

# *Yasegaman no setsu*: On Fighting to the Bitter End

Fukuzawa Yukichi  
(Translation and Notes by M. William Steele)

Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote *Yasegaman no setsu*, here translated as “On Fighting to the Bitter End,” in 1891. The essay reflected the growing cultural and political conservatism of the late 1880s and Fukuzawa’s own highly charged nationalist sentiments.<sup>1)</sup> It criticized the actions of bakufu retainers such as Katsu Kaishū and Enomoto Takeaki who, according to Fukuzawa, failed to fight to the bitter end at the time of the Meiji Restoration. Katsu played an important role in the so-called bloodless surrender of Edo Castle. His negotiations with Saigō Takamori in the spring of 1868 is one of the most famous episodes in modern Japanese history.<sup>2)</sup> Enomoto did resist imperial takeover; he fled with the Tokugawa Navy to Hakodate and attempted to set up a republic.<sup>3)</sup> Under fire, however, Enomoto surrendered and after brief imprisonment, entered the Meiji government. In 1891, when Fukuzawa wrote his essay, Enomoto was Minister of Education under the Yamagata Cabinet. Katsu had similarly risen in service to the new government. He was Minister of the Navy in the 1870s and later member of the Genro-in. Both Katsu and Enomoto had been awarded titles of nobility in recognition of their meritorious service to the Meiji state.

Fukuzawa and Katsu were rivals.<sup>4)</sup> In the 1890s they were both sage-like figures, eager to reflect on the past, but with different visions of how that past related to Japan’s present and future. A comparison of Fukuzawa’s autobiography and Katsu’s semi-autobiographical *Hikawa seiwa*, both composed in the late 1890s, would be instructive.<sup>5)</sup> Katsu was born in 1823 and Fukuzawa in 1835. They both owed their advancement to Dutch Studies through which they gained specialized knowledge of the outside world. In 1860 their lives came together on board the *Kanrin Maru*. Katsu was its captain and Fukuzawa traveled as attendant and translator for Kimura Kaishū, the chief bakufu official on board. In the 1860s they held sharply opposing solutions to the problems confronting the Tokugawa regime. Fukuzawa, in 1866, argued on behalf of a “Taikun Monarchy.”<sup>6)</sup> Katsu was opposed to any notion of absolutism; inspired by demands for a more “public” political space, he advocated the establishment of a parliamentary system to guarantee a more equal sharing of power between the bakufu, the court, and the various domains.<sup>7)</sup> In 1868 Katsu negotiated the surrender of Edo Castle to the troops of the new imperial regime. At that time Fukuzawa’s sympathies were with the old government. He feared that an imperial restoration, given its commitment of loyalism and anti-foreignism, would undo the bakufu’s attempts at Westernization. Later in the Meiji period, Fukuzawa argued on behalf of “leaving Asia and joining the West.” Katsu’s position was to encourage a union of Asian countries to counter possible Western imperialism.<sup>8)</sup> Katsu strongly objected to the outbreak of hostilities with China in 1894.

He expressed his doubts about Japan's decision to follow the lead of Western imperialism. If attacking one's neighbors was the mark of a "civilized" country, Katsu wanted nothing to do with it.<sup>9)</sup> Fukuzawa, on the other hand, was overjoyed at the news of Japan's victory. "The Sino-Japanese war is the victory of a united government and people. There are no words that can express my pleasure and thankfulness: to experience such an event is what life is for."<sup>10)</sup>

Fukuzawa criticized Katsu for his failure to fight to the bitter end. The peaceful surrender of Edo Castle to the forces of the new government was nothing but an expedient; in the long run his failure to fight had harmed unique Japan's martial spirit. Fukuzawa's essay relates directly to his concerns about Japanese foreign policy in the 1880s and early 1890s. Peaceful negotiations were no substitute for military readiness; Japanese citizens had to be prepared to sacrifice their lives in defense of their country. Katsu thought otherwise. He lamented the loss of life and thought that foreign wars in Asia would only benefit the Western powers. Cooperation, not contest, was necessary between the Asian states. As such, differing interpretations of the surrender of Edo Castle relate to a broader dispute over the nature of Japanese culture and its relations with the outside world. Fukuzawa, however, had the last word; *On Fighting to the Bitter End* was published shortly after Fukuzawa's death in 1901. Katsu had already passed away in 1899. The debate between emotion and reason has, of course, continued up to the present day; sadly, arguments to fight to the bitter end still seem to have the upper hand over voices of restraint.

