

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF JAPANESE-STYLE ORGANIZATIONS IN MODERNIZATION

This book has examined the concrete characteristics of Japanese-style organizations, but an important element to be considered in this chapter is not only why these modes of organization persisted as Japan modernized, but how they played a key role in this process. Indeed, it can be argued that modernization reached fruition at the same time as the culmination of the formation of Japanese-style organizations. There are two possible implications in the assumption that modernization appeared at the same time as their fruition. The first suggests that Japanese-style organizations progressed independently toward modernization, driven by internal forces. The second contends that through Western contact during the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the Meiji Restoration (1868), Western cultural models were assimilated and indigenous society was restructured. In this situation, the distinct characteristics of Japanese-style organizations worked effectively and revealed a high degree of adaptability to changing situations. This chapter investigates both of these contentions.¹

Indigenous Progress to Modernization in Japanese-Style Organizations: The Development of a System of Magistrates and Bureaucrats

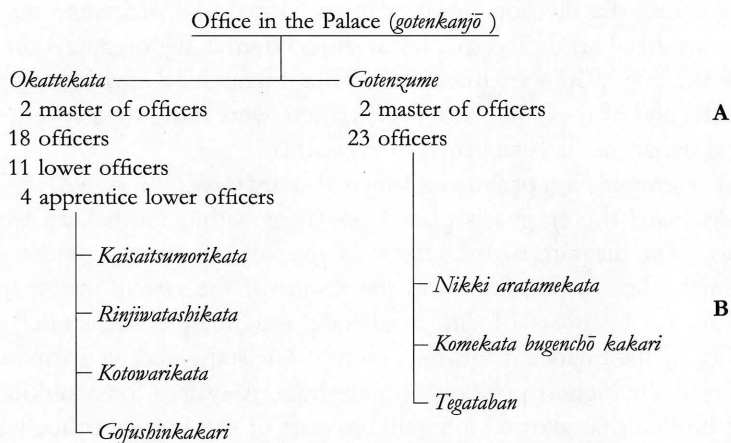
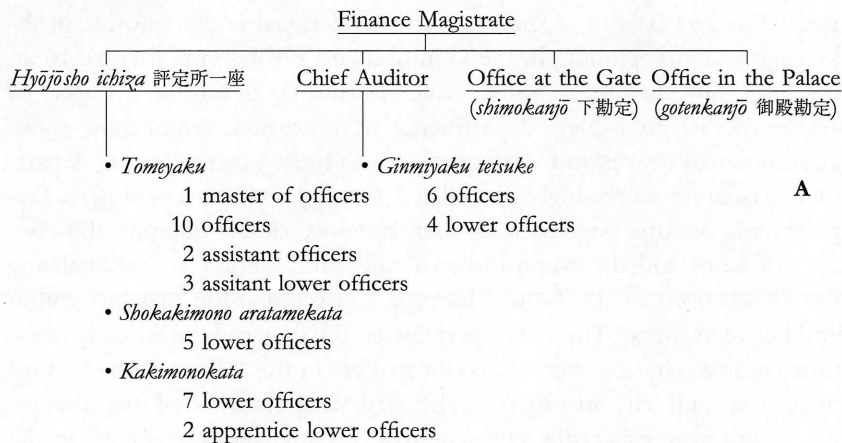
As the previous chapter noted in the discussion of the organization of

the Tokugawa bakufu, a series of profound social and economic problems appeared beginning in the Genroku and Kyōhō eras that led to an increased bureaucratic response, which in turn set in motion a variety of systematic reforms. New departments were created, establishing more governmental offices and staff appointed to these posts. Existing departments became increasingly specialized to support different duties. Departments became systematized, first, by more clearly defining the division of labor and the command structure, and, second, by rationalizing the jurisdictions of the various bureaus and the division of labor within and between them.² These trends reflected the government's needs at the time, and the changes were especially evident in the offices of the finance magistrate and city magistrate. The structural reforms of the finance magistrate were especially representative of the changes occurring in the bakufu's administrative bureaucracy. These structural developments are depicted in Figure 10.

At first, the division of labor in the office of the finance magistrate was arranged according to a linear model, but as the organization gradually became more systematized, internal hierarchical divisions appeared. By the end of the Tokugawa period, there were more than seventy lower level departments established in this office.

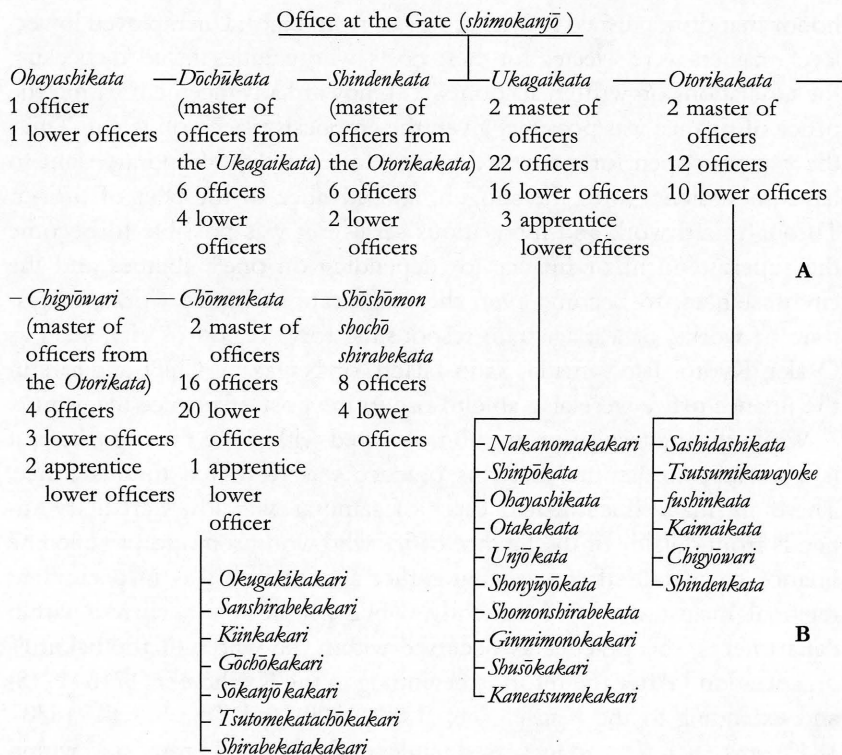
The examination of the supplemental salary (*tashidaka*) system in Chapter 3 disclosed the emphasis placed on talent within the bakufu's bureaucracy. The diagram of the effects of the implementation of the supplemental salary system illustrates the results of the system in the appointments to the posts of city magistrate and finance magistrate.³ In the office of the finance magistrate, men of low status received appointment even to the highest position of magistrate. A system for promotion was established that allowed low-ranking staff of the finance office who had low-level appointments to receive higher offices and gradually gain the supreme office. The cases of Ono Kuniyoshi, Kanno Haruhide, and Negishi Yasumori provide evidence of this system.

Lower level members of the finance office held titles such as the overseer of finance and the apprentice to the overseer. Their low status as retainers prevented them from having audiences with the shogun (an



Source: Based on *Nihon zaisei keizai shiryō*, vol. 4, p. 90; *Tokugawa kinreikō zenshū*, vol. 3, no. 1445; and Baba Ken'ichi, "Edo bakufu kanjōsho no kōsei to shokumu bunka," *Hōsei shiron*, 3.

Figure 9. The Office of the Finance Ministry



Key

- A — Divisions of offices established in the eleventh year of Hōreki (1761)
- B — Divisions of offices until the Tenpō era (1830)
- Numbers indicate number of officers
- The *Hyōjōsho ichiiza* was a collective decision-making body encompassing the magistrate of religious affairs, the city magistrate of Edo, and the finance magistrate
- The offices of *kanjō ginmiyaku tetsuke* and of *hyōjōsho ruiyaku* were filled by members of the bakufu judicial office
- The four Hōreki-era departments of *shindenkata*, *chigyōwari*, *obayashikata*, and *shōmonshirabekata* became subsumed by other offices in the Tenpō era, but the *dōchūkata* continued as an independent office

honor that distinguished low-level vassals from high). Unemployed lower-level retainers were selected for these posts, whose duties included checking the tabulations on written accounts. Yet, upward advancement within the office of finance was possible, given the emphasis placed on talent. Thus, the way was open for a talented person to receive the honorary right to have an audience with the shogun, and advance to the post of officer. Through hard work and meritorious service, it was possible to become the superintendent of finance, or depending on one's abilities and the circumstances, to become even the magistrate of public works, magistrate of works, or a magistrate responsible for a region or city, such as Osaka, Kyoto, Ise Yamada, Sado Island, or Nagasaki. Chief auditors in the finance office were also able to rise to the post of finance magistrate.

While this pattern of promotion occurred within the finance office, it is a mistake to assume that this practice was restricted to this office. There are many documented cases of samurai with low hereditary stipends from outside of the finance office who won promotion to become finance magistrate after receiving earlier appointments as inspectors or regional magistrates. Consequently, while promotion occurred within departments, this practice as occurred within the whole of the bakufu's organization.⁴ After the reforms beginning in the Kyōhō era (1716–1735) and extending to the Kansei 寛政 (1789–1800) and Tenpō 天保 (1830–1843) eras, there was an increased tendency for internal promotion within the finance office up to the post of finance magistrate. Regardless of any particular example that can be cited, lower level retainers of lesser status had the way opened for them to gain promotions to high rank with salaries of 3,000 *roku*.

Cases of promotion decisions favored the opinions of a candidate's immediate supervisors concerning the assessment of his accomplishments. Promotion and transfer decisions rested on the reports and recommendations made to senior administrators, who in the case of the finance office, was the finance magistrate. Consequently, if the reports issued by a candidate's immediate superiors were negative, that person would be forced to remain in a lowly position for years. Yet, if a superior officer

was found to be derelict in his duties or abusing his authority, then he put himself in danger.

The role of connections and favoritism cannot be ignored in the promotion process, but promotion was based on the perception of a candidate's merit and talent; and the bureaucratic system continued to become more rational. While it was not inconceivable that someone of low rank might ascend to the post of finance magistrate in an earlier period, after the eighteenth century, a process was created which provided a clear, systematic path for promotion that prioritized talent and culminated in the highest office. The fact that such a system existed is remarkable.

A System for Promotion Based on Talent

The selection process for officials that prioritized talent was by no means limited to the bakufu reforms of the Kyōhō era. Cases can be found to a greater or lesser degree in organizations in different historical eras as well. Regardless of the context, for any organization to survive it is necessary for it to try to recruit and promote talented people who might be of low status or from low-level offices. From that standpoint, when the problem of rationalizing a bureaucracy is considered, whether or not people are selected purely on the basis of their ability is not the central question. Instead, the manner in which promotion occurs is much more critical. Thus, the procedures for appointments and the process for making promotions express the characteristics and stage of development of a given society or organization. Understanding these factors is essential in comprehending the issue of how organizations modernize.

