

The Identity of ''Samurai'' in the Tokugawa Period

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Bushidō is the inspiration for action and the source of values, not only for the early-modern political order, but also for organizations in present-day Japan. Generally, *bushidō* in early-modern Japan is understood as loyalty to the lord and self-sacrifice to the point of death, as a morality of selfless service.

However, this is only one way of understanding *bushidō*. Originally, *bushidō* was a mode of conduct practised by individual warriors—a type of morality which aimed at perfecting the individual character. After the formation of a vertical society based on a social status system in the early-modern period, warriors came to be incorporated into a lord-vassal relationship as followers of a lord. In response to this situation, *bushidō* emphasized the virtues of loyalty and sacrifice that fitted an order founded on the lord-vassal relationship.

Nevertheless, the basis of *bushidō* was still the aim of the warrior to attain self-perfection. Works about *bushidō* such as *Book of Five Rings (Gorin-sho)* by Miyamoto Musashi (died 1645), that were written by experts in the martial arts are from beginning to end explanations of the individual warrior's mental attitude and the daily life of an independent warrior.

Bushidō of the Tokugawa period is well known from the work *Hagakure* (1716), which the modern author Mishima Yukio loved so much. This work was written in the form of a series of oral instructions about *samurai* lore and learning. It is said to be the creation of a retired *samurai* of the Nabeshima house of Saga domain, Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659-1719), who expressly composed it for the edification of the younger *samurai* of his domain. *Hagakure* is undoubtedly one of the most idealized representations of *bushidō*. The phrase "the way of *samurai* is found in death" is the kind of hyperbole that sums up the gist of the work.

The opening passage of this work states the following: "Never bear any resentment to the lord, no matter if you receive an assignment that is next to impossible, or even if by ill fortune you are ordered into exile or to commit suicide. Think only of your duty to the lord. Make the domain your foremost concern for all eternity ... this is the entry point to the true meaning of being a *samurai* for this household (i.e., the Nabeshima house of Saga domain)."

In treating the themes of death and sacrifice found in writings about *bushidō*

such as the *Hagakure*, writers frequently refer to this type of expressions. The many critics of the *Hagakure*, as well as those in the opposite camp who devote themselves to discovering the aesthetics of *bushidō*, both share this recognition of the underlying philosophy of this text. However, is this truly the correct understanding of this work?

The *Hagakure* does not demand the samurai's slave-like obedience to his lord simply in the name of loyalty. That is to say, after expostulating on obedience to the commands of one's lord, the same text states: "One should always appeal anything that does not resonate with one's own feelings" – in other words, if there is ever a command that somehow does not conform to your own convictions, then you ought to petition the lord repeatedly to change his views. The text also states that "The highest form of loyalty is to strengthen the domain by correcting the lord's behaviour," for instance, through criticizing a command from a *daimyō* even though he issued it, or through seeking to admonish and correct the *daimyō*'s mistaken views. The highest form of loyalty might properly be called making an all-out effort to solidify and fortify the domain.

The *Hagakure* demands that the *samurai* perfects himself as an independent individual. The *samurai* has to be a strong individual with a sense of self, someone who actively pursues the important notion that "determination is called doing everything by yourself for the domain." According to the *Hagakure*, the ideal of blind obedience to the commands of a lord would be the worst example of behaviour. "One serves the orders of a lord and the love of a friend depending on the circumstances." In other words, a person acts or transgresses in accordance to what he himself believes. Ultimately, if one's feelings toward the lord and the domain are strong, then the choices will become self-evident.

The text also states that if someone besmirches a *samurai*'s honour, even if that person is his lord, the *samurai* ought to demand redress for the insult. It explains that a hereditary *samurai* of the Nabeshima is someone who ought to live by the motto "strive ahead bravely." If a *samurai* decides that his efforts are not sufficiently praised or rewarded, he should demand his due. But, if that same *samurai* receives unfair treatment and he is "without dignity," or simply lacks common sense, then he cannot hope to find a place to make himself useful in future.