The translation is based on the text of *Yasegaman no setsu* found in *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū* (vol 6) and the independent *bunko* edition of the text edited by Koizumi Takeshi. I have also benefited from the text and notes found in the *Nihon no meicho* version of *Yasegaman no setsu*, edited by Nagai Michio.<sup>11)</sup> I have not attempted to reproduce Fukuzawa's literary style nor have I always followed his grammar. In many cases I have broken long sentences into a series of shorter sentences and I have converted double negatives into positive statements. The translation remains rough, but I hope that it will contribute to an understanding of the continuing controversy over the peaceful surrender of Edo Castle and of the advocacy of peaceful solutions to domestic and foreign disputes. And if there be any doubt, my sympathies are with Katsu.

## *Yasegaman no setsu: On Fighting to the Bitter End*

Fukuzawa Yukichi

To found a nation derives from private rather than public sensibilities. The many millions of people who live on the face of this earth, although separated by mountains, seas, and other natural borders, have united themselves in regional groups. People so divided by nature have their own regional food and costume so determined by available natural resources; in turn a variety of lifestyles have been fixed. Each region has its own particular wants and excesses, making it necessary for people to trade with each other. In other words, due to the blessings of nature, people farm for food, manufacture for use, and trade for convenience. Beyond this people need have no other desires. Why then have people chosen to divide themselves into man-made national units and seek to maintain artificial boundaries between the various countries? Have not the boundaries between the various countries been the cause of war? Have not people, seeking only their own advantage, become impervious to the sufferings of their neighbors? Have not national leaders as masters of the people, assuming exalted titles such as king or lord, required the masses to offer up their lives and property? Has not each country been further divided into numerous regional units, each with its own governor demanding the obedience of the local people? And is not each, with different interests at stake, in constant competition with other regional units?

All of these affairs derive from the private emotions of human beings and not from any natural or public way. Nonetheless, if we examine phenomena taking place from the time of creation until the present day, peoples everywhere have divided themselves into groups, each group having its own common language and script, its own common history and legends, and through marriage and friendship they have become intimate with each other; in drink, food and clothing they are all alike. Thus, they naturally stay together through thick and thin and do not scatter.

To found a state or establish a government involves, from its inception, the increasing political commitment of its people; that they distinguish between their country and others, and to no other state or government do they give the slightest commitment. Moreover, in all areas people should place priority in the interests and glory of their own country to the exclusion of all else. This exclusive devotion to country will grow and grow; it is to be called loyalty and patriotism (*chūkun aikoku*) and it is no wonder that such sentiments be termed the highest virtue of a people.

Therefore, although the notion of loyalty and patriotism, philosophically speaking, is, was and continues to be a purely human and private emotion, it has become one of the most praiseworthy virtues in our world today. In other words, philosophically private emotions are the basis of the public way necessary for nation building. Moreover, public recognition of this public way, this public virtue, not only is something that permeates the entire country. A nation may be composed of several regional subdivisions, necessarily governed by their own particular interests; nonetheless, there must be recognition of a public way that will champion the domestic “us” in opposition to the foreign “them.”

For example, in confronting the various countries of the West, Japan and China and Korea could join together, but it is only natural that each of these countries has their own different interests. This situation can also be seen in Japan’s feudal past. While

the government of the shogun, the bakufu, served as political center, the country was divided into 300 domains. Each domain gave priority to its own individual interests with no thought whatsoever for other domains. It was as if competition existed between the domains and each thought only of their own profit, even if it caused loss to others.

During times of peace, it is relatively easy to create a country and establish a government in accordance with the public way. However, in times of crisis, the very survival of the country may be at stake. In such a situation, the fear of failure and national destruction is all too obvious. Nonetheless, it is the nature of people not to give up. Always depending on the faintest glimmer of hope, people will exert themselves to the utmost if only to die fighting. There are many well-known episodes concerning the role played by human emotions. One extreme example is the reaction of people when their parents are struck with a terrible sickness. They will hope for their recovery and will not stop trying to find a cure until the actual moment of death. Philosophically or rationally speaking, it is common for sick people to die and wise for people to administer morphine to people suffering from incurable diseases, thus giving them an easy death rather than prolonging their sufferings. However, when the sick person is a parent, the children, controlled more by emotion than by reason, will strive to extend their lives, even for one day, holding on to the slightest of hopes.

How then should people react to the imminent collapse of their country, to a situation in which people know that there is no chance of victory over enemies at the door? Should people overcome many hardships and exert themselves until their powers are exhausted, but at the point of defeat, negotiate peace and surrender? Or should they accept death as the public way citizens have of fulfilling the duty to serve their country? In other words, commonly put, should they adopt a "fight to the bitter end" (*yasegaman*) policy and die fighting? In confrontations between the strong and the weak, the person in the weak position is compelled to fight to the bitter end, never giving up. Not only in times of war should one fight to the finish; international relations during ordinary times also demand this spirit of dogged endurance (*yasegaman*). Small European countries such as Holland and Belgium should find it convenient to amalgamate with one of their larger neighbors in order to prevent interference in their small government by France or Germany. However, determined to preserve their own independence, people in these small countries will fight to the bitter end and continue to work with pride for the glory of their homeland.

