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# ***Finding a Place:***

## *Rōnin Identity in the Tokugawa Period*

A dissertation presented

by

Floris van Swet

to

The Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

History and East Asian Languages

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# Finding a Place: Rōnin Identity in the Tokugawa Period

**Abstract**

*Finding a Place: Rōnin Identity in the Tokugawa Period* focusses on the interaction between institutional and everyday understandings of status, and the subjective, mutable nature of social labels through the lens of rōnin ('masterless samurai'). Through tracing the history of the term rōnin, the multiple ways in which it was used and interpreted over time, and its locally contingent nature, this research elucidates the inconsistencies between center/periphery, ideational/reality and explicit/implicit rules during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). What the particular case of rōnin demonstrates is that such irregularities were an active part of Tokugawa rule within which status and identity were created, recreated and negotiated continuously at all levels of society. Though such institutional 'messiness' is generally viewed as inefficient, wasteful, confusing or even subversive in modern terms, as an accepted part of Tokugawa institutions it did not create instability or detract from the effective running and governability of society. Instead, it formed an integral part of the relative stability of the Tokugawa state for more than 250 years. Consequently, although clear differences existed between the institutional definition of rōnin and the social realities these people encountered, both held social meaning and were continuously negotiated. Though this process took different forms depending on place and time, it was universal throughout Japan and an accepted part of social life. Rōnin, apart from the unacceptable minority, were an accepted and integral part of the Tokugawa social world.

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## Names, Dates and Measurements

Throughout this work all Japanese names are given with family-name first. In addition to this, names have been standardized and individuals will be referred to by the same name throughout, despite naming conventions at the time which saw an individual referred to by a variety of different names (such as, childhood names, granted names, Buddhist names and posthumous names etc.) Though this can undermine certain social processes of the time, it is necessary for the sake of readability and understandability. Where relevant, alternate names will be indicated and discussed. Macrons indicate long vowels in Japanese words except when the word is regularly used in English such as with Tokyo, Osaka, daimyo or shogun, when they are omitted.

Measurements in the work will be rendered mostly in their original Japanese form. This is because of a lack of standardization and conformity, which poses issues in conversion. However, where relevant, general conversions are provided in order to offer a sense of scale. A more detailed generalized conversion chart can be found in the appendix.

In general, the years indicated in this work are rendered in their equivalent in the Gregorian calendar for ease of reading. However, the months and days are indicated according to the lunisolar calendar and therefore do not correspond to the same in the Gregorian rendering (for example, the 26th day of the 4th month is not the 26th of April). This is done to remain closer to the Japanese rendering as well as to avoid the problem of rendering dates into the Gregorian calendar before its introduction and adoption. Monthly and daily dates are used to indicate the passing of time and are therefore only relevant in relation to one another rather than indicating certain times of the year. Where relevant the Japanese year name will be added in addition to the Gregorian year.

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# *Introduction*

During the last years of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868), Iwakura Tomomi, a high court official, wrote a letter to a friend telling him that, "the Tokugawa government insists that they know how many rōnin there are in Kyoto and Osaka, and believes that it has them under control, but this is not so, so don't put any faith in these claims."[1] In this letter, rōnin, often translated into English as 'masterless samurai,' are painted as a disruptive group in need of active suppression and with an inherent potential to undermine the Tokugawa. Tomomi was not alone in perceiving rōnin this way and his statement echoes numerous others stretching back centuries.[2] Whether they were edicts aimed at preserving the peace,[3] reports on street-brawls in Edo[4] or letters of complaint,[5] the mention of rōnin occurred frequently in relation to disruptions and ruffianism. Violent, poor, socially displaced and unhappy with the Tokugawa status quo, the rōnin was "a sinister figure of dread in the land; a spectre that ever haunts the dreams of the

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[1] Nihon shiseki kyōkai (eds.). *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, Vol.1*. Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1968. Pp.215.

[2] Tomomi himself likely did not mind these rōnin forming a threat to the Tokugawa peace and order as he was a firm supporter of anti-*bakufu* elements during these turbulent last years of the Tokugawa government. See: Sasaki, Suguru. *Iwakura Tomomi.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006.

[3] Such edicts were ubiquitous throughout Tokugawa Japan. For examples, see: Kinsei Shiryō Kenkyūkai (eds.). *Edo machibure shūsei, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1994; Takayanagi Seiichi and Ishii Ryosuke (eds.). *Ofuregaki tenmei shūsei (3rd Edition).* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1976.

[4] Noguchi Takehiko. *Edo wakamono kō.* Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1986. Pp.63-72.

[5] For example, see: "Goteishu." In, Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, Vol.25: Tsuyama-han*. Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1981. Pp.1122.

officials making the weaker-kneed among them sweat the cold sweat of terror."[6] As a population which was understood in much popular and official discourse in terms of violence and transience, rōnin were seen to challenge the Tokugawa government's attempts to monopolize violence and its governing logic that people should be included in identifiable and internally regulated groups. Conflicts involving rōnin throughout the first half of the 16th century, such as the siege of Osaka (1614-15) and the Shimabara rebellion (1637-38), and conspiracies to overthrow the government such as the Keian and Jōō incidents (1651-52), led the Tokugawa shogunate to become deeply concerned about this population. Rōnin, therefore, were defined through their negative interactions with Tokugawa institutions and, despite the fact that many lived as integrated and productive members of their communities, the general view persisted: rōnin were violent ex-samurai, unhappy with their lot in life, poor and generally unwanted. The experiences of rōnin were, however, extremely diverse and most of them were far divorced from these disturbances, conflicts and conspiracies.

By tracing the varied experiences of rōnin and interrogating the ways in which the term was applied, understood and manipulated, this work focusses on the interaction between institutional and everyday understandings of identity and status, and the subjective and mutable nature of social labels. It will show that the rōnin label was not passively applied but was instead actively managed, differently employed and diversely understood. In doing so, it questions the coherence of institutional social groupings in a 'premodern' environment and highlights the locally contingent ways in which social change and social ordering were manifested and interpreted. In addition, it therefore highlights the subjectivity inherent in socio-historical definitions, something not only important in a historical context but especially pertinent in

[6] Murdoch, James. *A History of Japan, Vol.3, part 2: The Tokugawa Epoch, 1652-1868.* New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964. Pp.704.

confronting contemporary, popular interactions with historical narratives. Through research into these processes, this work emphasises the 'messiness' of societal and institutional ordering within the Tokugawa Japanese polity, but rather than attempting to rationalise this 'messiness,' this project embraces it as an essential part of the premodern experience on a personal, societal and institutional level.[7] Though such institutional 'messiness' is generally viewed as inefficient, wasteful, confusing or even subversive in modern terms, as an accepted part of Tokugawa institutions it did not create instability or detract from the effective running and governability of society. Instead, it formed an integral part in the relative stability of the Tokugawa state for more than 250 years.

This dissertation demonstrates that the rōnin label was intimately tied up with the 'messy' social environment in which it operated. It does so by showing that the creation of 'Tokugawa rōnin' was closely linked to the evolution of the Tokugawa state in its early decades and remained heavily influenced by social and political change. As this research demonstrates, it is therefore important to understand the ways in which political and social institutions changed over time and to recognise that during the early Tokugawa period these institutions were still in a formative stage. The main organisational socio-political 'systems' of the Tokugawa state, such as the configuration of power between *bakufu* and domain (*bakuhan taisei*)[8] and the status system (*mibun taisei*),[9] did not simply arrive on the scene unheralded at the dawn of the Tokugawa period. Instead they were amalgams of previously existing forms and new ideas that were

[7] Within the context of this dissertation 'messiness' is understood as, "conditions and processes that do not follow institutionalized or culturally prescribed notions of order." This conception of messiness is borrowed from Chanala and Hou, however it implies less a system "subjugat[ed] by the dominant hierarchy" in this context and more something that was an integral part of the Tokugawa polity. See: Chalana, Manish and Hou, Jeffrey. "Untangling the 'messy' Asian city." In, Chalana, Manish and Hou, Jeffrey (eds.) *Messy Urbanism: Understanding the "Other" Cities of Asia.* Hong Kong: HKU Press, 2016. Pp.4.
[8] The *bakuhan* system (more fully discussed below) is the configuration of power, and coexistence of the *bakufu* and the numerous semi-autonomous domains (*han*).
[9] The status system (more fully discussed below) was a system of social hierarchy in some ways similar to caste in the Indian subcontinent or the system of estates in medieval Europe.

constantly evolving during the early Tokugawa period in response to the changing issues with which the polity was confronted.[10] This shifting social environment meant that rōnin had to be engaged, competent social actors in order to find and determine their positions within the forming social institutions.

By complicating existing understandings of rōnin, this work challenges presumptions about who the rōnin label referred to, how it was applied and the myriad consequences it had. However, in addition to this, by examining the interactions between rōnin, the rōnin label and the Tokugawa state, it reveals the 'messiness' inherent in the social makeup of the Tokugawa polity. As a population who could cross status divisions, whose social label could be positively and negatively employed, and who were understood through the lens of the early Tokugawa state-building process, an examination of rōnin is able to provide an alternative understanding of the complex nature of the Tokugawa social landscape and the locally, situationally constructed nature of social identity. In order to understand the social position in which rōnin found themselves and the ways in which understandings and articulations of their position changed, it is therefore necessary to examine how scholars have approached questions of state, society and status in Tokugawa Japan. For this purpose, the following sections will outline how Tokugawa state and society have been conceptualized, how ideas of status have developed and how existing understandings of rōnin have been shaped.

[10] This gradual evolution and incorporation of earlier institutions has been the focus of scholars such as Herman Ooms and Philip Brown. Brown, Philip. *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kaga Domain.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993; Ooms, Herman. *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

## Tokugawa State and Society

Early scholars, often preoccupied with the Japanese transition to the Meiji period rather than the Tokugawa period itself, have typically viewed the *bakufu* as "minatory and repressive."[11] Ruled by a hegemon from Edo, Tokugawa Japan has been compared to repressive early modern European absolutist states[12] or discussed as a copy of ill-suited, antiquated Chinese forms of government.[13] Similarly, much of this early scholarship on the socio-political situation during the Tokugawa period also took its cue from European models and described social relations in terms of 'vassalage' or 'feudalism,' most notably in the work of Edwin Reischauer and Joseph Strayer.[14] However, just as the idea of the European early modern absolutist state and overarching concepts such as feudalism were complicated and deconstructed during the 1980s and 90s,[15] so too did scholars begin to highlight the ways in which this model did not conform to the realities of the Tokugawa state. Work by scholars such as Fujino Tamotsu, Kikuchi Akio and Ōtani Mizuo therefore shifted the focus to an interpretation based on a less centralized system made up of a combination of both *bakufu* and domains (*bakuhan taisei*).[16] The exact interplay between these two institutions remains a topic of contention but what was established was the importance of the domain as an institution of power. For later scholars this interaction has

[11] Sansom, George. *A Short Cultural History.* London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd., 1946. Pp.458.
[12] Norman, E.H. *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period.* Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1973. Pp.12.
[13] Reischauer, Edwin. *Japan: The Story of a Nation.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970. Pp.89-91.
[14] Reischauer, Edwin. "Tokugawa Japan: A Centralized Feudal State." In, Craig, Albert; Fairbank, John and Reischauer, Edwin (eds.). *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Pp.392-418; Strayer, Joseph. "The Tokugawa and Japanese Feudalism." In, Hall, John and Jansen, Marius (eds.). *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.3-14.
[15] For good examples, see: Henshall, Nicholas. *The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy.* London: Longman, 1992; and, Reynolds, Susan. *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994.
[16] Fujino Tamotsu (ed.) *Bakuhan taisei shi no kenkyū: Kenryoku kōzō no kakuritsu to tenkai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1961; Fujino Tamotsu (ed.). *Nihon hōkensei to bakuhan taisei.* Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1983; Kikuchi Akio (ed.). *Bakuhan taisei to Ezochi.* Tokyo: Yuzankaku Shuppan, 1984; Ōtani Mizuo (ed.). *Bakuhan taisei to Meiji isshin.* Tokyo: Aki Shobō, 1973.

become crucial in understanding how power functioned and was articulated in the Tokugawa state. To some degree the two, *bakufu* and domain, were mutually constitutive and only fulfilled the role of state in tandem.[17]

This shift towards the recognition of an inter-relation between *bakufu* and domain is also reflected in the English scholarship. For Conrad Totman the domains were "client states" of the *bakufu*, in a relation similar to that of states subjugated as part of a larger empire.[18] Alternatively, Mary Elizabeth Berry describes the Tokugawa state as a federal state that constituted a "union of semi-autonomous domains under an overseer of the common interest."[19] Proceeding on from the work of Mizubayashi Takeshi, Mark Ravina offers the idea of a "compound state" to reflect the dual nature of the domain as both "autonomous 'states' and as vassal holdings of the shogunate."[20] Whilst these scholars therefore argue that there was a complex relationship between *bakufu* and domain, what remains debated is the precise balance of power between these two. Whereas some scholars emphasize the power of the *bakufu*, others redirect their focus more towards the individual domains.[21]

At the sub-domainal level, Tokugawa society was compartmentalized into what John Hall calls a "container society" made up of self-contained units aimed at ensuring individuals fulfilled

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[17] Mizubayashi Takeshi. *Hōkensei no saihen to Nihonteki shakai no kakuritsu*. Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppan, 1987. Pp.279-280.

[18] Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. Pp.43-44.

[19] Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *Hideyoshi.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp.147-167.

[20] Ravina, Mark. "State-Building and Political Economy in Early-modern Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol.54, No.4 (Nov. 1995), Pp.1017.

[21] This discussion centers around the primacy of power and the 'nationhood' of the respective units. For some scholars, such as Ronald Toby, this 'nationhood' is only to be found in the *bakufu* and therefore sees the primacy of power at the center. For other scholars, such as Mark Ravina and Luke Roberts, domains were primarily political units with a large amount of autonomy. In his later work however, Roberts assumes more of a 'middle ground' and urges a need to recognize seeming contradictory coexistence of both the *bakufu* as a "rhetorically politicized territorial country" and domains as "politicized countries." See: Toby, Ronald. *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984; Ravina, Mark. *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998; Roberts, Luke. *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchants Origins of Economic Nationalism in 18th Century Tosa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.13-14.

their duties, at the same time as protecting them from outside interference.[22] These groups, such as the village (*mura*), ward (*chō*) or household (*ie*), were at the core of the Tokugawa polity. However, though these units were placed within a vertical hierarchy, here too, research has shown that the authorities, though fully capable of suppression and coercion, preferred to rely on regulation, mediation and persuasion in its interaction with these groups.[23] Whilst inter-group interaction was predicated on customary relations, the internal organization of these groups was left, to an extent, to the group itself. Tokugawa society was therefore, in the words of Luke Roberts, "at its governmental heights […] primarily a set of what we think of as feudal relations between samurai, [yet] it existed in varied similar manifestations extending throughout society, interrelated with a social culture invested in inside/outside dichotomies of behavior."[24] Therefore, much of the Tokugawa institutional structure was based around the coexistence of an outward compliance with laws and regulations, alongside the tacit understanding that internal discrepancies were acceptable provided the outward appearance of compliance was preserved.[25] It is this difference between inside and outside dichotomies, or 'messiness,' that enabled the rōnin label to be differently employed, interpreted and imagined depending on context. Outwardly, rōnin were discontents to be avoided and contained. On the inside, however, units often worked to incorporate rōnin and provide them with socially understandable positions without necessarily removing the label itself. Though it is easy to say that discontented rōnin and those, for example, living peacefully in the countryside were somehow different, the fact remains that they were both labelled rōnin within the rationale of the Tokugawa polity. By examining all

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[22] Hall, John. "Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies,* Vol.1, No.1 (Autumn, 1974), pp.48.

[23] Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. Pp.13. Also see: McClain, James. "Edobashi: Power, Space, and Popular Culture in Edo." In, McClain, James; Merriman, John and Ugawa Kaoru (eds.). *Edo and Paris: Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994. pp.127-131.

[24] Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace,* 2012. Pp.20.

[25] *Ibid.* Pp.33-42.

those to whom the rōnin label was applied, rather than only those who conform to stereotyped ideas of what a rōnin is, this dissertation highlights the productive nature of the institutional 'messiness' inherent in the Tokugawa system.

## Status and the Tokugawa State

The topic of status has received a lot of attention in the scholarship on Tokugawa Japan for much of its history. Though it has gone through multiple interpretations, in general, Tokugawa Japan is seen as a status order that grounded its social hierarchy around four status groups based around occupation; warriors (*shi*), farmers (*nō*), artisans (*kō*) and merchants (*shō*). This idea of status (*mibun*) was, according to many earlier works, imported from China and based on Confucian models that ordered society into four vertically hierarchical estates (*shimin*).[26] These works, in line with more absolutist ideas of state, argue that people were "forc[ed] into the rigid Tokugawa social mold,"[27] though even these works allow for the fact that much of the system was theoretical, as groups such as courtiers, priests and outcasts were not represented. However, though this schema didn't map onto Japanese social realities, early scholars held it as the defining feature and most important institutionalised governing ideology of the Tokugawa aimed at separating the ruling *bushi* class from those they ruled.[28]

Since the late 1980s this rigid and absolutist representation of the Tokugawa social order has increasingly been questioned and adapted. The work by the Japanese scholar Tsukada

[26] Reischauer, Edwin. *Japan: The Story of a Nation.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970. Pp.89-90.
[27] Reischauer, Edwin. "Tokugawa Japan: A Centralized Feudal State." In, Craig, Albert; Fairbank, John and Reischauer, Edwin (eds.). *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Pp.407.
[28] Minegishi Kentarō. *Kinsei mibun ron.* Tokyo: Asakura Shobō, 1989. Pp.71-130; Asao Naohiro, "The Sixteenth Century Unification." In, Hall, John and McClain, James (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.4: Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1991. Pp.50-53.

Takashi, in particular, did so by focussing on the *eta* and *hinin,* groups.[29] Traditionally translated in English as 'outcasts,' partly because they did not fit within the idealised Neo-Confucian model, Tsukada showed that these groups were in fact recognized and had similar institutional logic as the other status groups. By analysing legal contracts, he showed that *eta* and *hinin* were offered certain privileges when it came to their expected role *as a group*. They were therefore not outside of the system but instead incorporated into the larger socio-political makeup of the polity. Groups such as these were formulated and gained legitimacy in the early years of the Tokugawa bakufu and as such became a recognized part of society despite their position outside of the four 'accepted' status groups. Tsukada therefore shows that the authorities interacted with these groups at the same level as they would with 'accepted' status groups and that their existence did not necessarily threaten the projected social hierarchy.[30] Such studies, then, recast the social hierarchy of early modern Japan, incorporating a number of 'anomalous' groups, complicating the social landscape of Tokugawa Japan and highlighting complex social networks. As a result, scholarship has moved away from institutionalized ideas of status towards a more experiential analysis, from a "focus on 'masses' based around preconceived theories to an analysis of more individualized and varied social groupings."[31]

Despite this recasting of status, it remains a defining term for the understanding of the Tokugawa polity as it placed individuals within an understood and accepted framework of social interaction. David Howell has discussed this issue in depth, noting that the status system was defined by interrelatedness, occupation and duty.[32] For Howell then, the individual was not of

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[29] Tsukada, Takashi. *Kinsei mibunsei no kenkyū.* Kōbe: Hyōgo Buraku Mondai Kenkyūjo, 1987; Tsukada Takashi. *Kinsei mibunsei to shūen shakai.* Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppansha, 1997.
[30] Tsukada, *Kinsei Nihon mibunsei no kenkyū.* 1987. Pp.240-251.
[31] Carré, Guillaume. "Les marges statutaires dans le Japon prémoderne: enjeux et débats." *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, Vol.66, No.4 (Oct-Dec, 2001), pp.963.
[32] Howell, David. *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Pp.20-44.

great significance within this system, but rather people were defined by their status established through various relationships and "for most purposes […] social identity was mediated through th[e] group."[33] Whilst this system took time in both its conception and its creation, Howell notes that, "this revolution led by the middle of the seventeenth century to a structure in which every individual (through the medium of the household or its functional equivalent such as a Buddhist sect) was placed into a social category with attendant obligations."[34] The importance of occupation in the creation of status was therefore paramount and the concept of work, as understood in the contemporary world, was divided in two distinct clusters of meaning in Tokugawa Japan.[35] On the one hand there was the earlier mentioned occupation (*shokubun*), which corresponded to one's social role within the hierarchized status order. On the other hand, there were concepts referring to 'livelihood' (*kasegi*), which described the action one undertook in order to make a living.[36] These two interacted with one another and in many cases certain groups' livelihoods were transformed into occupations through official recognition and the assignment of a defined social role.[37] This process often involved the creation or recognition of pre-existing hierarchies within the group and the definition of group-based rights and duties.[38] In this manner, 'outside' groups could become socially integrated and even marginal groups could leverage their position as part of a socially recognized occupational unit.[39]

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[33] *Ibid.* Pp.25.
[34] *Ibid.* Pp.33.
[35] Howell, David. "Territoriality and Collective Identity in Tokugawa Japan." *Daedalus,* Vol.127, No.3 Early Modernities (Summer, 1998), pp.105-132.
[36] Takemura Eiji. *The Perception of Work in Tokugawa Japan: A Study of Ishida Baigan and Ninomiya Sontoku.* Lanham, MD: University Press America, 1997.
[37] Howell. "Territoriality and Collective Identity," 1998, pp.105-132.
[38] Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. Pp.23.
[39] For an example of this process, see: Groemer, Gerald. "The Creation of the Edo Outcaste Order." *Journal of Japanese Studies.* Vol.27, No.2 (2001), pp.263-293.

Status, therefore, has more recently been cast as a "web"[40] constituted by the interactions between interrelated groups rather than a rigid ideological model.[41] These groups were created and defined through the social matrix made up of the interplay of group (*shūdan*), relationship (*kankei*), place (*ba*) and occupation (*shokubun*).[42] The social order was then, as presented by Maren Ehlers, the interaction between the awareness of each group of its own identity based around place and occupation, inter-group customary relations, and the ties of duty (*yaku*) and privilege (*gomen*) that linked each group to the authorities.[43] This resulted in a configuration that was more locally bound than has been generally accepted, as, "status groups [were] not local manifestations of a uniform standard that applied countrywide but […] products of a specific local environment."[44] The local configuration of the exact characteristics of status groups took place on all levels of society. Whereas in her research Maren Ehlers describes the local configurations of the beggars' guild in Ōno domain, that of Haraguchi Torao, for example, highlights the local arrangements of lower retainers.[45] In his work he shows that, in Satsuma domain, certain retainers bore last names, were ordered according to their family (*shi*), were employed by daimyo and paid through stipends as was common for *bushi*. In contrast to this,

[40] Scholars have used a number of ways to represent these more complex interactions. Here I have used the idea of a "web" following Maren Ehlers. Other scholars use different terms to indicate similar ideas. Where Marius Jansen spoke of "constellations" of status groups, Daniel Botsman describes it in terms of status groupings existing within "pockets" and "layers," and David Howell works in terms of "overlapping geographies." See: Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. Pp.5; Botsman, Daniel. *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Pp.71; Howell, David. *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Pp.20-44; Jansen, Marius. *The Making of Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. Pp.38.

[41] For a recent work that adopts this model and describes it in-depth, see: Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. See especially pp.3-13.

[42] This reinterpretation stems from work initiated by the Marginality Research Group (*Mibunteki shūen kenkyūkai*) during the 1990s. For more on this project, see: Botsman, Daniel. "Recovering Japan's Urban Past: Yoshida Nobuyuki, Tsukada Takashi and Cities in the Tokugawa Period." *City, Culture and Society,* Vol.66, No.4 (2011), pp.9-14; Morishita Tōru. "Mibunteki shūen no keifu hōhō." *Buraku mondai kenkyū*, Vol.161 (2002), pp.2-17.

[43] Ehlers. *Give and Take,* 2018. Pp.5.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] *Ibid.*; Haraguchi Torao et al. (eds.). *The Status System and Social Organization of Satsuma: A Translation of the Shūmon Tefuda Aratame Jōmoku.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1975.

however, they were not registered in *kumi* (the unit denoting *bushi* internal ordering) and instead were linked to a *za* (guild), a unit generally associated with the ordering of the merchant population and could therefore be described as "quasi-samurai."[46] These works therefore highlight that alternative configurations did not occur despite the status order system but as part of it, and that as long as they adhered to outward group unity, internal differences were largely unproblematic.

In this work, this more complex and locally constructed understanding of status is an important prerequisite for the way in which the rōnin label is argued to have manifested. However, it is also important to appreciate the 'ideological,' institutional aspects of status in shaping the Tokugawa social world. This is something that is brought forward in the work of David Howell who states that "status groups of early modern Japan were neither internally homogenous, nor unitary in their conception or operation, but they were nevertheless coherent markers of identity."[47] The coexistence of status at these two levels did not, however, create contradiction but was an integral part of the socio-political makeup of the Tokugawa polity.[48] The status system was therefore a complex interplay between an institutional representation of the imagined polity and a complicated, evolving social reality. It was within the interplay of these two that the rōnin label became constructed and understood.

[46] Haraguchi. *The Status System and Social Organization of Satsuma.* 1975. Pp.14-16.
[47] Howell. *Geographies of Identity,* 2005. Pp.25.
[48] This understanding of the coexistence of seemingly contradictory elements within the Tokugawa system is based on the research of Luke Roberts, see: Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace,* 2012. In particular, pp.5-15.

## Placing Rōnin within the Tokugawa System

The discussion on rōnin has often been confined to broader works on the issues of state and status. Because of this, as noted above, the focus has been on the relation between the central authorities and rōnin, and rōnin as a sub-set of the *bushi* status group. As a result, rōnin have often been presented as either inherently oppositional to authority or an internal status curiosity. It is likely because of this ingrained view of rōnin as simply wayward 'unemployed' *bushi* that they have not received the English scholarship attention that other marginal and alternative status groups have attracted, such as *zatō,* or *eta* and *hinin* referred to above.[49] Whilst there is, therefore, very little written in Western scholarship concerning rōnin specifically, they regularly appear fleetingly as intransigent ruffians or embittered rebels. Works that mention rōnin therefore do so by addressing particular events associated with them *as a group,* such as the siege of Osaka or the Shimabara rebellion, and as a result, rōnin are often presented as a unified group of 'outside' malcontents.[50] The common issue with these works is that they invariably reduce of the lives of rōnin to their violent or disruptive intersections with the *bakufu*, whether through brief descriptions of them as types of violent 'vagabond' or through a focus on their role in seemingly 'anti-*bakufu*' activity. Consequently, their lives have featured within Japanese

[49] Studies into groups such as *zatō* (blind transients), or *eta* and *hinin* (outcast groups) have collectively expanded the understanding of status during the Tokugawa period as well as aided in the interpretation of 'non-standard' status groups. For examples, see: Groemer, Gerald. "The Guild of the Blind in Tokugawa Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica.* Vol.56, No.3 (Autumn, 2001), pp.349-380; Howell. *Geographies of Identity,* 2005.

[50] In most works, such as that of Conrad Totman or George Sansom, rōnin only appear during these times of crisis and only on the anti-Tokugawa side. Even the rare works focussing on rōnin in particular, such as that of Martin Ramming, do so through the lens of anti-Tokugawa sentiments. See: Ramming, Martin. "Zum Ronin problem in der Tokugawazeit (1603-1868). *Sitzungsberichte der Deutchen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin,* No.4 (1956), pp.3-32; and Ramming, Martin. "Die Verschwörung der Yui Shosetsu." In, Steininger, Helga (ed.). *Sino-Japonica: Festschrift Andre Wedemeyer zum 80. Geburtstag.* Leipzig: VEB Otto Harrassowitz, 1956. Pp.138-147; Sansom, George. *A History of Japan, 1615-1867.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968; Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

history only during moments of upheaval, the focus always falling upon acts of violence against the *bakufu* or the public peace it saw itself representing.

Resultantly, rōnin have frequently been cast as caricatures representing central concerns rather than a social reality. They are presented as the reason for, or the result of moments of violence and "[f]acing hardship and dishonour, these *rōnin* ('wave men'), or masterless samurai, became a rowdy social element in the cities."[51] The central themes in the discussion have therefore been violence, penury and vagrancy, and as a result these works often place rōnin into one of two groups, which can be surmised as 'mad' rōnin and 'sad' rōnin. Whereas the first, 'mad' rōnin, are those men opposed to the central authorities and violently disruptive especially during the early Tokugawa years, the second group, 'sad' rōnin, are men who roamed the cities and countryside looking to alleviate their penury.

Despite this divide, the general view has been that rōnin, as a homogenous group, were linked to violence and anti-Tokugawa disruption, and that policies and economic change between 1600 and 1650 "gradually shrank the population of alienated ex-samurai [meaning that] rōnin did not reappear as a major issue until the 1860s."[52] Bitterly opposed to the Tokugawa government, which restricted their every move, and to the feudal system which was the reason for their distress." […] the rōnin became a most potent force in the final overthrow of the Tokugawa government."[53] These works therefore present rōnin as a violent group whose anger, though initially suppressed, simmered for over 200 years before boiling over once more in the latter years of the Tokugawa period. In this body of literature, rōnin anger is presented as a result of dissatisfaction with their social position and is predicated on the view that rōnin were, first

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[51] Totman, Conrad. *Japan before Perry: A Short History.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981. Pp.148.
[52] Totman. *Early Modern Japan.* 1993. Pp.127.
[53] Hall, John. *Tanuma Okitsugu, 1719-1788: Forerunner of Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955. Pp.7-8.

and foremost, *bushi*. This presumed relation between rōnin and *bushi* is clearly echoed in the general translation of the term in English as 'masterless/unemployed samurai,' which leaves little doubt as to the status identification of rōnin. In discussing the status identity of those not conforming to the general rules of their status group, David Howell notes that, "such people occupied a vulnerable position in society, yet they retained a status identity nonetheless: a landless peasant was still a peasant, a masterless samurai still a samurai."[54] Nakano Tastuya approaches the issue in much the same way, stating that despite certain inconsistencies with the status group, "rōnin were essentially *bushi.*"[55]

The focus on rōnin as *bushi* and as a population that was only historically significant during the first half of the seventeenth century is reflected in nearly all works that mention them and is even reflected in the ways in which scholars have attempted to ascertain their numbers. For example, scholars have based their numbers of rōnin on the dismissal of retainers only during the first 50 years of the Tokugawa period. Through using this approach, the Japanese scholar Hozumi Nobushige calculated that there were around 150,000 rōnin during the first 50 years of the Tokugawa period based on estimated domainal yield (*kokudaka*) figures.[56] However, this number seems low due to that fact that Hozumi's focus did not extend beyond former middle-ranking Tokugawa retainers. On the other hand, both Kurita Mototsugu and Morimoto Junichirō, who also based their figures on *kokudaka* averages, included those of lower ranks and therefore came to a figure of around 400,000 rōnin.[57] Other scholars, such as Fujino Tamotsu and George Sansom, put their estimates higher still and placed it closer to half a million as they

[54] Howell. "Territoriality and Collective Identity." 1998. Pp.106.
[55] Nakano Tatsuya. *Edo no buke shakai to hyakushō, chōnin.* Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 2014. Pp.150.
[56] Hozumi Nobushige. *Yui Shosetsu jiken to Tokugawa bakufu no yoshi hō.* Tokyo: Teikoku Gakushi-in, 1913. Pp.10.
[57] Kurita, Mototsugu. *Edo jidai shi, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1928. Pp.308-312; Morimoto, Junichirō. *Tokugawa jidai no yūminron.* Tokyo: Miraisha, 1985. Pp.19.

include some sub-retainers (*baishin*).[58] However, as this dissertation highlights, these numbers not only confine the social relevance of rōnin to the first five decades of the Tokugawa period, they also ignore the more complex social manifestations of rōnin. Despite the development of more nuanced approaches to status, as described above, more recent work, therefore, still casts rōnin in much the same light that earlier works did: "indigent, culturally violent men who were skilled in the use of weapons."[59] What is demonstrated through this dissertation is that the vast majority of rōnin did not conform to these ideas of dissatisfaction and violence, and that issues surrounding rōnin continuously evolved throughout the Tokugawa period. In a rare, albeit brief, exception to typical narratives around rōnin, Anna Beerens warns that, "clichés of the frustrated younger son or the embittered rōnin should be handled with caution."[60]

Unsurprisingly, there is a far larger number of works in Japanese dealing with the subject of rōnin. One of the first scholars to look at rōnin extensively was Kurita Mototsugu, and his work has set much of the focus and tone for later research, in both English and Japanese. According to Kurita, large numbers of rōnin were created due to the upheaval caused by the demise of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the ensuing conflict, which led to the Battle at Sekigahara (1600) and the Siege of Osaka (1614-15).[61] This, he explains, was further exacerbated by the large number of attainders and fief reductions imposed by the Tokugawa during their first decades in power.[62] These factors combined to create a situation of tension and an increased number of disenfranchised and embittered rōnin that culminated in a plot to overthrow the Tokugawa government in 1651 known as the Keian Incident. In order to lessen problems with

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[58] Fujino Tamotsu. *Bakuhan Taiseishi no kenkyū: Kenryoku kōzō no kakuritsu to tenkai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1961. Pp. 193; Sansom, George. *A History of Japan, 1615-1867.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968. Pp.32.