This is the *Hagakure*'s perspective on loyalty. In contrast to what is commonly understood, the text does not argue that the lord should be obeyed absolutely. The most important concern for a *samurai* is his own person; and the text preaches a mental attitude that supports the pursuit of individual responsibility on the basis of a *samurai*'s own autonomous decisions. To the extent that this aspect has been ignored, *Hagakure*'s pronouncements concerning the issue of death and loyalty have been interpreted

incorrectly. The single phrase, "the way of *samurai* is found in death," actually means just the opposite, as the text itself explains later. Since *samurai* adhere to that type of attitude to begin with, the text states in the beginning: "One should find freedom in the ways of arms and pursue one's duty without fault one's entire life." *Samurai* reach a point where they can transcend life and death: they sever their attachment to life and become attuned to death. When they have attained this point of freedom, *samurai* will have nothing to fear and they will be able to pursue their duties without making any mistakes. *Bushidō* does not valorize a meaningless death. The real meaning of *bushidō* is for a *samurai* to live his life in as safe and meaningful a manner as possible.

The Philosophy of the "Strong point of the Domain"

The military philosophy of the Tokugawa era included the concept of "the strong point of the domain" (*o-ie no tsuyomi*). This referred to the elements that strengthened the *daimyō*'s household and ensured its permanence as an organization. Since a domain was vertically organized, one might imagine that it was an organization in which everyone worked together to fulfil the orders and commands of the lord and high-ranking *samurai*, without uttering a complaint or harbouring a selfish thought.

This idea is mistaken. This image of an organization in which everyone had a spiritual sense of absolute loyalty might seem true on the surface, but in reality the domain was never far from complete disintegration.

The "strong point" of these organizations was that they depended on employing people who as individuals put their trust in their own convictions and were full of their own sense of autonomy; people who would not be swayed by their surroundings and would not simply obey the commands of their superiors and lord without criticism and questions.

Handling such people was extremely difficult, and potentially dangerous. They were the sort of men who would struggle till the bitter end against overwhelming odds without relinquishing their responsibilities to someone else—although they might relinquish their offices when the organization faced difficulties or was on the brink of ruin. Within the daily routines of running the organization, their presence would hold in check the dangers of a *laissez faire* attitude, but you would never know whether they were not also conspiring together or engaged in corrupt practices.

Such situations are exemplified by the *bushidō* philosophy of the *Hagakure*. Loyalty and devotion to the lord do not mean that one should follow him blindly and remain obedient. It is crucial to understand these ideas in connection with a *samurai*'s own sense of autonomy and to understand, how the one does complement the other.

People who are filled with a sense of their own self-importance and who act for themselves, will on occasion oppose the commands of their lord. However, precisely because these strong, self-willed *samurai* did not easily submit to being controlled, paradoxically, they would faithfully exert themselves for the organization to which they belonged, namely the *daimyō*'s household.

This is the true meaning of the word "warrior" (*bu*) and can be considered to be the intellectual core of the notion of independence in *bushidō*, the "Way of the warrior." This way of thinking is also found in other texts than *Hagakure. Tōshōgū goyuikun*, which records aphorisms ascribed to Tokugawa Ieyasu, and the *Meikun ippanshō*, written in the late Edo period by Tokugawa Nariaki (1800-1860), the *daimyō* of Mito, expresses similar sentiments. These ideas are characteristic of *bushidō* thought in the Tokugawa period.

The intellectual basis that supported the autonomy of the *samurai* as an individual is also clearly discussed in the *Meikun kakun* by Muro Kyūsō (1658-1734), who served as the tutor for the eighth *shōgun*, Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684-1751). The text purports to be the instructions of a lord (Yoshimune) to his retainers, and describes the ideal form of lord-vassal relationship. The text asserts that the most important principle is for both the lord and the vassal to "advance the good and rectify the bad." At the outset, the text notes the necessity of different opinions and of a vassal's remonstrating with his lord.

It states, in the voice of the ruler: "Do not stray from the path of service to the lord; day and night be watchful for any feeling of opposition. I want you to report directly to me about my own deeds and the governance of this country without hesitation, if there is any matter that is not as it should be, no matter how small, or if you have any opinions."

In seeking to instill in retainers their honour as *samurai*, this text crafted the image of the ideal warrior: "Honour is not accomplished through words, nor is it accomplished by showing off one's cleverness. It is accomplished by taming one's heart; nothing else is needed. Be well mannered and polite. Avoid flattery of your betters and disdain flattery by those below your station. Uphold promises made. Pay attention to people's afflictions... Know shame; and even when you face execution, do not do anything you think should not be done. Do not retreat from death. Work for justice and truth. That sort of spirit is as strong as iron. Realize in your behaviour the sentiment of the flourishing of all things and of gentle compassion. A *samurai* with honour is someone who has sympathy toward others."