Promotion in most organizations in the early modern period, including Tokugawa-period domains, took place on an *ad hoc* basis at the leader's discretion. In other words, promotion was characterized by a lack of continuity and by local peculiarities that were a function of the supreme decision-making power resting in a particular ruler. With an enlightened ruler, promotion took place in an effective manner, but when he died all of his initiatives might be abandoned. In such organizations,

there was little guarantee that the promotion process would occur in a rational and appropriate manner. As long as the leader gave his assent, decisions were made. While a leader might assume that talent formed the basis for his scheme of appointments, in actuality he might only be assembling a group of sycophants. In many instances, terrible conditions for both the organization and society resulted from such circumstances, creating little more than corrupt administrations driven by greed.

Tokugawa Yoshimune took the lead in the creation of the supplemental salary system, which provided for greater freedom in deciding promotions. This system functioned with a high degree of fairness and stability after Yoshimune's death, until the end of the Tokugawa period. The implications of the promotion system, which gave preference to talent and was overall very fair and stable, were considerable, given that it was not based on any single ruler's prerogative.

After the Kansei reforms, the promotion system saw the introduction of an examination system that measured scholarly learning in the literary and military arts. Exams were detailed and graded objectively. Since the results of these exams were viewed as important, the system itself can be seen to have taken one more step to becoming more rational.⁵ Promotion based on the model of the supplemental salary system produced more optimal results when the changes affecting society became more dire; at the same time, the social mobility inherent in this system became increasingly pronounced. During the turbulent changes occurring at the opening of Japan at the end of the Tokugawa period and in the Meiji Restoration, the promotion system retained its salient characteristics.

Both the reforms of Tokugawa Yoshimune and of Uesugi Yōzan restructured the system of government and successfully introduced the concept of the "public" into the discourse on rule, thereby greatly contributing to the enrichment and advancement of Japanese-style organizations. This meant the development of more rationally structured Japanese-style organizations, or what Max Weber referred to as "formal rationalization," marking a step in the process of political modernization. As Weber explained, "The course of development of 'modern' forms of

organization is the same as that of a bureaucratic form of government.”⁶

As Chapter 4 described, the policies developed by the bakufu and domains utilized the power of highly developed government bureaucracies. A series of economic policies, especially those aimed at promoting production, strengthened domestic manufacturing. Domains and the bakufu created trade policies and plans for developing indigenous goods for internal consumption with the intention of increasing their wealth. All these policies played key roles in the modernization of the economy. Policies to encourage domestic production, as they were enacted by Yoshimune in the Kyōhō-era reforms of the bakufu, began first as an effort to obtain hard currency.

Yoshimune created bakufu policies to foster production on a country-wide scale so as to resolve the foreign trading problem. Uesugi Yōzan faced a different situation because the domainal government of Yonezawa sought to promote growth of the domain. Nevertheless, the economic principles of both of these cases were similar. Whether on the scale of the domain or of the entire country, the manufacturing economy that grew from government practices to foster domestic production fueled economic modernization.

Comparable to the modernization of the economies of Europe, the mercantilist policies of eighteenth-century Spain, France, and England began by attempting to obtain foreign currency through protectionist policies safeguarding domestic production.⁷ In that same period, Japan faced greater restrictions in its foreign trade; therefore its rate of development of manufacturing was not the same as the economic achievements spurred by the mercantilist policies in European countries. Yet, in regard to fundamental economic principles, Japan had embarked on the same road to economic modernization as European countries.

Yoshimune's policies during the Kyōhō-era reforms had the goal of advancing all of these economic initiatives while at the same time offering tremendous encouragement to practical and applied knowledge such as Western learning (*rangaku*), traditional Chinese medicine, natural history, the study of natural resources, and the utilization of economic

theories derived from Confucianism. These efforts raised the level of scientific knowledge in eighteenth-century Japan and laid the foundation for the modernization of scholarship and of scientific thinking.

The aforementioned issues offer a portrait of the modernization of Japan through indigenous advances in the autonomous development of what can be termed Japanese-style organizations. Yet, for a backward country like Japan, modernization was influenced on a much deeper level by foreign pressure from the West in East Asia in the nineteenth century as typified by the Opium War. Japan avoided the problems of colonialism and maintained its independence by fending off foreign aggression. Yet, at the same time, Japan accepted Western culture and was able to initiate social reforms. How did the Japanese-style organizations described in this book react to these complex problems? What distinct characteristics of Japanese-style organizations functioned effectively in the midst of this situation? We will consider these questions next.

The Ability of Japanese-Style Organizations to Respond to Circumstances

Simply stated, Japanese-style organizations played a key role in the modernization of Japanese society due to their ability to respond to changing circumstances. In other words, they possessed the facility to quickly discern the most suitable way to overcome problems and were therefore able to respond to the perilous situations they faced by reforming themselves through a process of trial and error. This facility enabled Japanese society to modernize rapidly.

The ability to respond to circumstances is visible in Yoshimune's Kyōhō-era reforms. These reforms promoted the process of the rationalization of government. In the areas of trade and manufacturing policies, the Kyōhō reforms presaged the pro-growth policies of the Meiji government. During the domestic and international upheavals of the late Tokugawa period and Meiji Restoration, the system of government was reformulated so as to create a structure suited to the conditions of the period.

At the same time, when Japan learned of the dominance of the ad-

vanced countries of the West, it abandoned isolationism and seclusionism, making an abrupt 180 degree turn to enter the international world and embrace a capitalist economy, facilitating the modernization of Japanese society. The competence with which Japanese-style organizations were able to respond to circumstances by freely abandoning certain aspects and reforming others was quite distinctive. What concrete elements in these organizations produced this great ability to respond to change?

Strength Through an Emphasis on Talent

The basis of the facility with which Japanese-style organizations respond to circumstances is found in the high rate of internal hierarchical mobility for their members. Although these organizations give the appearance of upholding a status system, they are able to freely employ and promote talented people to important offices. Thus, their forte was their creation of conditions that allowed for the greatest possible utilization of the talent of their members. The supplemental salary system described in Chapter 4 was very important as a particular method of appointing employees in a Japanese-style organization, but there are other methods of appointment created by early modern organizations that warrant analysis.

The Household as an Economic Unit

The household (*ie*) is one of the principle structures of the Japanese organization, and the origin of Japanese-style organizations lies in the samurai households of local lords (*zaichi ryōshū*). At the beginning of the early modern period, these households consisted both of individual samurai households and of larger householdlike structures called domains. The daimyo's household, or domain, was a larger, constructed version of the original household. However, the domain maintained the various attributes of the original household, namely its characteristics as an economic structure, its ability to incorporate nonrelated members, its adaptability, and its stability. Both the households of individual samurai and the daimyo household of the domain possessed the original characteristics of a household, as objectified economic units that sought to preserve capital and labor. The person who succeeded the household,

the so-called household head, had to be talented to bear the responsibilities of management. Patrilineal succession was one of the tenets of household organization, but whenever there was no male heir, adoption was used to find an heir with managerial talent.

The Adoption System: The Talented Will Inherit

In Japan, adoption is used to ensure the continuation of the household. Since adoption permits using candidates outside of the father's side of the family, someone who is not a blood relative of the father can be chosen for adoption. Thus, candidates for adoption can come from either the father's or mother's side of the family and can include a relative by marriage. A person unrelated to the family can also be chosen for adoption.⁸ The practice of adopting a son-in-law pays equal attention to talent as it does to a candidate's family background. When a son-in-law from a different household marries the daughter of the household head, he becomes the adopted son of his father-in-law and succeeds to the family inheritance.

In this practice, the son-in-law cannot be related to his adopted family, but blood succession is preserved by virtue that the woman's child will eventually inherit. Consequently it does not matter that the son-in-law is not a blood relation to his adopted family. Since any male can become an adopted son, the most important factor is that the family members grant their mutual consent (*gōi*) to his adoption.⁹

Clannish notions of bloodlines have no place in this decision. Thus, the characteristics of adoption in Japan mark a distinct contrast from the rules for adoption in Chinese Confucianism which stipulate that an adopted son must be a patrilineal blood relative of the family. This means that the implications of adoption and the conditions whereby an adopted son inherits the household are different in Japan than they are in China and Korea.

As Chapter 4 indicated, Yoshimune and Yōzan are two examples of people who inherited households by adoption. In Yoshimune's case, he was related to the founder of the Tokugawa house, Ieyasu, and was chosen due to his relationship to this patrilineal bloodline. Yet, it is also significant that the choice of Yoshimune was somewhat contradictory to

the rules of patrilineal bloodlines, since it bypassed the Owari house, which was the chief household of the three families related to the shogun (*gosanke*) and enjoyed a closer linkage to the shogunal line. Yoshimune's reputation as an enlightened ruler was widely recognized at the time, and many wanted him to become shogun.

Yōzan's only blood relationship to the Uesugi family was through his grandmother on his mother's side, who was from the Uesugi family: this meant that from the perspective of the principles of patrilineal succession, he was completely unrelated to the Uesugi. Just before Yōzan was formally adopted as successor to the Uesugi house, a son was born to the head of the Uesugi family, Shigesada. However, this son was not given any consideration, and Yōzan was chosen as adopted heir.¹⁰ Both Yōzan's intelligence and the money promised from the Akizuki family for adopting Yōzan had a role in this decision. When Yōzan entered the Uesugi household, he was supposed to marry Shigesada's daughter, Yukihime. This step would have made Yōzan inherit the family as an adopted son-in-law and would have legitimated his succession.

Domainal law in Yonezawa advocated against the widespread practice in retainers households of adopting another person as a successor even though a legitimate child was already present. Both the bakufu and the domains frequently passed edicts forbidding such "impious adoptions" which were defined as adoptions of someone who was not a relative or adopting someone in return for payment.¹¹ However, these same records indicate that the practice of adopting someone who was completely unrelated by blood was far from rare in contemporary society. Thus, in the practice of adoption, even though that adoptee was of low status, providing he was talented, he might enter the household of a high-ranking warrior family. Depending on any political ability, this same person might further gain an appointment and work in a high government office.

Buying Status as a Shogunal Retainer:

The Entry of Commoners into Warrior Society

Outside the custom of adoption, there was another method to achieve greater social mobility and win opportunities to put one's abilities to use,

namely through the purchase of status as a shogunal retainer (*gokenin* 御家人). This practice gave the chance for people who were not even warriors, such as farmers and townsmen, to enter the samurai class and live in that capacity. There was an established procedure in the Tokugawa period for the constant introduction of the talent and blood of nonwarriors into samurai organizations.