In Japan's feudal past, huge daimyo lords with domains over one million *koku* existed alongside tiny domains of only ten thousand, yet as daimyo they were equals. During this time the military class dominated the government of the nation and for several hundred years the imperial court was nearly powerless. Some did urge, as a temporal means, a sharing of power (*kōbu gattai*) between the imperial court and the military government. Moreover, the court in face of nearly insurmountable difficulties, sought to preserve its standing and keep alive the notion of imperial loyalism. Such, for example, were the sentiments of the court noble, Chief Councilor Nakayama Norichika, who, when called to Edo for reprimand [in 1791], spoke of the shogun as the "Eastern Deputy." Considering the situation at that time, the imperial court could not but practice dogged endurance.

When speaking about the beautiful traditions of the warrior class of old, there is none

than can surpass the men of Mikawa. There are many stories about these warriors (*bushi*), regarding their learning, their martial skill, their wisdom, and their bravery. While each of them had their own particular strengths, during the period of the warring states, as a group, they were the bannermen of the Tokugawa family. They always kept their loyalties clear and without a second thought, whether right or wrong, they knew no other lord but that of the Tokugawa. No matter how great their misfortune or suffering, they never faltered; for the sake for the Tokugawa family and its lord, they always pressed forward regardless of defeat or death. Such determination and bravery distinguished all of the men of Mikawa and was the tradition of the Tokugawa family. They enabled the founder of the Tokugawa family, Tokugawa Ieyasu, though small in stature, to assume leadership over all warrior groupings and in the end take over control of the entire country. The fortunes of the Tokugawa family can well be said to be a result of their determination to fight to the bitter end (*yasegaman*).

The notion to fight to the finish originally derives from human private emotions; to attempt an explanation with cold logic would be a childish endeavor bound to fail. Nevertheless, it is this very idea of dogged endurance that fixes a country's goals and maintains its independence. This idea served to cultivate the warrior spirit during Japan's feudal period as the various domains competed with each other. But even though the feudal age is over and the age of the Great Japanese Empire is upon us, we must still value the idea of fighting to the finish. Looking broadly at the world today, a spirit of dogged endurance is necessary to maintain Japan's independence from other civilized countries. Affairs in human society, as they exist today, may indeed change on the surface, but even one hundred thousand years from now people will continue to value the spirit of fighting to the bitter end as the basic foundation of their country. This spirit can only grow greater and greater and it is important that we assist it in its development.

In this way, endurance contributes to the high moral fiber of a country. For example, during the deliberations in the court of the Southern Song [on being attacked by the Mongols in the thirteenth century], a division into two groups emerged, one pro-war and the other in favor of capitulation and peace. Nearly all of the pro-war faction withdrew or committed suicide. Opinion in later ages has found the peace-faction at fault for its unrighteous behavior, and there is no one who does not sympathize with the undying devotion of the pro-war faction. In fact, the weak Song court had fallen on hard times and there is no doubt that it would suffer defeat no matter how hard it tried. Indeed, it would have been to their advantage to submit to humiliation and carry out rites, even for one day, for the Zhao family [of the Song Dynasty]. Governors in later times placed value on statesmanship and sought to cultivate martial spirit; necessarily, they rejected the temporizing policy of the peace faction and adopted the policy of fighting to the bitter end proposed by the pro-war faction. This is why even up to the present day these two positions are known, one as good and the other bad.

However, I regret to note that unfortunately in Japan, at the time of the restoration of imperial rule some twenty years ago, the all-important virtue of fighting to the bitter end suffered a great blow. In the last days of the rule of the Tokugawa family, one group of the retainers early on realized the need for prudence and determined not to resist the enemy. Earnestly they argued on behalf of peace, and offered to dissolve the

government of the Tokugawa family by themselves. Although their actions proved a temporary benefit for the Japanese economy, in fact they were a major disservice to the country. The Japanese warrior spirit, which had evolved over several hundred thousand years, was thereby severely shaken. Here it must be said that a gain resulted in a loss. Even though the imperial court had a just cause, in fact the restoration was the result of actions taken by two or three strong domains that were enemies of the Tokugawa family. At that time, one group of Tokugawa retainers, filled with the old spirit of the men of Mikawa, returned to Edo after defeat at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. They sent out directives to various pro-bakufu domains and plotted their revenge. They would fight and fight again and if unsuccessful retreat to defend Edo Castle. If even for one day they would attempt to extend the fortunes of the Tokugawa family and if, fighting to the bitter end they failed, they would fall fighting with the castle as their deathbed.