[59] Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace*, 2012. Pp.76.

[60] Beerens, Anna. *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons: Japanese Intellectual Life in the Late Eighteenth Century, A Prosopographical Approach.* Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006. Pp.276.

[61] Kurita, Mototsugu. *Edo jidai shi, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1928.

[62] *Ibid.*

rōnin by stemming the increase in the number of displaced retainers, the *bakufu* decided to change laws of inheritance and the ways in which attainder was applied.[63] After this, Kurita argues, rōnin no longer played a significant role during the Tokugawa period until its turbulent last decades when rōnin roamed the countryside.[64] It is this view of rōnin, as indicated above, that came to dominate western scholarship on the topic. However, where many western scholars still hold to the general ideas put forward by Kurita, Japanese scholars have done much to open up the research on rōnin.[65]

One of the most influential works that has helped to move beyond the framework of rōnin experience set out by Kurita is that of Asao Naohiro. In his work focusing on rōnin in Kyoto during the Tokugawa period he shows that the identities of those *bushi* who lost their lords became based around the places they lived and the occupations they took on.[66] In doing so, his work shows that rōnin were not necessarily nuisances who were without income but could instead become integrated into local areas.[67] Though still mainly concerned with the relation between rōnin and the authorities due to his primary focus on the city of Kyoto and the use of *bakufu* documents, Asao's work questioned assumptions on both the place of rōnin in Tokugawa society as well as the characteristics generally associated with them. As a result, Asao's work has

[63] The direct link between these changes and a desire to avoid problems concerning rōnin is apparent in Kurita's work, but is most clearly made in the work Hozumi Nobushige. See: Hozumi Nobushige. *Yui Shōsetsu jiken to Tokugawa bakufu no yōshi hō.* Tokyo: Teikoku Gakushi-in, 1913.
[64] Kurita Mototsugu. "Edo Jidai." In, *Sōgō Nihonshi daikei, Vol.9.* Tokyo: Naigai Tosho, 1926; Kurita Mototsugu. "Shimabara no ran to rōnin mondai." *Chūō Shidan*, Vol.10, No.1 (1999); Kurita, Mototsugu. *Edo jidai shi, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1928. Pp.308-312
[65] Though the views on rōnin are increasingly nuanced in contemporary Japanese scholarship, the influence of Kurita's framework can still be seen, such as in the works of Ōishi Manabu, Watanabe Daimon and Yamamoto Eiji. See: Ōishi Manabu. *Kinsei Nihon no shōsha to haisha.* Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2015; Watanabe Daimon. *Rōnin-tachi no sengoku jidai*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2014; and, Yamamoto Eiji. "Gōshi to rōnin." In, *Jiten shiraberu Edo jidai.* Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2001. Pp.234-240.
[66] Asao Naohiro. "Kinsei Kyōto no rōnin." In, Asao Naohiro (ed.). *Asao Naohiro cho sakushū, Vol.7: Mibunsei shakai ron.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004.
[67] *Ibid.* Pp.244.

been immensely influential since its publication in the late 1970s, and can be found at the basis of most of the subsequent Japanese works focusing on rōnin.

These contemporary works therefore build on the ideas of Asao but combine this with more recent scholarship on issues of status and area studies in order to further complicate the discussion on rōnin. Yamamoto Eiji, for example, though still influenced by Kurita, emphasizes the ways in which certain families actively manipulated the rōnin label in order to gain social advantage.[68] Similarly important is the work by Negishi Shigeo, who focuses on rōnin and retainer band formation in Sakura domain and highlights the importance of interpersonal relations on which rōnin relied to obtain reemployment.[69] Others, such as Yokota Fuyuhiko, Yoshida Sadahiko, Komiya Kiyora and Kanehira Shinji, have also emphasized interactions between locally integrated rōnin and society that undermine the general view provided by Kurita and show the complex configurations and reconfigurations that persisted throughout the Tokugawa period.[70] It is this more complex, mutable and locally contingent understanding of the term rōnin that is central to this work. However, in looking at the different manifestations of the rōnin label, this work highlights that rōnin were not simply specific, local incongruities and analyses the ways in which these individuals were integrated as a part of the Tokugawa social environment. Socially incorporated rōnin, this research argues, were not the exceptions they

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[68] Yamamoto Eiji. *Kai no kuni 'rōnin' no isshiki to kōdō.* Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1990. Pp.120-134.

[69] Negishi Shigeo. "Kinsei shoki ni okeru Sakura-han Horita-shi kashindan no tenkai to rōnin." In, Negishi Shigeo (ed.). *Kinsei buke shakai keisei no kōzō.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2000.

[70] For more recent works complicating the rōnin label and the ways in which it functioned within Tokugawa Japan, see: Yokota Fuyuhiko. "'Rōnin hyakushō' Ita Nagayasu no dokusho." *Hitotsubashi ronsō,* Vol.134, No.4 (Oct, 2005), pp.94-117; Yoshida Sadahiko. "Kurume-han 'rōnin' seido ni okeru kisoteki kosatsu." *Kyūshū bunkashi kenkyūjo kiyō*, Vol.42-43 (Mar, 1999), pp.93-116; Komiya Kiyora. "Minmatsu kōtaiki bakufu gaikō no shakaiteki zentei." In, Nakamura Tadashi (ed.). *Sakoku to kokusai kankei.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997. Pp.256-268; Kanehira, Shinji. "Kinsei zenki no rōnin meshikakae to daimyō kachū," *Rekishi Hyōron*, Vol.803 (Mar, 2017), pp.20-34; Shimoju Kiyoshi. *Rōnin was dono yōna sonzai data ka.* In, *Shinshiten Nihon no rekishi, Vol.5.* Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1993.

seemed, but were representative of the workings of the socio-political system of the Tokugawa state.

Further complexity, often overlooked in English scholarship, arises from the fact that in Japanese the word rōnin can be written using different character compounds. The most widely used of these nowadays is 浪人, however, it can also be rendered as 牢人.[71] The first of these, 浪人, is combination of the character 人 meaning person, and a derivation of 流浪 (*rurō*) or 浮浪 (*furō*) both of which refer to wandering or vagrancy. Though sometimes poetically translated as "wave men"[72] this translation adds little to the understanding of rōnin. The second version of the word rōnin, 牢人, is derived from the compound 牢籠 (*rōrō*) meaning destitution, poverty or unemployment. However, despite the fact that connections can be drawn between ideas of vagrancy and destitution, the usage of these two terms is much debated in Japanese scholarship.

One of the reasons for this debate stems from the relation between rōnin and *bushi* status and subsequently the particular interaction between rōnin and the Tokugawa social environment. As stated by Yamamoto Eiji, during the early Tokugawa period the use of 牢人 was prevalent, after which, due to the negative connotations of this compound,[73] a general change can be seen towards 浪人, to such an extent that only this last compound was used by the late Tokugawa period.[74] However, this schema only applies to the Tokugawa period itself. When looking at earlier usage, 浪人, referred to "people who left their place of birth and have taken to wandering. Often these people left the villages where they were entered in the family register (*koseki*), in

[71] The compound 窂人 is also seen but this is a simply a variation of 牢人. Both will therefore be treated as the same.
[72] This is a literal translation of the character 浪 (wave). See for example: Totman. *Japan before Perry,* 1981. Pp.148.
[73] This is due to the fact that the character 牢 also has connections to confinement and jail, as in the word 入牢 (*nyūrō*), meaning 'imprisonment.'
[74] Yamamoto Eiji. "Gōshi to rōnin." In, *Jiten shiraberu Edo jidai.* Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2001. Pp.236.

order to avoid the burden of tax impositions."[75] On the other hand, 牢人 is slightly different in focus and refers to "people who left their master's household and lost their stipend; a warrior who does not have a master."[76] Not only did the term 浪人 predate the term 牢人 but it also implies a lack of belonging of those who were no longer working the land or entered in village registers. This emphasis on ideas of belonging is heightened by the description of the medieval historian Murai Yasuhiko who uses the term 浪人 to mean "outsider" (*yosomono*).[77] 牢人, on the other hand, only became widely used during the Medieval period and had a direct relation to the idea of 'feudal' relations between a lord and his retainers.

Therefore, the distinction between the two terms has to be reimagined when looking specifically at the Tokugawa period as these earlier definitions do not map onto the usage of the term within the Tokugawa social environment. This recasting of the terms within a Tokugawa context is highlighted in the work of Yoshida Sadahiko who distinguishes between the two by viewing 浪人 as "men who have gone through fixed procedures to register as rōnin," whilst seeing 牢人 as "*bushi* who roam the country without any form of retainer relationship to a lord."[78] However, whereas most historians of the Tokugawa period hold that the rendering of 浪人 is generally seen to have slightly more positive connotations than 牢人,[79] even here it is difficult to draw a simple distinction as many registers of the Tokugawa period include men who are registered and integrated into their communities as 牢人. Central to this divide between the two renderings, especially within the Tokugawa context, is therefore a distinction of belonging

[75] Watanabe Daimon. *Rōnin-tachi no sengoku jidai*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2014. Pp.11.
[76] *Ibid.* Pp.12.
[77] Murai Yasuhiko. "Shōen to kisakunin: konden chikei shōen no tokushitsu ni tsuite." In, Nihon shikenkyūkai shiryō kenkyū bukai (eds.). *Chūsei shakai no kihon kōzō*. Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobō, 1958. Pp.67.
[78] Yoshida Sadahiko. "Kurume-han 'rōnin' seido ni okeru kisoteki kosatsu." *Kyūshū bunkashi kenkyūjo kiyō*, Vol.42-43 (Mar. 1999), pp.93-94.
[79] Even commentators at the time, such as Namura Jōhaku, saw 牢人 as "shameful characters." See: Namura Jōhaku. *Buke chōhōki.* [unpaginated] NDL Digital Database 840-50.

and 'acceptability,' themes that feature heavily in the discussion of rōnin throughout this dissertation, but do not necessarily map onto particular compounds.

With these issues in mind, this study does not attempt to explain how the current understanding of the term developed, nor enforce a comprehensive, homogenizing analysis onto a group of people who often had little shared social experience. Instead, it demonstrates how the rōnin label and the rōnin identity operated in their social environment, and how they were experienced by those who were rōnin or, indeed, those who attempted to associate themselves with the term. It therefore focuses on individual experience and in doing so highlights a social position and situation rather than a cohesive social group. Although analyzing the various attempts to govern or control rōnin, it does so with the understanding that many of these initiatives were aimed at integrating specific subsets of rōnin rather than the group as a whole. As a result, in this work, the criterion for inclusion is based on the application of the rōnin label, rather than on meeting a number of presupposed characteristics. What becomes clear throughout this work as a result of taking this approach is that the term rōnin was imbued with ambiguity and that internal dichotomies dictated much of the rōnin experience. The way in which one experienced the rōnin label was therefore influenced by a number of factors including personal and family connections, time, place, prior social status, and abilities. Although it is appealing to see the various manifestations of the rōnin label as unrelated due to the different understandings and interpretations of their position within the Tokugawa polity, this work brings them into the same framework. Taking this approach is crucial to avoid 'flattening' the term rōnin guided by a set of presupposed characteristics and demonstrates the ways in which the complex and varied rōnin label functioned within the institutional 'messiness' of the Tokugawa state. Rōnin within the Tokugawa system did not necessarily dispute the social configuration of the Tokugawa world

and many of them held to the system closely. Nor were they necessarily faced with hardship and penury since many of them in fact thrived, sometimes because of their rōnin label rather than despite it. Instead, it was their own position within this polity, both as rōnin and as individuals, which they constantly manipulated and negotiated in response to the social situation around them.

## Organization of this Work

This work explores the logic behind the actions of those labelled rōnin and, in doing so, shows that they were not simply reactive elements but that their behavior was informed by the unusual and unsure position they took up within the social makeup of the Tokugawa state. By initially approaching the issue chronologically, this work traces the evolution of the term rōnin, and the social and political environment within which it found itself. Subsequent chapters take a more thematic approach in order to highlight the different ways in which the rōnin label was used and understood during the Tokugawa period.

To ground the chronological discussion on rōnin, chapter 1 explores how ambiguities within the rōnin label during the Tokugawa period were the result of a long prehistory. By looking at the ways in which the term continually changed from the seventh century to the seventeenth century the chapter highlights its varied and complex nature by the early years of the Tokugawa period. Whilst the term became defined through its interaction with Tokugawa state building, this chapter shows that the internal ambiguities inherent within the term throughout its longer history persisted. An analysis of the pre-Tokugawa history of the term therefore elucidates the rationale behind its use post-1600.

Chapter 2 focuses on the period 1600-1652 when the newly established Tokugawa shogunate was in its formative years. Many of the institutional, political and social changes that came to be emblematic of the Tokugawa period developed during these years and contributed to the increasing marginalization of rōnin. As the socio-political landscape changed in this period, the rōnin label became defined through its interactions with the Tokugawa state, and internal dichotomies between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' rōnin proliferated. As a result, rōnin became emblematic of larger issues facing the *bakufu* during its formative years, most notably state and social formation, and economic change.

In chapter 3 the focus shifts to examine in-depth the effects of attainder which was one of the main reasons identified as creating rōnin. Whilst there has been much discussion on the significance of attainder during the first 50 years of the Tokugawa state, this chapter looks beyond the 1650s to show the enormous local impact that attainders had throughout the seventeenth century. At the same time, it highlights that such moments of crisis were complex events that necessitated dialogue and concession and did not simply create large numbers of disaffected rōnin. Additionally, this chapter uses attainder to lay bare the rifts within the rōnin population that created conflicts of interest and contributed to their inability to coalesce as a group.

Whilst the focus on rōnin activity is mostly confined to urban areas in existing literature, chapter 4 highlights the rural aspect of the rōnin experience. Certainly, many rōnin sought out employment opportunities in cities such as Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka, yet what has hitherto gone largely unacknowledged is the role this population played in shaping the extensive rural development that occurred during the Tokugawa period. By demonstrating the ways in which certain places acted as 'gravity wells' whose opportunities drew rōnin to them, this chapter

argues that many rōnin's lives were shaped around 'alternate geographies.' Although the opportunities offered by such 'gravity wells' could be temporary or of interest to only a few, they further reveal the ways in which the rōnin label could act differently on a micro-level, at times being leveraged for advantage within units of social ordering.

Since it was not just rōnin themselves who sought ways to re-integrate into recognized social units, chapter 5 focuses on the ways in which the authorities, both *bakufu* and the numerous individual domains, sought institutional answers to 'deal with' rōnin as a group. Through the implementation of laws and rules many sought to regulate rōnin behavior and movement as well as understandings of the rōnin label itself. As central policy was largely absent, the many domains across Japan were forced to come up with their own policies. By creating new, recognized groups or incorporating rōnin into existing groups they attempted to integrate rōnin within accepted, understood and governable social units. However, as this chapter shows, these efforts were only ever partly successful as they were made more difficult by the ambiguous nature of the rōnin social position.

Having revealed the diverse experiences of rōnin that complicate typical associations of the population with violence and transience in previous chapters, chapter 6 turns its attention to those rōnin who conformed to these most notable characteristics of 'unacceptable' rōnin. In doing so, it demonstrates that even these characteristics were situationally and locally constructed, and understood to the extent that they could be positively applied. By focusing on ideas of movement and violence, it analyzes a variety of ways in which rōnin sought to evade the negative influence of their rōnin label. By exploring the specific characteristics of transience and violence, this chapter shows that they could manifest differently, in both legal and illegal ways. Whilst it was these rōnin who arguably shaped popular and centralized understandings of the

population, this chapter shows that even in this most recognizable guise, rōnin remained difficult to define.

# Chapter 1

## *Becoming Rōnin*

In 1863 the US Minister General to Japan, Robert H. Pruyn, wrote to Secretary of State William H. Seward to inform him of matters in Japan. In the letter Pruyn explains that he had been interrupted by a Tokugawa governor of foreign affairs whilst celebrating Christmas and New Year in Kanagawa with "not very agreeable intelligence."[1] Threats, he informed Seward, had been made to kill foreign ministers and Pruyn had therefore been asked to return to Edo under the auspices of governmental guards. Significantly, however, Pruyn added that these threats had come from rōnin, whom he described as "moaning men with pretentions to rank, but without means of support."[2]

Though it is easy to see that the description of rōnin provided by Pruyn was likely influenced by government-paid translators, it is a clear example of the interactions between the term rōnin and those in power. Understandings of rōnin, and their position in society, have been created through rōnin interactions with the authorities: most notably, the Tokugawa *bakufu.*[3] This

[1] "Letter from Mr. Pruyn to Mr. Seward, January 10, 1863." In, *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 1st Session of the 38th Congress, 1864.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864. Pp.980.
[2] *Ibid.* Pp.980.
[3] Such institutional understandings are often based around theories by Pierre Bourdieu, who posits that field of power is determinative in any society and that the internal makeup of this field has a structuring function vis-à-vis all other fields. Though this indeed holds in many cases, this chapter will show that this structuring function is only

anchoring of the term within the socio-political environment of the Tokugawa period has meant that understandings of rōnin have not evolved alongside other areas of research,[4] with the term often unproblematically translated as "masterless samurai" or "unemployed samurai."

It is, therefore, necessary to place the Tokugawa understanding of rōnin within the context of a longer genealogy in order to "trace breaks or discontinuities and show how our own arrangements are accidental, not inevitable, the outcome of choices, not the product of design, contingent and therefore temporary and changeable."[5] By doing so this chapter will not only destabilize the Tokugawa understanding of the term rōnin, but it will also lay the groundwork for following chapters by demonstrating that even within the Tokugawa period understandings, experiences of and interactions with rōnin were not one-dimensional and did not conform to institutional conceptions of 'rōnin-ness.'[6] Such an approach will, in addition, complicate the place rōnin hold in contemporary scholarship by disentangling current preconceptions from historical analysis.[7]

This chapter will therefore show that despite the development of a more clearly defined institutional understanding of the term rōnin, the term contained significant ambiguity throughout its pre-Tokugawa history and that this ambiguity continued unabated into the

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one part of a larger constellation. For the interaction of society and the field of power, see: Bourdieu, Pierre. *Logic of Practice*. London: Polity Press, 1990.

[4] Numerous recent works highlight the ways in which accepted ideas on the Tokugawa period should be re-examined in light of preceding periods. For a great example relevant to this work, see: Brown, Philip. *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kaga Domain.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993; Kurashige, Jeff. "Serving Your Master: The Kashindan Retainer Corps and the Socio-Economic Transformation of Warring States Japan." PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2011.

[5] Armitage, David. *Civil War: A History in Ideas.* New York, NY: A. Knopf, 2017. Pp.16-17.

[6] In many ways this chapter will therefore act as an intellectual genealogy of the term rōnin. However, instead of employing it, as Quentin Skinner describes, "as a means of reflecting on how [a term or idea] is currently understood," it will seek to establish the evolution of the term until the early decades of the 17th century. Skinner, Quentin. "Genealogy of the Modern State." *Proceedings of the British Academy,* Vol.162 (2008), pp.325.

[7] For examples of works that have constructively employed this approach, see: Keirstead, Thomas. "Inventing Medieval Japan: The History and Politics of National Identity." *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol.1, No.1 (1998), pp.47-71, on the usage and understanding of the term 'medieval' in Japanese History; and, Reynolds, Susan. *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994, on understandings of the term 'feudal.'

Tokugawa period. It will therefore become clear that the term was not simply a temporary indicator of transience, nor a simple description of malcontent. Instead, it was a highly varied term that since its emergence existed in a complex relation with official ideas on movement, livelihood, disruption and belonging.

In order to highlight these changes and variations in understandings of the term rōnin, the following sections will trace its usage from its earliest appearance in documents from the Asuka period (538-710) to the dawn of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). Though most often understood through its embeddedness in the society of the Tokugawa period, the term can be found in documents predating the Tokugawa period by many centuries. By showing the multiple ambiguities inherent in its usage and the variations within the way the rōnin label was experienced, this chapter will demonstrate that the term already had significant intellectual baggage by the time Tokugawa state was established.

## Early Rōnin: Land and Livelihood

The emergence of the term rōnin can be directly linked to the emergence of the early Imperial state in Japan between the fourth and sixth century, as it attempted to project its ambitions beyond the provinces close to the capital. Undertakings such as the creation of family registers and tax quotas were, therefore, attempts by the central state to assert its power in the provinces. By registering people, one could rule them and, perhaps more importantly, tax them. The focus of these projects was then to situate people in understandable and stable units, which would be the base for a stable and dependable source of income. In order to accomplish this, these early

state-building initiatives had to dissuade the population from peregrination and disruption.[8] As a result, by the Asuka period (538-710) actions by the central authorities focused on restricting movement and binding people to particular places. This push for centralization of power was formalized through the Taika Reforms (*taika no kaishin*) in 646, which laid out a series of changes to institutions, social structure and land-holding.[9] These reforms were followed by other edicts aimed at extending this centralized power and increasing the governability of the realm. By 670 it was noted that in order to rid the land of robbery and vagabondage (*furō)* family registers must be created.[10] These edicts seem to have indeed been effective as in 689 it was proclaimed that "family registers were made and vagabonds (*furōnin*) were regulated."[11] The term *furōnin*, as found here, was thus used to indicate vagabonds, or, more specifically, men who had left their land and place of origin in search for other work, land etc. Later documents show that people in the same position as these *furōnin* were indeed referred to as simply rōnin, indicating that the word *furōnin* was likely an archaic version of the word rōnin.[12] From these documents it becomes clear that the connection between the idea of rōnin and peregrination, something that came to define popular understandings of the population, was already apparent in early references.

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[8] For more on the creation of the early Japanese state, see: Fuqua, Douglas. "Centralization and State Formation in Sixth- and Seventh- Century Japan.' In, Friday, Karl (ed.). *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850.* London: Routledge, 2012; and, Farris, William Wayne. *Japan to 1600: A Social and Economic History.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. Pp.27-52. On the specific creation of early social units, see: Mazzei, Franco. *I Moduli Sociali di Base Nel Giappone Antico: Struttura e Funzioni delle Famiglie (ko) dei Registri Anagrafici Conservati Nello Shōsōin.* Naples: Instituto Orientale di Napoli, 1977.

[9] These Taika Reforms were part of a larger moment of reform but are the single most famous and important expression of period. See: Inoue Mitsuda. "The Century of Reform." In, Hall, John; Jansen, Marius; Madoka Kanai; and Twitchett, Denis (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.1: Ancient Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp.163-220.

[10] Kojima Noriyuki, Naoki Kōjirō, Nishimiya Kazutami, Kuranaka Susumu, and Mōri Masamori (eds.). *Nihon shoki, Vol.3*. Tokyo: Kogakukan, 2006. Pp.284-285.

[11] *Ibid.* Pp.378-379.

[12] The word *furōnin* is written 浮浪人, showing a clear relation to the later use of rōnin, 浪人.

Though these *furōnin* were seen as a liability, since their transient nature made them difficult to control and tax, a document from Kamido district in Bizen province shows that taxation did in fact occur.[13] As noted above, these early years saw attempts by the Imperial center to incorporate the provinces firmly into its sphere of influence and hence a number of edicts to this effect were issued during the first half of the eighth century. One of these was the *kyōri-sei*, which amounted to a re-structuring and re-ordering of the local units of control. In Bizen, these edicts brought about the creation of six districts and the province of Mimasaka. In conjunction with this, the names of provinces, towns etc. were standardized and recorded. This re-ordering had a significant effect in Eastern Bizen as new districts (*gun*) were created and a document, called the *Wamyō ruijushō*,[14] was compiled in order to record the changes to names and taxes. In this document, there is mention of a *furōnin* who was said to be from Kuji district in Hitachi province. This man, however, was recorded as having paid taxes in the form of reams of white cloth in the province of Bizen.[15] Despite the fact that *furōnin* were transient and supposedly unregistered, here we see an example of taxation of such an individual by the imperial authorities, raising questions as to whether these people were indeed fully outside of society's administrative institutions. It is therefore important to note that, notwithstanding this inclusion in the records, the man from Bizen continued to be labelled and identified as a *furōnin* even when paying local taxes.

Similarly, in the *Ruiju sandaikyaku,* a chronicle from the Heian period (794-1192), a number of people who had established themselves in an area around the capital, Heian-kyō,

[13] Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, Vol. 19*. Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1988. Pp.58.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*

modern-day Kyoto, were referred to as rōnin[16] and identified as transients. The entry, dated 897, concerns the annual Kamo festival in the capital, and addresses the issue of allowing the participation of rōnin in the festival procession.[17] These types of communal festivals offered an opportunity to participate in official events and could be used to highlight one's place in the local area. For rōnin to be included in such a local religious festival would indicate a degree of incorporation in the local religious tradition and thus a validation of their place within, not separate from, the community. This incorporation in tax registers and participation in religious festivals complicates our understanding of rōnin as simply outsiders or transients, and highlights the various ways in which they had active social ties to local communities.

At times, as with the above rōnin in Heian-kyō, these social ties had to be negotiated as communities were unsure about how to interact with rōnin seeking a place. At other times, however, the aim was a more permanent and direct incorporation of rōnin into local social institutions. A reference to this permanent social incorporation of rōnin comes from another document, dated 965. When the Sone manor (*shōen*) in Ise, part of the lands belonging to the Daigo-ji temple, was made tax exempt (*fuyusoden*) on the 5th day of the 8th month of Tenryaku 7 (953), new rules for the land were enacted at the same time.[18] The first of these stipulated that any form of tax was to be halted on the manor. Secondly, the *shoji* (manorial administrators) and *yoriudo* (manorially-bound farmers) of the manor were to be exempt from miscellaneous duties.

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[16] The term used in this, and subsequent, documents is rōnin. We can therefore deduce that the shortening of the term *furōnin* to the term rōnin must have taken place somewhere during the period form the late seventh century to the second half of the ninth century. From the usage we can also clearly see that both the references to *furōnin* and rōnin are made in relation to the same demographic.

[17] "Ruiju sandaikyaku." Kanpyō 9, 4th month, 10th day. In, Kuroita Katsumi (eds.). *Kokushi taikei, Vol.25*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1965. Pp.17.

[18] During the period a number of lands held by noble families and temples gained tax-exempt status, and became increasingly autonomously administered and disconnected from central control. Such manors (*shōen*) became an increasingly salient feature of the Japanese polity from the late eight century. See: Morris, Dana. "Land and Society". In, Shively, Donald and McCullough, William (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.2: Heian Japan.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999. Pp.224-235.

Lastly, it was stated that rōnin were to be allowed to settle the surrounding lands. This last rule was most likely influenced by the fact that a number of rōnin had already settled on the lands of the Sone manor, as 54 rōnin were indeed registered on the land in the same year.[19] Despite this resettling of numerous rōnin onto land, however, the main association of the term seems to have been with ideas of the social and geographical unboundedness of those to which the documents referred. The reason for this preoccupation was the fact that most of the documents mentioning rōnin were official records; once resettled, rōnin were no longer presented as a problem. However, it is important to note that many who *did* resettle were at times still referred to as rōnin. The application of the rōnin label thus seems to be more than a simple indication of a temporary state of transience.

Those that did face extended periods of transience were often forced to search for different positions that could provide an income. As a result of this, though rōnin took up various trades and positions, the most frequent reference is to those who were hired as fighting men. Though, as Mary Elizabeth Berry points out, violence was relatively infrequent in Japan during its pre-Muromachi period, there were indeed numerous incidents that fed the need for fighting men.[20] During the late eighth and early ninth centuries, for example, the Heian court strengthened its power in the provinces and in doing so it came to realize that it would have to deal with the numerous Ainu tribes that lived throughout the northern area known today as Tōhoku. For this purpose, the court appointed a *Seii taishōgun*[21] Ōtomo Otomaro in order to

[19] "Keien-ki." Kōhō 2, 8th month, 7th day. In, Tokyo Daigaku Shiryōhensanjo (eds.). *Dai Nihon shiryō, Vol.1.11* Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku, 1959. Pp.450-452.
[20] Incidents such as the Battle of Ōshū (1189), the Kennin Incident (1201), the Jōkyū Incident (1221) and the Genkō Incident (1331), in addition to periodic smaller incidents, created employment opportunities, especially since these moments often resulted in periods of higher military preparedness. See: Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. Pp.xv-xvi.
[21] This title, generally shortened to shogun, was initially specifically bestowed upon the general of the armed forces charged with suppressing the 'barbarian' Northern Ainu tribes. It has therefore been translated as, for example, 'Barbarian-quelling Generalissimo.' Although the relation with protecting the realm from outside influence

suppress the Ainu. In the year 802, Otomaro sent his right-hand man, Tamura Moro, to Mutsu province in order to construct a fortress at Izawa with the goal of subjugating the Ainu. In describing the garrison at the fort, it was recorded that 4000 *furōnin*[22] from various provinces to the east all the way down to Suruga were stationed there.[23] These were likely men who had left their place of origin and were able to take advantage of the expansionist drive of the Heian court. Though rare, such drives towards outward expansion of central power created opportunities for martial employment. In addition to this, martial employment was as much, if not more so, driven by the threat of conflict as it was by actual conflict.