In the bakufu, most low-ranking retainers called *kachi* 徒士, *yoriki* 与力, and *dōshin* 同心 held their ranks for only their lifetime as a rule and were not allowed to transmit their ranks to descendants. Excepting bannermen (*batamoto* 旗本), shogunal retainers below the standing that allowed for an audience with the shogun were divided into ranks called *fudai* 譜代, *nibanba* 二半場, and *kakaeseki* 抱席, depending on when their ancestors had joined the Tokugawa ranks. Rank determined appointed office and made for clear distinctions on the conditions of succession. Retainers of *fudai* and *nibanba* status were allowed to transmit their ranks to their heirs, but *kakaeseki* generally held that standing for only one generation.¹² In actual practice, however, succession of rank did occur de facto, since heirs received reappointment to the same rank.

This practice of regranteeing rank to a descendant created the conditions that led to the buying and selling of the various ranks of shogunal retainers. For instance, lower level retainers of the *kakaeseki* rank might transfer their rights of successorship to another person when they themselves did not have an heir. Or, someone who served in the post of overseer of finance or in the public works office, and on the basis of their ability had risen to an office that allowed for an audience with the shogun, might receive a new rank as an *kachi* if there was a vacant post in that rank (there were twenty *kachigumi* each with thirty people). The cost of the rank varied. The rank of *yoriki* (80 *koku*) cost 1,000 *ryō*, *dōshin* (30 *hyō*, and a two-person stipend, *fuchi*) cost 200 *ryō*, and *kachi* (70 *hyō* plus a five-person stipend) cost 500 *ryō*.¹³

The recent research of Baba Ken'ichi on the selling of the *dōshin* rank in Hachiōji 八王子 village has cast new light on the particulars of the sale of the ranks of shogunal retainers.¹⁴ According to Baba's findings, there were three patterns for the sale and purchase of ranks as a shogunal

retainer. In the first case, the transaction took the form of inheritance through adoption. In the second form, called agency (*bandai* 番代), the purchaser used the seller's family genealogy to secure a position. In the last form, the seller transferred a portion of his salary as a shogunal retainer to a buyer. The last of these three forms was a simple economic exchange and did not mark the transferral of rank as a shogunal retainer. However, in the case of the first two types, both the rank and the salary were bought and sold together.

The first evidence of the buying and selling of rank as a shogunal retainer dates from the fifth year of Shōtoku 正徳 (1715). This evidence indicates that adoption was the oldest and most widespread version. Later trends indicate that more than half of the cases were of the second type, agency. Based on these conclusions, it is possible to assume that the sale of rank as a shogunal retainer appeared around the Genroku and Kyōhō eras, that is by the early eighteenth century, and that the transferral of rank started from the practice of adoption.

In the case of succession by adoption, the bakufu rigidly prohibited its retainers from adopting anyone "distant from the family's bloodlines" under the terms of a cash agreement. However, the bakufu seems to have acquiesced in the case of lower level retainers who held their ranks for only their lifetimes. As Baba Ken'ichi has described, the transference of rank in exchange for money was allowed when a person was either ill or too old, and the proceeds of that sale were used to support that person. Sick or elderly retainers who did not have an heir of their own were allowed to relinquish their ranks as shogunal retainers in return for having their designated successor care for them in their old age. The bakufu allowed this to occur for humanitarian reasons.

Yet, once the shogunate made this concession, it meant adoption was no longer necessary to transfer rank, and the semi-open sale of rank as a shogunal retainer could occur by a request to the bakufu that a successor be allowed to take up the petitioner's position. By Baba's calculation the cost of the transference of rank, in the case of a salary worth 10 *hyō* plus a stipend for one person was about 25 *ryō*. On the average, a stipend worth 1 *hyō* was sold for the equivalent of 3.25 *ryō*. Even more significant

was Baba's evidence that showed the trend for farmers living within the confines of Hachiōji village to acquire *dōshin* rank and samurai status.

The sale of rank as shogunal retainer — and therefore samurai status — might seem to spell the end of the warrior class, but the converse seems to be true. With the entrance of townsmen and peasants into the samurai ranks, their fresh perspectives and vibrant energy also penetrated the warrior class, giving it new life. Commoners who purchased rank as shogunal retainers were especially able to overcome structural hindrances. They put forth tremendous energy and had a great desire to succeed, which made them use the opportunity to enter the warrior class to their fullest advantage. By the three methods of adoption, sale of rank as shogunal retainer, and the supplemental salary system, warrior organizations were able to create a dynamic system for promotion that prioritized ability and allowed for social mobility.

Government Appointments and the Foreign Threat

The promotion system established in the middle of the eighteenth century provided for a great number of talented men to be appointed during the turbulent years at the end of the Tokugawa period and during the Meiji Restoration to confront the difficult circumstances of this age. The ability to allocate talented people to crucial duties during this period of transformation formed the basis for the various respective organizations to cope effectually. The shogunal bureaucracy preserved an organization centering on the status system, but at the same time it achieved a high degree of organizational reform.

At the outset of the nineteenth century, foreign ships arrived in Japan's harbors, and a series of demands came from England, America, Russia, and other countries to open Japan to foreign trade. Nearby China faced the Opium War (1840–1842) and the Arrow Incident (1856–1860) which began the use of continued military force to transform China into a semi-colony. Japan was clearly in a dangerous position. In reaction to the demands to open the country to trade that came from the foreign ships, on the one hand, Japan needed to prepare for the possibilities of peace or war. On the other hand, it faced problems of how to resolve domestic

political disputes caused by the bakufu's handling of the foreign situation, as well as the issue of what form of national polity should be created to face these dangers. The country needed to resolve the interlocking domestic and foreign problems.

To address these complex issues, the bakufu had to recruit a wide variety of talented individuals and draw upon their collective wisdom; and, in this period of crises, Japanese-style organizations revealed the degree of latent power they possessed. The following section takes up the examples of five shogunal retainers who were involved in foreign affairs, which was the most serious problem of the late Tokugawa period affecting Japan on a countrywide level. The careers and achievements of these five men reveal the high level of political competence inherent in the promotion system at use in the shogunal bureaucracy at the time.

The Elite Bureaucrat of Lowly Birth: Kawaji Toshiakira

More than any other person, Kawaji Toshiakira 川路聖謨 deserves mention in view of the fact that his life reflects this book's central theme.¹⁵ He was recognized as one of the most able and highest standing members of the bakufu bureaucracy in the late Tokugawa period. Toshiakira was at the front line of the foreign crises at this time, working as the finance magistrate, albeit his extremely humble birth.

Toshiakira was born in the fourth month of 1801 in a small dwelling belonging to the intendant of Bungo and Hyūga provinces in Kyūshū. He was called Yakichi 八吉 at birth. His father, named Kichibei 吉兵衛, was a mere commoner from Kai, but he was employed as a low-ranking official in the office of the Deputy of Hyūga and lived there for a long time.

Later, Kichibei left Hyūga and took his family to Edo to look for employment. In Edo, he was blessed with the opportunity to purchase status as a shogunal retainer at the *kachi* rank. He may have used the money he had collected while working for the Deputy in Hyūga. Thereafter, Kichibei became a shogunal retainer of the *kachi* rank and changed his name to Naitō Kichibei 内藤吉兵衛. He moved his household to an official residence belonging to *kachi* located in Ushigome 牛込.

Subsequently in 1812, Kichibei's son, Yakichi, was adopted into the family of a shogunal retainer, Kawaji Sanzaemon, who held a salary of 90 *hyō* and a two-person stipend. The following year, Yakichi reached maturity, changed his name to Toshiakira, and succeeded to the family fortune. He was only thirteen at this time.

In 1818 at age seventeen, he passed the exam for the bakufu finance office. In the third month of 1818, he was assigned to work for the lower officer of finance in an out-of-office capacity attached to the office of the overseer of the construction and repair groups, but reporting to the overseer of finance. He had an additional post attached to the archives of the bakufu justice office. He then made one of the fastest ascents ever of bakufu officials in the hierarchy of appointments.

In the sixth month of 1821 he received a formal appointment in the department of the lower officer of finance as vice-secretary to the justice office (*hyōjō sho tomeyakusuke*). In the first month of 1823, he became an official in the finance office with the post of secretary of the justice office (*hyōjō sho tomeyaku*). The post of finance official allowed for an audience with the shogun and indicated he had reached the high rank of *hatamoto*. This new office opened the way for Toshiakira to become a high-level bakufu bureaucrat. There was a great difference in rank among shogunal retainers, between the post of lower officer of finance which did not allow for an audience with the shogun, and the post of finance official, which did. Yet, Toshiakira made this transition in only two years, thanks no doubt to his inherent talent and effort. The fact someone like him, from such a humble social background, lacking a legitimate family lineage, had his ability acknowledged through promotion serves as an indication of the better qualities of the bakufu's bureaucracy.

In the ninth month of the second year of Tenpō (1831), Toshiakira advanced to the master of officers of finance. Four years later, in the sixth month of 1835, he took charge of the preliminary hearing about disturbance involving the Sengoku 仙石 family of Izushi 出石 domain in Tajima province, and he led the resolution of this case. This well-known case resulted from a struggle within the Sengoku family over control of the domain. It was seen as an extremely difficult situation to resolve, and

opinions within the bakufu were divided. Through his preliminary hearing, Toshiakira was able to uncover the plot of the domainal elder, Sengoku Sakyō 仙石左京, to wrest control of the domain. Shogun Tokugawa Ienari 徳川家斉 applauded Toshiakira's efforts to resolve this case, and he appointed him chief auditor in the finance office in the eleventh month of the same year.

In this period, the bakufu senior councilor Mizuno Tadakuni 水野忠邦 (d. 1851) had just begun the Tenpō reforms of the bakufu, and Toshiakira received Mizuno's patronage. Toshiakira did his part to work toward bakufu reforms. In the sixth month of 1840, he was transferred to the post of magistrate of Sado Island. In the sixth month of the following year, he became the magistrate of construction and repairs. In the same year, he received a court rank of junior fifth rank lower grade (*jugoige* 従五位下) and took the name Saemonnojō 佐衛門尉. Court rank was a high honor allowed only to a select group of elite, which gave him status equal to a daimyo.

Subsequently in his career, he became magistrate of public works in 1843, magistrate of Nara in 1846, and magistrate of Osaka in 1851. Finally in the ninth month of 1852, he reached the pinnacle of his career as the chief financial officer in the bakufu, the magistrate of finance, receiving the order to build the country's sea defenses. This period marked the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and the accompanying unrest at the fall of the Tokugawa bakufu, yet the promotion system in the bakufu's bureaucracy appears to have continued functioning, and it allowed Toshiakira to make his incredible rise to power.

In the sixth month of 1853, Perry arrived in Uruga 浦賀, leading a fleet of ships from the American East Indies. He carried a personal letter from U.S. President Millard Fillmore seeking the opening of Japan to foreign trade. Perry departed saying that he would ask for a reply when he returned to Japan the following year.