The same text that emphasized the importance of *samurai* honour, made the following comment regarding situations in which decisions of individual retainers were opposed to the orders of their lord. Writing in the voice of the ruler, it says: "As a rule, my true belief is that I do not for a moment feel that everyone ought to exhaust his loyalty to me by bending the true ideals that they possess. If there is any opposition between their true ideals and one of my commands, and if these ideals are sincerely held, I would consider that to be truly valuable." In this example, the text pays respect to the principles embraced by individual *samurai*, and allows some latitude for disobedience on these grounds. The idea of the relationship of the individual to the organization as expressed in the *bushidō* philosophy of the Tokugawa era is also significant for modern society.

The *Meikun kakun* was published in 1715, and was favourably received in the warrior society of the Tokugawa era. Shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune later recommended the work to his close associates, and the text rapidly spread. All retainers in Edo Castle kept it close at hand.

The philosophy of *bushidō* in the early-modern period is characterized by its emphasis on the existence of the *samurai* as individuals. This shows in such expressions as, "Even the lowly and weak ought to bear the responsibility for their lord's household," and "even when you are about to lose your life, do not do anything you think should not be done." There was a strong undercurrent of personal self-interest in *bushidō*.

In the social order of the early-modern period, the individual was not swallowed by the organization. People preserved their autonomy through the principle of "shares" (*mochibun*).¹ *Bushidō* provided the intellectual backbone for the *samurai* to exist as an individual.

The early-modern political order in Japan and modern Japanese-style organizations have a distinct way of encompassing the independence of individual members within the organization, regardless of the existence of a vertically organized chain of command. Such types of organization are strong because all the members possess a strong sense of self and of their individual ability to act, which is rooted in an awareness of their autonomy. The strength and the viability of these organizations are particularly evident when they encounter threatening circumstances.

The Practice of Oshikome

In my earlier work, *The Mechanism of Oshikome Against a Lord: Early-Modern*

*Daimyō and their Retainers*² I undertook a fundamental criticism of the dominant historical concept of the *daimyō* household and domain that I have just now examined. *Oshikome*, or house-arrest, was an action taken against the *daimyō* when, first, there was excessive cruelty or evident mismanagement on his part within the domain administration, and, second, when the *daimyō* himself did not heed any of his retainers' admonitions. In cases of *oshikome*, a *daimyō* was imprisoned by his retainers under the direction of the elders (*karō*) of the domain and his highest ranking vassals. A certain period of time was allowed the *daimyō* to express his regrets, but if he remained defying and recalcitrant, the *daimyō* might be forced to retire and moves would be made to replace him, usually by establishing his lawful son as the new lord of the domain. We will explore the various forms of *oshikome* and the ramifications these actions might have through several concrete examples.

1. *The Case of the Arima House of Kurume Domain in 1729*: With its territory of 210,000 koku, the Arima house of Kurume domain (modern Fukuoka Prefecture) was among the larger domains. However, like other domains in this period, the domain of Kurume had reached a critical point, with its finances deeply in the red. Important political issues needed to be resolved in order to be able to deal with these fiscal and financial problems. As a way to correct these problems, in 1706 the sixth *daimyō*, Arima Norifusa (1674-1738), had advocated restructuring the domain's administration through a complete reorganization of the domain's bureaucratic structure. He had, however, been heavy-handed in forcing through these political moves. Specifically, he had employed officials of low rank but with financial acumen, who were now slowly rising in the administration, such as Honjō Kazue and Kume Shinzō. He had also furthered administrative reform by taking such steps as the simultaneous dismissal of forty-eight officials whose appointments had been due solely to their high rank and to the dictates of precedent. He had even abolished the time-honoured practice of consulting the elders of the domain about financial matters, and he continued implementing successive policies for political reform through direct orders he gave as *daimyō*.

What finally brought Norifusa into direct conflict with the retainers of this domain, was his abolishment of the system of local fiefs (*jikata chigyōsei*) which, following established custom, maintained all the villages of the domain as the fiefs of individual vassals. Norifusa placed all these fiefs under his direct control and paid his retainers a stipend in rice to be drawn from the domain's storehouses, thus making a fundamental change in the payment system of retainers.