As the Imperial court slowly lost power from the ninth century, the polity became increasingly interwoven with overlapping private authorities (*shōen*) as nobles and religious institutions obtained manors and estates throughout the provinces.[24] Since these landholders mostly resided in the capital, manors and estates were overseen by local corporate entities made up of private warrior groups hired to defend the holdings. Though nominally under the control of the Imperial court, the rise in power and influence of these private warriors led to the creation of an identifiable class of powerful local warriors (*bushi*).[25] The rise in the power of this class of warriors eventually resulted in a national power-struggle between the two most powerful

remained, after the establishment of the Kamukura shogunate (1192) it came to hold a more general connotation of ruler. Therefore, though I will use the term shogun throughout, I will loosely interpret it as 'Protector/defender of the realm,' containing both martial overtones and, in principle if not in practice, the appointment by a higher authority.

[22] This example comes from the period when there was a gradual shift from the use of *furōnin* to the use of *rōnin* (See: n.16).

[23] Lewin, Bruno. "Die japanischen Beziehungen zu den Emishi un das Jahr 800." *Oriens*, Vol.18/19 (1965/1966), pp.312-313.

[24] The emergence of these private estates took place over a long period of time and could be diverse in their manifestation. For a good overview of the way in which the *shōen* operated, see: Segal, Ethan. "The *Shōen* System." In, Friday, Karl (ed.). *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850.* London: Routledge, 2012. Pp.167-177. For an in-depth historiographical view on *shōen* and their emergence, see: Piggott, Joan. "Estates: Their History and Historiography." In, Goodwin, Janet and Piggott, Joan (eds.). *Land, Power, and the Sacred: The Estate System in Medieval Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018. Pp.3-36.

[25] Friday, Karl. "Teeth and Claws: Provincial Warriors and the Heian Court." *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol.43, No.2 (Summer, 1988), pp.155-159.

families; the Taira and the Minamoto.[26] When the Minamoto eventually emerged victorious in the 1180s, they established the Kamakura *bakufu* (military government) underlining the supremacy of the new military class.

The instability and conflict that accompanied the power-struggles of the 12th century opened up opportunities for men looking for martial employment, such as rōnin. As a result, there were increasing references to rōnin in chronicles discussing these events, such as the *Azuma kagami* and the *Genpei seisui-ki*. In these references it becomes clear that the men described had left their place of origin and gone in search of employment. On the 14th day of the 6th month in the first year of Yōwa (1181), a man named Kasahara Yoshinao found employment by joining the Taira cause where he was simply recorded as a man who "used to be a resident of the Shinano province [but] now is a rōnin named Kasahara Heigorō Yoshinao."[27] Just as the Taira recruited Yoshinao, other factions did the same and this ultimately resulted in the term rōnin becoming more intimately involved with politics and martial identities.

It was during this period, therefore, that the use of the word rōnin began to show a change as explicit distinctions started being made between 'unacceptable' rōnin and 'acceptable' rōnin. In the *Azuma kagami*, an entry dated as the 17th day of the 8th month of Bunji 4 (1188) refers to rōnin and relates how a monk named Senkōbō gathered a group described as *akutō rōnin*[28] in order to "raid the area under the cover of darkness."[29] Similarly, another entry, in the same work, on the 30th day of the 2nd month of the following year, again refers to rōnin. Here, however, the

[26] For an in-depth description on this conflict, see: Souyri, Pierre. *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001. Pp.29-47.
[27] Ikebe Yoshikata (ed.). *Genpei seisui-ki, Vol.2*. Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1924. Pp.51-52.
[28] The term *akutō,* literally 'evil bands,' was to gain legal meaning by the mid-thirteenth century according to Morten Oxenboell. The earlier use here is therefore likely to be an adjectival use aimed at highlighting their status as a group of undesirables. See: Oxenboell, Morten. *Akutō and Rural Conflict in Medieval Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018. Pp.57.
[29] Yosano Hiroshi, Masamune Atsuo, and Yosano Akiko (eds.). *Azuma kagami, Vol.2.* Tokyo: Nihon koten zenshū kankōsha, 1926. Pp.156-157.

gathering of rōnin happened for an entirely different reason: "in the provinces of Awa, Kazusa and Shimōsa there was much wasteland and the peasants did not produce grain. This was bad for all, [and so] they gathered rōnin to move there and develop [the fields]."[30] Therefore, although in many cases the men described found themselves employed in a martial capacity, other 'rōnin' were simply landless famers. The concept of rōnin was therefore neither explicitly bad, nor, more importantly, explicitly martial. As pointed out by Morten Oxenboell, the focus on feudalism in the study of early Japan has led to an emphasis on the "rise of the warrior,"[31] leading to the conclusion that warriors were the main component of change during this period. As he rightfully notes, however, "warriors were not the only active participants in the reordering of social and political patterns in the Kamakura period."[32] The continued focus on 'the warrior' as central to the evolution of the Japanese polity throughout this period therefore led to a focus on those rōnin who found martial employment and the increasing 'martialization' of the term.

As the Kamakura *bakufu* set out to reorder the institutional landscape of the realm in accordance with its military character, it appointed *bakufu* officials in the form of *shugo* (military governors) and *jitō* (military stewards) in order to regulate the provinces. Though initially in charge of military concerns, their jurisdictions grew to include matters pertaining to nobles, religious institutions and commoners.[33] As a result, the Kamakura shogunate was forced to balance the opposition from the weakened Imperial institution on the one hand, whilst on the other hand controlling its military officials, as "the ambitions of armed men and local functionaries that brought the shogunate to power always underlay the exercise of public

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[30] *Ibid.,* Pp.175.
[31] Oxenboell. *Akutō and Rural Conflict in Medieval Japan,* 2018. Pp.5.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. Pp.xxi-xxvi.

authority."[34] It was therefore necessary to create complex agreements to balance the interests of the groups holding authority since none of them had the power to truly overcome the others. This balancing act was reflected in the *bakufu*'s response to social issues. On the one hand, the *bakufu* did not want any form of disruption at its center of power in the city of Kamakura. On the other hand, however, it was necessary to present a benevolent face to state authority despite the ambitions of local power holders. Therefore, when dealing with social issues, such as those concerning rōnin, the responses of the *bakufu* needed to be adapted to these two concerns.

The *bakufu* therefore modified its approach to fit with the particular incident at hand and in this decision-making process issues of geography played a large part. In response to the continued presence of rōnin in the capital, for example, the *bakufu* issued an edict on the 20th day of the 8th month of 1247. The edict was an order to the commissioners tasked with the defense of Kamakura and stated that all rōnin were to be summarily expelled from the city.[35] We can see in this edict an early form of the reaction to rōnin that was to be repeated throughout the Tokugawa period; their expulsion from centers of *bakufu* power. On the other hand, the response to rōnin seems to have been very different when rōnin were present in more peripheral areas, away from the capital. Evidence of this comes from an edict issued in 1259, signed by the regent (*shikken*) at the time, Hōjō Nagatoki, and his nephew, Hōjō Masamura, who would follow his uncle in the position of regent in 1264. The edict stated that there was a severe food shortage in various provinces and that some of the commoners were experiencing extreme hardships. The problem seems to have been exacerbated by the fact that various local power-holders did not allow rōnin to gather food from their lands. In response to this, the edict continued by stating that the "prohibitions imposed by the *jitō* are to be quickly lifted so that the lives of the rōnin can be

[34] *Ibid.* Pp.xxv.
[35] Yosano et al. (eds.). *Azuma kagami, Vol.7.* 1926. Pp.26.

saved."[36] From these two edicts it becomes clear that the *bakufu* viewed rōnin in a very different light depending on where they were encountered. Whereas rōnin in the capital were seen as a potential threat to public order and central power, those in the countryside were to be given aid, highlighting the subjective nature of interactions with rōnin. This reaction was bolstered by not only the continued specter of famine that plagued Japan during the thirteenth century,[37] but also the political turmoil at the time. This issue is evident in the second edict by showing that the extension of the authority of the *jitō* had gone far beyond merely military matters by this time and highlights the ability of local powerholders to act independently.[38]

It was, therefore not just the *bakufu* itself that was forced to deal with issues concerning rōnin. Just as the local *jitō* had sought to manage the rōnin on the lands in their care, other local power holders were also forced to manage their presence on their lands. This type of management often took the form of a dialogue between rōnin, local residents and the local authorities. Letters from the Myōōin temple in Kashiragawa clearly show this dialogue as they discuss the need to respond to issues concerning a local group of rōnin. In these letters, the temple, in its position of landholding power, is put forward as a mediator between the local residents and a group of men described as 'Kashiragawa rōnin'.[39] The difficulties involved in such discussions are clear as the letters are spread over a period of 10 years, showing recurrent discussion of the place of rōnin in relation to the local institutions and local population, and their exact role in the local hierarchy.

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[36] "Kamakura bakufu hō (tsuikahō)." Shōka 3, 2nd month, 9th day. In, Satō Shinichi and Ikeuchi Yoshisuke (eds.). *Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1960. Pp.189.

[37] Farris. *Japan to 1600,* 2009. Pp.115-117.

[38] Nagahara Keiji and Birt, Michael. "The Decline of the *Shōen* System." In, Yamamura Kōzō (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.3: Medieval Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp.260-261; Farris. *Japan to 1600,* 2009. Pp.112.

[39] *Kashiragawa myōōin monjo,* Vol.4 and Vol.11. [unpaginated] NDL Digital Archive 青 A25-70.

An edict from 1286 further highlights the ambiguity and complexity that were becoming increasingly ingrained in the term. In an attempt to quell unrest created by local *akutō* ('evil bands'),[40] the *bakufu* forbade anyone from harboring these men. For this reason, it ordered landholders to oversee their lands more thoroughly and remove suspicious elements. Given specific mention in the edict were rōnin who had been resident for a longer time. These men, it stated, were allowed to remain given that they would register their households.[41] There was therefore no simple equivalence between unwanted groups and rōnin, instead the differentiation between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' rōnin was based around their willingness to stay within recognized institutional units. The differentiation created by an emphasis on concepts of registration and 'belonging,' meant that the rōnin label could exist to indicate both settled, registered individuals and wandering transients. It was therefore not necessarily rōnin who were under suspicion of potentially joining the various *akutō* bands, but a particular subset of those labelled rōnin.

The way in which local powerholders attempted to individually deal with rōnin on the lands reflects the increasing potential for individual action on their part. It is this increased potential for local individual action that is often pointed to as one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Kamakura shogunate in 1333.[42] Three years later, after a short attempt at the restoration of imperial power by the emperor Go-Daigo, the Muromachi shogunate was established in 1336, under the headship of the Ashikaga family. However, instead of combatting

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[40] The term *akutō* has often been interpreted by historians as one referring to bands of violent ruffians. Morten Oxenboell, however, shows that by the second half of the 13th century the term had gained legal meaning in addition to more popular understandings, and referred to those committing particular crimes. In addition, those documents referring to *akutō* often did so with political motive by labeling them as bandits. By the fourteenth century the term lost its function as a concept with clear legal and jurisdictional meaning. See: Oxenboell, *Akutō and Rural Conflict in Medieval Japan*, 2018.

[41] "Kamakura bakufu hō (tsuikahō)." Kōan 9, 2nd month, 5th day. In, Sato Shinichi and Ikeuchi Yoshisuke (eds.). *Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1960. Pp.271-272.

[42] Segal, Ethan. "Kamakura and the Challenges of Governance." In Friday, Karl (ed.). *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850.* London: Routledge, 2012. Pp.211.

this increased local autonomy, the Ashikaga incorporated it into the new system of rule. Initially the *shugo* installed in the provinces were given increased jurisdiction and could exercise their power without interference by civil officials. Despite these local duties, however, the *shugo* were also expected to spend extended periods of time in the capital, which made it necessary for them to appoint representatives in order to oversee the territories under their control. For this they turned to influential local strongmen, who they positioned as their deputies. The alliance between these local strongmen and the *shugo*, "involved the exchange of deference (and often military support) for land or income privileges."[43] These strongmen created their own local corporate entities, which governed the provinces in name of the *shugo*. In this way, the Ashikaga shogunate functioned as one component in a system of, what Berry calls, "lordly corporations."[44] These corporations were differently permutated vertical units of power and social identification, which were not based around ideas of status, wealth, occupation etc. As Berry further points out, this system was able to hold together until the Ōnin war (1467-1477), during which the relation between *shugo* and province was irreparable broken. However, even before this period issues already arose from these corporate social constructions.[45]

As a result of these socio-political changes, the term rōnin was increasingly used in relation to these provincial units of authority and different groups of local powerholders, such as local strongmen. As pointed out by David Spafford, though contemporary documents used a number of different terms to refer to these groups of people, a clear distinction is often impossible. Thus, by using a term like local powerholders, "the terminological fuzziness may

[43] Berry. *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, 1994. Pp.xxvii.
[44] *Ibid.* Pp.xxix-xxx.
[45] Aside from the central contentions for power, numerous groups vied for power and jurisdiction locally. Such local disputes were common throughout the Medieval period. See: Oxenboell. *Akutō and Rural Conflict in Medieval Japan.* 2018; and, Spafford, David. *A Sense of Place: The Political Landscape in Late Medieval Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013.

better reflect the ever-shifting, situational quality of the vocabulary at the time."[46] However, this ambiguity was not only found in the terms focused on by Spafford, but was a general reflection of a socio-political environment where relations were often dictated by varying factors such as personal power, geography, relations etc. As a result, Spafford's recognition of ambiguity can also be extended to the term rōnin as their position in society was equally situational and based around a variety of interpersonal relations. Despite such levels of ambiguity, however, a common thread tying those labelled rōnin together emerges throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; their relation to place. The base relation of the groups of local powerholders, now found throughout the archipelago, was to the area they administered, i.e. the land. When removed from this base, they were severed from their income and source of power and became 'unbounded.' It was these men that would most often be referred to as rōnin.

In relation to this, rōnin were increasingly presented as martial figures as they sought to leverage their skills in order to retain their incomes and social positions. In a social world where legitimacy lay increasingly in the ability to exert force rather than in official office, many who were displaced found themselves with little alternative than armed resistance when wrested from their base of power. An example of this focus on the relation between rōnin and the land, comes from the experiences of the retainers of Isshiki Yoshitsura. In 1409 Yoshitsura inherited his father's lands in Mikawa, Wakasa and Tango, as well as a position in the shogunate. In 1440 Yoshitsura was sent to attack the Ochi family in Yamato, however, at the same time he was attacked by the Takeda family and forced to take his own life in the Ryūmon-ji temple in Yamato.[47] His son, Norichika, was subsequently instated in Tango and Ise but Wakasa was seized by Takeda Nobuhide. Soon after, however, the Takeda were forced to elicit the help of the

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[46] Spafford, David. *A Sense of Place: The Political Landscape in Late Medieval Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013. Pp.166-167n91.

[47] Watanabe Daimon. *Rōnin-tachi no sengoku jidai*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2014. Pp.19.

Kuchiki family from Ōmi in order to suppress insurrections by "Isshiki rōnin." These insurrections periodically flared up and are recorded in the years 1452, 1455 and 1466. As a result of these insurrections, the Takeda were forced to come down to Wakasa to quell them on a number of occasions, eventually even resulting in extended stays in the Wakasa area.[48] Despite the fact that their former lord continued to rule in other domains, as the Isshiki were reinstalled in lands in Tango and Ise, these rōnin evidently opted to stay in Wakasa. Their rōnin status was thus not based on their connection to their lord; rather it was based on a connection to the land. Their insurrections against the Takeda should then be seen as resistance against the erosion of their financial base and social position, rather than based around vague sentiments of loyalty.

It therefore becomes clear that, those people who were identified as rōnin were labelled through an interaction between power and land; whether they were people who left the land when they should not have, or people who occupied land that they were expected to vacate, rōnin were identified as those who went against the prevailing configurations of power. In this process, many found the need to refocus their efforts to sustain themselves and their families. It is through this process that the idea of rōnin became increasingly associated with martial occupations and violence.

## Becoming Warriors: Transience and Martial Employment

As shown above, the relation between rōnin and the land, or lack thereof, developed into one of the main determinants of their identity. With the erosion of their claims to particular lands, many were faced with both social and financial uncertainty, forcing some to turn to martial endeavors

[48] *Ibid.* Pp.19-20.

in order to gain an income and get by. However, the identification of rōnin as martial figures was heightened by the *bakufu* view that this population presented at the very least a potential source of disruption and at worst a direct threat to their power. In documents from this politically volatile climate in the second half of the fifteenth century,[49] the term rōnin was frequently applied to those who were opposed, or thought to be opposed, to the established central order. Tellingly, these documents were primarily written by those who supported the Ashikaga *bakufu*. In these contexts, the term rōnin became synonymous with 'rebel' or 'malcontent.' One was identified as rōnin not necessarily through a social position, but through political circumstance. In fact, these issues were apparent in the many interconnected conflicts that sprung up throughout the Muromachi period (1336-1573), and rōnin became increasingly viewed as a threat and as opposed to *bakufu* rule.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, one such conflict erupted between the two branches of the Kira family who ruled Mikawa province, in modern-day Aichi prefecture; the Western Kira who were in Kyoto serving the Ashikaga *bakufu*, and the Eastern Kira who were in Mikawa. At the same time, and interconnectedly, the Maruyama clan turned against the *bakufu* and openly declared its revolt from a stronghold in the Nukata area in Mikawa.[50] As they prepared for its defense, they hired men from the area, many of whom were supporters of the Eastern Kira, and set out to plunder the transports that were meant to bring taxes to the capital. The scholar Hirano Akio puts forward three possible reasons for the revolt.[51] Firstly, he posits that the uprising could have been at the request of Ashikaga Shigeuji in opposition to Ashikaga

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[49] The volatility of the period stemmed in large part from the rivalry between the Ashikaga *bakufu* and the Ashikaga *Kantō kubō* (ruler of the Kantō area). This rivalry within the ruling Ashikaga family created an environment of political volatility. See: Hall, John. "The Muromachi Bakufu." In, Jansen, Marius (ed.). *Warrior Rule in Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp.93-108.
[50] Hirano Akio. *Mikawa Matsudaira ichizoku*. Tokyo: Yosensha MC Shinsho, 2000. Pp.68-70.
[51] *Ibid.*

Masatomo, the ruling shogun at the time. Secondly, he suggests, it could have been directed against Ise Sadachika, a *bakufu* official who had a bad relation with Ashikaga Shigeuji and who had been installed as the official tax collector (*ryōsho*) of Mikawa. Thirdly, he posits, the men involved in the revolt could have been former retainers of the Isshiki family who saw the death of their lord Yoshitsura, described above, as the result of a plot by the Ashikaga shogunate and sought revenge. Though it is impossible to determine which of Hirano's three interpretations is closest to the truth, the commonality between the three theories is the anti-*bakufu* character of the revolt. This is underlined by the ways in which contemporaries described the people partaking in the revolt. Whereas in the chronicles of the Imagawa family these events are described as a revolt by retainers (*hikan-nin*) of the Kira family,[52] another account, by Ninagawa Chikamori, refers to these men as "rōnin from the Nukata district (*Nukata-gun rōnin*)."[53] Significantly, Ninagawa, was an important official in the *bakufu* and during the time of the revolt he was in the employ of Ise Sadachika. By capitalizing on the negative associations of the term rōnin, Ninagawa therefore presented the men in Nukata as rebels whilst simultaneously undermining their relation and claim to the land. This was a potent statement in a time characterized by the conflict between those on the land and absentee landlords.[54]

This use of the term rōnin to indicate opposition to the ruling power, is also seen in the accounts the attack on the Imperial palace, which occurred in 1443, known as the Kinketsu incident. In the diary of Saitō Mototsune, a shogunal official (*hyōjōshū*) at the time of the

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[52] "Imagawa-ki." In, Ōta Toshirō (ed.). *Zoku gunsho ruijū, Vol.21.* Tokyo: Zoku gunsho ruijū kanseikai, 1958. Pp.196-197. Though the account does mention that these men recruited rōnin for their cause, they themselves are presented separately as retainers.

[53] "Chikamori nikki." Kanshō 6, 5th month, 18th day. In, Takeuchi Rizo (ed.). *Zoku Nihon shiryō, Vol.10.* Tokyo: Meibundō, 1985. Pp.297-298.

[54] Imatani Akira and Gay, Suzanne. "Muromachi Local Government: *shugo* and *kokujin.*" In, Yamamura Kōzō (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.3: Medieval Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp.231; Noda Taizo and Eason David. "Warriors and Estates in Muromachi Period Harima." In, Goodwin, Janet and Piggott, Joan (eds.). *Land, Power, and the Sacred: The Estate System in Medieval Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018. Pp.427-440.

incident, for example, the men involved in the attack are explicitly described as rōnin.[55] During the attack, the palace and a number of offices were set ablaze, as men unsuccessfully sought to attack and kill the emperor Go-Hanazono. In the end, realizing their failure, they made off with the three sacred imperial treasures, which were later recovered.[56] Since none of these men were individually identified, it is unlikely they were referred to as rōnin based on their social position at the time. Rather, the term rōnin was once again used liberally to refer to those in opposition to prevailing institutions of authority. What both these examples indicate, is that during this period a politicization of the term rōnin was solidified. Instead of being used to describe an identifiable social position, it became applied as a subjective description of one's relation to prevailing centers of power.

This political malleability of the term rōnin comes further to the fore in the Shiba family conflict of 1466. This conflict, like many of the time, was one waged over the headship of a powerful family who, along with their followers, were split in their loyalty between two claimants to the title of household head; Shiba Yoshikado and Shiba Yoshitoshi.[57] After the death of the previous family head, it had been decided that Yoshikado should be the heir, especially since Yoshitoshi had lost the favor of the *bakufu* after failing to exert control over the province of Echizen. This decision, however, had sparked discontent amongst those in support of Yoshitoshi, such as the influential statesman Ise Sadachika and Kikei Shinzui, a Buddhist official in the politically important Shōkoku-ji temple. In the chronicle written by Kikei Shinzui, the *Inryoken nichiroku*, it is recorded that the retainers of Yoshitoshi were often unfairly referred to

[55] "Saitō Mototsune nikki." Kakitsu 3, 9th month, 23rd day. In Takeuchi Rizo (ed.). *Zoku-Nihon shiryō, Vol.10*. Tokyo: Meibundō, 1985. Pp.59-60.
[56] *Ibid.* Pp.60.
[57] Shiseki Kankōkai (eds.) *Inryoken nichiroku, Vol.2.* Bunshō 1, 7th month, 16th day. Kyoto: Shiseki Kankōkai, 1954. Pp.666-667.

as rōnin by Yoshikado and treated as criminals.[58] Luckily for Yoshitoshi, Sadachika and Shinzui had the ear of the shogun and, as a result, the decision regarding the headship of the Shiba family was reversed. Yoshikado was removed from his newfound position of power and Yoshitoshi was installed in his place. This chronicle shows the political potential the employment of the term 'rōnin' had to undermine opponents directly. At the same time, however, accusations of being rōnin could be leveraged to provide evidence of one's own mistreatment and political oppression. What comes forward from all of these examples of conflicts during the second half of the fifteenth century, is the fact that those who were referred to as rōnin were not just those unable to continue their previous duties to a lord or stay on their land. Increasingly, rōnin were those who, faced with these issues, were the ones to resort to resistance and violence.

Whilst the above conflicts were essentially family feuds, they had wide-reaching significance beyond direct family relations and spilled into the larger socio-political realm of the fifteenth century. The Hatakeyama family feud, for example, had particularly overt 'national' significance as an event that was closely connected to the beginning of the Ōnin War (1467-1477). In addition to, and as a result of, bringing about political turmoil, feuds such as this were also significant because of the numerous men they placed in the position of rōnin. The Hatakeyama feud was caused by a dispute over the appointment of an heir after the head of the family, Hatakeyama Mochikuni, had initially adopted his own younger brother, Mochitomi, and declared him as heir. However, in 1448 a biological son of Mochikuni turned 12 and was put in the position of Mochikuni's heir instead. Mochitomi did not oppose this change of appointment and passed away in 1452 without any landholdings, leaving behind his own son named

[58] *Ibid.*

Yasaburō.[59] As a result, the retainers who had supported Mochitomi all left their homes and became rōnin under the protection of Yamana Sōzen. Unhappy with their new situation, the men who had supported Mochitomi decided to take matters into their own hands. In the 8th month of the same year, 1452, they attacked the residence of Mochikuni. The attack, however, was ultimately unsuccessful as Mochikuni was able to escape to the house of Hatakeyama Yoshitada.[60] Many of the family feuds of the time, such as this, not only fueled unrest, but also created a population of displaced men, who had been forcibly removed from their bases of power and who were left with little recourse but to engage in violent opposition.

Many of the families involved in these feuds were situated around or in the capital and due to this it became the center-point for many of these violent conflicts. As a result, the authorities were compelled to set up 'peace-keeping' forces designed to stop the violence in the capital. Tasked with this during the Ōnin years (1467-1469) was the head of the *samurai-dokoro*,[61] Kiyogoku Mochikiyo. Yet, as the post was mostly ceremonial, the true head of affairs at the time was an official who served under Mochikiyo named Taga Takatada. Takatada, however, was not provided with enough personnel to be able to keep the peace in the capital and, unable to fulfil his duties, was forced to personally hire other men for the job, the majority of whom were, ironically, rōnin.[62] As many of these rōnin were hired on a contract basis, the position offered little security and other opportunities often seemed more profitable. Many of them therefore either avoided these positions or sought to 'combine' them with joining one of the

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[59] "Morosato-ki." In, Zoku gunsho ruishū kanseikai (eds.). *Shiryō sanshu kokirokuhen, Vol.84*. Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1988. Pp.127.
[60] *Ibid.* Pp.122-123.
[61] The *samurai-dokoro* was an office during the Kamakura and Muromachi shogunates. Its main roles were to guard the shogun and serve as a criminal court. Additionally, it would assume command of shogunal vassals (*gokenin*) during wartime.
[62] Futaki Kenichi. *Chūsei buke girei no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1985. Pp.269-275.

warring factions who had caused the violence in the first place.[63] With battles raging in Kyoto and 'peace-keeping units' not functioning, many of the people who lived there were forced to flee and often found themselves without anywhere to go. In the diary of Nakamikado Nobutane, a powerful courtier, in 1504, it is noted that "there is fighting in Nishioka, and we can see the smoke from various places destroyed by fires. In the South, the roads can't be traversed, so the eastern banks are clogged with innumerable refugees."[64] Though many fled the capital, some instead went there to find shelter. As a result, the authorities, such as they were, were faced with the virtually impossible task of distinguishing between those who should be allowed in the capital and those should not. Making matters worse was the questionable reliability of those put in charge of keeping the peace. The authorities therefore continually pointed out that association with the wrong people would be heavily punished. In 1550, an edict put up in the capital read, "Those who allow rōnin to remain, even if discovered after the fact, will receive punishment."[65] As Berry points out, the term rōnin was thus not necessarily easy to define, but was instead associated with other generally negative terms, much in the same way that rōnin were included in general terms for undesirables during earlier periods. By this time then, the term rōnin had become incorporated into a constellation of 'similar' terms referring to men identified as mercenaries.[66]

Though the conflicts between the various sides vying for supremacy provided numerous opportunities for the reemployment of rōnin, their rehiring was not a given. During the creation of new retainer bands or the expansion of existing ones in the Sengoku period (1467-1603), rōnin

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[63] "Hekizan nichiroku." In, Tokyo Daigaku shiryōhensanjo (eds.). *Dai-nihon kokiroku*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2017. Pp.72-73.
[64] "Nobutane kyoki." Eishō 1, 9th month, 4th day. In, Kyoto-shi (eds.). *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi, Vol.3*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979. Pp.313.
[65] "Kamikyo monjo". Tenbun 19, 7th month, 10th day. In, Kyoto-shi (eds.). *Shiryō Kyōto no rekishi, Vol.3*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979. Pp.321.
[66] Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, 1994. Pp.61.

were often at the bottom of the hiring list. When looking at the creation of the retainer band of the Ukita family of Bitchū, it becomes clear that in hiring the preference was given to those who could claim a closer relation to the lord in question. Ukita Naoie settled in Otogo castle in 1544 as a retainer to Urakami Munekage. Most of the families who would occupy the highest position in the future Ukita command structure, such as the Togawa, Oka and Nagafune, were already close to Naoie when he was hired by the Urakami. During his time as an Urakami retainer, he would further collect men around him who would form the base of his future retainers. After Urakami was defeated, many of his retainers were also taken up in the Ukita retainer band as they expanded their power. However, only after even this did not provide sufficient manpower did Naoie actively set about hiring rōnin.[67] It therefore becomes clear that rōnin were in no way guaranteed employment during this period, likely due to the perception that they were after material gain or part of bands of 'ruffians.' Only when power-holders increased their power to such an extent that other avenues of recruitment were depleted, did they turn to rōnin.

There are varying schools of thought on how to view the process of 'national unification' that took place during the sixteenth century, but most scholars focus on the creation of a *single* central authority as the defining feature of the era, which formed a source of political, social and economic change.[68] Though the focus in this process is often on the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1600), centralization, albeit on a local scale, was already a component of change during the Sengoku period.[69] It must be noted that the creation of a legitimizing 'ideology,' tax reforms, the surveying of land and the removal of vassals from their fiefs, which are often attributed to the

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[67] Taniguchi Sumio. *Okayama-ken seishi no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Hanawa shobō 1964. Pp.15.
[68] Brown, Philip. *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kaga Domain.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993. Pp.25-27.
[69] Nagahara Keiji. "The Lord-Vassal System and Public Authority (Kōgi): The Case of the Sengoku Daimyo." *Acta Asiatica,* No.49 (1985), pp.34-45.

'three unifiers,' had already been taking place on a local level.[70] As these earlier developments were crucial for the extension of these models to a national level, seeing these two time-periods as distinct from one another creates an over-emphasized sense of sudden social change. The process of centralization took place over a long period of time and continued into the Tokugawa period as ideas of vassal/commoner separation, state ideology, and tax and duties showed signs of slippage, and formed at a different pace in different places.[71] As the rōnin label existed in the 'gray areas' of many of these issues, the formulation of their position was intimately tied-up with the process of state-building.