The month after Perry came to Japan, Russian Vice Admiral E. V. Putiatin arrived in Nagasaki, demanding the opening of Japan to foreign trade. Putiatin indicated his specific desire for trade in the Nagasaki area. The leader of the shogunal cabinet, senior councilor Abe Masahiro 阿部

正弘 (d. 1857), named Kawaji Toshiakira to be the supreme representative for the treaty negotiations. (Another person working in this capacity was the keeper of Edo Castle, Tsutsui Masanori. 筒井正憲) In the tenth month, Toshiakira was ordered to Nagasaki to serve as the chief representative for negotiations with Russia, and he held negotiations with Putiatin. (In the same period, he was also appointed assistant to the finance magistrate (*kattegakari* 勝手掛). The negotiations were temporarily interrupted by Russia's involvement in the Crimean War, but the Russo-Japanese Treaty of Amity was concluded in the twelfth month of the following year (1854) at Shimoda 下田 in Izu province. Unlike the treaty concluded with the United States, the Russian treaty affirmed the national boundaries of both Japan and Russia. The provisions that established the national boundaries between Russia and Japan between Etorofu Island and Uruppu Island formed the basis for the modern conflict over the northern territories.

Kawaji Toshiakira took the lead among bakufu bureaucrats in seeking relations with the West. He received the patronage of the senior councilors Abe Masahiro and Hotta Masayoshi 堀田正睦 (d. 1864), but at the same time he maintained cordial relations with Matsudaira Yoshinaga 松平慶永, the daimyo of Echizen; Shimazu Nariakira 島津斉彬, the daimyo of Satsuma; and Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山, a samurai of Matsushiro 松代. These men all looked favorably on his management of the bakufu. But, he was unable to avoid the disfavor of Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼 (d. 1860) and the more conservative wing of the bakufu. Against Naosuke, Toshiakira supported the faction that wanted Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu 一橋慶喜, to become shogun. During Naosuke's Ansei 安政 purge, Toshiakira was relegated to the unimportant position of Edo Castle in the fifth month of 1858, and in the following year he was ordered into forced retirement. Thereafter he changed his name to Keisai 敬斎.

After the collapse of Naosuke's rule, Toshiakira again received appointments as magistrate for foreign affairs (*gaikoku bugyō* 外国奉行) and as finance magistrate in the fifth month of 1863, but he only held these posts for a half-year before retiring. Immobilized with paralysis, he disappeared from government in the late Tokugawa period. During the Boshin

戊辰 War between the forces of Restoration and the bakufu, on the fifteenth day of the third month of the first year of Meiji (1868), Toshiakira recorded witnessing the handover of Edo Castle. At home, he committed suicide by shooting himself.

With his rise from humble origins to the post of finance magistrate with a 3,000-*koku* emolument, perhaps Toshiakira gave his life out of a feeling of gratitude to the bakufu, which had provided him with the opportunity to act freely on the grand political stage. In his suicide, he followed the samurai custom of harakiri and finished himself off by a gunshot, which gave expression to his sense of honor. His suicide typifies a bakufu bureaucrat who sought to blend conservatism with a new openness in foreign relations, and it truly fit his character.

A Younger Brother Active in Bakufu Foreign Diplomacy: Inoue Kiyonao

Inoue Kiyonao 井上清直 was Kawaji Toshiakira's younger brother, and his career saw successive promotions culminating in the post of magistrate of foreign affairs. Inoue dealt with the American emissary Townsend Harris (d. 1878), and he had the important task of negotiating a trade agreement with the United States.¹⁶

Kiyonao was also the son of Naitō Kichibei, born in 1809. At a young age he became the adopted son of the shogunal retainer Inoue Shin'uemon 井上新右衛門. At seventeen, Kiyonao received a post in the bakufu finance office, and then was appointed secretary to the justice office. He then worked as *shirabeyaku* 調役 in the office of the magistrate of religious affairs. In 1852, he became the master of officers in the finance ministry. At the time of Commodore Perry's arrival, the senior councilor Abe Masahiro selected him for the position of chief auditor in 1854, and he went to Shimoda with the task of managing the port there. In 1855, he became the magistrate of Shimoda, received a court rank of junior fifth rank lower grade, and the title *Shinano no kami* 信濃守.

He met Harris when he arrived in Japan in 1856, and Inoue became active with Iwase Tadanari in representing Japanese interests in the negotiations over the trade treaty with the United States. In the sixth month of 1858, they reached an agreement. A month later, he was appointed to

establish the office of the magistrate of foreign affairs while simultaneously holding the post of magistrate of Shimoda. Inoue later participated in negotiating the treaties with Russia, England, and France.

Like his brother, Inoue was relegated to a minor post during the Ansei purge, and in the sixth month of 1859 he was made magistrate of construction and repairs. But, he did not disappear completely from politics. Four months later, he was transferred to the post of magistrate of warships (*gunkan bugyō* 軍艦奉行), and after the collapse of Ii Naosuke's government, he put his energy into the development of the bakufu's naval forces. In 1862, he prompted the bakufu to send a group of students to study in Holland. He advanced to the post of city magistrate of Edo in the same year but soon lost that office. In the ninth month of 1864 he became magistrate of foreign affairs for the third time, and two months later received the post of finance magistrate in charge of legal affairs. His reappointment to city magistrate of Edo came in 1866, but he became ill in the twelfth month of 1867 and died. The spectacular careers of Inoue Kiyonao and his brother Kawaji Toshiakira provide excellent examples demonstrating the degree of openness of the shogunal bureaucracy.

The Leader of the Faction Seeking the Immediate Opening of Japan: Iwase Tadanari

Iwase Tadanari 岩瀬忠震, who ranked among the elite of the bakufu bureaucracy at the end of the Tokugawa period, did not come from nearly as humble a background as Toshiakira and his brother.¹⁷ He was born in 1818, the third son of the Tokugawa *batamoto* Shidara Sadatake 設楽貞丈, who held a 1,400-*roku* emolument. Tadanari was adopted into the household of Iwase Tadamasu, which held an 800-*roku* family stipend and enjoyed a proud heritage as a *batamoto* household in service to the Tokugawa since at least the sixteenth century. Tadanari had not yet succeeded to his family's inheritance when he received an important post, and it was his talent that allowed him the chance to engage in greater affairs.

In 1843, he passed the entrance examination for the Shōheikō 昌平黌,

the bakufu-sponsored school of Confucian learning in Edo. By passing this formal examination, Tadanari gained appointment on the basis of his talent alone. It allowed him in the following year to receive the rank of *goban'iri* 御番入, becoming a member of the inner palace guard in the western enclosure of Edo Castle with a salary of 300 *hyō*, and taking the name *Shuri* 修理. Four years later, Abe Masahiro selected him to become master of the shogun's foot guard, and he gained a supplemental salary raise of 1,000 *koku*. When Commodore Perry returned to Japan in the first month of 1854, Tadanari rose to the post of inspector, and he was soon put in charge of coastal defenses and ordered to construct gun emplacements, cannon, and large ships. In this capacity, Tadanari led the military reforms of the bakufu. When Admiral Putiatin came to Shimoda, Tadanari worked with Kawaji Toshiakira and signed the treaty between Russia and Japan.

Tadanari took charge of the most prominent issues related to foreign relations in the late Tokugawa period. He and Inoue Kiyonao were given full authority to conclude a trade agreement with Townsend Harris between Japan and the United States. They both received high commendations for their dealings with Harris. In the twelfth month of 1856, he received the court rank of junior fifth rank lower grade and the title *Iga no kami* 伊賀守, although he still had not succeeded to his family's inheritance.

There was no one among all of the bakufu's officials who could equal Tadanari's mental clarity and eloquent speech, and he was active in various capacities in guiding the bakufu's foreign relations. He was also considered a highly popular leader in the faction that sought to open relations with the West. This faction, which included Ōkubo Tadahiro 大久保忠寛, Nagai Naonobu 永井尚志, and Udono Nagatoshi 鵜殿長鋭, advocated the positive impact of opening Japan. They wanted to obtain Western technology, supported Hitotsubashi Yoshinobu as shogun, and sought to establish a unified government.

Tadanari's allies in the office of the inspectors backed rapid reforms, and the finance officers led by Kawaji Toshiakira opposed these steps on philosophical grounds, seeking a more moderate pace of reforms. Other

factions called in vain for the expulsion of all foreigners or were unable to produce any policies or results due to a lack of internal consistency in their policies.

Officials such as Toshiakira and Tadanari, who advanced in the bureaucracy through their talent, guided bakufu foreign policy and politics at the end of the Tokugawa period. The examples of these men indicate the excellence and soundness of the bakufu bureaucracy because it allowed them to deal effectively with the government's foreign relations. Iwase was the principle Japanese authority who signed the trade agreement with the United States in the sixth month of 1858. One month later he was assigned to the new post of magistrate of foreign affairs, signing trade agreements with other foreign nations. He was left out of the struggle over the shogunal succession involving Ii Naosuke, but received a minor position as magistrate of works. Later removed from this post and placed under house arrest, he retired to an island in Edo Bay, and spent his days in leisurely pursuits, writing poetry. In the seventh month of 1861, he passed away at the young age of forty-four, still having never succeeded to his family's inheritance.

The Genius Behind Closer Ties with France: Kurimoto Joun

Kurimoto Joun 栗本鋤雲 was the heir of the Kurimoto, a household that served as personal physicians for the bakufu, which meant that his status was fairly high. However, he abandoned his job as physician and cast his lot in bakufu politics. This choice made his situation comparable to a masterless samurai, and his decision in this regard makes him somewhat unique.¹⁸

Joun was born in 1822 as the third son of the bakufu physician Kitamura Kaien 喜多村槐園 and given the name Kon 鯤. When he reached twenty-two in 1843, he entered the Shōheikō. That year he passed the bakufu's entrance exam, in the same year as Iwase Tadanari. However, the period when Joun was involved in the group seeking closer ties with France was much later than Toshiakira's and Tadanari's efforts to open the country. In 1848, Joun was adopted into the Kurimoto family, which served as bakufu physicians, gaining a 300-*roku* stipend.

Joun was found unsuitable to be a bakufu physician by failing in a position on a bakufu warship, and in 1858 he was assigned to a lower post on the Ezo 蝦夷 frontier, where he worked six years in Hakodate 函館. During this time, he befriended a Frenchman named Mermet de Cachon, creating the basis for his later activities in support of the pro-French faction at the bakufu. By special order in 1862, he resigned his status as a doctor and became a samurai, winning appointment as superintendent in the office of the magistrate of Hakodate and responsible for inspecting the territory from northern Ezo to Kunashiri and Etorofu. The following year, he was recalled to Edo and made superintendent in the education office (*gakumonjo* 学問所). The next year, 1864, he rose to the position of inspector and was involved in the negotiations surrounding foreign use of Yokohama harbor. In 1865, he moved from the post of magistrate of warships to magistrate of foreign affairs, receiving a court rank of junior fifth lower grade, and the title *Aki no kami* 安芸守.