He levied new taxes from the inhabitants of the domain by raising the amount of

annual tribute rice and by demanding corvee labour. Besides rice, he revised the tax rates for other commodities, too, including barley, vegetables, cotton, and lacquer. The rates of taxation, including those of tribute rice, which had stood at 10 percent, were raised to 33 percent. Norifusa's argument for the tax increases was the need to secure the financial resources necessary for the development of new fields and for the improvement of irrigation in all the villages of the domain.

This series of reforms carried out by Arima Norifusa restored the finances of the domain and increased its fiscal reserves. At the same time, it also played a critical role in directly promoting production within the domain. These reforms, however, precipitated a power struggle between the *daimyō* and his retainers, because the *daimyō* tried to push them through by force.

Many voices were raised in opposition to Norifusa's coercive policies by his retainers and by the people of the domain. In the eighth month of 1728 a peasant rebellion broke out in Kurume domain that was caused by the increase of the rate at which the farmers were taxed. The riots involved approximately 5,800 people, and Kurume domain fell into a state of uncontrollable upheaval. At that time, Inatsugu Masasane, the highest retainer (*karō*) of the domain, who had an emolument of 3,000 *koku*, tried to end the impasse by taking control himself. He arrested Honjō Kazue and Kume Shinzō, who had provoked the problems, and he put an end to the new policies. Norifusa was held responsible for the series of failed schemes and forced into retirement. His heir was appointed the new lord of the domain. In this way, Kurume domain was saved from disaster.

2. *The Case of the Mizuno House of Okazaki Domain in 1751*: The Mizuno house of Okazaki domain (modern Aichi Prefecture) held 60,000 *koku* and was an important domainal house. It was founded by Mizuno Tadamoto, who was the cousin of Tokugawa Ieyasu's mother. In 1737, Mizuno Tadatoki (1722-1752) became the seventh *daimyō* of the domain. Steeped in learning from an early age, Tadatoki wanted to establish an ideal government based on Confucian principles. He was, moreover, convinced that he should act quickly and enact drastic reforms. Therefore, he abolished the system of hereditary ranks for his retainers and appointed many talented people of low rank.

Besides reforming personnel affairs and defying high ranking retainers from important lineages, Tadatoki sought to centralize authority in order to facilitate political reform. He selected such middle-ranking retainers as Suzuki Matahachi, Sakai Saishichi, and Akabotsu Naoemon as his close associates. These measures naturally provoked tensions between Tadatoki and his high-ranking retainers, who were related to

him by blood, but Tadatoki ignored the very existence of these problems.

In 1746, the domainal elder Haigō Genzaemon was ordered to relinquish his post and to enter forced retirement. Since Haigō did not comply with these orders from his lord, he was brought in for interrogation and allegedly responded with extreme contempt. Then, two members of the *toshiyori*, who ranked just beneath the domainal elders, Matsumoto Kitanomo and Suzuki Yaemon, were also ordered out of office and forced into retirement, because they had supposedly disobeyed Tadatoki's commands.

In response to what they regarded as unwarranted authoritarian measures, the elders and other high-ranking retainers of the domain joined in opposition against their *daimyō* Tadatoki. On the first day of the New Year of 1749, on the occasion of the celebration of the New Year, the retainers in Okazaki Castle refused to attend the celebration as an expression of their united opposition against Tadatoki. The next day, all ordinary retainers of high rank (those retainers of the *hirashi* level and higher) took a similar stance and refused to attend. As a result, no one besides Tadatoki's closest aids and the lowest retainers appeared at the New Year's audiences.

From the perspective of the lord, this act of defiance on the part of his retainers portrayed him as a tyrant and constituted open treason. Tadatoki and his retainers reached an acute deadlock and tension mounted to the point where military action seemed imminent.

The domainal elders and retainers ensconced themselves in their mansions and awaited the arrival of the guards they thought Tadatoki would dispatch. Preparing for their deaths, they strengthened the defences of their mansions. Meanwhile, the *daimyō*, Tadatoki, was facing a difficult decision. Should he use the military force he directly controlled to crush the opposition? Should he commit suicide, now that nearly all his retainers had defied him? Or should he agree to his retainers' demands and yield to them?