Despite these social and political changes therefore, the rōnin label remained ambiguous and the same reluctance to hire rōnin and efforts to curtail their rehiring can also be found in documents from the the late Sengoku period and Azuchi-Momoyama period. Though at times driven by different motives, the effects of such documents remained the same. The primary type of such documents are the various house-codes, which were created to regulate behavior of the retainer bands and (to various degrees) set down rules and laws for this. Looking at the house-codes written during earlier decades of the 16th century, such as the Date house's *Jinkaishū* (1536) or the Rokkaku house's *Rokkakushi shikimoku* (1567), there are no articles directly referring to the treatment of rōnin.[72] However, in the Chōsogabe house-code written in 1596 rōnin are explicitly referred to in article 89: "It is strictly forbidden to employ rōnin without petitioning the lord and obtaining permission."[73] Although this is the only house-code known to

[70] See: Matsuoka Hisato. "Saigoku no sengoku daimyō: Ōuchi-uji wo chūshin toshite." In, Nagahara Keiji, et al. (eds.) *Sengoku jidai: 1550-nen kara 1650-nen no shakai tenkan.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1978. Pp.22-48; Nagahara, Keiji. "The Lord-Vassal System and Public Authority," 1985, pp.34-45; and Ooms, Herman. *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Status, Power, Law*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.
[71] Brown. *Central Authority and Local Autonomy*, 1993. Pp.25-27.
[72] Kobayashi Hiroshi. *Date-ke jinkaishū no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Tokyo Sōbunsha, 1970. Pp.236-269; Satō Shinichi (ed.). *Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, Vol.3.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966. Pp.259-272.
[73] "Chōsogabe-shi tosho." Bunroku 5, 11th month, 15th day. In, Satō Shinichi and Ikeuchi Yoshisuke (eds.). *Chūsei hōsei shiryōshū, betsu.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965. Pp.300.

have survived from the period between 1570 and 1600, it is probable that others would have included similar clauses. This is made even more likely as the problem was also addressed in Hideyoshi's Separation edict (*mibun tōsei rei)* of 1591 and the census edicts (*ninbetsu aratame*) of 1592. The effects of these edicts are widely held to have resulted in a clearer distinction between the warrior and peasant populations, especially in combination with the sword-hunt edicts (*taikō no katana-gari*) issued earlier, which were an attempt to disarm the peasantry. Part of the Separation edict stated that villages were to either expel or report people, especially rōnin, who had arrived after 1590. The edict was first issued in the Ōmi province, and was extended nationally by the following year.[74]

Despite this general tendency towards dissuading people from hiring rōnin, there remained opportunities for reemployment or settlement. Many of these were, however, predicated on the need for individuals with particular skills or abilities, be they martial or otherwise. Such skill-based hiring during the late sixteenth century was often directed at men who showed skill in battle through acts of bravery or valor. Thus, rōnin risked their lives in actions that would either see them reappointed in an official position or dead. In the year 1566, the attack on Ukita Naoie's Mistuboshi by the kin of the lord of Matsuyama castle presented just such an opportunity for high-stakes action on the part of rōnin. Since, the lord of Matsuyama had been appointed to his position by Naoie and had been given one of his daughters in marriage, Naoie saw this attack as an act of treason. He decided that instead of sending his army to take care of it, he would have both the lord of Matuyama, as well as all of his kin murdered. The two assassins entrusted with this task were the rōnin brothers Endō Matajirō and Endō Kisaburō who were from Kamo village in the Tsudaka district. Despite the difficulties and dangers of the mission, they were successful. As their rewards, Matajirō was granted the name Ukita Kawachi

[74] Ando Seiichi. *Edo jidai no nōmin.* Tokyo: Shibundō, 1959. Pp.134.

and conferred land worth 4500 *koku*.[75] His younger brother, Kisaburō, was granted the name Ukita Naori and received a stipend of 3000 *koku*.[76]

Although martial ability was the primary skill that rōnin could leverage in their search for employment during this period, there were other skills that could facilitate their rehiring. Rōnin could go in search for skilled employment on an individual basis (as will be highlighted in the following chapter), but the hiring of skilled men also occurred on a larger scale. Though many of the reactions to rōnin were colored by the need to curb their movement and disruptive potential, others saw them as a resource, as an entire demographic with specific skills who were in need of an opportunity to use them. In 1592, Oda Hidenobu became the lord of Gifu castle and in the same year hired Mabuchi Yozaemon to create a new harbor town to promote commerce between Gifu and other domains. The result was the creation of the harbor of Kagashima. In order to further promote the establishment of the town, Hidenobu exempted the harbor from any miscellaneous taxes and prohibited shipped goods on the Nagara river from arriving at any other port. In addition, he stated that the town should be made to flourish by actively enticing rōnin to relocate there and settle.[77] However, the success of Kagashima was not to last. In 1640, a large flood changed the flow of the river and made it difficult to reach Kagashima. Added to this was the fact that because of riparian along the river over the years it had become far easier for larger ships to reach further inland. The result was that many ships started avoiding the Kagashima restrictions and trade was rerouted to Kano.[78] Thus, despite a generally negative attitude towards the rōnin population by this period, there were instances where these men were actively recruited, sometimes even in large numbers. Not only does the example of Kagashima show that

[75] A *koku* is a unit of volume that when applied to rice was roughly equivalent to the amount of rice it takes to feed one person for a year. See Appendix.
[76] Taniguchi, *Okayama-ken seishi no kenkyū*, 1964. Pp.11.
[77] Gifu-shi (eds.). *Gifu-shi, chūsei 2*. Kanda: Ōshū shobō, 1966. Pp.217
[78] *Ibid.,* Pp.278.

rehiring could depend on specific circumstances demanding large volumes of skilled workers, but it also highlights that characteristics associated with rōnin could make them especially suited for certain undertakings.

The above examples of rōnin finding both martial and non-martial employment show that these individuals were, throughout the Sengoku period, able to obtain reemployment through leveraging the skills they possessed. Their skills not only provided them with opportunities to be rehired into the ranks of the various retainer bands, but also made them a valuable demographic for immigration into areas needing skilled populations (a topic further explored in chapter 4). However, many of these opportunities were driven by the social dynamism of the late sixteenth century. The creation of a new national authority under Toyotomi Hideyoshi by 1590 initially curtailed much of this dynamism as it sought to extend its rule across the Japanese archipelago.

After Hideyoshi had pacified and unified most of Japan, he set off to fulfil his foreign ambitions. His plan was to invade Ming China via the Korean peninsula, which would give his troops a straight road to the Ming capital.[79] In order to accomplish this he ordered all the greater lords to muster their troops and established a headquarters at Nagoya in Kyūshū from where the fleet would set out to Korea. Though initially successful, the war effort soon met with tenacious Korean resistance and Ming aid to the Korean war effort which eventually forced the Japanese troops to return to their base created in Pusan. In the last months of the war a list was created of

[79] This event is given different names in the various countries involved. Though different appellations are also used, in Japan is generally referred to as the 'Wars of Bunroku and Keichō', and in Korean it is generally known as the 'Imjin War.' In Western scholarship it is generally referred to a variation of the 'East Asian War of 1592-1598.' For more information on the war, see: Kim-Haboush, Ja-Hyun. *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016; and, Swope, Kenneth. *A Dragon's head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. A new project 'The Aftermath of the East Asian War of 1592-1598' run by prof. Rebekah Clements also seeks to explore the aftermath of the war, see: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. "Aftermath of the East Asian War, 1592-1598." pagines.uab.cat/aftermath.

the units stationed in Pusan, presumably in preparation for the order to return to Japan.[80] Amongst the listed troops gathered in Pusan there are both the names of large warlords who had helped Hideyoshi during his campaign of national unification, such as Katō Kiyomasa and Nabeshima Naoshige, as well as those who had been subjugated by him in the process, such as Mōri Terumoto. However, next to these well-known names it is stated that there were multiple units made up of rōnin stationed at Pusan. The various warlords were divided in two groups and, in addition to the regular troops of Hideyoshi's retainers, each contingent also had a force of rōnin attached. As these troops weren't listed in initial troop registers, it is probable that these men had lost their lord in the field and as a result ended up in the position of rōnin. The fact that these men were not simply incorporated into other armies shows the unwillingness of other lords to hire them. With the potential for new lands that the campaign had initially promised now seeming unlikely, rōnin were generally seen as a possible financial burden.

Rōnin were, however, not only created in battle during this period. Though attainder (the removal of lords from the lands assigned to them by the ruling authority) is often brought up in relation to the early years of the Tokugawa period,[81] attainders were part of the Japanese social experience before 1600. Apart from the attainders and reductions in retainer band size as a result of conquest, there were already a large number of attainders during the last decade of Hideyoshi's rule, resulting in the unemployment of many retainers. Some major examples include those of Bitō, Harima, Kimura, Kunohe, Ōwari, Higo and the fiefs of Mōri Hideyori, Hashiba Hideyasu and Toyotomi Hidetsugu.[82] These attainders created numerous rōnin who

[80] "Shimazu-ke bunsho, Vol.2." In, Tokyo Daigaku Shiryōhensanjo (eds.). *Dai Nihon komonjo: ie wake 16.* Tokyo: Tokyo University, 1953. Pp.272-273.
[81] Attainder and its effects will be explored in-depth in chapter 3.
[82] Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *Hideyoshi.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp.126-127.

were forced to look for other modes of employment, often adding to the tensions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

## Ordering the Realm: Creating 'Tokugawa Rōnin'

After the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, his position was transferred to his young son Toyotomi Hideyori. However, as Hideyori was young and inexperienced, some of the former vassals of the Toyotomi did not see him as a capable heir. As a result, a conflict erupted between those who supported Hideyori and those who supported one of the most powerful former vassals of Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu. In the end, Ieyasu, after defeating the Toyotomi forces at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, was given the title of Shogun in March 1603 by the Emperor, Go-Yōzei. This effectively made him the clear ruler over all of Japan, giving him the opportunity to consolidate his power and reassign various local lords as he saw fit. Many of the lords who had supported him at Sekigahara were rewarded and given larger domains. Strong or important opponents were now 'given' their domains by the Tokugawa, thus making them indebted and subordinate to them. However, many minor lords who had opposed the Tokugawa lost their lands outright and were not newly enfeoffed, as a result of which many of these men and their retainers were effectively left to their own devices. Though attainder was not a new phenomenon, the constant conflict which had previously provided new opportunities of employment had come to an end with the establishment of the new Tokugawa government. While periodic upheaval continued to occur, the enduring warfare that had raged during the Sengoku period was at an end.

Although ongoing processes of consolidation and unification had started to give shape to the Japanese polity, it was the early years of the Tokugawa shogunate that cemented the characteristics that would create what we now refer to as 'Tokugawa Japan.' Socio-political institutions, foreign relations, ideological guidelines etc., though subject to some change throughout the Tokugawa period, were given shape during this formative period. Besides systems of registration and affiliation, one of the main socio-political institutions was that of the status system. This system was in many ways a continuation of the separation edicts issued by Hideyoshi in the 1590s, but was more fully conceived of as a way to order society. In this way, "for most purposes […] social identity was mediated through the group," even if "status groups of early modern Japan were neither internally homogenous, nor unitary in their conception or operation, they were nevertheless coherent markers of identity."[83] However, the transition to the new social realities of the Tokugawa world was not without its issues. As Dennis Gainty describes, the change was in certain ways a paradoxical one when it came to the creation of the system's new elites since, "as samurai were codified as an elite and exclusive class, their role as purveyors of violence – seemingly their raison d'être – was dramatically curtailed by a rebellion-wary *bakufu*."[84]

Relatedly, the existing ambiguity in the term rōnin continued despite its increased identification with martial employment and violence. In fact, during this period, the ambiguity inherent in the identification of rōnin was extended. As Michael Birt highlights, the identity of sixteenth century warriors, for example, was defined by "the very diversity and ambiguity of

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[83] Howell, David. *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Pp.25.

[84] Gainty, Dennis. "The New Warriors." In, Friday, Karl (ed.). *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850.* London: Routledge, 2012. Pp.344.

what constituted samurai status."[85] Not only were armies at the time made up of very diverse groups of people from different backgrounds and social classes, but those included in the more confined retainer bands (*kashindan*) were equally diverse, as there was an increased need to focus on matters beyond warfare, such as domain management and commerce.[86] The imposition of a status system was therefore, in many ways, a construction based around ideology and perceived social relations that did not accommodate previous or consequent social change and ambiguity. However, despite this constructed nature, the system became a powerful determinant for social interaction and ordering.

The status system was therefore conceived of to create pockets of governability and taxability in the face of lacking state capacity. The status system cannot, therefore, be understood without its attendant networks of interdependence. In effect, its focus lay on the institutions that made the status system governable, such as the village (*mura*), guild (*za*) or household (*ie*) etc. The most important part of the status system was not the attendant identities but the institutional frameworks within which they were placed. In many ways, understandings of status were locally contested and articulated within given parameters. Consequently, they were, in certain ways, procedurally generated. As long as the institutional framework stayed in place, the identities and positions within them could be reconfigured. As long as the appearance and function were performed in the appropriate way, the authorities could turn a blind eye to any internal discrepancies.[87]

Despite such internal discrepancies, such a status-based system provided a certain level of intelligibility by enabling people to interpret their social reality through the reduction of

[85] Birt, Michael. "Samurai in Passage." *Journal of Japanese Studies,* Vol.11, No.2 (Summer, 1985). Pp.372.
[86] For examples, see: Kurashige. "Serving Your Master," 2011.
[87] Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.7.

identities to social types.[88] A status-based system thus established the axes along which inequalities in social relations could be organized since status is, in and of itself, a form of inequality centered around differences in social esteem and respect. For Max Weber, status therefore creates a ranking in which one status group is seen to be more socially significant and worthy of respect than others.[89] For such a system to operate, and for it to be intelligible to all who are a part of it, there needs to be a shared understanding of the social significance of each status group. The basis for this is irrelevant, as long as it is understood and accepted by all who make up the society within which these status distinctions operate. Therefore, the Tokugawa institutions of authority "viewed society as consisting of dozens and dozens of status layers piled in hierarchical order. Each individual was expected to play the type-role assigned by birth and occupation; his behavior and consumption should be according to his level."[90] Whilst where one lived was not necessarily a determinant of status, it was at the very least perceived as indicative. In this way, samurai identity became, in part, based on consumption patterns only sustainable through urban living. The warriors of the Tokugawa period had "transformed from landholding village notables into stipend-receiving urban consumers, [who] generated and depended upon dense market constellations."[91] To be considered *bushi* one had to adopt these consumption patterns, if not in truth then at least outwardly.

In a status system designed to place people in clearly defined units, rōnin were a group that presented a particular challenge due to their inability to form an internally defined and

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[88] For more theoretical expressions of this concept, see Simmel on social types and Bourdieu on field and habitus interaction. Simmel, Georg. *Grundfragen der Soziologie: Individuum und Gesellschaft.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984; Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.
[89] Ridgeway, Cecilia and Cornell, Shelley. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs," *Social Forces,* Vol.85, No.1 (Sep. 2005), pp.431.
[90] Shively, Donald. "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Modern Japan." *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol.25 (1964-1965), pp.143.
[91] Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *Information and the Nation in Early Modern Japan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006. Pp.28.

outwardly recognizable social cohesion. Like other 'fringe' or semi-status groups, which were seen as disruptive to the social fabric of society, their existence as part of recognizable social units could be accommodated through the creation of hybrid social positions. Whilst in many cases two status indicators could be combined in order to accommodate an 'anomalous' social group, for example *chōnin-hyakushō* (merchant farmer), this was predicated on the understanding that the constituent parts, both merchant and farmer, were independently intelligible and constituted only a small adaptation to the system's standard forms. However, the rōnin label acted differently since it did not independently place one within the status system but rather left the position ambiguous. When attached to another status label, the term rōnin therefore served as a type of sub-status marker which could be differently employed and differently interpreted. It is this process that led to the creation of 'modularized' social positions such as rōnin doctor (*rōnin ishi*), rōnin sub-retainer (*rōnin baishin*), rōnin attendant (*yoriki rōnin*), and peasant rōnin (*rōnin hyakushō*). It is therefore crucial to recognize that rōnin were not a homogenous group. Rather, the term rōnin was utilized as a sub-status marker in relation to a highly varied group of people who would not necessarily have identified with one another as a group, both due to their diverse past circumstances as outlined above and their present situations, opportunities and occupations.

In the early decades of the seventeenth century, however, it is crucial to note that the status system, so associated with Tokugawa period, was still in the process of active and ongoing construction. These early decades were a period of consolidation for the newly created Tokugawa government, which still faced a number of roadblocks in the creation of what we now refer to as the Tokugawa political and social system. Not only was the term rōnin internally ambiguous, but the larger system within which it existed was itself in a period of evolution. It

was with the siege of Osaka (1614-1615) that Tokugawa institutions, which in many ways defined the system itself, were infused with a more ossified idea of what to be rōnin entailed.

## Osaka and the Creation of the 'Anti-Tokugawa' Rōnin

As stated above, it was after the victory at Sekigahara in 1600, that Tokugawa Ieyasu became the de facto ruler of Japan. In 1605, only two years after he was officially recognized as shogun, he abdicated and passed his title to his son Hidetada. Not only was this abdication a clear sign of change from a period of upheaval to one of peace but it was also a potent signal of the beginning of a dynasty that was to rule Japan for the next two-and-a-half centuries. Despite this handover of power, however, Ieyasu remained the dominant figure in Tokugawa politics and put his efforts into ensuring the continuation of Tokugawa hegemony.[92] It was during this period that many of the social changes that would come to embody the Tokugawa polity were made. Despite the fact that the long period of open warfare had ended with the victory at Sekigahara and the reshaping of the Tokugawa polity, a potent threat to their hegemony remained. The heir to Hideyoshi, his son Hideyori, was still alive and resided in the castle at the city of Osaka. Hideyori, though in a weakened position, therefore still presented a focus for those in opposition to the new Tokugawa regime to rally around. As a result of this, many of those in power were acutely aware of this situation and felt that the growing tension between the Tokugawa government and its supporters, and those who still saw the heir of Toyotomi Hideyoshi as the legitimate leader of Japan had to came to a head. As early as 1601 people were well aware of the fact that with Hideyori still alive, conflict was inevitable. In a letter addressed to Imai Sokun, a rich merchant and close confidant

[92] Enta Yūji, et al. "Soshikiron de yomitoku Edo jidai." *Keiei Shirin,* Vol.47, No.4 (Jan. 2011), pp.92; Totman, Conrad. *Tokugawa Ieyasu: Shogun.* San Francisco, CA: Heian International Publishing Company, 1983. Pp.91-94.

of Ieyasu, Date Masamune, daimyo of the Sendai domain, voiced his concern over the situation.[93] In the letter he predicted that the rōnin who were created after Sekigahara would focus around the Toyotomi in Osaka and become a problem. In a second letter sent to Imai three days later, he again states that these men, who he refers to as 'useless people' (*itazuramono)*, would take the opportunity when they saw it to come forward and pledge their allegiance to Hideyori.[94]

The premise for the renewed armed struggle between the Tokugawa and the Toyotomi eventually came a decade later. In 1610, Hideyori pledged his support for the rebuilding of Hōkō-ji temple in Kyoto, which had been the site of a large service ordered by Hideyoshi in honor of his ancestors in 1595. After 1595, however, the temple had suffered numerous disasters, such as an earthquake and a fire, and was therefore in a serious state of disrepair. In addition to its rebuilding, Hideyori ordered the casting of a bronze bell to be placed at the temple. The bell was to be dedicated in a ceremony in 1614 but this was halted by the Tokugawa.[95] An inscription on the bell contained a phrase in which the character for peace was placed in between the two characters that made up Ieyasu's name. This phrasing was seen as a provocation that supposedly secretly implied that true peace could only be reached by 'breaking' Ieyasu and, by implication, the Tokugawa as a whole. Ieyasu had this perceived slight investigated by scholars and monks at various temples in Kyoto, as well as other scholars such as Hayashi Razan. All indicated in their reply to him that the inscription was improper at best and could be read as openly rebellious at worst.[96] In addition to this part of the inscription they also found other parts that they viewed as

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[93] "Letter from Date Masamune to Imai Sokun," Keichō 6, 4th month, 18th day. In, Osakajō Tenshukaku (eds.). *Ronin-tachi no Osaka no jin.* Osaka: Osakajō Tenshukaku, 2014 [Henceforth *ROJ*]. Pp.119-120.
[94] *Ibid.* Pp.120-121.
[95] Totman, Conrad. *Tokugawa Ieyasu: Shogun.* San Francisco, CA: Heian International Publishing Company, 1983. Pp.157.
[96] *Ibid.* Pp.157.

seditious. Even though Hideyori sent an envoy, Katagiri Katsumoto, to convince Ieyasu of the fact that he had meant nothing by the inscription, Ieyasu decided to take to the field to rid himself of the Toyotomi once and for all. In response, Toyotomi supporters gathered around the castle in Osaka where Toyotomi Hideyori resided and resolved to hold the castle against the Tokugawa forces.

Despite the fact that the public reason for the conflict was attributed to the personal slight and threat of usurpation through the dedication on the bell at Hōkō-ji, a central issue in not only the initial conflict, but also its re-ignition after the initial winter siege, was the hiring of large numbers of rōnin by the Toyotomi side. This highlights the Tokugawa's acknowledgement of the disruptive potential of large numbers of rōnin seeking new ways of generating an income. Numerous letters sent to *bakufu* officials informed them of the gathering of rōnin in Osaka. A letter from Itakura Katsushige, for example, informed the Tokugawa of the internal struggle within the Toyotomi camp and that some there, like Ōno Harunaga, were not in favor of the attempts to find a diplomatic solution to the Hōkō-ji incident.[97] Katsushige also repeatedly informed the *bakufu* of the fact that the Toyotomi were actively recruiting rōnin in the Kyoto and Osaka areas.[98] As a result of this, the shrine, which was positioned at a strategic point between Kyoto and Osaka, was urged to place notices and guards to prevent men, weapons and provisions from being sent to Osaka. However, despite these attempts to stop, or at least interfere with, the preparations of the Toyotomi at Osaka they continued unabated. These preparations did not go unnoticed by those on the Tokugawa side and in a letter to Nakai Masakiyo, Nakai Toshitsugu wrote that, "the situation in Osaka is that walls are being put up on the riverbanks along the outer

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[97] "Letter from Itakura Katsushige to Honda Tadamasa." Keichō 19, 9th month, 28th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.121.

[98] *Letter from the Kyoto shoshidai Itakura Katsushige*. Keichō 19, 10th month, 7th day. Tokyo Historiographical Institute: Rikyū Hachimangu monjo IV-27, 3071.62-29-4; "Letter from Itakura Katsushige to Iwashimizu Hachimangu." Keichō 19, 10th month, 21st day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.121-122.

citadel. At the mouth of Tennō-ji a moat is also dug, watchtowers are being built, and other battle preparations are made. Rōnin from all around are gathering. The number of troops in the castle is steadily increasing and is already above 30,000."[99] Thus the Tokugawa were not only aware of the growing preparations by the Toyotomi, but also of the fact that their strength was heavily bolstered by the large number of rōnin who were gathering at Osaka.

Many of these rōnin would have been former lesser retainers who found themselves in their position due to a variety of reasons. Some had been rōnin since the later years of the Azuchi-Momoyama period. Others had become rōnin after the defeat at Sekigahara. Still others had been made rōnin by the large number of attainders undertaken by the Tokugawa government during its first decades. These men were, therefore, often disenfranchised individuals looking to improve their lot in life by fighting for the Toyotomi. They were formed into units under middling former retainers or men who had spent years as rōnin themselves, like Susukida Kanesuke. Kanesuke had been a rōnin for much of his early career until he was able to gain a position as a horse-guard (*umamawari*) in the army of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.[100] After Hideyoshi's death he served Hideyori and was put in charge of a unit of lesser rōnin at Osaka. Despite losing the fort at Bakuro during the winter campaign, he is said to have redeemed himself during the summer campaign by fighting valiantly and dying on the battlefield.[101] The value of men such as Kanesuke was therefore doubled as they not only fought for the Toyotomi, but became integral to forming parts of the rōnin army at Osaka. It was, however, not only former lesser retainers who joined the Toyotomi. Many of the rōnin making up their army had been powerful lords themselves before their lands had been confiscated or reduced by the Tokugawa. Their support

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[99] "Letter from Nakai Toshitsugu to Nakai Masakiyo." Keichō 19, 10th month, 11th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.122-123.
[100] "Missive to Susukida Kanesuke." Bunroku 4, 12th month, 2nd day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.124.
[101] The siege was split in two phases. The initial siege took place in the last months of 1614, and is generally referred to as the winter campaign. After a brief truce, hostilities resumed in the first months of summer of 1615, called the summer campaign.

of the Toyotomi cause was vital and the Toyotomi were well aware of this fact. A list of a number of rōnin that joined the Toyotomi and the rewards that they were offered upon a Toyotomi victory was included in the *Yamaguchi Kyuan Banashi.*[102] It is clear that the rewards on offer were not insignificant, as Sanada Nobuyuki, for example, was promised lands worth 500,000 *koku*. Chōsogabe Motochika, who had his holdings in Tosa stripped by the Tokugawa and had been forced to make a living teaching calligraphy to children in Kyoto, was offered his entire holdings back. In light of their reliance on the rōnin troops, it is no surprise that Conrad Totman goes so far as to say that by the end of the winter campaign, the main drive of the Toyotomi side to continue the hostilities was based around rōnin concerns: "private interests of rōnin had replaced Toyotomi ambitions as the principal concern of the castle defenders."[103] Thus, he sees the rōnin assembled under the Toyotomi banner as the main advocates of renewed efforts to shore up defenses and restart hostilities. This willingness to continue the fighting, despite a seemingly disadvantageous position is not surprising as they were the ones who had most to lose. Whilst the Toyotomi and their retainers were offered lands and employment during the truce between the campaigns, the rōnin would be left with nothing. The influence that the large numbers of rōnin had is made even clearer by the fact that a Toyotomi representative, sent to discuss the truce, proposed that Ieyasu should increase the holdings of Toyotomi Hideyori in order for him to provide for the many rōnin that had joined his side. The Tokugawa reply left no uncertainties as to the fate of the rōnin in the case of a compromise, as Ieyasu replied by asking; "What loyal service have these rōnin shown me that should I reward them?"[104]

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[102] "Yamaguchi Kyuan banashi." In, Asakura Haruhiko, and Fukazawa Akio (eds.). *Kanazōshi shūsei, Vol.11.* Tokyo: Tokyodō Shuppan, 1990. Pp.357.
[103] Totman. *Tokugawa Ieyasu*, 1983. Pp.171.
[104] Tsuji Tatsuya. *Edo kaifu*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974. Pp.231.

The threat of defeat, or of an unfavorable settlement, was further heightened for many of the rōnin due to their full reliance on Osaka at the time. Not only did their future employment depend on concessions by the Tokugawa, but their entire family was at stake. As the gathering of troops under the Toyotomi had taken place over a number of years, many of the rōnin daimyo had moved their entire residences to Osaka. Even lesser rōnin had taken their wives and children with them to Osaka in such numbers that the Ōgata-chō neighborhood was specifically designated to house them.[105] It is therefore unsurprising that it was these men who came to dominate Toyotomi policy, as they would be left with nothing in case of either defeat or surrender. The truce between the winter and the summer campaigns, however, had forced the Toyotomi to tear down most of their defenses as a gesture of goodwill towards the Tokugawa. As a result, they were left without the great defensive moats and ramparts at the start of the summer campaign of 1615, making defeat all but inevitable. A day after the fall of Osaka castle, Itakura Katsushige wrote to the caretaking officials in Edo to inform them of what had happened. He stated that all men of importance had died in battle and that the castle had burnt down. Specifically, he pointed out that Gotō Matabei, Takashi Takenori and Sanada Yukimura had all died in battle. Furthermore, he warned that 10,000 to 20,000 survivors were fleeing towards Kyoto.[106]

The conflict at Osaka removed the only viable alternative to the Tokugawa government and thus the opportunity for large scale conflict. However, it also highlighted the danger that large numbers of rōnin presented. This was not overlooked by the Tokugawa and, in conjunction with an active hunt for those who had fought at Osaka, a large number of anti-rōnin edicts were issued during the following years. As many of the refugees were suspected of being rōnin who

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[105] *Ibid.* Pp.358.
[106] "Letter from Itakura Katsushige to Sakai Tadatoshi." Keichō 20, 5th month, 8th day. In, *ROJ.* Pp.123-124.

had sided with the Toyotomi, these edicts were put in place not only in the Kansai area, but also further afield in places such as Murakami domain, in modern-day Niigata prefecture.[107] The conflict therefore resulted in a heavily tainted understanding of rōnin within the new Tokugawa world. Despite the fact that rōnin had fought on both sides during the conflict, the potential for anti-*bakufu* violence had been made clear. Having dealt with the Toyotomi threat, the Tokugawa now faced the challenge of addressing rōnin as a problem of peace, rather than one of war.

## Conclusion

In spite of the fact that rōnin are most often linked to the Tokugawa period, when Tokugawa Ieyasu was made shogun in 1603 the term had already existed for almost a millennium. This chapter has therefore demonstrated that the term's use during the Tokugawa period was in fact shaped by prior understandings and manifestations. By repositioning the term within its longer history, it has been possible to counter dominant, fixed and negative interpretations of rōnin. Instead, this chapter has brought the inherent ambiguities within the term rōnin to the fore; ambiguities which, as subsequent chapters will show, continued to influence everyday interactions with those identified as rōnin throughout the Tokugawa period.

Despite the malleability of the term, however, what has also been determined is that certain characteristics remained associated with the term across a long temporal span. The emergence of the term rōnin, as one created through the interactions between power and land had a continued influence on its usage. More specifically, central to the understanding of the term was the relation between family and land in a particular area, or lack thereof. This focus led to

[107] See for example: *Niigata-ken shi, 6.* Pp.188-189.

the description of rōnin as vagrants, drifters or unbounded as they moved away from particular geographical areas and out of specified social units.

As by the 12th century increased social and political upheaval created potential avenues for employment, rōnin became increasingly identified with martial activities. Their unboundedness made it possible for many of them to take advantage of moments of upheaval, as these presented opportunities for employment and social advancement. Though the term could now simply be used to indicate men who had found employment in warrior bands, the nature of these conflicts also provided a political use for the term. Its association with 'unboundedness' and 'non-belonging' made it a useful term in conflict often centered around jurisdiction. It was therefore used to highlight negative connotations as the various claimants to power labelled each other with such negativized terms. However, despite this, many others sought to remain in their positions working the land or sought out other opportunities for a livelihood. Thus, descriptions and understandings of the term coalesced around a particular group of rōnin; those most related to central concerns, and apparent to both the larger population and the government at the time.

In the seventeenth century, despite a widely used popular understanding, the term rōnin remained decidedly subjective. Yet as the Tokugawa government established itself as the unopposed hegemonic power, rōnin became defined through what the Tokugawa viewed as 'not belonging' or 'unacceptable.' The creation of the Tokugawa state therefore brought with it the creation of the 'Tokugawa rōnin'; men who, though institutionally defined, spanned a large gray area of pre-existing social positions, now considered incompatible with the new social realities.

The importance of the varied meanings imbedded within the term rōnin will be highlighted in the following chapters in which the vastly divergent experiences of people who were all described as rōnin will be examined. In tracing its history, this chapter has highlighted

that the unification of Japan and the resultant creation of the Tokugawa state had a significant impact on the understanding of the term rōnin. The initial separation of *bushi* and commoner, and later the creation of a status order presented rōnin with a particular set of challenges. As a result, they often found themselves in a social gray area, forced to find a place within the new social order. With the fall of Osaka, one thing became abundantly clear: if one wanted to find new employment, they would have to do so within the context of the newly created Tokugawa order.

# Chapter 2

## *Coming to Peace*

In a letter dated the 7th day of the 5th month of 1615, a day before the eventual fall of Osaka castle, Hosekawa Tadaoki, daimyo of Kokura domain and commander in the Tokugawa forces, informed an unknown addressee that the battle had been decided. He continued by proclaiming that after the battle at Tennō-ji gate and Okayama gate, "in an instant, the world had become tranquil and peaceful."[1] The inevitable confrontation predicted by Date Masamune 14 years earlier had come to an end,[2] and the Tokugawa reign was more secure than ever now that the Toyotomi had been eliminated. Echoing the sentiments of Tadaoki, the era name was changed to Genna, "foundation of peace." The era of warfare had truly ended and the polity now faced new challenges in an era of 'peace.' For some, however, this newfound peace did not become a reality, something which was no truer than for those who fled Osaka in the wake of defeat; the 'Osaka rōnin.'