Such devotion is no different from praying for even one more day of a long life for one's father or mother. Indeed it is a perfect example of the idea of fighting to the bitter end. Nonetheless, peace advocate Katsu Awa and his followers said that "the bakufu should not resort to military force," and that "no one should oppose the swords of Satsuma and Chōshū," or that "social stability should not be upset," or "the life of our lord may be in danger." Loudly he proclaimed: "Fighting within the country is no good as foreign policy." He went in all directions advocating such messages, even placing his own life in danger. He did not hesitate to argue on behalf of peace. In the end, all taking place without incident, the castle was surrendered and the Tokugawa retainers removed to a new domain of 700,000 *koku*.

This was indeed a puzzling turn of events. Even foreigners at the time said: "In general everything that has life will attempt to resist by any means if that life is threatened. Even squirming insects when about to be crushed by a heavy hammer, will gird themselves and assume a position of defiance. How is it that the 270-year-old powerful government of the bakufu, when confronted by the forces of two or three strong domains, showed no signs of resistance, and instead only begged for peace? Surely, throughout the world in ancient and modern times there nothing that can compare with this." Secretly we must fear that they were laughing at Japan. However, according to Katsu and his followers, a civil war would cause unprecedented damage and needless waste of money and life. If there was no calculated hope for victory then the government should sue for peace quickly and thereby immediately seek to restore order. At that time people were left with no other choice but to trust his calculations. If you listened to what he said, the safety of the shogun and the interests of diplomacy were at stake. Inside the workings of his heart, however, one can find no value placed on "fighting to the bitter end" (*yasegaman*) as a philosophy to guide human and national affairs. Instead, what one finds is the way of thinking which since ancient times has guided upper class society in Japan, namely deceit based on vagueness and ambivalence. There can be no refuting this claim.

Even though a coward may be suddenly stirred to action, or young hearts, confronted with danger, can be excited, a man of discernment and intelligence may well feel the need to be prudent. Therefore at that time, I knew as well as Katsu that the weakened bakufu had no chance of victory. Nonetheless, I also knew that, in order to maintain

Japan's martial spirit, the time was not right to make calculations over questions of victory or defeat. The very survival of the nation was at stake. One may strive for victory and be defeated, but there are few examples of people who strive for defeat and gain a victory. Katsu, however, had already adopted a defeatist position, and without engaging the enemy gave orders for the ruling authority of the Tokugawa family to dissolve itself. He earnestly sued for peace, saying that people would be killed in military action, and property needlessly destroyed. While he sought to soften the loss of life and wealth, he cannot escape blame from harming Japan's warrior spirit of dogged endurance so vital to the make-up of the country.

Loss of life and property are temporary misfortunes, but to maintain the fighting spirit is an eternal necessity. It is not easy to evaluate the actions of one who would seek to destroy this dictum and pursue a different course. Some may say, for example, that "the struggle surrounding the restoration of imperial rule was an internal affair; it was, so to speak, simply a fight among brothers and friends. At that time, even though eastern and western domains stood in opposition to each other, in fact the enemy was not really an enemy. Therefore, for the bakufu not to push desperation to an extreme and dismember itself was itself a masterful display of accommodation to the force of the times (*jisei*)." Clever as this explanation may seem, it is nothing but an excuse.

Even though the restoration drama was an internal matter and fought between friends, when hostilities are underway, an enemy is an enemy. Indeed, it may well be reckless and the cause of national collapse to treat these enemies as enemies. However, if one leads men by championing the cause of peace and stability, what will happen once Japan is confronted by a foreign threat? Will these men be able to display their fighting spirit and endure the most extreme sufferings? If we fail to practice dogged endurance in domestic affairs, we will likewise be unable to practice it when confronted by foreign enemies.

While distasteful to write about, how can we explain to future generations if by some chance the Japanese people were confronted by foreign enemies, and if in their calculation of the direction of historical change, they skillfully determined the need to give up before fighting? Now, is not the story of the dissolution of the bakufu, although a domestic matter, any different from this? Certainly this has become a shameful episode in our history. But, of course, Katsu is a hero. At that time he had to overcome criticism from within the bakufu and quiet the indignation of the Tokugawa retainers. Offering himself as a sacrifice, he dissolved the Tokugawa government and paved the way for the success of the imperial restoration. Due to his great efforts many lives were saved and property kept safe.

I am not one to look lightly upon Katsu's achievements. However there is one area that concerns me. At the time of the restoration, by standing in alliance with warriors from enemy domains, Katsu was able to put on airs and advance to a position of wealth and honor. Arguing from the point of view of propriety (*taigi meibun*) in society, all Japanese people are subjects of the imperial court and there should be no distinction among them, naming some as enemies and others as friends. In fact, however, the situation at that time was unique. In the last years of the Tokugawa period warriors from the strong domains raised troops against the central government. They said they were serving the court by seeking to reform the bakufu and restore the imperial court.