Tadatoki agonized a long time over his decision before he finally made up his mind and decided that the best solution to the feud would be the dismissal of all of his closest advisors. Faced with the power of the domainal elders and other high-ranking retainers, Tadatoki accepted political defeat. He became a changed man. In his effort to express his total disinterest in politics, he turned to the various entertainments of the Edo pleasure quarter, Yoshiwara, and squandered the finances of his domain.

In the tenth month of 1751, Tadatoki announced at his mansion in Edo that he would be making a pilgrimage to his mother's grave. When he was about to leave his residence and summoned his retainers to head toward the pleasure quarters, the domainal elders and *toshiyori* appeared. They seated themselves in a row facing Tadatoki and addressed him as follows: "Your conduct is not befitting, and you ought to

be more prudent." After making this announcement the officers and deputies under the direct command of the domainal elders moved toward Tadatoki and restrained him, took both his long and short swords, and then imprisoned him. In those days, such an action was generally referred to as "forced confinement" (*oshikome*). In the aftermath, Tadatoki retired as lord, claiming ill-health. A family relative of the Mizuno, Mizuno Tadatō, who was the second son of Mizuno Morimitsu, became Tadatoki's adopted son. And, with Tadatō succeeding to the post of *daimyō*, the domain's problems were finally solved.

3. *The Case of the Andō House of Kanō Domain in 1755:*

At the height of the early-modern period, around the year 1750, Andō Nobutada (1717-1770), the *daimyō* of Kanō domain (65,000 koku, in Mino, modern Gifu Prefecture), had given himself up to a life of extreme indulgence, surrendering himself to liquor and debauchery. Because the *daimyō* had lost all interest in the affairs of his domain, his officials lost discipline and the administration of the domain became a mess.

The actions of the rural magistrates (*kōri bugyō*), who were in charge of the execution of the agricultural policies of the domain, were especially problematic. They showed themselves to be so exclusively interested in raising the yearly taxes and in nothing else, that a series of peasant protests and uprisings erupted in the domain. The situation became so precarious that the rural magistrates themselves no longer dared to supervise the peasants and in the end fled the domain.

The domainal elders and other high-ranking retainers came to the realization that it was no longer possible to ignore the situation. At a meeting they decided to press for the removal of the *daimyō* by *oshikome*, and they confined Nobutada in the personal quarters in his mansion. We are fortunate that in this case one of Nobutada's retainers, named Miharada Zeizaemon, recorded in minute detail the different attitudes the ranking retainers of the domain took towards the incident. His writings allow us to understand what *oshikome* really meant. These records also tell us that the ranking retainers expressed a range of opinions about the removal of their *daimyō* from office and that they debated these points among themselves.

Let us first examine the attitudes of the domainal elders and highest-ranking retainers toward the proposed *oshikome*. They came to the conclusion that in spite of the fact that the *daimyō* played an indispensable role in the domain, his continued neglect of the affairs of the domain imperiled its very existence, and that, therefore, *oshikome* was the only option. They were also confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, they observed that Nobutada, now that he was confined in his mansion,

demonstrated regret of his misdeeds. Some thought, therefore, that he should be allowed to resume the office of *daimyō*. On the other hand, some were apprehensive that Nobutada, if he were to resume his office, would tell other *daimyō* about his situation, and that he would make a point of revenging himself for the *oshikome* on the domainal elders and his chief retainers. Even more frightening was the possibility that if at that time fighting broke out in the domain, the turmoil could lead to the downfall of the Andō family. For those reasons, they argued that the ideal solution was that Nobutada should remain in retirement and that his son be designated as his successor in the office of *daimyō*.

The retainers closest to Nobutada granted that the removal of the *daimyō* of the domain through *oshikome* was a difficult move to endorse, but they agreed that the situation had left no alternative. On the other hand, now that Nobutada showed significant remorse, they concluded that he ought to be restored to the position of *daimyō*. The retainers who took this position threatened that if their demand was not met, they would also want to be placed under house arrest, just like Nobutada. They pledged to take action and rescue Nobutada themselves, if the domainal elders did not agree to their demand, or die in the attempt.

Finally, there was the opinion of the ordinary retainers of the domain. To their minds, there was no one in warrior society who had a more exalted position than the *daimyō*. They considered it as hardly an option to force Nobutada to step down from office; moreover, he had quickly shown sufficient remorse for his actions. Therefore, Nobutada should not be scorned as a villain, and as retainers they could not permit him to be simply cast aside. Consequently, the ordinary retainers demanded that Nobutada, while he was still under house arrest, would be allowed to swear an oath to the effect that he would improve his behaviour. They implored the domainal elders to allow him to resume his office. If, however, upon resuming office, Nobutada would renege his pledge or initiated reprisals against the domainal elders, there would be no other choice but to force Nobutada into retirement again.