For those in the Tokugawa government Osaka had been a clear sign. Despite the fact that victory meant that there was no single opposing 'warlord' left for opposition to coalesce around, another issue had become very clear; rōnin, especially in large numbers, could form a serious

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[1] "Menkōshuroku." In, Sone Yuji. *Osaka no jin to Toyotomi Hideyori.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2013. Pp.219.
[2] "Letter from Date Masamune to Imai Sokun." Keichō 6, 4th month 18th day. In, Osakajō Tenshukaku (eds.). *Rōnin-tachi no Osaka no jin: Tokubetsuten.* Osaka: Osaka Tenshukaku, 2014 [Henceforth *ROJ*]. Pp.119-120.

threat to Tokugawa power. The 14 years between Sekigahara and Osaka had seen a number of incidents involving rōnin, as seen in chapter 1, yet the numerous rōnin joining the opposing side at Osaka had been a poignant wakeup call. Though none in power disputed that something had to be done about this issue, none could agree on how to exactly tackle it. As a result, the decades following Osaka saw a number of attempts to deal with rōnin, but a fully formed policy never materialized.

As issues involving rōnin became tied-up with other social and economic problems encountered by the young and developing Tokugawa state, rōnin became emblematic of the larger issues it faced; establishment of power, social ordering, elite insecurity and the change from a war-time to a peace-time economy. Yet in the decades after the siege of Osaka, rōnin transformed from simple enemy combatants to a systemic social problem and old approaches no longer had the same results. In the end it took two attempted coups during the Keian and Jōō years (1648-1655) that were linked to groups of rōnin before a concerted effort by those in power was made to address what they saw as the underlying reasons for what they interpreted as the 'rōnin problem.'

This chapter will examine early attempts by both domainal and national government to solve the issues concerning rōnin and will highlight the divisions in the upper echelons of power on how to go about this. Additionally, it will highlight that the change in approach to rōnin and the 'rōnin problem' was heavily reliant on the evolution of the early Tokugawa polity as the conception of both was shaped through a multiplicity of internal and external factors. In doing so, it will foreground not only the incidents which formed the central narrative around which the idea of a 'rōnin problem' was created but will also trace the development during this period of an increasingly crystalized definition of the rōnin label.

## From Problems with the System to Problems within the System

After his victory at Sekigahara in 1600, as discussed in chapter 1, it took three years before Tokugawa Ieyasu took the title of shogun. Though his position as *primo inter pares* was firmly established by then, on the 12th day of the second month of Keichō 8 (1603) Ieyasu was appointed as shogun by emperor Go-Yozei. The appointment was not only an indication of Ieyasu's power but also of the fact that this was the start of a new era of rule by the Tokugawa. Despite this indication of central control, it would take a number of decades to not only assert power but to institutionalize it across the Japanese archipelago.[3] In bringing together the Japanese domains and organizing the realm under its control, however, the Tokugawa created situations in which some felt that they no longer had a clear place within the new system. As shown in the previous chapter, the change in rulers resulted in enormous changes to the geo-political landscape of the Japanese archipelago, subsequently creating large numbers of rōnin. Yet rōnin were not the only issue to be addressed during the early decades of the Tokugawa period. Instead, they were part of a constellation of issues highlighted through the drive towards political and geographical unity.

Following in the footsteps of unifying processes initiated by its predecessors,[4] the consolidation of the Tokugawa state necessitated that elements that were threats to the polity

[3] This process of asserting power over the archipelago happened in both physical and ideational form. In their grab for central power the 'three unifiers' all adopted and adapted a variety of legitimizing discourses. The Tokugawa continued this during their reign, not simply adopting legitimizing discourses, such as for example neo-Confucianism, but actively adapting them to their needs. See: Ooms, Herman. *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

[4] For the ways in which the previous 'unifiers,' Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, approached the process of unification, see: Lamers, Jeroen. *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord, Oda Nobunaga Reconsidered.* Amsterdam: Hotei publishing, 2000; Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *Hideyoshi.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

were extinguished, or at least neutralized. Consequently, during this period the *bakufu* felt the need to deal with groups that had the ability to pose a challenge to the legitimacy of *bakufu* power. Thus, the attempt to neutralize the court, the persecution of Christians and engagements with rōnin, all occurred within this framework of securing the legitimacy of the new government, especially after any Toyotomi challenge was extinguished in 1615. The Imperial Court was dangerous to the *bakufu* because of its historical legitimacy to rule and continued cultural capital,[5] and thus it had the potential to become an anti-*bakufu* rallying point (which eventually it indeed did). Christians, on the other hand, promoted a world-view that did not necessarily need the *bakufu*, in addition to which they were seen as being dangerously tied-up with foreign powers.[6] This combination of faith with a powerful and influential institution behind it would have reminded many in power of the Buddhist *honganji* sect which had been violently suppressed a number of decades earlier.[7] Rōnin similarly presented certain dangers to *bakufu* legitimacy. On the one hand, they were seen to cause unrest and be a source of violence, something that presented a problem for a regime that was predicated on its ability to pacify. On the other hand, was the fact that rōnin, as they intermingled with all strata of society and sought new ways to generate a livelihood, could be seen to openly dilute the projected separation between the warrior status group and others. This was unacceptable for a regime that was, at least outwardly, based around the solidification of an identifiable ruling warrior elite.[8]

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[5] Butler, Lee. *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467-1680: Resilience and Renewal.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002. Pp.4-6; Butler, Lee. "Tokugawa Ieyasu's Regulations for the Court: A Reappraisal", *Acta Asiatica,* Vol.54, No.2 (Dec. 1994), pp.509.

[6] Paramore, Kiri. *Ideology and Christianity in Japan.* London: Routledge, 2009. Pp.30-32.

[7] Tsang, Carol. *War and Faith: Ikkō Ikki in Late Muromachi Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007. Pp.11-43.

[8] The creation of this elite took place during the late sixteenth century and continued into the early Tokugawa period when it contracted and solidified. This status became increasingly confined to those from specific family lineage and engaged in positions of public military service. See: Howland, Douglas. "Samurai Status, Class, and Bureaucracy: A Historiographical Essay." *Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol.60, No.2 (May, 2001), pp.353-380; and, Pitelka, Morgan.

When looking at these various issues in conjunction to one another it becomes clear that the so-called 'rōnin problem' was, however, not necessarily a unique issue facing the *bakufu*.[9] Rather, it became one of the many threats identified by the Tokugawa regime during its early state-building efforts. Rōnin, foreigners, Christians, the Imperial Court and former Toyotomi supporters all formed groups identified as potential threats to Tokugawa hegemony. In order to address such groups, it was therefore necessary to present them as a coherent, and threatening, whole. Despite the fact that all of these groups had their own ambiguities, inconsistencies of definition, and internal schisms, it was possible to produce broad enough definitions that could contain discrepancies. In the case of rōnin, however, these discrepancies were so large and the group so amorphous that any definition remained inadequate in representing reality. Though in legal and political rhetoric rōnin did become defined as a clear group, this definition was based more around *bakufu* concerns than a reflection of the rōnin social position, and as a result the most outwardly present minority of those labeled 'rōnin' became symbolic for the many.[10] However, this narrowing of the idea of rōnin did not affect the actual application of the social label as it remained used in a large variety of circumstances. Many rōnin had little or nothing to do with those who the official use of the term crystalized around. For this discrepancy to exist there was thus a tacit understanding of the division between 'acceptable' rōnin and 'unacceptable' rōnin, the latter of which the various *bakufu* and domainal edicts sought to remove as a threat or disturbance. 'Acceptable' rōnin were, however, not often dealt with on a 'national' level and domainal governments were frequently left to deal with this group. It is

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"The Early Modern Warrior: Three Explorations of Samurai Life." *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* Vol.16 (2008), pp.34-36.

[9] These issues have been linked in a variety of contexts as the Tokugawa sought to establish their rule. Conrad Totman, for example, stated that Tokugawa Ieyasu "hoped to have solved both the missionary problem as well as the rōnin issue at Osaka." Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. Pp.55.

[10] This will be explored in further detail in chapter 6.

therefore that, for the domains, the majority of rōnin gradually transformed from dangerous rebel to social burden.

This change in the domainal understanding of rōnin was, however, a process that took time and came about through the ongoing interactions between rōnin and various social institutions. The upheavals during the early Tokugawa period created moments in which this was most visibly played out and foremost amongst these were the events in Osaka in 1614-15 and their aftermath. Shortly after the fall of Osaka many rōnin who had supported the Toyotomi fled across the Japanese archipelago and attempted to find places where they could rebuild their lives after the recent defeat. These Osaka rōnin highlight the ways in which various official institutions were forced to deal differently with rōnin depending on social standing. Yet what they also demonstrate are the changes in institutional approaches to this group and the way in which they transformed from an 'outside' threat to an internalized issue.

## Rōnin Beyond Osaka

After Osaka, the threat to the hegemony of the Tokugawa had been effectively erased. Many had died in the conflict and "lest the lesson be missed, Ieyasu ordered the heads of dead rōnin posted along the highway to Fushimi."[11] Those who had been lucky enough to escape faced persecution as the *bakufu* set out a number of laws and edicts that would ensure that those who had fled Osaka would not be able to easily reintegrate, and as a result, would be easily apprehended.[12] In other documents too, the treatment of rōnin featured prominently. Following Ieyasu's victory, for example, the Tokugawa government issued the *buke shohatto*, the laws for warrior households.

[11] Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. Pp.55.
[12] Kyoto-shi (eds.). *Kyoto-shi no rekishi, Vol.5: kinsei no tenkai.* Tokyo: Gakugei Shorin, 1972. Pp.44.

These laws were intended to leave no question as to what was expected from daimyo and their retainers. In it, it was clearly stated that households were not to hire any suspicious characters, clearly pointing to the rōnin that had participated in the siege.[13] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the inclusion of such articles in codes for warrior households was nothing new and had been widespread during in the pre-Tokugawa period. However, its inclusion in the *buke shohatto* made it a nation-wide injunction, one that seemed to significantly narrow the opportunities for reemployment and resettling open to rōnin, especially in conjunction with edicts that limited rōnin in their movement and settlement.[14] Not only did the government issue these general law codes and edicts, however, but in doing so it also established a clear framework of what was expected of individual daimyo in their service to the Tokugawa.

In the wake of its victory, the *bakufu* sent out letters to inform those vassals who had not been involved in the fighting of the outcome. One such letter, sent by Itakura Katsushige to Shimazu Iehisa, not only informs him of the fact that the Tokugawa were victorious, but it also leaves little doubt as to what Katsushige saw was the reason for the conflict in the first place: "Osaka employed a large number of rōnin [and] this went against the wishes of the shogun."[15] The conflict had erupted and "in the battle on the 7th [of the 5th month] the Osaka rōnin were defeated."[16] Despite their defeat, however, these rōnin were still seen as a source of potential disruption and anti-Tokugawa sentiments. A second letter sent on the same day, the 16th of the 5th month, therefore contained further instructions on what should be done if these rōnin were encountered. This letter, written by Yamaguchi Naotomo, relays orders issued by two high-

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[13] Yoshimoto Shinji. *Kinsei buke shakai to buke shohatto,* Tokyo: Gakuyō Shōbō, 1989. Pp.26-28.
[14] For examples, see: Umeda Yoshihiko (ed.). *Nihon shūkyō seidoshi, vol.3.* Tokyo: Tōsen Shuppan, 1972. Pp.374; Kyoto Machibure Kenkyūkai (eds.). *Kyoto machibure shūsei: betsu, Vol.2.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989. Pp.186,190
[15] "Letter from Itakura Katsushige to Shimazu Iehisa." Keichō 20, 5th month, 16th day. In, *ROJ.* Pp.123-124.
[16] *Ibid.*

ranking *bakufu* officials, Doi Toshikatsu and Sakai Tadakatsu, and was sent to a number of daimyo. The orders were that all those who had fought for the Toyotomi and had fled were to be apprehended. If these men were found in one's domain, they should be arrested and sent to Kyoto.[17] As Shimazu Iehisa had not been at Osaka during the time of the siege, he received his letter directly from the Tokugawa government. Other daimyo, who had been part of the Tokugawa forces at Osaka, sent out these orders themselves to the vassals managing their domains in their absence. On the same day that Iehisa was sent the letters above, the daimyo of Kaga domain Maeda Toshitsune wrote orders to his retainers back home. In the letter, he instructed them that none were allowed to take in new people and that those found to have given shelter to anyone who might have fled from Osaka were to be severely punished.[18] In Kishū domain, just south of Osaka, the search for those who had fled from Osaka after the fall of the castle on the 8th day of the 5th month was similarly quickly initiated. On the 15th of that month, a letter was sent to the heads of all villages in the Naga district at the southern end of Kishū.[19] The letter ordered that all rōnin found in the district were to be reported. In addition to this, high officials of the daimyo of Kishū, such as Asano Nagaakira, were made to sign a joint letter promising that they would, under no circumstances, hide or provide shelter to any rōnin.[20]

It was, however, not only those who had fought at Osaka that were subject to these edicts. In the letter by Yamaguchi Naotomo discussed above, it was further stated that the order to arrest rōnin should be strictly followed and that it applied not only to the men themselves but also any of their associates; be they man, woman or child.[21] As shown in the previous chapter, the wives and children of those who joined the Toyotomi had also settled in Osaka and, as a result of this,

[17] "Letter from Yamaguchi Naotomo to Shimazu Iehisa." Keichō 20, 5th month, 16th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.141.
[18] "Letter from Maeda Toshitsune." Keichō 20, 5th month, 16th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.141-142.
[19] Wakayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai. *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei*. Wakayama: Wakayama-ken, 1990. Pp.34.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] "Letter from Yamaguchi Naotomo to Shimazu Iehisa." Keichō 20, 5th month, 16th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.141.

many of them were forced to flee when the castle fell. The wife of Sanada Yukimura, who had fled from Osaka after the death of her husband and eldest son, managed to find shelter in the village of Ito in Kishū. However, someone provided information as to her whereabouts and on the 19th, 11 days after the fall of Osaka, and she was apprehended together with her daughter Akuri.[22] Not only those who had joined their spouses at Osaka were under suspicion but those who stayed behind as their husbands went to Osaka were equally in danger of being apprehended. In 1614, a rural samurai (*jizamurai*) named Tsumura Yohei from the village of Hiro in Kishū, chose to serve under the Toyotomi in the defence of Osaka, despite the fact that he had been assigned a stipend of 200 koku in 1601 by the then daimyo Asano Yoshinaga. As a result of Yohei joining the Toyotomi forces, his wife and children were forced to hide in the village of Tomioka in Awa domain after the Toyotomi defeat. However, as the search for Osaka rōnin extended throughout the archipelago, Yohei's wife and children were found and apprehended.[23]

Other members of the families of those who joined the Toyotomi at Osaka were also confronted by the authorities. Interestingly, some of these were seen as more than mere bystanders and were instead presented as active instigators in the acts of their family members. Mori Gosuke's older brother, for example, had decided to join the Toyotomi and fight for them. However, after the fall of Osaka, Gosuke, who had stayed in Kishū, found himself apprehended by the domainal authorities. In the legal suit against him it was alleged that his brother had acted on Gosuke's orders when he decided to join the Toyotomi as a result of which Gosuke was

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[22] *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei.* 1990. Pp.36.
[23] *Ibid.* Pp.35-36.

stripped of his stipend and retainer status, thereby becoming a rōnin. Gosuke was not, however, alone since a further 15 people are known to have become rōnin this way in Kishū.[24]

The fact that many villages were willing to inform the government on anyone who was potentially fleeing Osaka was not surprising, as the repercussions for not informing could be severe, even if one was not actively hiding the fugitives. After a Buddhist priest named Takanao Gibo who had fled Osaka was discovered in the village of Ōkubo in Kishū, it was not only he who was apprehended and incarcerated, but so were a number of villagers on the grounds of failing to inform the domainal authorities of his presence.[25] It is therefore unsurprising that some people decided to err on the side of caution with regards to informing. This overly cautious attitude led to the arrest of a number of family members of Hayashi Rokurōzaemon from Sakai by the Kishū domainal authorities. Travelling to Kishū for business, Rokurōzaemon's family members had decided to stay at a local inn in one of the villages they passed through. Some of the villagers took them, incorrectly, to be rōnin fleeing Osaka and informed the authorities. It was only after Rokurōzaemon sent a letter of guarantee stating that they had no connection to Osaka and detailing the reasons for their travel that his family was released from custody.[26] As shown by these examples, anyone who was suspected of a relation, however minimal, to those who had decided to join the Toyotomi at Osaka were under suspicion by the *bakufu*, thereby demonstrating the seriousness with which the *bakufu* viewed the presence of rōnin during this period of the Tokugawa state's infancy.

Despite this suspicion and the continued issuance of edicts prohibiting the hiring of rōnin, many rōnin still seem to have been able to find ways to resettle and obtain reemployment. They were, however, often forced to find ways that would generally go 'officially' unnoticed.

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[24] *Ibid.* Pp.36.
[25] *Ibid.* Pp.35-36.
[26] *Ibid.*

Therefore, one of the most important assets to a rōnin in finding reemployment was one's personal network. Since many of the warriors on either side at Osaka had known each other and/or were related through intermarriage, this could cross former allegiances. It is therefore that Okiku, a former maidservant to Hideyori's mother Yono-dono, writes in her memoires that her father, Yamaguchi Mozaemon was only able to find reemployment through his friendship with Tōdō Takatora, who had switched sides at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 to join the Tokugawa. After his misfortune in 1615 Mozaemon was able to ask for help from his friend and Takatora granted him holdings worth 300 *koku* in his domain of Tsu.[27] This type of rehiring though personal connections, though in defiance of Tokugawa edicts, allowed some to avoid having to joining the large number of other rōnin looking for any work they could get. Mozaemon was not the only former Toyotomi supporter who had been able to obtain reemployment soon after Osaka and many others were similarly able to continue to move in the higher echelons of society. However, as will become clear from the following example, for every rōnin able to use their personal connections to retain their high social position, there were others who were not so fortunate.

In 1636, Fukutomi Monzaemon penned down his personal experience of the events in 1614-15 and their aftermath.[28] He writes that at the time of the siege, he had been in the service of Mōri Katsunaga, who was a vassal of the Toyotomi. He recalls that on the 7th day of the 5th month of Keichō 20 (1615) he was stationed on the south-western side of the main hall of Shitennō-ji where trenches had been dug to aid in their defense of the keep. Initially, the battle was an exchange of gunfire but, Mozaemon writes, the armies soon clashed. During the close-combat fighting Monzaemon found himself faced by "an unnamed enemy commander carrying a

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[27] "Okiku monogatari." In, Nakamura Michio, and Yuzawa Kōkichirō (eds.). *Zōhyō monogatari.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1963. Pp.157.

[28] "Memorandum written by Fukutomi Mozaemon to Hori Ichibei." Kanei 15 5th month, 17th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.134.

spear and wearing a red battle coat (*jinbaori*).”[29] After Monzaemon had managed to defeat this opponent he went over to a nearby ally named Takaki Sakon to establish him as a witness to the kill. However, as this happened, their left flank collapsed, forcing all of the Mōri forces to retreat to the castle. This left Monzaemon and Sakon on the battlefield and, seeing their predicament, they decided that they too had to retreat. They took two horses that had been left behind on the battlefield and managed to return to the castle. After the fall of Osaka, they fled and “became rōnin together,”[30] spending time travelling in search of a place to go. They split up at a certain point and Monzaemon states that he heard that Sakon went to live and work as a farmer in Obara village in Yamashiro province. He never saw Sakon again. Though Sakon had decided to attempt to make a living through farming, Monzaemon seems to have been able to retain connections to the higher strata of society. Three years before Monzaemon wrote his memorandum, in 1633, he was invited to a meeting at the house of Miyata Jinnojō, a descendant of a Mōri family house elder (*karō*) who was now a retainer of Matsudaira Nobutsuna. During the meeting, Monzaemon got together with other men who had fought for the Mōri and they exchanged stories about the day that Osaka fell and Monzaemon’s meeting with Sakon.[31]

The above recollection of Monzaemon not only highlights the different routes taken after Osaka and the role that personal connections, or lack thereof, could play, but it also shows that the central position towards Osaka rōnin seemed to have softened over time. Monzaemon’s meeting at the house of old Toyotomi supporters would, in earlier years, have raised eyebrows among many in the Tokugawa government. Moreover, Miyata Jinnojō, who hosted the meeting, was not only a former Toyotomi supporter but was actually related to Ōno Harufusa, one of the main commanders of the Toyotomi forces at Osaka. However, as seen from the examples above,

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Ibid.*

despite prohibitions on hiring Osaka rōnin, well-connected individuals were still able to find reemployment. Aware of its inability to truly enforce many of the injunctions it had issued, the *bakufu* quickly began to loosen the restrictions it had imposed.

Already in 1617, the *bakufu* issued orders stating that former Toyotomi supporters, the majority of whom were now rōnin, should not be looked upon as criminals forever and that hiring them would be allowed.[32] However, the order continued by adding a caveat that made a clear distinction between who was and who was not to be hired. Men who had been longstanding Toyotomi vassals were given a pardon. On the other hand, men who had newly joined the Toyotomi forces at Osaka were exempt from this pardon and as such they were not to be hired.[33] To the *bakufu,* rōnin were therefore not a single group but an internally divided population. On the one hand, there were the loyal and able retainers who had been unlucky enough to be on the losing side. These rōnin, likely very recognizable to many in the Tokugawa government who had themselves been rōnin during the period of national unification, were put forward as the 'acceptable' rōnin. On the other hand, however, were those identified as disloyal ruffians who were anti-Tokugawa and a danger to the public order. This differentiation in the definition of what a rōnin was not only facilitated the 'rehabilitation' of men who those in power viewed as having a respectable background, but also created opportunities for a broader interpretation of the other, 'unacceptable' group. Whilst the first group was clearly identified with *bushi* status, for the second this link was uncertain and tenuous.

This tenuousness of the relation between status identity and the rōnin label was increased by the fact that, as outlined in chapter 1, ambiguity was not only embedded in the rōnin label but the Tokugawa polity was still in its formative stage. The problem with the partial pardon of

[32] "Letter by Ando Shigenobu, Doi Toshikatsu, Honda Masazumi and Itakura Katsushige." Genna 3, 8th month, 24th day. In, *ROJ.* Pp.143.
[33] *Ibid.*

Osaka rōnin was therefore that is was aimed at social elites and did not affect other areas of society where amelioration between former Tokugawa and Toyotomi supporters could create serious issues. The seriousness of this is underlined in a letter received by *bakufu* officials in September 1619. The letter was sent by a man called Tarōemon who had been the headman of the village of Todai, in Kita Nagashima in Settsu, modern-day Hyōgo, and stated that he wanted to file a lawsuit. In the letter, he describes that during the conflict at Osaka, a large number of people in his village pledged their loyalty to the Toyotomi. Some even had gone so far as to leave the village and join the defenders inside Osaka castle. Tarōemon himself went to the Tokugawa forces instead. During the cease-fire after the winter campaign, however, he was prevented from returning to his village by Toyotomi supporters and, as a result, "ended up as a rōnin in Fushimi."[34] Although after the summer campaign he was finally able to return to his village, those who had gone to fight for the Toyotomi at Osaka castle continued to be hostile towards him. One day there was a quarrel between them and Tarōemon, and one man had threatened to kill him. Fearing for his life, Tarōemon was forced to leave the village again. As if these allegations weren't enough, Tarōemon also alleged that these men were embezzling tax rice.[35] Not only does this letter show that there was popular support for the Toyotomi and that some people decided to act on this but, more importantly, it indicates that both Tarōemon and the men who had fought for the Toyotomi were referred to as rōnin. Despite the fact that all of them were villagers and had not been, nor would be, considered of warrior status, they were equally and seemingly un-problematically referred to as rōnin, both by Tarōemon himself as well as those officials in charge of the case. The letter did not go unanswered and the reply, which was sent in the beginning of the 10th month of the same year, had the seals attached of a number of

[34] "Tarōemon sojo," Genna 5, 8th month, 12th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.111-112.
[35] *Ibid.*

important Tokugawa officials, namely Itakura Katsushige, Honda Masayoshi, Doi Toshikatsu and Ando Shigenobu. In it, they demanded that a man named Soemon, who had been identified by Tarōemon as the main offender, send them a letter with a rebuttal to the charges as soon as possible. Whether or not he did so, however, is not known.[36]

As the influence of the Tokugawa-Toyotomi conflict therefore reverberated into the 1620s, it was clear that only addressing the issue at the elite level was insufficient and five years after the partial pardon for Osaka rōnin was put in effect, orders were issued stating that all of "those who had fought at Osaka were to be pardoned without exception."[37] In a letter to Kuroda Tadayuki written in 1623, he is told by Itakura Shigemune, a high *bakufu* official, that there was now a general pardon for all who fought on the Toyotomi side at Osaka. Shigemune continued by simply explaining that the reason for this was that "a decade had passed and that thus the time for a pardon had come."[38] This pardon was, therefore, in many ways a realignment of law and practice since, despite edicts forbidding it, the rehiring of rōnin had continued as daimyo sought to align their retainer bands with the size of their domains. However, though the pardon was ostensibly universal, internal dichotomies within those labelled rōnin would continue to influence their ability to settle and obtain employment.

The 1623 pardon, therefore, though ostensibly lifting the threat of arrest for all who had fought at Osaka, did not necessarily mean much for many of the people at which it was aimed: rōnin continued to be divided into those who were 'acceptable' and those who weren't. A public edict put up in Kyoto in 1622 states that one should not hide "*bushi no rōnin*" (warrior rōnin).[39] Though, as mentioned above, a connection to *bushi* status could enable one to position

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[36] *Ibid.*
[37] "Letter from Itakura Shigemune to Kuroda Tadayuki." Genna 9, 8th month, 28th day. In, *ROJ.* Pp.144-145.
[38] *Ibid.* Interestingly, it had only been 8 years since the end of the conflict.
[39] "Edict issued in Kyoto." Genna 8, 8th month, 12th day. *ROJ.* Pp.143-144.

themselves within the category of the 'acceptable' rōnin, the reference to *bushi* in this instance seems less a status indicator and more a reference to rōnin likeliness and ability to commit violent acts. Similarly, place was important as cities such as Kyoto, Osaka and Edo were obvious areas of potential employment, resulting in various edicts trying to curb their number even before the siege of Osaka. Most edicts simply stated that it was forbidden to provide rōnin with lodgings, yet some of them were more specific. One such edict from Fukushima domain from 1613, stated that it was forbidden to lodge "rōnin from the Kantō, even for a single night."[40] As obvious centres for potential employment were curtailed through edicts, many rōnin therefore turned to areas further removed from the centre, which were slowest to be brought under central control. In response, edicts were issued barring rōnin from travel to such areas, for example Tōhoku. This was especially prevalent after the fall of Osaka as the Tokugawa feared that rōnin who had supported the Toyotomi might regroup in such less well-controlled areas.[41] Edicts therefore highlighted the particular preoccupations of the Tokugawa government with certain forms of unacceptable behaviour. Thus, through the issuance of public edicts the Tokugawa *bakufu* focused on a certain version of rōnin identity, which was not to be tolerated. A population against whom action should be taken was identified, but any further considerations were left vaguely defined. Many of these edicts did not define the particular rōnin in question and thus simply demanded that rōnin, as a group, were not given shelter.

Within this identified group, therefore, there was an understanding that there were those who were 'acceptable' and those who were not. A public edict erected in Kyoto in 1623 therefore specifically stated that rōnin looking to find employment with daimyo were to be

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[40] *Niigata-ken shi, 6.* Pp.188-189.
[41] Stanley, Amy. *Selling Women: Prostitution, Markets and the Household in Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012. Pp.23-24.

expelled from Kyoto.[42] Yet another edict issued a number of weeks later stated that rōnin were to be exiled from Kyoto altogether but it continued by giving a detailed description on the distinction to be made between which rōnin were allowed in the city and which were to be exiled.[43] Rōnin that were to be exiled included those who were looking for work in the city, or those that were found to be pretending to be monks.[44] In other words, these edicts targeted those rōnin who had not been integrated into identifiable social units. This focus was explicitly made clear as there were groups of rōnin that were specifically allowed to stay in the city. The first of these were officially recognized rōnin, such as those who had been temporarily hired by a lord. The second group was comprised of those rōnin who were making a livelihood through trade or crafts, and who had blended into the city population as either a merchant or artisan. This focus on social fixity was further underlined by the fact that those men who had a wife and children were stated to be even less objectionable.[45] These edicts therefore demonstrate a clear differentiation between those men who were embedded in society and those who were not. However, even the rōnin mentioned as being allowed to stay in the city were subjected to the caveat that they could only do so if they had registered themselves. The emphasis on registration was underlined as these edicts also encourage all people to punish and report hidden rōnin.[46] Encouraging communities to police themselves in this way therefore helped to guarantee that rōnin would seek to be included within the institutions of rule around which much of the socio-political structure was built. 'Osaka rōnin' were therefore not simply those who had fought on

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[42] "Tokugawa jikki." Kuroita Katsumi (ed.) *Shintei zōho kokushi taikei, Vol.38.* Tokyo: Nichiyō Shōbō, 1929. Pp.329-332.

[43] "Public edict erected in Kyoto." Genna 9, 9th month, 23rd day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.145-146.

[44] The connection between rōnin and itinerant monks was made frequently and was strengthened by the relation between rōnin and the Fuke sect as discussed in chapter 6.

[45] "Public edict erected in Kyoto." Genna 9, 9th month, 23rd day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.145-146.

[46] "Tokugawa jikki." In, Kuroita Katsumi (ed.) *Shintei zōho kokushi taikei, Vol.38.* Tokyo: Nichiyō Shobō, 1929. Pp.329-332.

the Toyotomi side as they are often presented in scholarship.[47] Instead they were those rōnin identified by the Tokugawa as antithetical to its state-building efforts; fitting neither into the emerging status system, nor within recognised social units.

Edicts and legislation therefore followed 'Osaka rōnin' across archipelago as the Tokugawa established power. These people, identified as opponents and rebels, set the framework for the 'unacceptable' rōnin; oppositional, violent and disruptive. However, as shown, the establishment of Tokugawa power also had the effect that despite this focus on these 'Osaka rōnin,' rōnin on the whole became increasingly viewed as socio-political issues rather than enemy combatants.