As rationale for their actions, they called on the people to “restore imperial rule.” They tried to elevate the court and keep it apart from the fray of battle. Everyone should be alike as beneficiaries of imperial grace. In the world of the commoners, however, when fight began it was inevitable to make distinctions between friend and foe. Therefore in this text I have referred to “enemy” domains, and there may be some who object to this usage. However, knowing the real situation at the time, it is unavoidable to use the word enemy.

According to Eastern and Western classics and examples from Chinese and Japanese history, it should not be easy for a person like Katsu to live out his life in peace. For example, Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty executed Minister Ding; Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty expelled the surviving retainers of the Ming Dynasty. In Japan, Oda Nobunaga punished Oyama Yoshikuni, the unfaithful servant of Takeda Katsuyori, who was about to betray his master. Toyotomi Hideyoshi was angered by the actions of Kuwada Hikoemon, the wicked retainer of Oda Nobutaka who had betrayed his master. Hideyoshi condemned his disloyalty and unrighteous behavior and had him pulled limb from limb in front of Nobutaka’s grave. Such examples are too numerous to be listed in full.

In turbulent times enemies and allies confront each other. On one side a tactician often emerges who advocates peace. Even though he may not be duplicitous, his actions benefit the other side. This becomes a good opportunity to secretly give that person kind treatment. After hostilities have ceased, the leader of the victorious side should emphasize the need for social order and make firm the foundation of the new government, setting up plans that will last for one hundred years. In order to establish and maintain “a just path” (*kōdō*) for the new nation, all private emotions should be abandoned. The person who was rewarded for his rare deed will not only be charged with disloyalty and shunned from society, but it may be necessary at times to have him executed.

Although this may seem cruel, leaders were forced to carry out this sort of policy, without reservation, as the way to govern the country. In other words, this sort of policy was usual among Oriental despotic states. If someone like Katsu had lived in these despotic times, he would have met a similar fate. The new government’s leaders would have made him into an example in order to admonish their subjects.

Fortunately, the Meiji government is not a despotic government; authority is in the hands of those who succeeded in carrying out the restoration. Their policy has been to follow the example of the civilized countries of the world. In all affairs the government is generous; not only have the former enemies not been sent into exile, but a temporary expedient opportunity has been transformed into a long-term good. Departing from the customs of the past, many retainers of the former bakufu have emerged as men of distinction in the new government and are enjoying their days. This is something unprecedented since ancient times.

While I feel truly sad for Katsu as a private individual, I am not without reason in writing this down. As stated above, Katsu’s efforts resulted in the smooth dismantling of the old regime, thereby avoiding much killing and loss of property. The success of his endeavor is indeed impressive. However, if we look at the matter from a different angle, is it not strange that the Tokugawa side, realizing that it had no chance of victory,



offered to submit even before hostilities broke out between the two sides that stood in confrontation with each other? On the surface, Katsu may have sought to excuse himself by offering to cooperate with the imperial army. In fact, however, the Tokugawa side simply seems not to have had the courage to fight two or three large domains. It surrendered without a decisive battle. Not only did these actions betray the spirit of the men of Mikawa, but also struck a blow against the grand notion of fighting to the finish (*yasegaman*) that has been a mainstay of the Japanese people. Katsu therefore cannot escape the crime of having weakened the samurai spirit that is the foundation of our country.

Although Katsu's endeavors may well have temporarily avoided military hostilities, did he not inflict eternal harm on the Japanese samurai spirit? Judgement will surely wait Katsu in the future. Fortunately, in accordance with civilized trends at present, he has been able to escape with his life in the period after the restoration. Nonetheless, he himself must realize his guilt in having injured the great and important fighting spirit of upper-class warriors so important to the make-up of our country.

In the period before and after the Restoration, Katsu's conduct served as a temporary expedient. His argument for peace was intended to bring things smoothly to a conclusion. He feared the outbreak of hostilities and sought to rescue the people from calamity. But the spirit of dogged endurance is a primary necessity for the establishment of the country. In the future how can we be certain to avoid a crisis brought on by threats from foreign countries? In such a crisis situation it will be no good to attempt to avoid hostilities. For those who hope, in the future, to make their country flourish and establish good relations with foreign countries, I should never wish them to study the events of our restoration and adopt its expediencies. However, if Katsu were to, as is commonly said, "disqualify himself from the bushi class," tell his descendents never to follow his example, firmly reject any special favors from the government, abandon all titles, give up his stipends, remove himself from public view and live as a recluse – if he were to do all this, then people would, for the first time, understand the sincerity of his actions, his innocence would be restored, and people will know his true nature of his achievement in the narrative of the collapse of the old government. At the same time, such actions would contribute, at least to some small degree, to the betterment of society.

In other words, as I see it, if Katsu fails to repent now and continues to flout himself as a distinguished national figure, I not only feel he is in the wrong for slighting the spirit of the men of Mikawa, but more broadly I am worried over the harm he may have caused to Japan's attempt to establish itself in the world today. I do not criticize him for private gain; I am, however, concerned about the fate of Japan's martial spirit and its public morality.