These three views represent the range of opinions entertained by the various groups of retainers of the Andō house of Kanō domain regarding the forced retirement of their *daimyō*. One fact that is particularly astonishing in these accounts is that, at first sight, no one among the general retainers, the *daimyō*'s close aids, or even the domainal elders criticized the act of removing the *daimyō* through *oshikome* as in itself an evil, misguided deed.

The point under debate, that the various factions did struggle over, was, whether the *daimyō*, who was not regarded as an evil or corrupt person, should be allowed to resume office. While expressing his personal loyalty to the *daimyō*, our chronicler

Miharada Zeizaemon wrote that he felt that the actions of the domainal elders were entirely appropriate. He further argued that Nobutada could resume his office of *daimyō* after he had sworn an oath to his retainers that he would improve his conduct. If after swearing this oath Nobutada engaged in improper conduct, or if he attempted to revenge himself on the domainal elders, all retainers would unite behind them and force Nobutada from office.

The case of Nobutada³ shows that when a *daimyō* was judged to be incompetent, the act of *oshikome* on the part of the retainers was not considered a malevolent plot to change the *daimyō*. Instead, it was widely viewed as the correct course of action in a difficult situation.

4. *The Case of the Matsudaira House of Uenoyama Domain in 1780*: Uenoyama domain (30,000 koku) in Dewa province (modern Yamagata Prefecture) belonged to the Matsudaira family. In 1761, Matsudaira Nobutsura (1746-1796) assumed the post of domainal lord. Nobutsura was an intelligent man, but also narrow-minded, fond of extravagance, and considered to be arrogant. Like many other domains, Uenoyama suffered from chronic financial difficulties and stood in urgent need of reforms.

In order to ameliorate the situation, Nobutsura together with his close advisors Ono Giemon and Nishina Tenzen enacted new laws that in effect raised the rate of yearly taxation. These laws went counter to established custom. In addition, the *daimyō* ordered land surveys to be held throughout the domain, which would give him accurate information regarding the actual area of cultivation, including the fields that the peasants had reclaimed over the last several decades. His aim was to increase the tax yield of the domain by bringing these lands under taxation, too. The domain, however, had not held land surveys for a long time, so the *daimyō*'s orders met with stubborn resistance on the part of the population. In addition, his household retainers submitted diverging opinions to Nobutsura concerning the question whether taxes should be raised forcibly or not. In the end, the new laws were deferred and the *daimyō*'s advisors Ono and Nishina resigned.

The circumstances of this case resemble the previous examples of Arima Norifusa of Kurume domain and Mizuno Tadatoki of Okazaki domain. The problems these three domains faced were similar in structure, and the events followed comparable patterns. Like Mizuno Tadatoki, Nobutsura showed a lack of interest in governing and devoted himself to enjoying the finer life. Money to pay for his pursuit of pleasure Nobutsura found by selling off the texts of Confucian learning and military strategy that had belonged to his ancestors, and by refusing to pay his retainers their rice stipends.

The intellectual core of the domain's administration, a group comprising the domainal elders and the *yōnin* (second in rank to the domainal elders in the administration, the *yōnin* assisted the elders and held authority over the administration of government), conferred together. After consulting with other *daimyō* of Matsudaira descent, who were related to Nobutsura, they decided to enact an *oshikome*. Nobutsura was placed under house arrest in the eleventh month of 1780.

Nakamura Shin'emon was one of the retainers who proposed the forced retirement of his lord. He ranked among the *monogashira*, holding the post of inspector (*metsuke*) in the police force. He was once Nobutsura's most trusted officials and his appointment to the post of inspector was due to the *daimyō*'s personal favour. Although a favourite of Nobutsura's, Shin'emon was not the pleasure-seeking sort of person his lord was. In his capacity as an officer, he wrote a series of petitions to his *daimyō* in which he criticized his behaviour and showed himself worried over the future of the Matsudaira house. Nobutsura, however, was not at all responsive to Shin'emon's sincere efforts at remonstrance. Shin'emon concluded that *oshikome* was the only remaining alternative, and he committed himself to this act after consulting with the domainal elders and the *yōnin*.