In this period, Joun and his ally in the pro-French faction, finance magistrate Oguri Tadamasu 小栗忠順, faced a number of problems including the construction of an iron-manufacturing plant at Yokosuka 横須賀, the introduction of a French-style military system, the problem of the opening of the port of Hyōgo 兵庫, and the negotiations for compensation to the Western powers for the incident at the Shimonoseki 下関 Strait where extremists from Chōshū 長州 domain had fired upon Western vessels. Joun was reappointed magistrate of foreign affairs in 1866, and the following year he was appointed to the offices of magistrate of Hakodate and finance magistrate simultaneously, while having to continue the important task of reforming the bakufu under the leadership of the fifteenth shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu. In the eighth month of 1866, Joun traveled to France as ambassador, where he assisted Tokugawa Akitake 徳川昭武 who visited France as the bakufu's representative to attend an international exhibition in Paris. Joun wanted to deepen cooperation between France, but the bakufu collapsed in the middle of his efforts. Joun returned to Japan and settled in Koishikawa 小石川. He then worked for *Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun* 横浜毎日新聞 newspaper and subsequently became the head writer for *Yūbin Hōchi Shimbun* 郵便報知新

聞 newspaper, making a career as a well-known journalist during the Meiji era.

A Leader in the Modernization of Japan: Katsu Kaishū

Another person who cannot be omitted from this discussion is Katsu Kaishū 勝海舟 who played a major role in politics in the late Tokugawa period.¹⁹ He was born in the first month of 1823, the son of Katsu Kokichi 勝小吉 a lower level shogunal retainer with a family stipend of 40 *hyō*. His first name was Yoshikuni, but he later changed his name to Yasuyoshi. His father Kokichi was a foot soldier of ill repute who went by the name Musui. His book, *Musui dokugen* 夢醉独言 (*Musui's Story*), describes how he spends his entire life avoiding work.

Kokichi was of problematic background. He was the third son of the shogunal retainer Odani Heizō 男谷平藏 Tadahiro, who was of *kakaeseki* 抱席 rank with a stipend of 100 *hyō*. Kokichi became the adopted son-in-law of the Katsu household, but his paternal grandfather was a blind farmer from Echigo province, who went to Edo and took the name Yoneyama Kengyō 米山檢校 (Odani Kengyō). Kengyō worked as a masseur in Edo and struggled hard to accumulate a small fortune. He lavished his money on his son Odani Heizō and was able to purchase him rank as a shogunal retainer. Since the Odani family name is absent from the ranks of Tokugawa *batamoto* and retainers, Heizō did not become a retainer through adoption; instead his father Kengyō was able to buy a vacant position and create a new house of retainer status.²⁰ Odani Heizō was ordered in 1766 to take up the rank of *yoriki* in the western enclosure of Edo Castle, and he was then transferred to the post of the lower officer of the finance ministry. In 1786, he became a full official in the office of the finance ministry, and advanced to a level where he could have an audience with the shogun. Heizō was thirty-three years old at the time.²¹ He was a shogunal retainer who was the son of a commoner, but became a *batamoto* allowed the honor of a shogunal audience. His grandson, Kaishū, followed in his footsteps.

Kaishū became head of his household in 1838 at age sixteen and

received a jobless post in a construction and repair group as was allowed his family. He practiced martial arts under the tutelage of Shimada Toranosuke, then in 1845 he pursued Western learning (*rangaku*) with Nagai Seigai of Chikuzen domain, and Western military techniques with Sakuma Shōzan of Matsushiro domain. In 1850, Kaishū opened a private academy where he taught *rangaku* and the military arts, and gradually made a name for himself.

In the ninth month of 1854, the year Commodore Perry came to Japan, Kaishū disseminated a treatise he wrote about coastal defenses. The following year, he was ordered to translate foreign books for the government, and he participated in the founding of an office for translation, the *bansho shirabesho* 蕃書調所. That same year he participated in teaching about naval defenses at Nagasaki as director of an office for naval education. In 1860, he piloted the ship *Kanrinmaru* 咸臨丸 across the Pacific Ocean for the ratification of the United States-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce (Harris Treaty). This important role opened the door for his advancement in the bakufu bureaucracy. In 1862, he entered the government by becoming magistrate of warships, and in this appointment he strove to develop the bakufu navy.

The notion of building sea-going vessels for the nation changed the political structure that had been dominated by the bakufu. In the attempt to gain parity with foreign powers, conferences involving a great number of daimyo were convened to seek their involvement in the government and unify the nation. Stronger alliances developed between extremist samurai who sought to “revere the emperor and repel the barbarian” and anti-bakufu forces. They were opposed by conservative factions within the bakufu who sought to oust them from government. However, larger trends prohibited these loyalists from being removed completely from the historical drama.

In the aftermath of the bakufu’s failed military campaign to punish Chōshū in 1866, Katsu Kaishū was one of the leaders in the bakufu administration at the twilight of the Tokugawa period. He took steps to ensure the neutrality of the foreign powers during the Boshin War be-

tween the forces of the Restoration and the bakufu. He also played an influential role in the negotiations for the security of the Tokugawa family and the bloodless handover of Edo Castle.

Kaishū lived during the volatile era of domestic and foreign pressures that characterized the late Tokugawa period. He stemmed the fallout from the internal turmoil facing Japan and was one of the most influential leaders guiding Japan's modernization. He became friends with Western envoys, including Ernest Satow, and through his understanding of Westerners and with their cooperation, he accomplished a historic mission in preventing Japan from becoming a colony like China and India, through foreign interference in a domestic struggle.

* * *

In addition to the five men mentioned above, there were many other shogunal retainers active in foreign affairs and dealing with domestic issues during the late Tokugawa era and time of the Meiji Restoration. Nagai Naonobu, Ōkubo Tadahiro, Mizuno Tadanori 水野忠徳, Egawa Hidetatsu 江川英竜 (Tarōzaemon), Oguri Tadamasu, and Enomoto Takeaki 榎本武揚 should also be included. Some of these men were elite *batamoto*, while others such as Ōkubo, Egawa, and Enomoto, were men from less prestigious backgrounds. Regardless of the circumstances of this hereditary status, they were appointed to influential positions in foreign affairs due to their talent and individual abilities. These men either entered their posts equipped with understanding of conditions in foreign countries, or else they had the motivation to study these matters with great diligence. These talented men who possessed knowledge of foreign conditions occupied crucial posts in the bakufu, and for that reason Japan avoided cataclysmic mistakes in dealings with the West.

These bakufu officials might be criticized for being unable to formulate a resolute position toward the problem of opening Japan to foreign trade, for becoming overpowered by circumstances of the times, and finally for postponing the problem caused by delaying any military responses. But such a resolute approach was problematic and inappropriate. The Chinese official Lin Tse-hsu attempted to stand firm against the West during the Opium War, but unfortunately his actions ultimately

placed China in jeopardy. Kawaji Toshiakira's decision to delay any military response does not indicate he was a coward, but reveals instead his attempt to find a way to maintain peace in Japan. Similarly, the trade agreements reached by Iwase Tadanari and Inoue Kiyonao are often criticized for their ignorance of international precedents and for allowing the inclusion of unequal treaties; the clauses that provided for extraterritoriality are often mentioned in this regard. But such reactions are mistaken.

As the scholar Sakata Seiichi has already described, Japanese legal thinking in this period included the concept that non-Japanese who committed crimes should be punished by other foreigners. Thus, the custom at Nagasaki was that the Dutch and Chinese involved in the trade there should be punished by their fellow countrymen.²² In addition to foreigners, the concept of extraterritoriality was a cornerstone of contemporary legal relations between the bakufu and domains. The lord of a territory where a criminal was registered in the census had jurisdictional precedence over any ruler in that criminal's current area of residence.²³ Consequently, Tadanari and his comrades should not be blamed for their insufficient discussion of the clauses of extraterritoriality, and these articles in the treatises did not become a problem until after the establishment of the Meiji government.

In the issue over the right of Japan to determine tariffs, it is a mistaken assumption that there were criticisms of the low rate of tariff for imported goods. The American representative Townsend Harris suggested a higher tariff rate to the Japanese and opposed a tariff on export goods. However, the opinion of the Japanese side set the conditions of the tariff agreements.²⁴ The realization of the inequality in the tariff agreements came with an 1866 study on the revision of the tariffs.

Viewed objectively, bakufu officials did not gain the optimal conditions that they wanted, and they may not have established equitable foreign relations. However, in this period Japan faced the threatening artillery and powerful steamships of the West as well as the danger of colonization that China and India had suffered. Moreover, an imposing fleet of British and French warships, which defeated China in the Arrow

Incident, were pointed toward Japan. Maintaining Japan's independence and preventing the loss of the nation's wealth constituted a vexing problem. Consequently, the power of these aforementioned officials deserves recognition. While there were many inadequacies, these officials deserve accolades for their overall successes.

In summary, during the great turmoil at the end of the Tokugawa period, the appointment of many people to critical administrative offices and the conscious fostering of the talents of these people speak highly both of the Tokugawa bakufu and Japanese society as a whole during the early modern era.

The Aim of Promotion in a Vertical Society

As Nakane Chie has claimed, according to the dynamics of social power, a vertical society inherently tends toward promotion.²⁵ A vertical society has one person at the top of an ordered hierarchy of ranks spread out like a pyramid below. This pyramid-shaped structure of ranks also serves as a ladder for social mobility.

In contrast, a horizontally organized society may appear to have equitable social groupings, and each of these groups may reflect the same egalitarian principles in their internal structures. But, the relations between all of these horizontal groups are rigidly defined according to caste-like principles, and mobility between members of these different groups is inherently restricted.

In a vertical society such as Japan's, when relations between people are examined at a particular chronological juncture, a rigid, unequal hierarchy seems apparent. Yet, if the entire system is examined over the stretch of a longer span of time, the members of that society who are functioning in this vertical system move upward in stages. Other downward trends are also visible. People, by virtue of their scholarly ability, business skills, and managerial acumen have the chance to advance in their rank. Moreover, the households of people at the highest status level who make nothing of themselves will often fall into a lower status within three generations, and become impoverished.

Merchants in the Tokugawa period certainly demanded talent and

business acumen, but the same was true for samurai who maintained the most rigid social order. Samurai households that were unable to improve their financial standing, whether they were shogunal retainers of *batamoto* rank, retainers of daimyo, and even daimyo families themselves, sought to adopt talented heirs from other wealthy households who would bring in a large amount of money into their adopted families. In some instances, adopting families had their own children but would claim these offspring were infirm, and then adopt a child from another family as heir. The ancestors of Kawaji Toshiakira and Katsu Kaishū purchased rank as shogunal retainers and entered the lowest level of that group. Once a person enters the bottom level of a pyramid-shaped vertical society, they have the opportunity to advance upward, depending in their talent and intelligence.