Enomoto Takeaki is another bakufu retainer active at the same time as Katsu Kaishū. Let me add a few words about his case. During the last years of the Tokugawa bakufu, he and Katsu held different views. Enomoto wanted above all else to maintain the Tokugawa government and to this end he exerted his efforts to the fullest. He fled Edo for Hakodate taking with him several ships belonging to the Tokugawa navy. Although he resisted the armies from Western Japan and fought bravely, in the end he was forced to surrender. At that time, the Tokugawa forces had been defeated at Fushimi and had

no intention of fighting further. Their spirits were broken and they earnestly appealed for mercy. Even though it was clear that there was no chance for victory, Enomoto's act of resistance was in line with the warrior ethos that demanded a fight to the finish (*yasegaman*). While he secretly may have expected his revolt to end in defeat, he dared to fight for the sake of bushido, the way of the warrior. Many Tokugawa retainers and men from pro-bakufu groups in other domains joined his cause. Under his leadership, they followed his orders to advance or retreat. Whether during naval battles in the northern seas or at the siege of Hakodate, many of these men fought bravely to their death. Their story exemplifies the tradition of the Yamato spirit (*Yamato damashii*); it would seem that Katsu and Enomoto were not living in the same age.

However, Enomoto's decamped warriors were never at an advantage and enemy forces closed in upon them. In a state of desperation, first their commander and then other groups, realized there was no escape, changed their minds and surrendered to the enemy. It was their misfortune to be imprisoned and sent to Tokyo; for members of the warrior class, however, success or failure was their very fate and not something for which they should be blamed. The new government may well have disliked resistance, but it did not despise the resisters. It found them guilty, but pardoned them as fitting the generosity of a civilized government. Both Enomoto's revolt and the new government's treatment of him are illustrious stories of universal appeal. However, after release from prison, Enomoto entertained dreams of high rank and entered the new government as an official. This I cannot approve. Of course there have been, since ancient times, many examples of defeated men who came to serve their former enemies as an official. This is so especially in times of transition when members of the old government lose their means of support, and seek employment in the new government to sustain their livelihood. Such examples are quite common throughout the world in ancient times up to the present. Perhaps, since Enomoto's case is no different, he should be exempt from criticism.

But Enomoto's actions must be evaluated in the emotional context of the Japanese warrior class. Not only did Enomoto seek to enter the new government to earn a livelihood, but he displayed ambitions for high office. After successive promotions, he was appointed Special Ambassador and finally promoted to Minister of State. Certainly he is to be congratulated for his achievements, but looking back on his past, I cannot hold back my criticisms. At that time the desperate warriors, vying with the cold north wind, rallied to fight a bitter battle in a corner of Hokkaido. In the end they found surrender unavoidable. However, the decamped troops looked up to Enomoto as their leader; from the beginning they fought courageously, and for him they died in battle. Therefore, when Enomoto decided to surrender, some of his men may have agreed, but there may well have been those who thought differently. It is needless to say that these abandoned men were filled with feelings of discontent and disappointment. How much more so it must have been for those who had already died in battle. If the spirits of the dead exist in the world below, they must be crying out in great anger at this injustice.

From what I have heard, at the time of the siege of the Goryōkaku Fort at Hakodate, Commander Enomoto urged his followers to surrender. Hearing this, one group of men became angry. "From the outset we had no expectation to win this war. Rather,

in accordance with our training as military men, with our deaths we only seek to repay the 250-year debt (*on*) we have incurred. If the commander seeks to live, go and surrender. We will fall in battle in line with the tenants of bushido.” This they cried out and died fighting with deep resentment. Among them were fathers and sons who together fought to their deaths.

“The Waters of the River Wu were shallow and easy to cross, but a righteous spirit forbade him to turn to the east.” In the distant past wars were fought between the Han and the Chu. The Chu troops were at a disadvantage. The general of the Chu army, Xiang Yu, retreated to the banks of the Wu River. Some of his men crossed the river hoping to escape death and live to fight again, but Yu did not follow their example. Instead he led his 8,000 men to the west, and after sever bitter engagement, they were all killed in battle. The poem shows the emotions of the men who had retreated. When they returned to the east of the river and found the dead bodies of their fathers and brothers, they all committed suicide.

There are, of course, many differences in the social conditions between the Han and Chu of old and the Meiji period of today. It may be absurd to use the example of Xiang Yu of 3000 years ago in finding fault with Enomoto. But human emotions remain unchanged. Even though Enomoto achieved high office in the restoration government and rose in wealth and honor, still there must have been times in which he looked back on his actions in Hakodate. At that time, many of his followers died in battle or were severely injured. Ever since, family members left behind, their parents, brothers and sisters, have continued to mourn their deaths and are at a loss about what to do in the future. When Enomoto reflects on these things, so terrible and sad, his guts of steel cannot help but be torn to shreds. How can he sleep on rainy nights or in the autumn cold? When the lights go out and he is alone, the spirits of the dead and the living, in the form of innumerable devils, appear before his eyes.