Shin'emon went to see his lord Nobutsura after the latter had been confined and put under house arrest. He apologized, but maintained that *oshikome* had been the only recourse. Nobutsura questioned him, reminded him that he owed his success to his favour, and rebuked him for his infidelity in participating in the plot. Later, Nobutsura occasionally summoned Nakamura to ask him questions about the circumstances surrounding his current predicament, all the while claiming to be deeply regretful and insisting that he would mend his past behaviour. Finally Nobutsura asked Shin'emon to arrange things in such a way that he could resume the post of *daimyō*. Shin'emon was vexed at the prospect of his *daimyō* resuming office, but on the other hand he could not bear the thought that Nobutsura's wish should be denied. The many conversations he had had with Nobutsura had convinced Nakamura that he should make an attempt to have his lord returned to office.

Nakamura consulted with the domainal elders and *yōnin* who had participated in the *oshikome* plan. He lobbied with those who expressed disapproval of Nobutsura's return to office. He also explained the situation to the *daimyō* who were related to the Matsudaira house, and he sought their cooperation in peacefully returning Nobutsura to office. Eventually, all those who had been involved in the case approved. Approximately one year after the *oshikome* had been enacted, in the eleventh month of 1781, Nobutsura was released from house-arrest and was allowed to resume his post as *daimyō*.

For a short while after he had succeeded in resuming his position of *daimyō*, Nobutsura concentrated on governing and ignored "pleasant distractions." He even appeared to attach great importance to efforts to rectify the administration of his domain in accordance with the advice of his retainers. Yet, around the seventh month of 1782, Nobutsura returned to his "arrogant" (*kachiki*) ways, thereby alienating his retainers.

Nobutsura gradually began to fill the offices of the domain with men who agreed with his views, and he awaited an opportunity to re-enact his earlier reforms. Through these actions, Nobutsura opposed himself to the domainal officials who had previously removed him from office; he even sought to purge them all from office. *Daimyō* related to Nobutsura became embroiled in efforts to oppose his retaliatory purge. In the event, the internal squabbles of the Matsudaira of Uenoyama domain continued for decades.

Characteristics of oshikome

The preceding cases of *oshikome* were typical of the warrior society of the early-modern period; they ought to be regarded as instances of a widespread custom. In the following section I will make a few generalizations about the problem of removing a *daimyō* from office through *oshikome*.

Steps in enacting *oshikome*:

1. *Joint Agreement is reached by the Domainal Elders and Chief Retainers.* Among the vassals, it were the domainal elders and chief retainers who took the initiative in proposing the removal of the *daimyō*, and the act was undertaken with their unanimous consent. As I have illustrated in the first part of this article, the political order of the *daimyō* household was based on a military status structure that gave enormous political power in the organization to the elder retainers and high-level vassals. From this perspective, to force the retirement of a *daimyō* was considered a legitimate administrative response on the part of the domainal elders, that formed part of the responsibilities of their office. The official authority of the domainal elders included the right and the duty to remonstrate with their *daimyō* and to criticize his improper conduct. Forcing the *daimyō* to leave office was thought of as a further extension of the act of remonstrance, and was to be used in extreme cases, when a *daimyō* consistently ignored his subordinates' petitions. Forcing the *daimyō* to retire can be called an act of remonstrance backed-up with physical force. For that reason, forcing a *daimyō* to retire was perceived to be an act that was within the competence of

the domainal elders.

2. *Forcing the daimyō to Retire.* Although the process of forcing a *daimyō* to retire was a serious matter, it also utilized drama comparable to that of a *kabuki* play. When the *daimyō* appeared in the main room of the house, the domainal elders and chief retainers would sit in rows directly in front of him and pronounce the set expression: "Your behaviour is not appropriate, and you ought to behave with prudence." With those words, they proclaimed the *daimyō*'s forced retirement. Then, the domainal elders would direct the officers (*metsuke* and *monogashira*) to remove the *daimyō*'s long and short sword and restrain him. He was either confined to his quarters or a room was prepared to hold him.