On the outside, a society such as Tokugawa Japan's, which appears to be structured in a rigid status hierarchy, can avoid suffering social decay as a result of its adherence to the credos of status hierarchy by establishing a process for rewarding talent that constantly introduces new blood and energy. A rigid status hierarchy that provides stability to a social order may seem contrary to notions of a society seeking to develop on the basis of the talent and efforts of its members, but these features were subtly joined in the same entity. In such a society, the amount of social mobility and the demand for talent increase in times of crises, and during this same period these factors have a much greater impact.

Thus, when the examples of Kawaji Toshiakira and the four other cases are viewed in terms of the advances enjoyed by each individual, they can be seen to be the direct, long-term outcome of the bureaucratic promotion system created by the bakufu in the middle of the early modern era, during the Kyōhō era. In particular, the two sides of the supplemental salary system become especially apparent, namely the dual emphasis given to preserving the status order and to prioritizing talent. The degree to which status and talent can be effectively harmonized strengthens an organization's human resources, as witnessed by the effective operation of the policies for promotion during the late Tokugawa period, described in Chapter 4.

Conceivably, an epochal social conflict may have erupted with so many people recruited and promoted in government regardless of their family background, coupled with the loss of saliency of existing modes of operation in the wake of Commodore Perry's sudden arrival. Indeed, prior to the debate over foreign affairs, there is sufficient cause to predict a collapse into a state of uncontrollable civil unrest resulting from the struggles and conflicts surrounding the disruption of the social order and debate over the policies guiding promotion. However, the bakufu bureaucracy was able to resolve these problems. The bakufu's proficiency in handling these issues still contains many lessons more than a century later. The facility of its system of promotion and the numbers of people it drew upon were great accomplishments in themselves for bakufu politics after the arrival of Perry.

The Duality of Formalism and Substance

The next point that bears mention in the discussion of the high level of adaptability of Japanese-style organizations is how these organizations are characterized by the dual standards of formalism and substance. When a Japanese-style organization faces a complex problem involving conditions affecting its members and its future, the manner in which it handles a situation determines how it views the relationship between form and substance: either formalism or substance will be given preference depending on the situation to resolve the problem. This duality of formalism and substance is related to the phenomenon evident in the actions of Japanese people and organizations known as the distinction between "surface principles," *tatema*, and "true intentions," *honne*. The difference between *honne* and *tatema* is a cliché which expresses both the cleverness and cunning of Japanese people and society. The element of *tatema* is usually used to refer to an external facade functioning like a disguise, while *honne* represents a hidden motive. This definition seems correct. However, when the two characteristics of *honne* and *tatema* are defined as meaning something that is substantial or truly felt on the one hand, and something that is formalized or standardized, on the other hand, then the relationship between the two is not reduced to a type of

manipulative technique. Instead, the relationship between *tatemaie* and *honme* can be seen as having an important place in Japanese society as one of its strong points.

Harmonization of Conservatism and Reform

The basis of the high level of adaptability of Japanese-style organizations is found in the characteristics that permit the compatibility of contradictory elements such as conservatism and reform. This compatibility is a function of the dual standards of formalism and substance, which are described here.

The system of recruitment and promotion that was established by Yoshimune's reforms reveals characteristics of organizational decision making that realistically express the response of a Japanese-style organization to a crisis. The bakufu respected "formalism," which constituted the limits of the possibilities in the existing decision-making process, status order, and power relations. While gaining the support of various, traditional power sources, at the same time the bakufu sought to adapt to developments present in society. The bakufu sought "substance" by recruiting highly talented officers skilled in financial management, and it used these officials to direct reform policies. By operating in this manner, the bakufu was able to facilitate its ability to function as an administration.

Regardless of the society or organization, whenever a condition of crises arises, the most important issue lies in the decision over two courses of action: whether to resolve a difficult problem so as to maintain the existing organizational or social structure, or to abolish existing relationships and seek a solution by creating a completely new structure. Any crisis can develop into a dispute over the selection of a course of structural action, which might lead to unrest and deeper divisions within society. Most instances of reform follow this pattern, and social unrest expands into civil war, creating instability, which results in the destruction of cultural artifacts, the devastation of economic stimuli and of manufacturing infrastructure, and terrible bloodshed. The old pattern of society might be completely destroyed, but the long period of social confusion, divisions, and unproductive power struggles continue.

The response of Japanese-style organizations to this type of problem is marked by a clearly different character than the aforementioned situation. By using both formalism and substance together, Japanese-style organizations are naturally able to harmonize and make compatible the two contradictory elements of conservatism and reform, and through this accomplishment create an organization that is highly adaptable to changing circumstances.

Respect for Formality and Procedure

The duality of formalism and substance has one more important feature that should not be overlooked, namely the importance of formality and procedure. In the case of the supplemental salary system, what the bakufu wanted as an organization was on the substantive side, specifically to draw upon the talents of able people who were of low status. It might be assumed that the bakufu would have been better off simply appointing the people it wanted rather than rely upon a roundabout practice such as the supplemental salary system. In the case of the decision-making process as well, forwarding matters for the senior council's consideration might be viewed from a substantive perspective as a fruitless ceremony since the decision-making structure involved the shogun, his chamberlains, and the senior administrative officers. Was this protracted ceremony only a compromise to avoid a conflict with the existing system? While the question deserves more attention, the answer is most assuredly no, since the real meaning of all this formality was deeply rooted in the inherent duality of the system.

Imagine attempting to solve a problem by removing all of the formalities and standards to take the fastest and most advantageous course of action. Such an approach when applied to the bakufu would have the shogun, his chamberlains, and the administrative officials discuss a problem and then act following the shogun's decision. This approach would be immediate, would reduce costs, and would appear to be a smarter way to reach a speedy resolution of a problem.

But how could the correctness of the shogun's judgment and the propriety of his judgment be assured in such a situation? What would

happen if the shogun was weak minded, or if the chamberlains abrogated the shogun's authority and began to flaunt their own authority? In such cases, the administrative officials would begin to worry whether they were being manipulated and would question the purpose of their policy proposals.

Other problems are just as likely to arise. The basic problem stems from the creation of a political situation in which a set number of people are involved in the process of decision making and problem resolution. The process comes to depend on the degree of benevolence and talent of the individuals having ultimate authority, and decisions are enacted and obeyed according to those individual's wishes.

Such a situation is none other than an absolutist form of government in which there is no authority to oppose the decisions of the supreme power holders, and no chance to examine the appropriateness and merits of these people's decisions. This is not simply a question of the independence of a few individuals within society, but signifies the loss of the development of the idea of the independent individual, and of democracy, which are two key conditions for modernization.

When Uesugi Yōzan was promoting reforms, he avoided becoming self-righteousness in his measures and emphasized the spirit of mutual criticism by placing great emphasis on "public discussions" (*shūgi*). Similarly, Yoshimune affirmed the principle of individual independence, stating, "Even though I give my assent, if it is in accord with everyone's duties, then it will have meaning for me."

The following episode occurred during Yoshimune's reforms and stemmed from the conflict between the senior council, the shogun, and his chamberlains, described in Chapter 4.²⁶ Senior councilor Kuze Shigeyuki called chamberlain Arima Ujinori before him for questioning due to Arima's frequent usurpation of authority and arbitrary decisions. Kuze advised the chamberlain to learn the difference between "faithful service and office." Kuze meant that "faithful service" was directed toward one's lord, and it was natural for retainers to try to work to the utmost of their capacity. However, senior retainers hold offices appropriate to them, just as chamberlains held their offices, and all officers each have their

own office. Regardless of the degree of their faithful service and the extent to which these officers applied themselves in their work, Kuze explained that “they are not allowed to transcend their station and exceed the bounds of their office to conduct policy as they might wish. Whenever disruptions such as these occur, the realm will not be at peace for even a day.”

Although active allegiance is important and vital to an organization’s functioning, ignoring the hierarchical chain of command in the name of faithful service violates the jurisdiction and authority of other officers. Even though faithful service might be the desired goal, both the organization and society will immediately fall into turmoil. This requires strict obedience to the various rules that govern the procedures for the management of the entire organization. The organization must work cooperatively and allocate assignments according to various offices dependent on its own social order and in consideration of the responsibilities of the various offices. If these rules are abrogated, then the organization and society as a whole lose their stability. Kuze’s command could not have been more appropriate.

In summary, governing society requires more than a rational approach to substantive issues: respect for formality, standards, and procedures are also necessary. This notion challenges arbitrary decisions made in the name of service for a leader and disavows taking the shortest course to achieve a desired result. The correct approach to governing is understood to be in preserving the organization’s rules and procedures, respecting differing opinions that are expressed in formal remonstrations and in voices of dissent, and forming a consensus that takes into account conflicting opinions and discussions involving the organization’s members.

Formalities and procedures might appear to be circuitous and a waste of time and resources, but without them political authority deteriorates, and people face the loss of their human dignity. As the well-known expression has it: “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” The establishment of principles and procedures in government and the promotion of the concept of independence at a human level are the other side to the

development of government bureaucracies and are in a mutual relation to one another. From the perspective of the rise of democracy, they are preconditions to the modernization of government.

Pursuit of "Substantive" Excellence

While respect for procedural matters and for the formalistic aspects of the decision-making process distinctly characterize Japanese-style organizations, these organizations are also highly attuned to the search for substantive qualities. In fact, in cases when these organizations face dangerous circumstances and unprecedented conditions, their facility in obtaining substantive excellence becomes a conspicuous feature.

The inability to enforce decisions concerning prior contracts, laws, and rulings during periods of social transformation is evident in a variety of countries. During these periods, the manner and form of response to handling these contradictions serve to express the political conditions of a given society or organization. When societies that respect rules and agreements encounter conditions that prevent the enforcement of rules and established contracts, large-scale social upheaval results. These societies frequently become fettered by earlier laws and agreements, are rendered unable to make any progress, and become mired in a quagmire. These circumstances might be overcome by reconciling prior rules and agreements to current conditions through an intellectual and theoretical search for the possibility of more enduring standards. Conversely, at the same time, revolutionary force is sometimes needed to abolish existing rules and fundamentally restructure the system to make rules in concord with changed conditions.