Up to now no one has questioned Enomoto’s inner thoughts, especially in light of the decamped troops who were left behind. His actions have been praised and their deaths seen as an unavoidable loss. But insight into Enomoto’s state of mind can be found engraved on a stone monument located on the grounds of the Kiyomi Temple in Suruga. The monument was erected to commemorate the deaths of the decamped troops under Haruyama Benzō who died in action in the sea battle aboard the *Kanrin Maru* at Shimizu port. On the back side of the monument written in bold script under the name Enomoto Takeaki was the phrase in nine Chinese characters: “He who feeds on others should die for them.” Placing this in public view, one can imagine the general drift of what was in his heart. Enomoto was once a Tokugawa retainer and had received [eaten] a stipend [food] from the Tokugawa family. By misfortune he lost the opportunity to die for the Tokugawa himself, but knowing that others had died for the Tokugawa he harbored deep and bitter regrets. For a long time, wanting to do something, he finally had these words carved in stone and erected the monument.

As noted before, Enomoto praised the loyalty and bravery of his men, but at the same time, thinking about the past naturally made him feel uneasy. Therefore, if we try to see into his heart, sometimes we see him complacent with his wealth and honors and a life of luxury. But at other times, he must think back on the sad situation of the past and show signs of shame and humiliation. In constant alternations between joy

and sadness, grief and happiness he is forced to live out a life in which he cannot possibly be completely at ease or at peace. Here, therefore, is my humble suggestion. For the sake of those whose food he has eaten, death is not necessary, but I do think that Enomoto, taking human emotion into account, should always act humbly in a way far beyond that of ordinary people. Ancient customs teach us that someone like Enomoto should enter a monastery and pray for the sufferings of the dead. Nowadays, it is no longer suitable to enter a monastery and take the tonsure. Enomoto should nonetheless hide himself in a quiet place in society, live a simple life, and in all affairs be humble; he should be prepared for a life of detachment from the eyes and ears of society.

Enomoto led decamped troops in revolt at the time of the restoration; his defeat should mean his own political death. Even if his physical body did not die, he should not expect a rebirth of his political life. Rather he should be humble and reserved. On the one hand he should pray for the spirits of those dead men who followed him in war, and he should comfort the families of the departed for this feeling of misfortune and injustice. And, on the other hand, since he was the leader of a revolt and in charge of all things, he cannot escape the responsibility for either success or failure. If successful, he could bask in glory, but if defeated, he should make clear his willingness to bear any kind of trial. This is an important tradition of warrior society. I want Enomoto to be mindful of this, not simply for his own personal sake, but for the future of the warrior spirit in the coming 100 years of our country.

In the above essay I have not attempted to make a personal attack on Katsu and Enomoto. I have been lenient and have not used coarse language. Not only have I preserved the honor of these two gentlemen, I have, in fact, entirely recognized the wisdom, loyalty, and bravery of their achievements. However, in the course of life one may obtain wealth and honor without great achievements or one may have achievements, but be without wealth and honor. Both of these two gentlemen conform to this observation. Katsu, by advocating peace and bringing on the collapse of the bakufu, truly produced a skillful and wise achievement. However, the end of the bakufu also meant the end of the Tokugawa family. Through the collapse of the Tokugawa family he was, even though a former retainer, able to gain riches and honor. Perhaps he did not personally seek out wealth and honor, receiving them only by events beyond his control. Nonetheless, he was a retainer of the Tokugawa family and a recipient of the Mikawa warrior heritage, and therefore his achievement will lose its luster in the eyes of society.

Enomoto adopted a pro-war position and decamped and fought hard until forced to surrender; all during this time he did not turn his back on his duty as a bakufu retainer. Although his loyalty and bravery produced a beautiful achievement, after his surrender and pardon, he had aspirations for high office, and in the new government was able to gain riches and honor. But he felt no shame towards all of those men who followed him into revolt, from the troops who fought bravely and died or were injured to the drifters and impoverished men who also joined him. Likewise, this diminishes the value of his achievement. In general, the wealth and honor of both gentlemen was itself the undoing of their great achievements. But it is not yet too late to repent. Both gentlemen can seek to withdraw from the world and seek to make up for sins committed since the restoration. Thereby we can hope that they will be yet to obtain

recognition for their great achievements.

Any future judgement of a person's reputation, whether good or bad, depends on the powers of one's mental resolve. However, due to the weakness of the human heart, it may well be that my words are ignored. Unavoidable as this may be, let it be known that during the Meiji period there was one who wrote these words and so evaluated these two men. This itself may contribute toward the maintenance of the warrior spirit in the future. In this way my writing will not be labor lost.