## Reemployment in the Shadow of Conflict

Despite its many edicts and laws prohibiting rōnin reemployment, the shogunate inadvertently created a wealth of employment opportunities for rōnin during its early rule. After the battle of Sekigahara and following the appointment of Ieyasu as shogun, many of his closest retainers and others who had aided him were promoted to the position of daimyo.[48] These long-serving retainers are referred to as *fudai* daimyo and they were often the ones who held high government positions.[49] As the number of them who were appointed their own domains increased, so too did the need for a sufficient number of retainers to effectively run each domain. Thus, many daimyo actively went in search of talented retainers amongst the numerous rōnin that had recently lost

[47] For example, see: Kurita Mototsugu. "Edo jidai shoki ni okeru rōnin no hassei ni tsuite." *Shakaigaku zasshi*, Vol.28 (1939), pp.33-66; Totman, Conrad. *Tokugawa Ieyasu: Shogun*. San Francisco, CA: Heian International Publishing Company, 1983.
[48] Kanehira Kenji. "Kinsei zenki no rōnin meshikakae to daimyō kachū." *Rekishi hyōron*, Vol.803 (Mar. 2017). Pp.20.
[49] Bolitho, Harold. *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyo in Tokugawa Japan.* New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1974. Pp.117-153.

their lords and employment.[50] This search for talented retainers was not only aimed at recruiting these men themselves but also sought to attract the men following these individuals. In this way, it was possible to recruit a large number of capable men embedded in an existing hierarchy through little effort. Horio Yoshiharu, for example, hired a well-known rōnin who brought with him around 400 well-trained cavalrymen already under his command.[51] However, such instances of mass hiring only happened during the first years of the Tokugawa period and became exceedingly rare after the Siege of Osaka. As the threat of open warfare dwindled, daimyo increasingly came to see the costs involved with larger retainer bands as a burden. This, however, did not dissuade daimyo from hiring talented individuals.

Though in this new period of relative peace, the focus of hiring often switched from raw fighting power to more intangible commodities such as skill, prestige and honor, the value of martial ability did not completely vanish. Domains such as Okayama therefore continued to hire men on the basis of their martial abilities. In 1641 Wakamatsu Ichirōbei, Sōka Gorōemon and Saitō Kaemon were all appointed to the position of *teppō gashira* (artillery sergeants) in Okayama on account of the prowess they had shown whilst fighting under Kimura Shigenari for the Toyotomi side at Osaka.[52] Another set of examples comes from Shōnai domain in the Northern province of Dewa, when the Sakai family was moved there in 1622 after the previous lord, Mogai Yoshitoshi, was attaindered. As Sakai Tadakatsu had previously been the lord of the 10,000 *koku* domain of Matsushiro in Shinano province and had been upgraded to the 138,000 *koku* domain of Shōnai, he set out to increase his retainer band in order for it to correspond to the increased size of his holdings. In the same year the Sakai moved to Shōnai, Tadakatsu received letters from various people looking for employment. One of these came from Fujita Tanba who

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[50] Kanehira. "Kinsei zenki no rōnin meshikakae to daimyō kachū," 2017. Pp.20.
[51] Ujiie Mikito. *Katakiuchi: fukushū no sakuhō.* Tokyo: Chuō Kōronsha, 2007. Pp.140.
[52] *Okayama-ken shi, Vol.6.* Pp.302-303.

in his petition for employment boasted of his exploits in battle and provided a list of 14 of his accomplishments. However, he only had evidence in the form of swords that were bestowed upon him and letters of merit for three of these. To compensate for this, he assured Tadakatsu that men named Kansai, Kamo and Kamezaki could provide details on some of his deeds. However, he also mentioned that further proof could be a problem as many of the people who had been witness to these events were no longer around.[53] Another letter came from a rōnin named Kawakami Jūzaemon, who was 52 years old at the time of his petition. He likewise boasts of his military accomplishments. He pointed out, among other things, that he was the first to claim a head at the battle of Mogami and that he was the first over the bulwarks at the attack of Sakai castle. In addition to these feats, he provides names of men who would act as references if Tadakatsu would want to check the veracity of his claims. He refers Tadakatsu to a man called Yahachirō, and another witness called Kumamoto Chōzaemon.[54] These letters highlight not only the continued importance of martial talent but also the need for people willing to vouch for one's abilities. In order for a rōnin to provide sufficient proof of their abilities, they therefore needed a respectable social network.

It was not only local daimyo who received such requests but even the *bakufu* itself occasionally received pleas for the reinstatement of previously highly placed rōnin. Aoyama Tadatoshi, for example, had been the daimyo of Iwatsuki domain and one of the teachers of Tokugawa Iemitsu during his childhood. In 1623 Tadatoshi seems to have fallen out of favor with the Tokugawa; his holdings were initially reduced to 20,000 *koku* and he was moved to Ōtaki domain in the Kazusa province and in 1625 his holdings were attaindered, and both Tadatoshi and his son Munetoshi were exiled and put under house arrest in Kōza in Sagami. It is

[53] "Ōizumi kinen, Vol.1." In, Tsuruokashi shihensankai (eds.). *Tsuruoka-shi shi shiryōhen, Vol.4.* Tsuruoka: Tsuruoka-shi, 1978. Pp.44-46.
[54] *Ibid.* Pp.44.

likely that the reason for falling out of favor with the Tokugawa was connected to a dispute between Tadatoshi and shogun Hidetada, as requests for the annulment of the sentence only started being submitted to the *bakufu* after Hidetada's death. Sadly enough, these requests came too late for Tadatoshi since he died in 1634 as a rōnin in exile. His son Munetoshi, however, was allowed to return to Edo and was given *hatamoto* status and a stipend of 3000 *koku*. He was able to regain the favor of the *bakufu* and was eventually appointed the Komoro domain in Shinano, modern Nagano prefecture. In 1662, he was further promoted and made the *Osaka jōdai* ('governor' of Osaka).[55]

As shown above, it was not the case that rehiring simply declined after Sekigahara. Instead, rehiring practices changed continuously as they adapted not only to domain needs, but also to various socio-political influences, such as domain-*bakufu* relations. As holdings were sometimes drastically changed in size by the Tokugawa, daimyo were forced to correspondingly adapt their retainer bands in order to assure the smooth and effective running of their domains. As a result, daimyo given larger domains, such as the Yamauchi of Tosa in 1600, were forced to expand their retainer bands. The Yamauchi, however, opted not to hire new retainers from amongst the ex-retainers of the Chōsogabe who had previously ruled Tosa. As Luke Roberts points out, many of the men they decided to rehire were instead recruited in Kyoto and Osaka.[56] Not only were the former Chōsogabe vassals viewed as 'provincials' not truly part of the emerging elite warrior group, they also had no personal or familial ties to the Yamauchi. The rehiring of rōnin was therefore highly dependent on relation networks, be they group-based or personal. These relations could be highly individual as shown by the case of Hayashi Kazukichi, who in 1559 lost his father and became a rōnin. During his time as rōnin, Kazukichi met another

[55] Masuda Ushin. *Kokubunkōki.* Tokyo: Dai Nihon Chūgakukai. [undated]. Pp.69-75.
[56] Roberts, Luke. *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchants Origins of Economic Nationalism in 18th Century Tosa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp.35.

rōnin named Katsutoyo and they promised one another that if either of them were successful in obtaining a position, they would hire the other. Katsutoyo eventually found reemployment in 1573 under Oda Nobunaga, and later Toyotomi Hideyoshi, through which he saw his holdings increase from 400 *koku* to 50,000 *koku* by 1590. In the course of his success he upheld his promise and hired Kazukichi into his retainer band.[57]

Reemployment opportunities were, therefore, continuously influenced by the way in which the Tokugawa were shaping the geo-political landscape. Instead of simply creating large numbers of rōnin, these changes could also result in the creation of large-scale opportunities for reemployment. In 1619 the tenth son of Ieyasu, Tokugawa Yorinobu, was appointed as domainal lord of Kishū domain, since the previous lord, Asano Nagaakira, had been promoted to become the lord of Hiroshima domain after the attainder of Fukushima Masanori. Nagaakira had succeeded his older brother Yoshinaga as lord of Kishū in 1613 and had initiated many domainal reforms. When Yorinobu arrived in Kishū, many of the foundations for domainal policy had therefore been instituted; cadastral surveys, the appointment of village heads, the building of an administrative headquarters in the form of Wakayama castle, etc. Yorinobu was therefore given the opportunity to focus on another pressing issue; the size of his retainer band. When appointed to Kishū in 1619, Yorinobu's retainer band was far too small to bear the burden of the duties and levies imposed on a domain of such size. Yorinobu thus set out to rectify this by promoting a number of his retainers and increasing their stipends, in certain cases doubling, tripling or even quadrupling those of certain retainers. Satsugawa Genjirō, for example, saw his stipend raise from 15 *koku* in 1619 to 60 *koku* in 1625. Both Katō Shinbei and Ogasawara Kakuemon saw their stipends raise from 30 to 80 *koku* during the same period. Others saw even greater increases, Maeshima Kakuzaemon held 30 *koku* in 1619, but by 1627 this had been raised to 200

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[57] *Ibid.* Pp.33-34.

koku.[58] New retainers, appointed on the basis of prior relations between them, or their family, and Yorinobu also saw their stipends quickly increase. Nomoto Tomonori was hired in 1623 based on his father's prior position as a retainer of Yorinobu. His father had died in 1614 and Tomonori had become rōnin as a result. In 1623 he was given a stipend of 45 *koku*, but he was quickly promoted and in 1637 he was assigned a stipend of 300 *koku*.

This alone, however, was not enough to increase his retainer band sufficiently and Yorinobu appointed a number of men to specifically recruit rōnin from both inside and outside of Kishū in order to fill the shortage.[59] In 1619, months after the attainder of Fukushima Masanori, three of his important retainers, Ōsaki Nagayuki, Murakami Yoshikiyo and Manabe Sadanari were made part of Yorinobu's retainer band by express order of the *bakufu*. These men had been approached by the new lord of Hiroshima domain, Asano Nagaakira, a number of months earlier but the *bakufu* had forbidden Nagaakira from hiring them.[60] The *bakufu* therefore did not simply impose attainder and let it play out but it could play an active role in the formation of new retainer bands. Though not often directly hiring rōnin themselves, *bakufu* officials sometimes refused the requests by *tozama* ('outside') daimyo to hire certain rōnin, only to then appoint them as retainers of the various *ichimon* (family) or *fudai* (hereditary) domains.[61] The worth of these men was not only acknowledged through their actions, but their stipends were often significant.

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[58] Wakayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai. *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei.* Wakayama: Wakayama-ken, 1990. Pp.59.

[59] Nagaya Takayuki. *Kinsei no gunji, gundan to gōshi-tachi.* Osaka: Seibundō. 2015. Pp.249.

[60] "Jitoku kōsai biroku." In, Wakayama-shi Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Wakayama-shi shi, Vol.5: Kinsei shiryō, 1.* Wakayama: Wakayama-shi, 1975. Pp.5.

[61] The Tokugawa retainer band was structured around distinctions between direct family, long-serving retainers and new retainers in a similar fashion to other retainer bands. *Tozama* daimyo were those who had only joined the Tokugawa late in their rise to power and often included powerful former rivals such as the Maeda of Kaga and the Date of Sendai. *Fudai* daimyo were those who had served the Tokugawa for a long time and these men would often hold high government positions. The dividing line between *tozama* and *fudai* daimyo was often whether one joined the Tokugawa before or after the Battle of Sekigahara. *Ichimon* lands were those assigned to members of the extended Tokugawa family. For a discussion on the differences, see: Bolitho, Harold. *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyo in Tokugawa Japan.* New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1974; Kasaya, Kazuhiko. *Kinsei buke shakai no seiji kōzō.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1993. Pp.139-145.

In the above example, both Yoshikiyo and Sadanari were stipended for 4,000 *koku*, while Nagayuki was even appointed around 8,000 *koku*.[62]

It was not just men from outside of Kishū that were recruited. Inside the domain itself, rōnin who had settled in the countryside as farmers as well as the sons of powerful rural families were also hired.[63] This kind of hiring shows us two things: The first is that the divide between the upper echelons of peasant status and warrior status, especially during the earlier years of the Tokugawa period, was highly porous and that differentiation between these 'groups' can therefore be problematic. Secondly, it shows that rōnin who settled in the countryside as farmers, doctors etc., often retained their 'rōnin-ness' as a form of added label. Instead of a primary determinant of status or identity, it instead acted at a sub-status level. Through the retention of the label in this way, rōnin were able to leverage it as proof of *bushi* lineage, but, on the other hand, it did not necessarily set them apart as being *bushi*, something that would have obstructed their ability to integrate as part of a non-*bushi* social unit, such as the village (*mura*) or the guild (*za*). Men such as Dobashi Kozaemon and Satake Genkichi, both rōnin in Kishū domain, were therefore able to become part of a recognizable and socially understandable hierarchy whilst living in their respective village communities in Saika and Saginomori village, despite being labelled as "rōnin" in village registers.[64] Later, however, they were able to leverage their sub-level status marker in order to obtain a retainer position. In this way, Kozaemon was able to obtain the position of *teppō bugyō* (gunnery commissioner) with a 200 *koku* stipend and Genkichi was stipended for 200 *koku* in the position of *ōban* (guard).[65]

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[62] Wakayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai. *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei.* Wakayama: Wakayama-ken, 1990. Pp.60.
[63] Yuza Norihiro. "Kishū-han ni okeru kinsei jikishindan no seiritsu to baishin no kōzō." In, Tsuda Hideo Sensei Kokikinenkai (eds.). *Hōken shakai to kindai: Tsuda Hideo sensei koki kinen.* Suita: Tsuda Hideo Sensei Kokikinenkai, 1989. Pp.327-330.
[64] *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei.* 1990. Pp.60.
[65] *Ibid.*

Despite the occasional large-scale hiring, there were other, more general, social trends which came to have a significant impact on retainers in the coming decades. As shown above, the number of stipends assigned to new retainers, especially at the lower end, shot up during the first 50 years of the Tokugawa period. Yuza Michihiro has shown, however, that the number of these newly appointed lower retainer families that continued to exist beyond the first half of the seventeenth century was less than 50 percent.[66] The initial spurt of hiring thus slowly petered out as retainer bands were adapted to the new social circumstances, often resulting in the dismissal of many of the previously hired rōnin. It was not necessarily simply attainder that increased the number of rōnin; it was as much a result of the reshaping of retainer bands in reaction to the new social realities of the Tokugawa polity that drove the continued creation of new rōnin.

At the same time as rehiring decreased on a broad scale, once personal connections had been exhausted daimyo increasingly hired local rōnin instead of those with more central ties or those from other areas. Thus, as daimyo tried to minimise the number of potentially problematic rōnin connected with their domain by prioritising them in their hiring practices, many rōnin's opportunities for rehiring within a retainer band were further constricted. Though often aimed at those within one's own domain, the hiring of local rōnin could extend to include those from neighboring domains. In this way, a rōnin's chance for reemployment correlated with their degree of affiliation with certain geographical areas. Increased degrees of separation from one's original domain meant an increased chance of not being hired. Ikeda Mitsumasa, daimyo of Okayama domain, for example, mentions a number of rōnin he employed during this period, the

[66] Yuza Norihiro. "Kishū-han ni okeru kinsei jikishindan no seiritsu to baishin no kōzō." In, Tsuda Hideo Sensei Kokikinenkai (eds.). *Hōken shakai to kindai: Tsuda Hideo sensei koki kinen.* Suita: Tsuda Hideo Sensei Kokikinenkai, 1989. Pp.333-335.

majority of whom were from the area around his domain of Okayama.[67] One of these men was Tazaka Yōhei who was born in Hagi in Chōshū and had been a retainer of one of the *karō* of Fukushima Masanori, Hayano Kaga. However, he had become a rōnin when Fukushima Masanori had been attaindered. In 1619, he moved to Tottori domain which was held by Ikeda Mitsumasa before he was moved to Okayama, and was employed by him as a dry-goods supervisor with a stipend of 20 *hyō* and 4 men.[68] This shift in hiring created certain local 'gravity wells' for rōnin activity and had the effect that hiring was mostly contained to rōnin from a particular local area.[69]

Even if hired, however, most rōnin were placed in low positions within the domainal retainer band. Though there are exceptions, especially for highly skilled rōnin, many were restricted to the lower retainer positions. Not only did this often mean the potential for continued economic hardship, but also made them the first retainers to be cut when domainal finances necessitated further cutbacks on those hired. Looking at retainer lists from Takamatsu domain, we see that lower retainers, especially those of the *yoriki* (constable) rank, were those who later fell into rōnin status.[70] Thus, though rehiring offered the opportunity for promotion and possible employment for one's descendants, it was by no means a position of security. The pressures of the new Tokugawa institutions such as the *sankin kōtai* system of alternate attendance,[71]

[67] Fujii Shun, Mizuno Kyōichirō, and Taniguchi Sumio (eds.). *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*. Kanei 21, 1st Month, 15th day (1644). Okayama: Sanyō Tosho Shuppan, 1967. Pp.70-71.
[68] *Okayama-ken shi, 7*. Pp.223. A *hyō* is a measurement of rice of approximately 72 litres, see Appendix.
[69] See chapter 4 for more examples of the creation of 'alternative geographies' for rōnin based around opportunities to make a living. This idea of 'alternative geographies builds off of the work of Kären Wigen. See: Wigen, Kären. *The Making of a Japanese Periphery, 1750-1920.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.
[70] Urabe, Hideaki. *Takamatsu-han hanshiroku*. Higashi Kagawa: Urabe Hideaki, 2011.
[71] The *sankin kōtai* system was introduced by shogun Iemitsu in 1635. It required daimyo to be in attendance in Edo every number of years. In order to do this daimyo were effectively required to maintain two households, one in the domainal capital and one in Edo. Additionally, part of their family was expected to remain in Edo as 'hostages' in the case of rebellious behavior on the part of the domainal lord. This requirement not only meant that the *bakufu* was better able to keep tabs on the various lords, but the financial burden for daimyo also made remilitarization by individual domains virtually impossible. The two households as well as the costly processions to and from Edo imposed a large burden on the domainal finances. For more on this, see: Vaporis, Constantine. *Tour of Duty:*

weighed heavy on domain finances. This, combined with other issues such as the problems caused by the many attainders, meant that, with certain rare exceptions, the rehiring of rōnin did not necessarily assuage their precarious situation.

Despite the fact that rehiring did not necessarily take away one's financial worries, it did however offer at least the potential of a steady livelihood, as well as status improvements. Therefore, rōnin continued to actively pursue such opportunities throughout the Tokugawa period. Many of them took initiative themselves and approached the various lords to either request employment or to change short-term appointments into long-term ones. One way of doing so was through the use of petitions sent by the rōnin themselves, or a respectable interlocutor to the various *bushi*. As shown above, this could result in reemployment, especially if one was backed by good references. However, this was not a guarantee. A request sent to Ikeda Mitsumasa by Sakai Tadashige in 1642 requested the hiring of a rōnin called Shinohara Kanemon. However, because Kanemon had already petitioned for a position he was turned down again despite the recommendation since domainal stated that rōnin were only allowed to apply for a retainer position once.[72] There were thus certain protocols to uphold.

The other, and more direct way of seeking reemployment took the form of presenting appeals and petitions directly to their superiors. Even though official channels for such appeals were in place, many felt that personal presentation would elicit a quick reaction. Therefore, moments when lords went out in public were often seen as perfect opportunities. To avoid such nuisance and potential public embarrassment, a proclamation addressing this matter was issued on the occasion of shogun Iemitsu's visit to the Tōshōgū temple in Nikkō in 1651. The

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*Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan.* Hololulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

[72] Fujii Shun, Mizuno Kyōichirō, and Taniguchi Sumio (eds.). *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*. Kanei 21, 1st Month, 15th day (1644). Okayama: Sanyō Tosho Shuppan, 1967. Pp.37.

proclamation stated that petitions were not to be presented by anyone to those on the temple visit. If one wanted to submit petitions, they were told to do this via the proper channels in Edo.[73] A similar proclamation was sent to the retainers of Abe Tadaaki, during another temple visit by the shogun, stating that certain precautions were to be taken in the area of Monma in Musashi province, where Tadaaki had holdings. Not only did the area need to be cleaned in preparation for the passing through of the shogun but all rōnin and persons from other districts had to be strictly supervised.[74] Appeals and petitions, be they personal or via a referee, therefore offered rōnin ways of looking for reemployment during a time when positions were hard to obtain.

The changes to rehiring practices were thus, in many ways, heavily dependent on general social trends of the time. Attainder, though having a significant impact on the increase of the rōnin population, was by no means the only factor. Reconfigurations of retainer bands, financial fluctuations, shogunal impositions and a variety of other factors influenced the ways in which rōnin were able to obtain reemployment. Yet, despite this fluctuation, the general trend was downwards and many rōnin were increasingly faced with obstructions in making a living.

## The Potentials and Problems of Peace in the 1640s

Despite the lifting of the sanctions on Osaka rōnin, and despite the number of opportunities for employment, rōnin remained a demographic of concern for the central government. This concern, however, manifested in waves, as did the attention paid to rōnin by central institutions. This meant added uncertainty to their conditions as it was possible to suddenly fall foul of new

[73] Takayanagi Shinzō, and Ishii Ryōsuke (eds.). *Ofuregaki kanpō shūsei, Vol.1*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1934. Pp.717.
[74] Matsuo Mieko. "Shiryō shōkai, Abe Tadaaki no shojō, 2." *Gakushūin daigaku shiryōkan kiyō,* Vol.12, No.3 (2003), pp.370.

government edicts. This uncertainty was increased in the 1640s as hiring decreased and the government once again began to pay closer attention to rōnin.

The 1640s was also a time when many domains had become fully aware of the financial burdens of retainer bands aimed at actual warfare and many saw the need to reorganise them to fit current social realities, especially in the face of new compulsory impositions on domain finances, such as the *sankin kōtai* system of alternate attendance. As we saw above, Kishū saw large-scale hiring during the time of daimyo transition in 1619 and many rōnin were employed to fill open positions. However, this policy was, similarly to other domains, stopped in 1640 and the hiring of rōnin was halted. Worse yet, in 1644 it was decided that a large number of retainers would be let go, many of whom had been of the lower *bushi* rank of *yoriki* (constable), in order to avoid financial disaster.[75] These changes were not unique to Kishū and as a result rōnin rehiring, which had already been on a downward trend, dropped sharply.

Adding to this sense of social and financial insecurity was a renewed mistrust towards rōnin after the late 1630s. In 1637 the attention of the *bakufu* turned to a rebellion that had broken out in the Shimabara domain as a result of multiple factors, such as financial difficulties, Christian persecution and disgruntled rōnin.[76] After having unsuccessfully besieged a number of castles, the rebels rebuilt the defences of the dilapidated Hara castle and armed themselves. The shogunate responded by sending troops and besieging Hara castle in order to deal with the rebels. Initially, the Tokugawa forces were led by Itakura Shigemasa but after his death the command was taken over by Matsudaira Nobutsuna and in order to put together a sizable force, various

[75] *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei.* 1990. Pp.75.

[76] The uprising has generally been described as Christian. Though there was a definite Christian overtone to the incident, however, it is unclear if this was a driving factor for all involved. Whilst the leader of the defenders was the 'Christian hero' Amakusa Shirō, it is possible that strategy and decisions were in the hands of a number of rōnin led by Masuda Yoshitsugu and Ashizuka Chūemon. See: Morris, Ivan. *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan.* London: Secker & Warburg, 1975. Pp.153-156.

daimyo were ordered to send men to Shimabara. One of the domains ordered to send troops was Ōgaki domain in modern-day Gifu prefecture, and a list of the detachments sent to Shimabara by Ōgaki shows the troops and the provisions needed. In this list, we see a separate section of 13 men listed as *kachū rōnin* (rōnin retainers) who would, judging from the provisions assigned to them, lead men into battle.[77] Though unclear what the exact position of these particular men was, the addition of rōnin to their description indicates that it was one that was either temporary or socially precarious.

In addition to the troops sent by the various domains, numerous rōnin also travelled individually to Shimabara to try their luck. Though rōnin are often only described in relation to those who joined the rebels in their cause,[78] others sought to join the Tokugawa forces. One of these men was Amenomori Hiroyuki who had spent many years as a rōnin and went to Shimabara in the hope of securing a new appointment. When he arrived at Shimabara, he managed to get the attention Matsudaira Yukitaka who ordered him to join the forces of Tachibana Muneshige.[79] Hiroyuki was, however, not the only rōnin to join the Tokugawa forces at Shimabara and it is estimated that in the end a large percentage, of the Tokugawa forces was made up of rōnin.[80] Despite this large number of rōnin being used for the purposes of battle, however, not many were retained after the rebellion was quelled.[81] Hiroyuki, however, seems to have set himself apart from many others and his actions are described in a number of testimonials written by high-placed retainers. In his writings, Mitaka Tadatsugu notes that, "On

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[77] *Gifu-ken shi, shiryō 22*. Pp.245.

[78] The reference to rōnin in, especially English language, scholarship is squarely focussed on the rōnin that joined the side of the rebels during the Shimabara Rebellion. Though most of these works refer to them as 'Christian rōnin,' George Elison describes the intertwined nature of the causes that spurred rōnin to join the rebellion, the most prevalent of which was the infringement on their rights by the new Terazawa daimyo. See: Elison, George. *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, 1991. Pp.219-220.

[79] Inui Takaaki. *Matsue-han no jidai: Matsue kaifu yonhyaku nen.* Matsue: Imai Insho. 2008. Pp.35-36.

[80] Fujita Tatsuo (ed.). *Komaki, nagakute no tatakai no kōzō.* Tokyo: Iwata Shoten, 2006. Pp.380.

[81] Yamamoto Hirofusa. *Kanei jidai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1989. Pp.82.

the 28th day at the donjon the spearmanship of Hiroyuki was sublime, and we exchanged greetings."[82] In another testimonial, by Tachibana Chikatoshi, it was written that, "On the 27th Hiroyuki, together with Chikatoshi, lead the charge on the donjon."[83] The high *bakufu* official Ichigaya Sadakiyo was even more full of praise and stated that Hiroyuki had been "unparalleled" (*hirui naki*).[84] Despite this praise, however, Hiroyuki was not given a position by the Tachibana. Instead, it enabled him to obtain another position when he travelled to Osaka where he met Matsudaira Naomasa, who had recently been granted Matsue domain, and was hired by him.[85] Similarly, other rōnin joined the forces of the daimyo of Kumamoto domain Hosokawa Tadatoshi. Though many of these rōnin died during the fighting, Tadatoshi hired their sons as retainers in order to fill gaps in his retainer band as 274 of his own men had died as well.[86]

These examples thus highlight the fact that despite the focus on the "Shimabara rōnin" who joined the rebels, for many rōnin the events at Shimabara were simply about opportunities and economics, which led to rōnin joining both sides of the conflict. Just as with the Siege of Osaka, the *bakufu* focus was aimed at those rōnin who were in opposition and thus 'unacceptable,' and many contemporary descriptions of the event similarly focus on the rebellious or anti-Tokugawa tendencies of rōnin.[87] As a result, despite the fact that rōnin had made up parts of both forces, the rebellion at Shimabara had, to those in power, been another example of the potential threat posed by a large number of unemployed and disenfranchised rōnin. This led to stronger actions against rōnin, at a time when larger social changes were

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[82] Inui Takaaki. *Matsue-han no jidai: Matsue kaifu yonhyaku nen.* Matsue: Imai Insho. 2008. Pp.37; Nishijima Tarō. "Senjō no mokugeki shōgen: Shimabara Amasaka ikkō to Amenomori Kiyohiro no shikan." In, Fujita Tatsuo (ed.). *Komaki, nagakute no tatakai no kōzō.* Tokyo: Iwata Shoten, 2006. Pp.379-405.
[83] Inui Takaaki. *Matsue-han no jidai: Matsue kaifu yonhyaku nen.* Matsue: Imai Insho. 2008. Pp.37.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] Fujita Tatsuo (ed.). *Komaki, nagakute no tatakai no kōzō.* Tokyo: Iwata Shoten, 2006. Pp.379.
[86] Yamamoto Hirofusa. *Kanei jidai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1989. Pp.82-83.
[87] Kurita Mototsugu. "Shimabara no ran to rōnin mondai." *Chūō Shidan*, Vol.10, No.1 (1999); Kimura Naoki. "Shimabara no ran no rōnin." In, Kimura Naoki, and Makihara Shigeyuki (eds.). *Jūnanaseiki nihon no chitsusho keisei*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2018. Pp.16-47.

already leading to decreased possibility of reemployment and income through rehiring by a lord.[88]

Adding to the problems faced by rōnin was the fact that not all of them were as lucky as Hiroyuki, and many of those who had fought for the Tokugawa did not manage to obtain a full position afterwards. Worse still was the fate of those who had sided with the rebels. If they had not been killed in the conflict they were now fugitives. Yet, due to the increased sanctions and the difficulty of ascertaining the background of rōnin, this persecution of rōnin who had sided with the rebels in reality also affected many who had not. Though the reasons for the rebellion were many, the involvement of Christians came to dominate ideas surrounding the rebellion, and as a result, most who had participated in the Shimabara rebellion became identified as Christian, whether or not they were so.[89] After the rebels were defeated by the Tokugawa forces, many of them scattered to avoid persecution and try to find new employment in different domains. In order to aid the persecution, the *bakufu* specifically prohibited the hiring of the 'Christian' rōnin,[90] and therefore decreed that anyone found hiring them would be punished. As a result, it was imperative for daimyo and other *bushi* to make sure they did not hire these men, as this could result in suspicion of harboring Christians. The issue was not confined to Kyūshū, where most Christians were thought to have hidden after Shimabara, and arrests occurred throughout Japan. In Kishū, a man named Yoshikawa Sukezaemon, who had been hired by a retainer of the daimyo Tokugawa Yorinobu, Fukuoka Tarōhachi, was subjected to torture to make sure he was

[88] Nagashima Fukutarō. "Hizen Shimabara hanshu Matsukura-shi to rōnin." *Jinbun ronkyū,* Vol.29, No.2 (1979), pp.11.

[89] As stated by Conrad Totman, "The upheaval resulted mainly from local abuses during a difficult time, but […] the insurgents rallied support and sustained their morale by flying Christian banners and appealing to Christian symbols, thereby giving their enterprise the color of a religiously inspired rebellion in the ikkō tradition." Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. Pp.115.

[90] Tanaka Kumiko. "Shimabara no ran: shūkyō ikki teki yōso no saihyōka." *Shisen*, Vol.110 (Jul. 2009), pp.36-55. Interestingly, soon after the rebellion it was instead reasoned that it had been caused by the hardhanded rule of the domainal lord. See: Tsuruda Kurazō (ed.). *Genshiryō de tsuzuru Amakusa Shimabara no ran.* Hondo: Hondo-shi, 1994. Pp.1091.

not a secret Christian.[91] As verifying the backgrounds of rōnin could be difficult when hiring them, many daimyo decided it was safest and easiest to simply stop hiring rōnin, at least those not personally known.[92]

Further adding to this hiring crisis were worries that hiring new retainers might invite the distrust of the Tokugawa government under shogun Iemitsu, as increasing the strength of one's retainer band could very easily be interpreted by the *bakufu* as a challenge to its hegemony. The problem for daimyo, however, was that it could be difficult to predict what would be interpreted as unacceptable behavior by the *bakufu*, as this could change easily. After the fall of Osaka, therefore, various lords were obliged to follow the directives given by the *bakufu* concerning the apprehension of rōnin who had fought for the Toyotomi side. In order to be seen as following these directives, various domains hired rōnin to act as *yoriki*. It is therefore that the daimyo of Kishū decided to hire 60 men as *yoriki* under the command of Yoshida Tadamasa, in order to police the domain and apprehend any rōnin who attempted to take refuge.[93] However, as mentioned above, by the 1630s the usefulness of these men subsided and retaining them was no longer seen as necessary. Continuing to employ such men could easily be looked upon by the *bakufu* with suspicion, as their constabulary duties were no longer seen as needed.[94]

This general suspicion also led to a renewed interest in those who had supported the Toyotomi at Osaka, in addition to attempts to curb the movement of the rōnin population as a whole. The number of edicts, which had been issuing warnings against rōnin throughout the

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[91] "Waki-ke monjo." In, Wakayama-ken shihensan iinkai (eds.). *Wakayama-ken shi, kinsei shiryō 1.* Wakayama: Wakayama-ken, 1977. Pp.1026; Nagaya Takayuki. *Kinsei no gunji, gundan to gōshi-tachi.* Osaka: Seibundō. 2015. Pp.250.