The approach in handling these types of issues is clearly different for Japanese-style organizations, which possess the dual principles of formality and substance. In Japanese-style organizations, the texts of laws and contracts indicate temporary guidelines, and they are not taken as absolutes. Therefore, whenever it becomes impossible to enforce either of these, there is no incentive provided to revolutionary force to destroy them. Usually, these contradictions are resolved by means other than what might be called the remaking of the intellectual framework. That is

to say, Japanese-style organizations do not implement solutions based on restructuring the rationale for the legal texts of laws and contracts by finding general principles encompassing new and old practices or by drawing conclusions based on old categories, judicial precedents, and by making larger inferences from a few earlier cases. Nor is revolutionary force usually employed to destroy an entire system of norms. Instead, problems are resolved through discussion.

The distinct manner of problem solving evident in Japanese society and organizations, called “resolution through discussion,” was touched upon in Chapter 3 in the discussion of “shares” (*mochibun*). Decisions in Japanese-style organizations do not adhere to formal principles of equality but are characterized by a substantive concern for the degree of apportioned responsibility of individual members. Resolution by discussion is the operation that puts these principles into practice.

This type of resolution by discussion transforms a formalistic process into a concrete matter of opinions over substantive issues. Discussions seek points of consensus by temporarily postponing existing agreements, such as prior laws and contracts, halting their enforcement to give priority to resolving complex problems at hand. Since the text of existing accords and contracts are generally agreed upon, there are no arguments over positions about how to theoretically apply these same measures to new circumstances, which means that energy is not wasted in efforts to resolve these problems by violence. The participants involved jointly agree to make the appropriate sacrifices in their consensus to halt the enforcement of earlier agreements and put these temporarily aside. This allows people to come to terms and accept the conditions that they are facing and attempt to work out optimal points of agreement.²⁷

Although this process is evident in various places, the system of “borrowing” retainers’ stipends (*shakuchi* 借知), evident in many domains in the latter half of the early modern period, can serve as an example. This system developed as a result of the impoverishment of domainal finances and was an attempt to reduce, and therefore utilize, a percentage of the rice stipends to retainers, paid either in the yearly tribute rice taken from the domain’s landholdings or from its granaries.

Duality in the Case of Borrowed Stipends

The word “borrowed stipend,” or *shakuchi*, refers to a reduction in the amount of rice paid as a stipend to a retainer and was clearly an infringement on the retainers’ authority. From that perspective, the independent authority of retainers within the domain was indeed fragile. According to the usual explanation, the independence of retainers was weak, allowing such a system to be implemented. However, this policy was not implemented unilaterally by order of the daimyo and domainal elite.

When laws establishing a borrowed stipend were promulgated, the text of these laws contained passages stating: “with our great feelings of inappropriateness and regret” and “to our tremendous exasperation.” Such phrases were formulaic expressions indicating that a given law was contrary to the daimyo’s will, or that he personally regretted it. The existence of these phrases indicates that the practice of borrowed stipends was viewed as irregular and that it was an embarrassment for the daimyo to have to reduce the stipends of his retainers.²⁸

The widespread prevalence of borrowed stipends speaks to the financial trouble of the domains that were reduced to take such steps. The daimyo made the request, apologizing for his own impropriety and lack of virtue. If the retainers were unable to put the daimyo off, then his request was accepted. Often the money would not be returned even after a set time limit. If the same command to borrow stipends was issued repeatedly, it amounted to an actual reduction in the retainers’ stipends. If retainers did not oppose this, they resigned themselves to the situation. They would protest if they regarded the reduction of their stipends as unjust and the result of a failing in domainal leadership or waste.²⁹

The latter part of the early modern period witnessed social and economic developments accompanied by increasing and varied demands placed on government. Domainal expenditures continued to climb. To resolve these problems, it was inevitable that the existing landholding relations be transformed and that domainal finances be increased by reducing the stipends paid to retainers. Nevertheless, these measures were always undertaken by “borrowing” from the retainers’ stipends. Even when the domain had effectively reabsorbed this revenue, it was

always represented as a “borrowed amount.” No one insisted on their rights described in the documents guaranteeing their salaries. The power relations and economic systems were not radically reformed, nor were new structures of authority and systems created. Substantial change occurred by retaining the existing system and employing the facade of a short-term loan.

Discussions were a prominent part of this process. Existing authority structures and systems were retained during periods of crisis. Everyone within the group resigned themselves to the situation and rallied together to resolve the problem responsibly to the benefit of the group.

The fact that the borrowed-stipend system became an actual reduction in retainer stipends over time is often tied to the dissolution of the domains and the end of samurai stipends in the early Meiji era.³⁰ From a political standpoint, the fact that such radical changes occurred in such a short amount of time and with relatively little bloodshed seems impossible. However, viewed from a substantive standpoint, the Meiji government’s issuance of bonds for former samurai, which accompanied the abolition of these stipends, was an extension of the practice of domainal borrowing of stipends. Understanding of the current of the times on the part of the samurai helped them overcome their lingering attachments to the superficial authority derived from their social status.

The aim to achieve the most optimal substantive result is one of the operative principles of Japanese-style organizations. The forte of these organizations is the way they cope with crises and the unknown; and this is what is meant by the so-called ability of Japanese to adapt quickly. Comparable to the situation with the commutation of samurai stipends, the anti-foreign imperial loyalists at the end of the Tokugawa period recognized the military strength of the West and its technological advances. In the Meiji era, they quickly reversed their earlier positions and sought to open Japan and modernize, taking a crucial step in the country’s modernization.

The Imperial Loyalists’ About-Face

The ideas and actions of the people who ascribed to the ideas of imperial

loyalism and chauvinism (*sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷) played an important role in foreign affairs during the late Tokugawa period. While the ideologues who sought to open Japan to the West were crucial to Japan's modernization, it is also essential to examine the change in political attitude of the people who had originally opposed this idea.

The research of Satō Seizaburō compares the chauvinist, anti-foreign movement of the late Tokugawa period with the anti-foreign movement in late Yi-dynasty Korea. Satō drew attention to the difference between the thoroughly doctrinal political posture of the Koreans and the pragmatism of the Japanese. In particular, he noted the distinctiveness of anti-foreignism in Japan, commenting that "in mid-nineteenth century Japan, almost no one, even the most radical chauvinists, denied the necessity of importing Western military technology."³¹ There are many aspects of the anti-foreign movement in Japan that are equally as surprising. While calling loudly for the expulsion of foreigners, there was also the realization of the power of Western military technology in the aftermath of the English bombardment of Kagoshima in 1863 (in retaliation for the murder of a British subject by samurai from Satsuma domain) and the 1864 Shimonoseki Bombardment (in which naval forces from France, England, the United States, and the Netherlands attacked Chōshū for firing on Western ships). A seminal moment in Japan's modernization occurred when the anti-foreign partisans changed their stance and sought closer ties with the West.

While the rapidity of this pragmatic move is striking, even more important for Japan's chauvinists was what has been referred to here as the duality of formalism and substance. It is unlikely that these activists opted for closer ties with the West as a result of suffering from their battles with Western forces. In fact, at the moment they sought to begin a war to expel foreigners from Japan, they turned toward England, which was the most conspicuous of the foreign powers they opposed, and sought to learn about military technology. In the fifth month of 1863, Inoue Kaoru 井上馨 (d. 1915) and Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (d. 1909) were part of a group of five men from Chōshū domain sent to England to study.³² These men were powerful members of the chauvinist faction in

Chōshū. The same faction of partisans led by Takasugi Shinsaku 高杉晋作 (d. 1867) and Kusaka Genzui 久坂玄瑞 (d. 1864) had participated in an attack on the British legation in Edo one year earlier.

Chauvinist fervor peaked in Japan in 1863, and loyalists spearheaded by Chōshū rallied in support of the imperial court at the same time that they succeeded in gaining political momentum and thwarted the bakufu by having the court issue an edict calling for the “expulsion of the barbarians” by the fifth month of 1863. On the day set for the foreign expulsion, Chōshū began firing on Western ships, which provoked the Shimonoseki Bombardment mentioned earlier.

At the same time that chauvinists were making these attacks, Inoue and his peers from Chōshū were hastening preparations for their trip to the West. Inoue Kaoru was a chauvinist at this time, but he was probably prompted to travel to the West to view conditions there himself, which was what had motivated his teacher Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 (d. 1859). The domainal government of Chōshū permitted this trip abroad. In the document giving its permission, the government explained its rationale: we sanction the plan for five students to travel to the West to study because, “during the onset of fighting and the break down in diplomatic relations, we realize it is difficult to obtain advanced foreign technology.”³³ After five years of diligent study, the party was to return to Japan and serve the domain by constructing naval vessels. Thus, in a seemingly incongruous move, the same domain simultaneously promoted both anti-foreign seclusionism and study abroad.

Not just the domainal government, but the chauvinist partisans Takasugi Shinsaku and Kido Takayoshi 木戸孝允 (d. 1877) lent their support for the study trip to the West. As expected, Kusaka Genzui, who was at the forefront of the chauvinist faction, violently opposed the plan. However, the phrasing of Kusaka’s statements against the plan reveals that he rationalized calling off the plan because he said that Chōshū had already lost its chance after it began the effort to expel the foreigners militarily.³⁴ In other words, even extremists such as Kusaka were not philosophically opposed to the idea of traveling to the West for study.

The group of five men, which included Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru, secretly boarded a British merchant ship in Yokohama at night in the fifth month of 1863 and set sail for England. Ironically, they disguised themselves as foreigners by cutting their hair. Inoue noted that they "wore barbarian hats and clothing."³⁵ Aboard ship, they endured the insult of being forced to labor as sailors, arriving in London after six months at sea. There they applied themselves to their studies at the University of London in the effort to understand the West. During their period of study in England, they came to advocate closer ties with the West and the adoption of Western culture, but their actions prior to their arrival in London indicate that they were already passive advocates for opening Japan.

In a manner comparable to Inoue and Itō, more were motivated the key leaders of the chauvinist faction in Chōshū such as Takasugi Shinsaku and Kido Takayoshi to turn toward the West than the ramifications of the English bombardment of Shimonoseki. In the process of investigating how to expel foreigners from Japan, imperial loyalists of the late Tokugawa period came to understand the advances in foreign civilization and military technology, especially in artillery and steamships. Consequently, at the same time that they advocated chauvinism, they were passive supporters of opening Japan. The rapidity in which they changed their positions, which is sometimes described as hard to fathom and uncharacteristic, was a consequence of their basing their actions on ambivalent motives; and these same motives make the consequences understandable.

Their ambivalent motives allowed the chauvinists to retreat from the principles they supported on a formal level, when they faced a deadlock and suffered from powerful foreign attacks, and this facilitated their efforts to find optimal responses to problems at hand. This type of rationale was responsible for the chauvinists' move to champion the opening of Japan. In terms of the modernization of Japan, the loyalists' ambivalence to the West had a profound impact and had its roots in the dualistic structure of formalism and substance which characterize Japanese-style organizations.