### **Fukuzawa's Letter to Katsu and Enomoto**

Respectful greetings. A few days ago I sent you a copy of a manuscript entitled *Yasegaman no setsu* (On Fighting to the Bitter End). Would you honor me by reading it? As I wrote you at that time, at some time yet to be determined, I intend to make this manuscript public. Therefore, thinking over the matter carefully, if you know of any factual mistakes or if you have any opinions regarding the argument in the text, please inform me and do not keep your thoughts concealed. In my heart, please know that I do not take pleasure in indiscriminately attacking others. I write down those things that trouble me and submit them to public scrutiny, with the hope that they may serve the nation in the future. Therefore if you have anything to state, please inform me. I ask you please to disclose your thoughts. Here I have mentioned only the business at hand.

With respects,

To:

February 5

Please regard the manuscript as confidential. Up to the present I have not shown it to anyone except for two or three close friends. This is my one additional request.

### **Katsu Kaishū's Reply**

Since ancient times, government leaders are not apt to be evaluated by the people unless they are persons of major distinction, known throughout time and place. Unexpectedly you have written an essay on my deeds of many years past. As you point out my shame is indeed unbearable. I am most grateful for your deep concern. I take responsibility for my actions, but praise or blame is the task of others. I neither make claims nor bother myself with such matters. I have no reservations whatsoever on what you show to other people. May I ask your permission to keep the essay you so kindly sent?

February 6

Katsu Awa

Recently I have been ill and half-bedridden and it is difficult for me to write. Please excuse my poor handwriting.

### **Reply from Enomoto Takeaki**

Greetings. Several days ago I received your request for my opinion and for any corrections of fact on the manuscript you sent to me. I have, however, been extremely

busy for some time and I will look at your manuscript when I get time. At this point I can only make a simply reply to your letter.

February 5

Takeaki

To Mr. Fukuzawa Yukichi

#### Notes

- 1) On Fukuzawa's nationalism, see Albert Craig, "Fukuzawa Yukichi: The Philosophical Foundations of Meiji Nationalism," in Robert E. Ward, ed., *Political Development in Modern Japan*, Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 99-148. See also the chapters on "Bushido" and "Patriotism" in Nishibe Susumu, *Fukuzawa Yukichi – sono bushidō to aikokushin*, Bungei Shinju, 1999.
- 2) For an account of Katsū's role at the time of the surrender of Edo Castle, see M. William Steele, "Against the Restoration: Katsu Kaishū's Attempt to Reinstall the Tokugawa Family," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 36.3 (Autumn 1981), pp. 299-316.
- 3) On Enomoto, see Tanaka Akira, *Hokkaidō to Meiji Ishin*, Hokkaidō Daigaku Tosho Kakōkai, 2000, pp. 81-118.
- 4) For an account of their rivalry, culminating in the *Yasegaman no setsu*, see Iida Kanae, "Yasegaman no setsu to Hikawa seiwa: Katsu Kaishū to Fukuzawa Yukichi no aida," in *Mita Gakkai Zasshi*, 90.1, 1990, pp. 1-18.
- 5) Fukuzawa's autobiography, *Fukuō jiden* (The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi), dictated to a secretary, was published in 1898; Katsu published his autobiographical reminiscences, *Hikawa seiwa* (Pure Words from Hikawa) that same year, the result of a series of interviews with the "sage of Hikawa" in 1897 and 1898. Fukuzawa's autobiography has been translated into English: *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, Eiichi Kiyooka, trans., Schocken, 1972.
- 6) For a translation of Fukuzawa's memorial to the bakufu demanding the use of military force to subjugate Chōshū, see M. William Steele, "Fukuzawa Yukichi and the Idea of a Shogunal Monarchy: Some Documents in Translation," in *Asian Cultural Studies*, Special Issue No. 7, 1997, pp. 17-27.
- 7) For details on Katsu's political thought and actions during the 1860s, see M. William Steele, "Public, Private, and National in Bakumatsu Political Thought: The Case of Katsu Kaishū," *Asian Cultural Studies*, Special Issue No. 2, 1990, pp. 33-45.
- 8) See Matsuura Rei, *Katsu Kaishū to Ajia*, Iwanami Shoten, 1987. Katsu's opposition to the Sino-Japanese War is detailed in Chapter 8, pp. 153-174.
- 10) *Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, p. 335, translation revised.
- 11) Keiō Gijuku, ed., *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū*, Iwanami Publishers, 1959, vol. 6, pp. 555-572; Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Teichū kōron – Yasagaman no setsu*, Koizumi Takashi, ed., Kōdansha Gakujitsu Bunko, 1999; Nagai Michio, ed., *Nihon no meicho: Fukuzawa Yukichi*, vol. 33, Chūō Kōron-sha, 1969, pp. 469-483.