[92] The serious ramifications this are highlighted in attainder of Naitō Nobuhiro in 1650, who was disenfeoffed because he had hired a Christian rōnin due to insufficient background checks. See: Fujino Tamotsu (ed.). *Oneiroku: haizetsuroku.* Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1970. Pp.287.

[93] Nagaya Takayuki. *Kinsei no gunji, gundan to gōshi-tachi.* Osaka: Seibundō. 2015. Pp.266n13.

[94] Fujii Shun, Mizuno Kyōichirō, and Taniguchi Sumio (eds.). *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*. Meireki 3, 1st month, 20th day (1657). Okayama: Sanyō tosho shuppan, 1967. pp.383-389.

period, increased again after Shimabara.[95] Though many edicts were put up around temples prior to Shimabara, some temples were known to have ignored them at times with few consequences. Yet by the 1640s ignoring them could often result severe punishment. One such instance came in 1649, when the Seigan-ji temple in Minoura in Ōmi province, modern Maibara city in Shiga prefecture, was accused of giving shelter to a man called Sōshitsu.[96] Not only was Sōshitsu a rōnin but he was also the son of Ōno Harufusa, a former retainer of the Toyotomi who had fought at Osaka. Sōshitsu had found refuge at the Seigan-ji temple and was living there as a monk. However, as a result of the investigation, Sōshitsu was arrested and beheaded at the Sanjō Kawara in Kyoto, and a number of monks were severely punished on the charge of unlawfully harboring and giving shelter to a rōnin.[97]

As a result of the renewed focus on rōnin after Shimabara, even people merely suspected of harboring ill-favor towards the *bakufu* were once again arrested and interrogated, especially if these people were seen to have had links to those who had joined the Toyotomi at Osaka. In the 3rd month of 1649, the oldest son of Gotō Matabei who had been a supporter of the Toyotomi at Osaka, Satarō, was found and arrested in the village of Tannowa in Izumi province where he lived and worked as a farmer. Satorō was found and caught through an investigation by the Osaka Magistrate (*daikan*) and was sent to the Kyoto governor (*shoshidai*), Itakura Shigemune, for interrogation. However, Itakura became convinced that Satarō had no intention to rebel or even oppose the government in any way. Because of this he let Satarō return to his village, but under the condition that he was forbidden from leaving it. It seems that this was indeed what he did as Satarō died in Tannowa five years later at the age of 59, leaving behind a son called

[95] Hozumi Nobushige. *Yui Shōsetsu jiken to Tokugawa bakufu no yōshi hō.* Tokyo: Teikoku Gakushi-in, 1913. Pp.12.
[96] "Gokenin yuisho meisairoku, 5." In, Osaka Tenshukaku (eds.). *Osaka jōdai kiroku, Vol.1.* Osaka: Osaka Tenshukaku, 2006.
[97] *Ibid.*

Hachisuke. Eight years later, in 1662, the village of Tannowa became part of the holdings of the newly installed governor of Osaka (*Osaka jōdai*), Aoyama Munetoshi. The lineage document of the Aoyama family retainers shows that "the Senshū (Izumi Province) Tannowa village rōnin Hachisuke" was made a full retainer with a stipend of 100 *koku* by Munetoshi.[98] Hachisuke died in 1726, and his descendants seem to have been able to continue this retainer position and are shown to have fought for the Aoyama during the Boshin War (1868-1869).[99]

The hiring of rōnin went through a period of sharp decline during the 1640s as various social forces impacted the practice. Not only did the Shimabara rebellion raise suspicion of rōnin in general but the economic difficulties facing domains meant that many of them sought to dismiss retainers rather than hire them. The petitions sent by rōnin requesting employment were less often favorably responded to and vouching for a rōnin who was looking for employment became increasingly fraught with danger. It is therefore little wonder that discontent among certain rōnin grew as some of them became increasingly disenfranchised. It is the confluence of these social forces that fuelled what would later become known as the 'rōnin problem,' that further forced the shogunate to address rōnin less as enemies and more as a social issue.

## Problematic Rōnin and the 'Rōnin Problem'

The social and economic changes of the 1640s put increased pressure on the rōnin population, and though most rōnin were able to find ways to get by, some became increasingly dissatisfied and disenfranchised. It is through a focus, once again, on this particular group that we see the

[98] *Ibid.;* Watanabe Daimon. "Rōnin Gotō Matabei kijikō." *Jūrokuseiki shi ronsō,* Vol.5 (Oct. 2015), pp.13-16.
[99] Watanabe. "Rōnin Gotō Matabei kijikō," 2015. Pp.13-16.

emergence of the idea of a 'rōnin problem' (*rōnin mondai*).[100] This compression of the issues plaguing the authorities into a single, recognisable problem was, however, a conception that only surfaced in the 1650s. Though everyday disturbances caused by rōnin were indeed an issue of concern, the conception of a 'rōnin problem' was based around a constellation of larger social issues of which rōnin were the most visible symptom. Yet the idea of a severe issue concerning rōnin persisted, and this fact was, in the eyes of many in the *bakufu*, confirmed by a number of events in 1651-1652. Firstly, and most famously, men who were mostly identified as rōnin conspired to overthrow the shogunate under the leadership of Yui Shōsetsu and Marubashi Chūya, in what became known as the Keian Incident.[101] Their plan was aimed at taking advantage of the change in ruler after the death of the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu. In this period of governmental insecurity and transition, their plan was to set fire to the city of Edo and attack the castle. At the same time, another group was set to attack the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the Tōshōgū, in Nikkō. Despite these detailed plans, however, the plan was never enacted as it was foiled after Chūya spilled the scheme in a fevered rant. Someone reported what Chūya had said to *bakufu* officials, and Chūya, Kawahara Jūrōbei and Nagayama Rokuemon were arrested. At the same time, the shogunate sent men to take care of Yui Shōsetsu and his men in Nikkō. Seeing his plan was foiled when confronted with *bakufu* officials, Shōsetsu committed suicide in order to avoid capture.[102] To make sure that none of the conspirators got away, the *bakufu* sent out orders to the various barriers along main roads, with instructions to apprehend

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[100] The phrase *rōnin mondai* was not used in documents from the time. Instead it was a description used by scholars to describe these events during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when many similar 'problems' were described in scholarship, such as *shakai mondai* (social problems) or *rōdō mondai* (labor problems). However, though not directly used as a phrase, documents do show that authorities at the time perceived there to be a 'rōnin problem,' as issues concerning rōnin were brought up repeatedly and rōnin were identified as a particular challenge facing the Tokugawa *bakufu.* See: Kurita Mototsugu. "Osaka jin to rōnin mondai." In, Nihon Rekishi Chirigakkai (eds.). *Nihon heiseishi, saihan.* Tokyo: Nihon Gakujutsu Fukyūkai, 1939. Pp.159-202; Kurita Mototsugu. "Edo jidai shoki ni okeru rōnin no hassei ni tsuite." *Shakaigaku zasshi*, Vol.28 (1939), pp.33-66.

[101] The name of the incident comes from the name of the year in the Japanese calendar, Keian 5.

[102] Shinji Yoshimoto. "Keian jiken no shinshiryō." *Nihon Hōgaku,* Vol.39, No.4 (1974), pp.330-342.

anyone the guards felt acted suspiciously.[103] Though a potentially dangerous uprising had been avoided, its discovery caused significant upset[104] and anxiety amongst those in government as they were unable to formulate a consensus on how to respond.

The tension of the situation was further heightened when another, independent, conspiracy was uncovered within months. This conspiracy, known as the Jōō Incident,[105] was also identified as a 'rōnin uprising' as two of the main plotters were the rōnin Bekki Shōzaemon and Hayashi Tōemon. The plans of this conspiracy similarly came to light when someone decided to report it to the authorities. These events are described in a diary called the *Jōkyōroku*, which states that, on the 13th day of the 9th month of the year Keian 5 (1652) a man named Nagashima Gyobuzaemon, retainer of Hori Hanzaemon and the adopted father of one of the conspirators, came to the house of Matsudaira Nobutsuna.[106] Here he told Nobutsuna that a number of men led by the rōnin Bekki Shōzaemon, Hayashi Tōemon, Miyake Heiroku, Fujie Matajurō and Toki Yoemon, had a plan very similar to that of the earlier Keian Incident. According to Gyobuzaemon, the conspirators' plan was to wait for favorable winds and set fire upwind from the Tokugawa family shrine at Zōjō-ji. In the ensuing confusion, they would steal gold and silver, and gradually make their way to the residences of the members of the *rōjū* council, the highest government council. On their way to these residences they would set fires all throughout Edo, after which they planned to shoot the council members using firearms they had acquired especially for this purpose.[107]

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[103] "Orders issued by Matsudaira Nobutsuna, Matsudaira Norinaga and Abe Tadaaki." Keian 4, 7th month, 27th day. In, *ROJ*. Pp.149-150.

[104] Public edicts were posted far away from Edo warning people to be weary of strangers due to the Keian incident, see for example: Kyoto-shi (eds.). *Shiryō Kyoto no rekishi, Vol.3: seiji, gyōsei.* Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979. Pp.441.

[105] This incident is also named after the year it took place, Jōō 1.

[106] "Jōkyōroku." In, Tokyo-shi (eds.). *Tokyo-shi shi kō: shigai-hen, Vol.6.* Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1974. Pp.598.

[107] *Ibid.*

After being informed of the plot by Gyobuzaemon, Nobutsuna reacted to the news by instructing the city constable (*machi bugyō*), Ishitani Kanno, to investigate the matter. Two of the main conspirators, Toki Yoemon and Miyake Heiroku, were located in the area around Zōjō-ji and apprehended. Three of the remaining suspects were known to have had lodgings in Shiba Fudanotsuji and men were sent to apprehend them. Though initially it seemed that the culprits might have fled, they were soon found to be hiding from the authorities in an alley. Though all three, Bekki, Fujie and Hayashi, were finally arrested, it was noted that Hayashi alone cut down eight of the constables sent to arrest him. After the arrests, the men were interrogated and more conspirators were revealed, most of whom were lower retainers, such as Ishibashi Goemon who was a stipended retainer to the Mizuno household, and Yamamoto Hyōbe who was a retainer of the daimyo Abe Tadaaki.[108] Following these initial interrogations, the suspects were moved to the *Hyōjōsho* (the Tokugawa High Court), questioned further and eventually sentenced. Looking at the court reports, we can see that the main conspirators were all rōnin, who had all been stipended for only around 200 *koku* before becoming rōnin. The only exception to this was Ishibashi Goemon, who had been a stipended retainer for 300 *koku* at the time of his arrest. In addition to this, two of them were young, as they were identified as still having their forelock (*maegami*).[109] It was, however, not only the main conspirators who were apprehended. Many people thought to have been involved in the plot or related to the conspirators were also arrested and sentenced. Five people who were decapitated at Asakusa were all the brothers of Ishibashi and Toki, some of whom were identified as being as young as 5 years old. The families of Bekki Shōzaemon and Fujie Matajurō were also ordered to be brought to Edo where they were to be

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[108] *Ibid.*

[109] This forelock was shaved off during a ceremony to mark a boy's transition to manhood. See: Pflugfelder, Gregory. *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999. Pp.33.

decapitated on arrival.[110] Though most who are mentioned in the records were men, we also find mention of the decapitation of a woman named Omitsu, a relative of Bekki Shōzaemon.[111] This swift and far-reaching reaction by the *bakufu* highlights the danger it felt it had been exposed to and the seriousness of the events is further highlighted by the fact that it is included in numerous diaries besides the *Jōkyōroku*.[112]

Though it is often these two incidents that are pointed to when discussing the eruption of a 'rōnin problem' during 1651, it was not solely these events that brought about action by the government. The participation of rōnin was also highlighted in a number of more 'mundane' incidents. One such event was the discovery of a large illegal gambling-ring in Edo that had been brought to the attention of, again, Matsudaira Nobutsuna by the rōnin Asai Dazaemon who had served Ōta Jūzaemon.[113] The gambling ring was observed for a time by the authorities and arrests started on the 27th day of the 11th month in a teahouse around the Yushima Tenjin shrine.[114] However, many more arrests were made the following day. Though the extensive lists of those arrested included priests, commoners and stipended retainers, the roles of rōnin, in particular, were highlighted by the authorities.

It was therefore decided that in order to assuage the rōnin issues, what was needed was an inquest into the rōnin who were in Edo. A result of this was that on the 18th day of the 10th month of Jōō 1 (1652) a change was made to the rules for the housing of rōnin in the capital, as "it seems that there are those who have concerns."[115] Further amendments, aimed at rōnin scattered

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[110] "Jōkyōroku." In, Tokyo-shi (eds.). *Tokyo-shi shi kō: shigai-hen, Vol.6.* Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1974. Pp.598.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] References to the incident can be found in documents from numerous domains and officials. For examples, see: Fujii Shun, Mizuno Kyōichirō, and Taniguchi Sumio (eds.). *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*. Okayama: Sanyō tosho shuppan, 1967. Pp.372; Fujii Jōji (ed.). *Edo bakufu nikki: Himeji Sakai-ke bon, Vol.25.* Yumani shobō, 2004. Pp.234-239.
[113] Tokyo-shi (eds.). *Tokyo-shi shi kō: shigai-hen, Vol.6.* Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1974. Pp.818.
[114] *Ibid.* Pp.818.
[115] *Ibid.* Pp.816.

throughout Edo, were made a month later. These stated that they were needed because "we cannot prosecute [the rōnin] nor drive them away,"[116] showing that earlier general expulsion edicts had had little effect. It was therefore decided that the appropriate offices all had their own jurisdictions and that they were responsible for the registration of rōnin in their respective areas. As for rōnin who were working in a warrior household, they were to provide an "explanatory note in the register by a member of the household."[117]

However, despite the steps that were being taken to address the issue, some in Edo seemed to have had their fill of such incidents and didn't appear to have much faith in the steps the *bakufu* was taking to stop them from happening again. A letter issued by the Gokoku-ji temple in Edo asked:

> The previous year we have had the Yui Shōsetsu incident, next we had the Bekki something-or-other incident. This time around we have these gamblers and the rōnin inquest. In view of this, has the time not come for us to think deeply on how the people of Edo must feel [about all of this]?[118]

This letter highlights the unease that this quick succession of incidents elicited. However, the focus of both the *bakufu* and those observing, such as the monks at Gokoku-ji, was firmly on the city of Edo. Like earlier reactions to rōnin, many of the newly issued orders only sought to address issues pertaining to the centre of power. Yet in light of the fact that rōnin issues were deeply entrenched in other social issues, further reaching measures were needed. In order to address the roots of the 'rōnin problem' some in government recognized that it was necessary to

[116] *Ibid.* Pp.817.
[117] *Ibid.* Pp.816-817.
[118] *Ibid.* Pp.824.

look beyond the city of Edo and to approach it as a social issue rather than a series of disruptions that could be solved through judicial means.

In government, however, there was no consensus on how to act and two main ideas on how to approach the issue came forward. On the one hand, there were men like Matsudaira Nobutsuna and Sakai Tadakatsu, who advocated a full expulsion of rōnin from the city of Edo.[119] Ridding Edo of rōnin, they argued, would remove the threat and nuisance from the heart of *bakufu* power. To them, one of the main problems was the large number of rōnin roaming freely in the country, which they claimed were drawn to Edo and would likely band together within the city and commit further "evil deeds."[120] This group was most influential in the government and the *bakufu* reaction was therefore initially to "clear out the rōnin from Edo" in order to avoid the formation of cliques which could cause social unrest and threaten the power of the *bakufu*.[121] Though the general sentiment was shared by most in the *rōjū* council, in the end, however, it was decided not to implement this plan.[122]

Not all in the council agreed with these assessments and one of the council members put forward another approach to the issue. Rather than expelling the rōnin and thereby not solving the issue but simply removing it from Edo, Abe Tadaaki recommended that these men should be given land to be resettled in order for them to make a living in the countryside.[123] Through resettlement, it would be possible to provide these men with income and at the same time reintegrate them into the Tokugawa system, thereby focusing on key social determinants, such as occupation and duties. Yet opposition to these proposals within the *rōjū* council was strong,

[119] "Kanmei nikki, Vol.2." In, Minami Kazuo (ed.). *Naikakubunko shozō shiseki sōkan, Vol.67.* Tokyo: Gyūko Shoin, 1986. Pp.237-238.
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] *Ibid.*
[122] *Ibid.* Pp.238.
[123] Fujino Tamotsu. "Matsudaira Nobutsuna to Abe Tadaaki." In, Kitajima Masamoto (ed.). *Edo bakufu: sono jitsurokusha-tachi.* Tokyo: Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1964. Pp.62-66; *Tokugawa nimeishin: Matsudaira Izu to Abe Bungo.* Tokyo: Minjūsha, 1898. Pp.119-129.

especially from the *tairō* (chief councillor) Sakai Tadakatsu, and they were voted down, thus preventing them from being developed as a policy. Much of this response was likely motivated by the unwillingness of the *bakufu* to look weak by giving in to 'aggressors.'[124] However, though his proposal had not been accepted as official policy, Tadaaki did continue to settle a number of rōnin in his own domain of Oshi.[125]

Adding to the confrontation on the issue in government was the fact that some members of the higher councils had retainers who were implicated in the conspiracies. An example of this was one of Tadaaki's own retainers, Yamato Hyōbe, who was implicated in the Jōō Incident. In a letter written on the 26th day of the 9th month of Jōō 1 (1652), Tadaaki notes that Hyōbe had been apprehended and taken into custody for suspected conspiracy. After an investigation, he had been acquitted since he didn't seem to know anything about the plans and intentions of the plotters. Despite the acquittal, however, the following evening he is reported to have taken his own life.[126] Hyōbe was not alone in being accused, however, as in the aftermath of the Keian and Jōō incidents, accusations were levelled at a number of the retainers of various lords. In addition to the retainer of Abe Tadaaki, suspicion also fell on a number of the retainers of Ikeda Mitsumasa.[127] One of those implicated, within Ikeda's household was the renowned Confucian scholar Kumazawa Banzan.[128] This link between Banzan and the 'rebels' was made by Hayashi Razan, a Confucian scholar in the employ of the *bakufu*. If the accusation was based on any

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[124] Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.77.
[125] Fujino Tamotsu. "Matsudaira Nobutsuna to Abe Tadaaki." In, Kitajima Masamoto (ed.). *Edo bakufu: sono jitsurokusha-tachi.* Tokyo: Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1964. Pp.62-66.
[126] Matsuo Mieko. "Shiryō shōkai: Abe Tadaaki no shojō, 1" *Gakushūin daigaku shiryōkan kiyō*, Vol.11, No.3 (2001), pp.91.
[127] Fujii Shun, Mizuno Kyōichirō, and Taniguchi Sumio (eds.). *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki.* Okayama: Sanyō Tosho Shuppan, 1967. Pp.176.
[128] Interestingly, Banzan's father, Nogiri, was in fact a rōnin. Banzan was adopted by his maternal grandfather in 1626 into his *bushi* family in Mitō. This direct connection to rōnin, as a group, could have further substantiated the accusations. See: Yoshida Toshizumi. *Kumazawa Banzan sono shōgai to shisō.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2005. Pp.13-15.

evidence or if this was a way for Razan to implicate a rival scholar is unclear.[129] What these examples show, however, is not only that many rōnin were still closely tied to various *bushi* but also that being rōnin, or associating with them, was an effective way of implicating one's opponents.

These accusations of involvement by various daimyo seem to have caused concern with the Tokugawa *bakufu* as a number of them were accused of harboring rebellious intent. The lords of Kishū, Ōshū, Echigo, Sagami and Hizen, in addition to Ikeda Mistumasa of Okayama domain, were all implicated in secretly trying to topple the government.[130] About Mitsumasa it was claimed that "his outward appearance is that of a Confucian scholar, but inside he harbors sedition."[131] The shogunal cabinet proceeded to summon Tsunamasa (the younger brother of Mistumasa) and told him that "in addition to being one of the daimyo, [Mitsumasa] is also a *shingaku* scholar.[132] He has heard a large number of varying opinions and this is a cause for concern."[133] Though the accusations levelled at Mitsumasa were eventually dropped, the implications were clear; the 'rōnin problem' was about more than just rōnin. Though rōnin were still seen as the main perpetrators, the issues were made worse by certain strains on the *bushi*. The shogunate therefore decided that in order to solve the problem it was necessary to address not only what they saw as the main catalyst behind the creation of new rōnin but also the source of much worry and discontent amongst *bushi*; attainder. Specifically, it set out to address attainders implemented due to the lack of an heir and, in order to do so, it set about making

[129] Hori Isao. *Hayashi Razan: jinbutsu sōshō, Vol.118.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964.
[130] Taniguchi Sumio. *Okayama-han seishi no kenyū*. Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1964. Pp.55.
[131] *Ibid.*
[132] *Shingaku* (心学) is the school of thought also referred to as *yōmeigaku* or the Wang Yangming stream of Neo-Confucianist thought which was in opposition to the official orthodox Zhu Xi school of Confucianism. It could therefore be presented as proof of anti-Tokugawa sentiments. See: Benesch, Oleg. "Wang Yangming and *Bushidō*: Japanese Nativization and its Influences in Modern China." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol.36, No.3 (Sep. 2009), pp.439.
[133] Taniguchi Sumio. *Okayama-han seishi no kenyū*. Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1964. Pp.55.

changes to laws pertaining to inheritance and attainder. [134] This subsequent drop in attainders and the more lenient approach towards 'infractions' on Tokugawa statutes, were an indication of the increased awareness of the social problem at hand. Though expulsion edicts aimed at rōnin continued, these changes indicated a more proactive approach to the issue at hand. However, despite this, the changes in the laws mostly addressed the strain on *bushi*, rather than rōnin, and even here only partly. Though the *bakufu* had addressed what it saw as the 'rōnin problem,' it had not removed rōnin issues, and rōnin continued to play a significant role in Tokugawa social life.

## Conclusion

Issues concerning rōnin should be seen as intimately interwoven with the creation and evolution of the Tokugawa state, and the social changes with which rōnin were confronted. The 'rōnin problem' was not simply caused by discontented individuals whose disenfranchisement steadily got worse until it was addressed by the government. Instead, it was created through a variety of changes that took place during the Tokugawa period and was eventually mainly addressed at a domainal level, though governmental changes were clearly of influence. These issues, changed and adapted throughout the first 50 years of the Tokugawa period and saw moments of increased and decreased intensity that ultimately led to a crystallisation around the notion of there being a 'rōnin problem.'

This chapter has demonstrated that an increasing number of social issues heavily impacted those who found themselves in the position of rōnin. These issues culminated in the

[134] Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.75-79.

1640s in a heavily narrowed path to reemployment, increased scrutiny of their actions and the growth of a generally more negative image, leading a small minority to take action that affirmed the existence of a 'rōnin problem' to those in power. Instead of taking the *bakufu* conception of a 'rōnin problem' at face value, however, we should see it as part of a number of issues that emerged during the creation of the new Tokugawa state, such as elite insecurity, a changing economy and social ambiguity.

The articulation of rōnin based around the events of the first five decades of the Tokugawa period remained dominant in shaping the continuing prevailing interpretation of rōnin identity. As the *bakufu* itself was evolving into the institution we recognize today, the society around it became explained and envisaged in terms concomitant with this project. Rōnin during this period became variously represented depending on the preoccupations of the *bakufu*. At different times, different categories and subdivisions were either classed as 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable' as the institutions of power were confronted with the realities of the social group rather than the projected image. It was this projected image, emerging from the first five decades, which came to dominate much of the understanding of the population afterwards; a conception that seemed both instantly recognizable and yet was opaque enough to encompass a large variety of people. In addition to this, other social pressures, such as financial issues in the domains, continued insecurity through attainder, etc., magnified the hurdles with which rōnin were already faced. Though personal and local connections could assuage the difficulties presented many others were left adrift. The legal and social changes mapped in this chapter therefore didn't, in reality create a 'rōnin problem' by the 1650s but instead were emblematic of the changing interactions between the evolving Tokugawa state and rōnin as a population.

# Chapter 3

## *Living with Attainder*

During the early years of the 1650s the upper echelons of the Tokugawa government were stirred to action when two planned uprisings aimed at overthrowing the *bakufu* were uncovered. Not only had both of these uprisings been focussed on the centre of political power, the city of Edo, but they had directly targeted the Tokugawa themselves. In addition to the fact that some of the conspirators had planned to attack the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu at Nikkō, the incidents were uncovered during a crucial moment for the Tokugawa hegemony; a change in shogun.[1] The danger of such a transition was only heightened by the fact that the shogunal heir, Tokugawa Ietsuna, was only ten years of age at the time of his father's death. As described in the previous chapter, the reaction by the *bakufu* to these so-called Keian and Jōō incidents[2] had been swift and sure, and all perpetrators together with their accomplices and most of their families were summarily put to death.[3] In the process of meting out justice, discussion arose on how this unthinkable act could have been possible and how such incidents could be avoided in the future. The fact that many of those who

[1] The Keian incident took place after the death of the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, and before the fourth shogun, Tokugawa Ietsuna, was granted the title. It therefore occurred during a shogunal interregnum when government matters were in the hands of the *tairō,* Sakai Tadakatsu.
[2] The incidents were named after the Japanese era names of the years in which they took place, Keian (1648-1652) and Jōō (1652-1655). The former took place in 7th month of Keian 4 and the latter in the first year of Jōō.
[3] Shinji Yoshimoto. "Keian jiken no shinshiryō." *Nihon hōgaku,* Vol. 39, No. 4 (1974), pp.330-342; "Jōkyōroku." In, Tokyo-shi (eds.) *Tokyo-shi shi kō,* 6. Tokyo: Rinsen Shoten, 1974. Pp.598.

had participated in the plots had been rōnin initially led some highly placed members of government, such as the *tairō* (chief minister) Sakai Tadakatsu and *rōjū* (member of the council of elders) Matsudaira Nobutsuna, to advocate a strong response to this potentially dangerous population.[4] Yet even to these men it was clear that the underlying reason for the existence of a large rōnin population needed to be addressed; the application of attainder (*kaieki*).[5]

As chapter two has already shown, attainder was an important device in the efforts by the Tokugawa to establish their power and reshape the geo-political map of Japan.[6] These attainders entailed the disenfiefment or seizure of the land and stipends assigned to particular daimyo by the *bakufu,* as well as the hereditary titles that accompanied these lands. As the power of daimyo was nominally determined by the assignment of land and stipend by the Tokugawa, the threat of taking these away was a potent political tool in making sure that these local powerholders were kept in check.[7] Immediately after the battle of Sekigahara in 1600 when Tokugawa hegemony was all but assured, the Tokugawa set out to reorder the realm to secure their hold over all of Japan. The scale of attainder during the first five decades of the Tokugawa period was immense as it was one of the most important ways to gain full control over the newly unified realm.[8] As a result, attainder was imposed not only to keep the many lords who might oppose the Tokugawa in check but also to reorder resources and assure political and social stability in the many domains. The application of attainder could therefore occur due to a variety of reasons, some of the most prevalent of which were insubordination, bad management of one's holdings or lack of an heir. Between 1600 and

[4] Gyōda-shi Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Gyōda-shi shi, shiryōhen kinsei, 1.* Gyōda: Gyōda-shi, 2010. Pp.111-113.
[5] This decision to change laws of inheritance and reduce the number of attainders has, since the work of Hozumi Nobushige, been directly linked to the *bakufu'*s realization of a need to address the 'rōnin problem.' See: Hozumi Nobushige. *Yui Shōsetsu jiken to Tokugawa bakufu no yōshi hō.* Tokyo: Teikoku Gakushi-in, 1913. Pp.12-15.
[6] Okasaki Hironori. *Kaieki to oie saikō.* Tokyo: Dōseisha. 2007. Pp.2-4.
[7] Suda Shigeru. *Tokugawa daimyo kaiekiroku.* Nagareyama: Ron Shobō Shuppan, 1998. Pp.8-12.
[8] For a fantastic overview of the specific ways in which the Tokugawa employed attainder in achieving hegemony, see: Fujino Tamotsu (ed.) *Bakuhan taisei shi no kenkyū: Kenryoku kōzō no kakuritsu to tenkai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1961. Pp.437-438.

1650, a total of 198 families' holdings were taken through these attainders, all of which totalled land estimated at 16,880,000 *koku*.[9] On top of this, though not subjected to full attainder, in the same period the holdings of a further 19 families were reduced by a combined total of 2,490,000 *koku*.[10] Though these attainders and reductions took place over 50 years, the fact that all of Japan around 1650 was assessed at 26 million *koku* shows the importance of attainder as an expression of Tokugawa hegemony.[11]

The new socio-political landscape that emerged during these first decades of the Tokugawa period demanded that changes be made in the way power was projected and utilized. The power politics of the tumultuous period of unification were no longer applicable to the issues at hand and new ways of ruling and imagining power had to be adopted. These changes in the nature of Tokugawa rule manifested in a number of ways, however scholars such as Kurita Mototsugu and Yamamoto Eiji have defined the process as a whole in terms of the *bakufu's* shift from a "military government" to a "civilian government,"[12] and to them the change of shogun in 1651, from the third shogun Iemitsu to the fourth shogun Ietsuna, was symbolic of the general changes that had occurred in the past 50 years.[13]

This change in the nature of power meant that the new social and political environment had an impact on the ways in which attainder played out and society was structured. As the position of the Tokugawa was more secure by the 1650s and the negative consequences of attainder became

[9] Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, 25: Tsuyama-han.* Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1981. Pp.302.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Beasley, William. *The Meiji Restoration.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972. Pp.14-15.
[12] Kurita Mototsugu. "Edo jidai." In, Kurita Mototsugu (ed.). *Sōgō Nihonshi daikei, Vol.9.* Tokyo: Naigai Tosho, 1926; and, Yamamoto Eiji. "Gōshi to rōnin." In, Akio Michio, and Hayashi Hideo (eds.). *Jiten shiraberu Edo jidai.* Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2001.
[13] Moreover, due to the age of Tsunayoshi, the *tairō* Sakai Tadakatsu served as interim regent, shifting the locus of power to government 'bureaucrats' rather than the Tokugawa themselves during this period. See: Bolitho, Harold. *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyo in Tokugawa Japan.* New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1974.

more apparent, attainder was less often applied in the second half of the seventeenth century. Those in power felt that the large number of attainders during the reign of the first three Tokugawa shogun (1603-1651) had to be addressed in order to combat new social issues. Ultimately, the government decided that changing the rules of attainder and easing prohibitions on the adoption of heirs would likely bring about more stability.[14] These changes were indeed successful in reducing the number of attainders that took place after the 1650s when compared to the preceding five decades. Yet attainder remained more than merely a threat and was frequently applied to daimyo seen to be in violation of Tokugawa laws or demands. Between 1651 and 1701, there were 50 attainders, relatively few when compared to the previous 50 years, but still an average of one a year.[15] These later attainders had a less measurable effect on a 'national' level, yet locally they were extremely disruptive and left a large number of retainers facing rōnin status. In addition to this, the aftermath of these events had effects far beyond the castle towns and centres of power as numerous retainers sought employment in either their own domain or others. As many of these men looked for opportunities in the countryside, this could result in confrontations with local powerholders as they infringed on existing local hierarchies. Yet even so, rōnin were no longer simply enemy combatants or a nuisance to be driven out. They had, as described in the previous chapter, transformed from outside problems to problems within the system and therefore had to be dealt with in ways that corresponded with the new form of Tokugawa power. This different nature of Tokugawa power had far reaching effects that shifted ideas surrounding rōnin as a population, the use of attainder and the need to assuage the negative effects of such actions. Attainders, however,

[14] The main reason for attainder during these first 50 years was the lack of a suitable heir. By loosening adoption laws, it became easier for ruling families to appoint an heir meaning that the lack of a biological son suitable for the post of lord became less of an acute problem. This meant that moments of political and social upheaval due to the lack of an heir could be avoided. See: Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.74-104.