Integrating the Individual and the Organization: *Ringi*

In the *ringi* method of decision making, lower level members of an organization make proposals and policy suggestions that they submit to higher ranking members, and the decision-making process continues until the highest level members render a final judgment. This method of decision making is characteristic of Japanese-style organizations. In Japanese bureaucracies, rank determines the role of a staff person in the decision-making process.³⁶ The *ringi* method of decision making is based on the structure of Japanese-style organizations, but at a much deeper level, it is also closely related to the lack of a legislative body within Japanese organizations.

Legislative bodies developed in the West around the same time as feudalism. In response to the political and administrative structures headed by kings and princes, various assemblies were created by powerful feudal lords within the same kingdom to debate and establish laws. In most cases, these parliaments had both administrative and consultative powers. Kings sought the approval of these legislative bodies in matters of administration and taxation affecting their kingdoms.³⁷

In the case of the structure of domains in early modern Japan, regional warlords (*zaichi ryōshū*) became daimyo retainers, and therefore members of a domainal administration. Consequently, they fulfilled a purely administrative function and appear to have lacked any force as a legislative body.

Since Japanese-style organizations contain a purely administrative structure, the *ringi* method of decision making is a rather conspicuous development. As seen in the examples presented in Chapter 3, in domains, lower level government officials drafted proposals for laws and policies, which were submitted to higher ranking officials for their approval. Ultimately, a decision was reached by the daimyo. This process provided a method by which members of the domainal bureaucracy could take a substantial part in the organization's decision-making process simply by carrying out their duties.

The *ringi* process of decision making ought to be taken as the Japanese expression of a legislative system. The right of individual members of the

organization to participate in the decision-making process was not as pronounced as in the case of parliaments in premodern Europe. However, from the perspective of the numbers of people participating, many more participated in domains, including the lowest members of these organizations. The creation of mechanisms within the administrative system that respected and gave a voice in the organization's decision-making process to the ideas and proposals of lower level officials provided flexibility and strengthened the organization's ability to adapt to circumstances. Thanks to the involvement of members at the lowest level, organizations remained in touch with the outside world and functioned effectively in that context. As seen from the examples of *ringi* decision making in the bakufu and Matsushiro domain described in Chapter 3, these organizations had mechanisms that allowed for the opinions and reform proposals from the people at the workaday level to be transmitted routinely throughout the organization. This prevented the respective organizations from becoming ossified and allowed the respective organizations to adapt to changing circumstances.

In a system with both legislative and administrative bodies, the legislative body determines proposals and formulates laws. Everything requires discussion and debate, which demands time and effort to reach decisions. However, Japanese-style organizations are not bifurcated in this fashion, and that is their virtue. Lower level officials transmit information about a problem along with their concrete responses to their superiors and the rest of the organization. Since the organization is based on a vertical chain of command, the debate about the adoption or rejection of a given response can occur much faster, compared to the discussions in a legislative body.

An organizational mechanism that readily facilitates the introduction of the opinions of its lowest ranking members empowers these members. The lowest ranking members, whose duty it is to monitor conditions of the organization, have the power and initiative as individuals to report their views. It is only logical that such a system would have an enormous capacity to adapt to circumstances.

Consequently, the organizational functionality of Japanese-style orga-

nizations is high, compared to organizations in which decision-making power and authority are concentrated in the center. In the latter, members receive orders issued from the center and function like machines in their compartmentalized jobs, within the confines of regulations, clearly demarcated duties, and time constraints. Legislative systems make compensations for these problems, but Japanese-style organizations, which are able to empower their lowest ranking members, are able to respond efficiently to changes. From the perspective of the development of society, the ability to adapt has proven the key to the continued survival of these organizations.

The Political World of the Late Tokugawa Period and the Meiji Restoration

The actions of lower level samurai figured prominently in politics at the end of the Tokugawa period. From the perspective of the development of Japanese-style organizations, the deeds of these lower level samurai represented independent actions on the part of people at the lower level of organizations, but who were extremely active within them.

Popular understanding of these low-ranking samurai is shaped by the lasting impact of their deeds, but when the larger social context is considered, it is possible to detect more widespread examples of individual actions at many other different levels. Such daimyo as Shimazu Nariakira, Matsudaira Yoshinaga, Date Munenari, and Yamanouchi Toyoshige took direction of their domains as leaders of reform efforts in conjunction with their retainers.³⁸ The senior councilor Abe Masahiro took it upon himself to reform the bakufu and acted in the same manner as these daimyo by initiating wider discussions to involve more people in government.

In spite of the intentions of these enlightened domainal and bakufu leaders, the various actions of much lower level samurai had greater resonance. The arbitrary and independent actions of anti-conservative factions, the reformists who sought to open the country, as well as the

loyalists who promoted seclusionism, had a more far reaching political impact in the late Tokugawa period and during the Meiji Restoration because they sought more drastic reforms of society during this time.

The bakufu was severely divided over the issue of seclusionism in this period. The supporters of Tokugawa Nariaki (d. 1860), the daimyo of Mito domain, were fanatic proponents for expelling foreigners. *Fudai* daimyo led by Ii Naosuke wanted to maintain the status quo, while Kawaji Toshiakira and Mizuno Tadanori opted for a gradual reconciliation with the West. Iwase Tadanari and Ōkubo Tadahiro wanted closer relations with the West much sooner. The bakufu reached political decisions by investigating opinions, which meant that final decisions that were supposed to be made by bakufu leaders instead followed the advice provided by mid-ranking officials.

The bakufu frequently sought the advice of mid-ranking officials regarding foreign relations in the late Tokugawa period. The bakufu senior council led by Abe Masahiro requested that daimyo and retainers submit their opinions about how to proceed with the problems resulting from Commodore Perry's arrival. Beginning in 1856, in response to Townsend Harris's demands for a commercial treaty, the bakufu sought the advice of Kawaji Toshiakira and the office of the finance magistrate, and Iwase Tadanari and the office of the inspectors. The bakufu formulated its decisions based on their responses. The finance magistrate advocated a delay in the commercial treaty, while the inspectors lobbied for the treaty. The two sides criticized each other's positions, and the debate over the issue continued.³⁹ The fact that this debate took place among mid-level administrators serves as an indication that they were the ones directing bakufu policy. In this period, Iwase Tadanari served as chief advisor to Hotta Masayoshi, a leading member of the senior council, and Iwase was viewed as the person actually making government policies.

The leadership of middle-ranking administrators in organizational decision making was the same in the domains. Inoue Katsuo's research has found a similar phenomenon in the decisions of conferences convened by daimyo in Chōshū domain.⁴⁰ Mid-level bureaucrats such as Kido Takayoshi led the debates and guided the actual decisions, although the

daimyo Mōri Takachika and the domainal elders were in attendance. At these conferences, Kido and his peers sat far removed from the daimyo and the domainal elders, offering their opinions in the form of replies to their superiors' questions. Yet, middle-level bureaucrats set the terms for this discussion in their responses and in the debate among themselves. The daimyo and domainal elders did not present their own opinions; they simply presided over the course of the mid-level bureaucrats' discussion and settlement. The leaders of the domain received final decisions, and these became domainal policy after the daimyo proclaimed them as laws.

Thus, in both the bakufu and the domains, middle-ranking administrators directed government, thanks to structures such as conferences. This allowed discussion to take a more radical course as public debate, which resisted the arbitrary decisions of higher level officials in both the bakufu and domains. This phenomenon was not restricted to radical factions such as the seclusionists but was widespread and included conservative factions. In one example, fifty retainers of *bangashira* rank in Mito domain who formed a conservative faction within the domain sought the restoration of their stipends borrowed from the domain and petitioned the shogunate to prevent the daimyo, Tokugawa Nariaki 徳川斉昭, from returning to office.⁴¹ In Chōshū, a group of conservatives opposed the rulings of the daimyo who supported imperial loyalism and chauvinism.⁴² In Fukuoka domain in Chikuzen province, a group of retainers bitterly opposed the daimyo Kuroda Nagahiro 黒田長溥 over his advocacy of a conscript military. Katō Shisho 加藤司書 and 140 members of this faction were punished for allegedly plotting to remove Nagahiro from his post.⁴³ At the imperial court as well, nobles and minor officials opposed Emperor Kōmei 孝明 (d. 1866) for his sanction of the commercial treaties with the West. These courtiers petitioned the emperor and succeeded in having him withdraw his approval for the trade agreements.⁴⁴

Thus, both progressive and conservative factions were unwavering in their opposition to the rulings of their superiors. Autonomous actions on the part of individuals in organizations directly countermanded their superiors' orders and complicated the political situation in the late Tokugawa

period. At the same time, mid-ranking officials were fundamental in bringing changes to the course of society and were therefore a major factor in the transformation of Japan and its modernization. For instance, the leader of the group of imperial loyalists in Chōshū, Kusaka Genzui, stated that “the loyalist faction first took control of the [domainal] government and then united the samurai of like spirit from various domains.”⁴⁵ Kusaka’s compatriots Inoue Kaoru and Itō Hirobumi belonged to the chauvinist faction in Chōshū, but they were able to transcend Kusaka’s jingoism and obtain permission from the domain to travel to England. In the bakufu, Kawaji Toshiakira, who opened negotiations with Russian Admiral Putiatin, recorded in his diary that “I am very worried for our nation. But I am not worried about offering my life for it.”⁴⁶ Iwase Tadanari who directed the bakufu’s foreign relations and debated his peers, was criticized by Kurimoto Joun for his stubborn behavior. “If he knows something he has to say it, and saying it, he has to try to accomplish it,” Kurimoto stated.⁴⁷ Katsu Kaishū opposed both the leaders of the bakufu and the last shogun, Yoshinobu, in continually trying to work for the future of Japan not simply for the profit of the bakufu; however, with the collapse of the Tokugawa bakufu, he exhausted himself in his capacity as a retainer in trying to preserve Yoshinobu’s life and ensure the continuation of the Tokugawa family. The positions and political convictions of all of these people were different, but they maintained their status as individual members of organizations, acting according to their own judgments. Their actions were a direct extension of the ideals of the independent warrior found in bushidō, as expressed in the phrases from *Hagakure* and *Meikun kakun*: “determination is called doing everything by yourself for the domain,” and “even when you are about to lose your life, do not do anything you think should not be done.”

The political developments of the late Tokugawa period reveal numerous examples of independent actions initiated by various individual members of organizations including those at the very bottom.⁴⁸ If these same proposals had been initiated by daimyo and high-ranking officials instead of being the result of vigorous debates among lower level administrators, then even if reforms had been undertaken, which gave the appearance of

fostering modernization, these would not have had the power to sustain themselves and would not have won support. The more that advances are made by trial by error and the more that reform movements and conflicts involve the whole of society and a multitude of conflicting opinions, the more that organizations and society as a whole will be affected by modernizing reforms. Everything rests on the role of the individual within the organization.