The theatrical aspects of the act of *oshikome* conveyed several important messages related to the meaning of a *daimyō*'s forced retirement. The act took place in the main room of the *daimyō*'s residence, with the elder retainers sitting in lines directly in front of him. This gave an added meaning to the act of proclaiming the removal of the *daimyō*, because it told people in- and outside the domain that the removal of the *daimyō* was not simply a plot or an act of political assassination inspired by the self-interest of the elder retainers, but an open, legitimate, and public political decision of the domain. Equally theatrical was the fact that the domainal elders were seated in a row *in front of* the *daimyō*. This arrangement expressed that their actions constituted a form of remonstrance. In other words, the act of *oshikome* was equivalent to a remonstrance, not to an insurrection. The performance characterized *oshikome* as an act that it was the duty of the domainal elders to perform; a remonstrance supported by the use of physical force suited to cases in which remonstrance itself had become useless.

3. *Return to Office.* In the earliest cases in which *daimyō* were forced to resign through *oshikome*, the *daimyō* was made to retire from office immediately. Gradually, however, the practice changed into a form of punishment, that was directed toward reforming the *daimyō* and that acknowledged the possibility that the *daimyō* would be released from his imprisonment and be allowed to return to his post. The repeal of *oshikome* was called *saishukkin*, "the return of the lord to his public duties as *daimyō*." This occurred when a *daimyō* who had been forced out of office reformed his behaviour, and it was accompanied by the condition that the *daimyō* made a pledge, for example by submitting a written oath to the retainers.

When he returned to office, the *daimyō* might take revenge on the retainers who had planned the *oshikome*, as happened in the case of the Matsudaira house of Uenoyama domain. Since *daimyō* usually were allowed to return to office, the suggestion is that there were few instances of *daimyō* exacting revenge. This indicates

that the idea was widely shared, perhaps even by the *daimyō* themselves, that the forced retirement of a *daimyō* was an appropriate punishment for misconduct, and that such an act was within the bounds of routine practice, and not an act of rebellion stemming from the malevolent intentions of the individual domainal elders.

However, the circumstances of individual cases show that the danger of the *daimyō* seeking revenge after he returned to office was always present, and that the domainal elders as a group were ultimately concerned with trying to prevent that. Miharada Zeizaemon expressed this view in the case of the Andō family of Kanō domain, cited above.

4. *Retirement and Family Succession.* *Oshikome* meant that the *daimyō* was confined to a room in his mansion, and that he was examined on the degree of his remorse, in view of the possibility that he might be allowed to resume office. If it was decided that the *daimyō* had difficulty atoning for his conduct, steps were taken to make him retire from office for good.

In this case, one of the *daimyō*'s legitimate sons would be appointed as the new *daimyō* and head of the domain. When this occurred, the former *daimyō*, who had been forced into retirement, was released from his imprisonment. Just as in the case when a *daimyō* resumed office, steps were taken to prevent the former *daimyō* from seeking revenge. The retainers all knew that they had to be on guard.

The Significance of oshikome

The act of removing a *daimyō* from office was the way for retainers, chiefly the domainal elders and highest level vassals, to prevent a *daimyō* from becoming a poor leader or a tyrant. A certain time was allowed to give the *daimyō* the opportunity to resume office, but if he were judged to be recalcitrant he was forced to retire. A new *daimyō* was chosen from among the former *daimyō*'s legitimate sons.

The act of *oshikome* took on many different forms, but the phenomenon as such occupied a prominent position in early-modern society. The breadth of its use and its endurance over time indicate that it was considered a customary practice. Not one of the opinions the vassals of the Andō house proffered concerning the decision of the domainal elders forcibly to remove from office their profligate *daimyō*, criticized the elders' decision as an act of rebellion. From the ordinary vassal to the closest advisors of the *daimyō*, all were agreed on that.

The single point of disagreement among the vassals was, whether it was appropriate or not, to force the *daimyō* into retirement when he was not viewed as an immoral tyrant. In short, *oshikome* was viewed as one of a repertoire of possible actions

that pertained to the high office of domainal elders. Among the people of early-modern society, including the *daimyō* themselves, *oshikome* was widely regarded as a course of conduct that could properly be pursued under the appropriate conditions.

NOTES

1. See Kasaya Kazuhiko, *Samurai no Shisō*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997; *The Origin and Development of the Japanese-style Organizaton*, Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2000.
2. Kasaya Kazuhiko, *Shukun 'oshikome' no kōzō; Kinsei daimyō to kashindan*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989.
3. The reader who is interested in the complex details of this case are referred to Kasaya, *Oshikome no kōzō*.