[15] Suda Shigeru. *Tokugawa daimyo kaiekiroku.* Nagareyama: Ron Shobō Shuppan, 1998. Pp.6-10.

remained tense and sensitive moments that held the potential for confrontation and conflict. The increasing divisions within retainer bands that had been exacerbated through the changes brought about by the Tokugawa regime only heightened this tension as internal conflicts of interest burst to the fore.

By looking at attainder over the span of the seventeenth century, this chapter will show that the ways in which the *bakufu* and local powerholders approached these moments were reflective of changes that had taken place in the nature of power and power politics during this period. No longer could attainder simply be used to reshape the political map and it had to be approached with a caution and deliberation on all sides. By the 1650s the advantages of attainder could be simply be outweighed by its ill effects and the *bakufu* was at times forced to negotiate or make concessions. By viewing attainders as complex, impactful and locally contingent events, this chapter will show that they were not simply administrative changes in holdings that involved new and former lords, but that these events necessitated dialogue and interaction between a variety of authorities, power holders and social groups, both within and outside of the domain in question. Whereas post-1650s attainders have often been described in terms of local history, rather than 'national history,' this chapter will show that attainders remained important events both determining and indicative of issues of 'national' politics.[16]

Furthermore, this chapter will highlight the different ways in which attainder was experienced by individuals. As changes in the social environment created or exacerbated fissures within the retainer band, conflicts of interest between retainers arose during these moments of

[16] Though a generalization, most works represent the attainders of the first 50 years of Tokugawa rule as part of a coherent program of attainder, mostly due to the laws implemented in the 1650s and the decline in number that followed. This view is, as shown by Kasaya Kazuhiko, reinforced by a focus on large attainders, especially that of the Fukushima in 1619 and the Katō in 1632. See: Kasaya Kazuhiko. "Tokugawa bakufu no daimyo kaieki seisaku wo meguru ikkōsatsu." *Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā kiyō.* Vol.3 (Mar. 1990), Pp.36-37; Kasaya Kazuhiko. "Tokugawa bakufu no daimyo kaieki seisaku wo meguru ikkōsatsu, 2" *Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā kiyō.* Vol.4 (Mar. 1991), Pp.140-143.

attainder. As the financial and social gap between lower and higher retainers increased, so did the ways in which they reacted to the possible loss of livelihood. The chance of ending up as a rōnin and the experience of that situation were therefore often heavily influenced by one's position before becoming rōnin. After examining attainder during the early years of the Tokugawa, this chapter will look at two post-1651 case studies in depth to highlight the effects of the changes that had taken place. By doing so, this chapter will demonstrate that attainders remained significant events that had far-reaching impacts on local relations and often forced rōnin to actively engage with the ambiguous nature of their position in society.

## Shuffling the Pieces: Attainder and the Early Tokugawa State

Only a couple of months after Tokugawa Ieyasu had been appointed shogun, in the winter of 1603, Satake Yoshinobu travelled north to his newly appointed domain of Kubota in what is now Akita prefecture. Before moving to Kubota, which was far-removed from the capital and in the cold North, Yoshinobu had been the lord of a large domain in the Hitachi province worth around 540,000 *koku*. During this time, he had been an important general of the Toyotomi forces and had been well acquainted with Ishida Mitsunari, the man who would lead the Western forces against the Tokugawa during the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Yoshinobu therefore decided to pledge his support to Mitsunari and sided with him against the Tokugawa during the battle. This decision, which meant he was on the losing side of the battle, resulted in his holdings being reduced to 180,000 *koku* by the new Tokugawa rulers. Two years later he was further side-lined when he was assigned Kubota domain.[17]

[17] Akita kaishinpōsha chihōbu (eds.). *Kosenjō: Akita no kassen.* Akita: Akita Kaishinpōsha, 1981. Pp.101.

The former lord of Kubota, Onodera Yoshimichi, had supported Uesugi Kagekatsu in the battle of Sekigahara and had thus, like Yoshinobu, also been on the losing side. However, unlike Yoshinobu, Yoshimichi was not seen as a lord important enough to keep around, since his family had had smaller holdings and fewer connections to those at the center of power. As a result, his holdings had not merely been reduced, but instead all his holdings had been attaindered by the Tokugawa. In addition to this, he and his older brother Iemichi, were summarily banished to the Chūgoku region in 1601, where Yoshimitsu died in 1645.[18]

When Yoshinobu entered his new domain in 1603, accompanied by his retainers who had come with him from Hitachi (such as Kawai Tadatō, Shibue Masamitsu and Suda Morihide), the main castle of the domain at Yokote was still in ruins. This forced Yoshinobu and his retainers to travel ten kilometres further north to find a temporary home in the stronghold at Rokugō. When he arrived at the stronghold, however, he found that it was barricaded by former retainers of Onodera Yoshimitsu.[19] These men did not accept that their lord had been exiled by the Tokugawa and were even less happy with their new-found status as rōnin, which had been the result of his banishment. Yoshinobu, who regarded the fortress as his property as decreed by the Tokugawa government, decided to storm it and took it without much difficulty. After this initial success, however, Yoshinobu quickly found himself besieged by another force of around 1000 Onodera rōnin who surrounded the castle. Trapped within the castle he had only recently taken himself, Yoshinobu was forced to do battle a second time. Once again, he quickly defeated the rōnin with his much larger force and thus managed to quell the rebellion for good.[20]

[18] *Ibid.* Pp.101-102.
[19] Kanō Tokuzō. *Satake-ke rekidai jiryaku.* Akita: Kanō Teikichi, 1910. Pp.8.
[20] Akita kaishinpōsha chihōbu. *Kosenjō,* 1981. Pp.102-109.

This rebellion at Rokugō in 1603 not only highlights the problems the Tokugawa faced in trying to impose their rule, but it also underlines the issues that former retainers were presented with when they lost their lord. The incident itself is not well known, nor did it have a large impact, however it is indicative of problems encountered during the early Tokugawa years in attempts to reshape the political map. As the new government set out to consolidate its power through a political and geographical reorganization it faced resistance by those who felt they were left with little or nothing. The rebellion at Rokugō was therefore not the only conflict of its kind. The Yamauchi family, who were assigned the domain of Tosa, on the island of Shikoku, after the battle of Sekigahara, encountered similar problems. In the last months of 1600, when the Yamauchi were ready to take up their new position in Tosa, disagreements broke out with former retainers of Chōsogabe Motochika, the previous lord of Tosa. In their anger these Chōsogabe rōnin took Urado castle and refused to acknowledge the new Yamauchi authority. Unable to come to an understanding, the castle had to be stormed by Yamauchi forces in order for them to take control, and 273 heads of former Chōsogabe vassals were sent to Osaka as a gruesome indication of success in the taking of the castle.[21]

Despite this opposition, the Tokugawa continued to reshuffle the geo-political landscape of the new polity. They punished those who had not supported them in their conflicts, as well as those who acted in ways that were interpreted as being in opposition to the wishes of the Tokugawa. Mismanagement, insubordination, lack of an heir, family conflict, and many other infractions were often met with the imposition of attainder by the Tokugawa. As indicated above, some daimyo saw their holdings shrink, whilst others had theirs taken away completely. Though some, like the former Onodera and Chōsogabe retainers, decided to oppose the political

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[21] Jansen, Marius. "Tosa in the Seventeenth Century." In Hall, John and Jansen, Marius, eds. *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.89-129.

restructuring imposed by the new government, others, for whom opposition was either impossible, undesirable or imprudent, had no choice but to give in to the newly implemented changes.

Another example of such resistance, though less well documented, occurred during the movement of the Mori family to Tsuyama domain. The Mori, whose own attainder, more than 90 years later, will be discussed later in this chapter, were moved from Kaizu domain in Shinano to Tsuyama in Mimasaka on the 21st day of the 3rd month of Keichō 8 (1603). In order to take up their new post, the Mori travelled from Shinano and entered Mimasaka in Yoshino village on its western boundary. The Mori procession stayed overnight in the nearby Shimosho village where the new lord was offered gifts by the heads of three influential local families.[22] However, in other parts of Mimasaka people were less optimistic about their new lords. Former retainers of the previous lords, the Kobayakawa, heard of the arrival of the Mori and conspired to form a rebellion. In order to drum up support for the rebellion, which centered around former Kobayakawa retainer Naniwa Munenori, they sent out appeals to local influential elite families (*dogō*) and asked them to join. The main reason given by these former retainers for their opposition to the Mori was the rumor of plans for new policies and taxes, which they judged to be too harsh on the population of Mimasaka. These appeals show that the former retainers saw themselves as the protectors of the population whilst also highlighting the perceived 'foreign' nature of the new lords.[23] However, despite this public show of concern for the population, similar statements show that it was likely other considerations that drove these men to rebellion. The *Mimasaka taiheiki* records how, when discussing their preparations for rebellion, the former retainers stated that:

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[22] "Mori-ke sendai jitsuroku, Vol. 10." Genroku 7, 10th month, 4th day. In, Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, shiryō Vol. 25: Tsuyama han monjo.* Okayama: Sanyō Shimbun, 1981. Pp.104-105. [Henceforth *OKS*].
[23] *OKS, 6*. Pp.86-87.

> The Mori are coming to take up their position in the area, if we tamely kneel down, eventually we will become commoners! […], if we take up defensive positions in the passes on the domainal boundaries, despite their numbers, we will kill many of them. Once the Mori have played their hand, they will be forced to sue for peace. If we make peace with them then, they will have to recognize our rights to the land. We are in no way inferior to the Mori warriors![24]

Though the *Mimasaka taiheiki* is a fictionalized retelling of the event, this passage voices concerns that were likely more indicative of the former retainers' motives than those displayed in the appeals. Their main concerns indicated here are the loss of their rights to the land and the possibility of losing their elite status. This passage clearly shows the complicated nature of the relation between land and status during these early Tokugawa years. However, it also highlights the problems inherent in looking at attainders as events with two clear sides comprised of new lords on one side and old lords on the other. The above example presents those opposed to the Mori as former Kobayakawa retainers, yet the reality is more complex when we look at the area in greater depth.

The territory of Mimasaka had seen constant confrontation during the preceding two centuries between two powerful families, the Mōri of Aki and the Ukita of Bizen. In 1582, after the defeat of the Mōri by Hashiba Hideyoshi (the future Toyotomi Hideyoshi), the area was appointed to the Ukita who had sided with Hideyoshi. However, there were local elites in the domain who continued to support the Mōri, especially as some of them were former Mōri retainers who were now considered rōnin.[25] Feeling they could count on support from these local elites, two

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[24] "Mimasaka taiheiki." In, Numata Raisuke (ed.). *Shinpen kibi sōsho, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Rekishi Toshosha, 1976. Pp.277-278.

[25] These local elites were made up of a combination of *dogō* and Mōri rōnin. These two groups are difficult to separate, as many former Mōri retainers had been from influential local families. However, though this overlap was frequent, it was not a given. See: *OKS, 25.* Pp.75.

former Mōri vassals, Kusagari Shigetsugu in Tomayama castle and Nakamura Yorimune in Iwaya castle, decided to oppose the Ukita. Despite this opposition, Ukita Hideie managed to stabilize his hold on the area by the mid-1590s. In 1600, however, he sided with the Western forces at Sekigahara and after his defeat he was removed from Mimasaka and replaced by Kobayakawa Hideaki. Hideaki moved to Mimasaka, but died suddenly without an heir in 1602 when control was changed, as described above, to the Mori. The frequency of change in local lord, as well as the divided allegiances in the domain, were a source of worry for the local elite as it left them vulnerable. Some of them had been on their way to inclusion in the *bushi* status group, or other favourable social positions, and a moment of change often meant that these men lost their social advantages as few of these concessions were made in writing. It is therefore that many of these local elite headed opposition to the Ukita, the Kobayakawa, and the Mori.[26]

In 1603, it was therefore not the heavy taxes that the Mori proposed to levy on the general population of Mimasaka that motivated the local elite to act, but the renewed threat to their social standing. This was underlined by the fact that after the Mori came to Tsuyama, one policy in particular drew the ire of local elites. This policy stated that the Mori had decided that all of the existing local elite were to be included in the farmer (*nōmin*) status group and, despite opposition to the policy, this was eventually enacted.[27] Though they were relegated to the status of commoner, however, many of these men were able to retain some form of power in their new position, and many of the people who would later hold the position of *ōjōya* (village head) were the descendants of these local elites. However, despite their failure to retain *bushi* status, these elites attempted to use the ambiguity in their position in attempts to increase their social standing. In the *Mimasaka sendai jitsuroku*, it is recorded in 1616 that:

[26] *OKS, 25.* Pp.75.
[27] *Ibid.*

> The *ōjōya* of the province, the Arimoto, Andō, Maki, Ikegami and Kono followed their lord [to Osaka], and on returning for the campaign they felt that they should be granted a small fief. […] After having returned from the campaign, it was commanded that they would remain farmers as before.[28]

As with the earlier example above, from this excerpt the main aim for these people remained authority over the land which formed the base of their influence and power. To be removed from this base of power would present them with insecurity, both financially and in terms of status. Furthermore, these former retainers' references to loyalty for their lord or their community were far less ideological than they first appear and were actually intimately tied up with their own social position and standing.[29] Those at the margins of elite status[30] were therefore most threatened by changes of power and their position of resistance to central power was fuelled by the instability of their privileged social position.

The three examples of opposition to attainder during the early Tokugawa period examined above are indicative of the reactions to the changes imposed by the new Tokugawa shogunate. They show that attainders were not simply the giving of lands from one lord to another, but that they were moments of tension that could easily lead to renewed opposition. The men faced with new lords would be subjected to social and economic uncertainty as to their position in the new

[28] "Mimasaka sendai jitsuroku." In, *OKS, 25.* Pp.110.

[29] The concept of loyalty and service often feature prominently in discussions of rōnin. This is largely inspired by the dramatization of the Akō incident, especially the *Kanadehon chūshingura*. See: Bitō Masahide and Smith, Henry. "The Akō Incident, 1701-1703." *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol.58, No.2 (Summer 2003), pp.149-170; Foxwell, Chelsea. "The Double Identity of Chūshingura: Theater and History in Nineteenth-Century Prints." *Impressions,* No.26 (2004), Pp.22-43.

[30] It needs to be remembered that ideas of status and other forms of social ordering took time to take hold and were actively created. Though many of the institutional social divisions implemented by the Tokugawa mapped onto preexisting ideas of social hierarchy, such divisions were still developing and being adapted during the earlier years of the Tokugawa period. See: Ooms, Herman. *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

domainal socio-political sphere. This concern was expressed mainly in relation to status and land since many of them continued to see the land they held as their base of power and social standing. At the same time, they were concerned about being integrated into the commoner population by the new lords and thus losing their elevated social position.[31]

As shown in chapter 2, these types of confrontations, combined with later uprisings, ultimately led to the crystallisation of an idea that Tokugawa Japan was faced with a 'rōnin problem' by the 1650s. As rōnin had been identified as the main disruptive factor, solutions were aimed at halting the proliferation of their numbers caused by attainder. This resulted, as mentioned above, in changes to adoption and inheritance laws in the 1650s.[32] In Japan, the practice of adoption to counter the lack of an heir was already a well-established practice by the dawn of the Tokugawa period.[33] However, in order to control the various daimyo now under its rule, early in its reign the Tokugawa *bakufu* instated laws that controlled adoption in both practice and form. This was a result of the fact that adoption was not only a way to assure the continuation of a family but also to reinforce alliances. The Tokugawa government was very wary of any alliances that could undermine its hegemony and therefore aimed to control these adoptions.[34] However, strict adoption laws combined with attainders due to the lack of an heir had the effect of creating a large number of disenfranchised ex-retainers. By enabling daimyo to adopt an heir on their deathbed and relaxing other sanctions pertaining to adoption, attainders due to a lack of an heir, one of the

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[31] The concern for the relation between *bushi* and land was not new, as discussed in chapter 1. The separation edicts (*heinō bunri)* implemented during the rule of Toyotomi Hideyoshi were intended to separate the *bushi* from the land and the commoner population, yet were only partially effective. See: Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *Hideyoshi*. Cambridge, MA: Council of East Asian Studies, 1982, pp.106-118; and, Yoshida Yuriko. *Heinō bunri to chiiki shakai.* Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 2000. Pp.97-102.

[32] Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace,* 2012. Pp.78-79.

[33] For a discussion of the use of adoption in Japan through the ages with a comparative perspective, see: Sugiyama Lebra, Takie. "Adoption amongst the Hereditary Elite of Japan: Status Preservation through Mobility." *Ethnology*, Vol.28, No.3 (Jun 1989), pp.185-218.

[34] Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace*, 2012. Pp.75.

most prevalent reason for attainder, were drastically reduced. Therefore, the changes in the adoption and inheritance laws pertaining to the various daimyo went a long way to solve the perceived problems. Easier adoption meant the existence of a legal heir and thus the stable continuation of the ruling household (*ie*).

This more measured approach and increased focus on stability are apparent in later reactions to issues involving family inheritance disputes (*sōdō*), such the *Date sōdō* in 1671 and *Nambu sōdō* in 1713, which would normally have resulted in attainder by the *bakufu*. In both of these domains an especially large percentage of the population, almost a quarter, was registered as *bushi*,[35] something which would have significantly increased the rōnin population if attainder had taken place. This more measured reaction to disputes is especially clear in the case of the *Date sōdō*. Where the public nature of the conflict itself would have been enough to incur attainder before the 1650s, even the considerable violence that accompanied it did not result in harsh punishment. When a member of one of the feuding parties cut down a rival in the house of a *bakufu* official, neither attainder nor reduction of the Date domain were imposed.[36] Although the above example is extreme, in both the number of retainers and violence involved, it underlines the new focus on stability; a stability built around more secure daimyo infeudation and family continuation.

The reason for this focus on the continuation of the ruling household was that the daimyo's household was not simply a family unit, but one of the central institutions in the socio-political hierarchy of the domain. During the years of national unification, lords had been subjected to constant changes in domain, which could result in either gains or losses in their holdings. The increased use of stipends, rather than the granting of land, tied retainers more directly to their lord

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[35] Morris, John. *Kinsei bushi no 'ōyake' to 'watakushi': Sendai hanshi tamamushi jūzō no kyaria to zasetsu.* Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 2009. Pp.120.
[36] Kitajima Masamoto (ed.). *Oie sōdō.* Tokyo: Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1965. Pp.168-169.

as they would not have their own lands on which to rely during social or financial setbacks.[37] Service to one's lord, and by extension his household, became synonymous with one's own fortunes, and was reflected in how one fitted into the retainer band. Just as the daimyo scattered around Japan were divided into categories such as *ichimon, fudai, tozama* etc. by the Tokugawa,[38] so were the retainers of the daimyo themselves. The exact reasons for the various subdivisions, however, often varied per domain as they were based around when daimyo were assigned domains or had the size of their enfiefment changed. In Okayama domain, for example, retainers classed as *fudai* (hereditary retainers) were generally those who had served during the time of Ikeda Terumasa who had died in 1613. On the other hand, men who entered service to the Ikeda after Ikeda Mitsumasa was transferred to Okayama domain in 1632 were generally viewed as *shinzan* (new retainers).[39] These subdivisions amongst retainers often became increasingly fixed during the Tokugawa period and could have important consequences when changes in the fortunes of the domain forced changes to the retainer bands. As the Tokugawa period brought more stability, these indications of service were, under normal circumstances, increasingly transferred to one's heir. In effect it was the retainers' households which were assigned as either *fudai* or *shinzan* as opposed to merely the individual. These practices were increasingly codified with the proliferation of retainer lineage registers, which often only recorded the households of upper-middle and higher retainers. These registers had existed prior but their use became increasingly widespread during the mid-seventeenth century, resulting in an increased fixity of the retainer band, as well as an increasingly hereditary nature of positions of power in the domainal institutional makeup. Instead

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[37] This is not to say that the ties between retainers and land had been fully severed and the correlation between stipend and land remained strong, especially in certain areas. See: Morris, John. *Kinsei Nihon chigyōsei no kenkyū.* Osaka: Seibundō, 1988.
[38] These terms were categories of retainers based around familial relation, length of service, time of pledging fealty, etc. See: Bolitho, Harold. *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyo in Tokugawa Japan.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974. Pp.45-46.
[39] *OKS, 25*. Pp.293-298

of addressing insecurity for the *bushi* status group as a whole, therefore, such registers instead created security for higher placed retainers, creating further conflicts of interest between higher and lower retainers.[40] The increased hereditary nature of rank and the recording of this in registers meant that whilst the social positions of certain families became more secure, many others were relegated to situation of perpetual insecurity as they would be unable to obtain new positions.

Attainders, however, still occurred post-1650s and continued for the remainder of the Tokugawa period, despite the laws intended to curb their number. One of the main reasons for attainder, instead of a lack of an heir, became family disputes (*oie sōdō*). These disputes often arose in the wake of the death of a lord when disputes regarding the legitimate heir to the title arose. Whilst prior to the relaxation of adoption laws the issue had been whether there was any heir at all, in the second half of the seventeenth century the main issue was often that different factions supported different claims.[41] These disputes were often reflective of existing rivalries within the daimyo household and were often created through the existence of multiple offspring from multiple women or the objection of an uncle who felt he had been overlooked in earlier transfers of power. Whereas such disputes were apparent in most families, it was when such rivalries left the privacy of the household and entered into the public realm, that they became a concern for the *bakufu* and thus opened up the possibility of attainder.[42] The rationale behind imposing attainder in such situations was that stability in the domains and the daimyo households was key to lessening disruption amongst retainers and preventing the creation of further rōnin.[43]

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[40] Yuza Norihiro. "Kishū-han ni okeru kinsei jikishindan no seiritsu to baishin no kōzō." In, Tsuda Hideo Sensei Kokikinenkai (eds.). *Hōken shakai to kindai: Tsuda Hideo sensei koki kinen.* Suita: Tsuda Hideo Sensei Kokikinenkai, 1989. Pp.333-335.
[41] Fukuda Chizuru. *Oie sōdō: daimyo-ke wo yurugashita kenryoku.* Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 2005; Kitajima Masamoto (ed.). *Oie sōdō.* Tokyo: Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1965; Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace*, 2012. Pp.76.
[42] This dichotomy between the public and private realms is explored in-depth in: Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace,* 2012. In particular pp.1-18.
[43] Hozumi Nobushige. *Yui Shōsetsu jiken to Tokugawa bakufu no yōshi hō.* Tokyo: Teikoku Gakushi-in, 1913. Pp.1-12.

Before, when lords had been attaindered, their retainer bands were disbanded and many of their former retainers found themselves without a source of income. Even reductions in holdings could pose an issue, as lords would be forced to cut down the number of retainers in their employ. This could go as far as to have effects within families, as second sons became one group at increased risk of losing their position due to cutbacks. This was especially the case for the sons of lower retainers since "younger sons of low ranking samurai […] were neither adopted into other households as the heir, nor given service appointments of their own [and therefore] dropped out of samurai status entirely."[44] With the large number of attainders during the early years of the Tokugawa period, many retainers lost their livelihoods and entered a state of often protracted social insecurity as rōnin. The new laws pertaining to adoption and inheritance were intended to avoid such disenfranchisement in the future and reduce the number of rōnin, but their main effect was security for those at the top of the social ladder.

Within the new rationale of rule, attainders came to hold a different position in the arsenal of power of the Tokugawa. No longer used to reshape the geo-political map, they were dialogic events aimed at reinforcing social and political stability yet fraught with potential conflict. The involvement of multiple actors was both indicative of the complex nature of attainder, as well as being representative of the new social fault lines. Attainders are therefore poignant examples of the ways in which retainers were faced with insecurity and rōnin status, something that often forced them to negotiate their position within the Tokugawa social world. The following sections will provide an analysis of two particular moments of attainder in the second half of the seventeenth century: the attainder of the Mori family in 1696 and the attainder of the Nasu family in 1687. By analysing these it will become clear that, firstly, numerous seemingly random events could lead to

[44] Howell, David. *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Pp.57.

retainers falling into rōnin status. Secondly, they will highlight that those who became rōnin experienced the rōnin label differently depending on their position prior to attainder. Lastly, they will work to demonstrate the ways in which multiple actors, all with their own interests at heart, worked to minimize the effects of attainder in order to avoid the worst of its effects on their personal position.

## The Mori Family and the Attainder of Tsuyama Domain

By looking in-depth at the lead up to and consequences of the attainder of the Mori in 1697, this section will highlight the tensions that occurred during moments of attainder and the active negotiation and concession that they necessitated. Despite the imposition of its will in the form of attainder, the case of the Mori demonstrates that by the late seventeenth century the Tokugawa were no longer able to simply use coercion to force their will. Furthermore, an analysis of this attainder will show that retainers, faced with the prospect of becoming rōnin, were not a unified group and that their actions were often informed by their individual positions. Lastly, this example will highlight the local tension that could occur as rōnin, in search for a new livelihood, inserted themselves into existing power hierarchies.

As discussed above, the Mori family was assigned to the domain of Tsuyama in 1603, when Mori Tadamasa was installed as the domainal lord by the *bakufu*. The domain was located in the Tsuyama basin to the north-east of Okayama domain and had an estimated yearly yield of 185,500 *koku*. The Mori had served under Oda Nobunaga at the same time as Tokugawa Ieyasu and Tadamasa was a younger brother of Mori Naritoshi, better known as Mori Ranmaru, the famous retainer of Oda Nobunaga who died with him at Honnō-ji. However, after Tadamasa had

been installed as lord he was presented with a problem as his natural son was too young to inherit the domain. It was therefore decided that the headship of the family should pass to Tadamasa's adoptive son, Mori Nagatsugu, in 1634. Nagatsugu was originally a son of the third daughter of Tadamasa who had married into the Seki family, an important retainer family to the Mori, and had thus been adopted by Tadamasa specifically to become his heir. After Nagatsugu retired in 1674, the lordship was passed to his natural son Nagatake. Nagatake however, also did not have any natural sons and left the headship of Tsuyama domain to his adopted son, Mori Naganari, in 1686.[45]

In the fifth month of 1693, Naganari was commanded by the *bakufu* to provide fire-watchmen for the Yushima Seidō temple in the capital, as part of his expected duties to the Tokugawa. This command came on top of the fact that one month earlier he had been commanded to also provide a fire-watch for the Zōjō-ji temple where the shogunal family cemetery was located. In 1696, Naganari, received a further command from the *bakufu* to build a kennel (*inu yashiki*) in Nakano village near the capital of Edo.[46] This command was the direct result of edicts issued by shogun Tsunayoshi for the protection of animals, which included a command calling for the construction of kennels in order to house stray dogs. In order to comply with this command, Naganari appointed Seki Atsutoshi to manage and oversee the project. The sheer size and requirements for the kennel necessitated the appointment of the assistant manager (*yōnin*) Kani Mataemon and a workforce made up of 140 vassals and numerous lower retainers. The work started on the 18th day of the 10th month and was completed on the 24th day of the 12th month. Despite the fact that the project was finished in just over two months, it is estimated that its total

[45] Kawaguchi Motoki. "Akō rōnin to Tsuyama Akō-hanshu Mori-shi." *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin*, Vol.1629 (Jan. 1998), pp.145-146.
[46] "Mori-ke sendai jitsuroku, Vol. 10." Genroku 7, 10th month, 4th day. In, Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, shiryō Vol. 25: Tsuyama han monjo.* Okayama: Sanyō Shimbun, 1981. Pp.229-235.

building costs reached the vast sum of 33,570 *koku*,[47] which was around one sixth of the entire domainal yearly income.[48] Combined with the previous commands from the *bakufu* to provide continuous fire-watches for the Yushima Seidō and Zōjō-ji temples,[49] the manpower and funds required to continuously perform these duties became immense. In order to alleviate the strain, the domain imposed an extra duty on villages and cities in Tsuyama. This, however, did little to assuage the financial strain and resulted in widespread popular discontent. To make matters worse, the miserable state of the Mori domainal finances seems to have been public knowledge. A letter from the Mitsui merchant family discussed the penury of the Mori and lamented the fact that this was influencing not only the Mori themselves but also those entering into business contracts with them, such as the Zenroku family currency exchange and other domains.

> […] the Zenroku, exchanged over 10,000 kan [in silver] for the lord of Tsuyama domain in Mimasaka. However, because of arrears [in payment by the Mori] their fortunes were dashed. Therefore, the Zenroku went to Edo to file a lawsuit concerning [this matter]. However, because the Mori pleaded that the Zenroku were stipended retainers, instead [of regaining their money] they were faced with financial difficulties and their business was finished in Edo. [The Mori] have even exchanged money with other daimyo, and here too they are in arrears. I have even heard that in their business with Kaga domain they were also in arrears.[50]

Such problems with financial issues, especially when widely known amongst various layers of society, would have been acutely worrying to the Mori. The mention of Kaga, which was

[47] One *koku* was taken as a unit corresponding to enough rice to feed one person for one year, which would be roughly equivalent to 180 litres of unhulled rice. See Appendix.
[48] Tsuyamashi Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tsuyama-shi shi, 3.* Tsuyama: Tsuyama Shiyakusho, 1973. Pp.111. [Henceforth *TSS*].
[49] "Mori-ke sendai jitsuroku, Vol. 10." Genroku 6, 5th month, 16th day. In, *OKS* 25. Pp.223-224; "Mori-ke sendai jitsuroku, Vol. 10." Genroku 7, 4th month, 22nd day. In, *OKS* 25. Pp.228-229.
[50] "Echigoya Mitsui-ke monjo: Chōnin koken roku". In, *TSS, shiryō 3.* 1973. Pp.114.

controlled by the largest land-holding daimyo family in the country, as being embroiled in the issue shows that it was neither contained to smaller daimyo, nor to a particular geographical area. Moreover, it highlights the danger the financial issues of one domain could pose to others. As a result, domainal mismanagement could quickly attract the attention and ire of the Tokugawa and, as already noted, was often a reason for attainder.

It was, however, not its financial troubles that would eventually lead to the attainder of the Mori. Adding to their predicament, and potentially exacerbated by it, less than a year later in the 6th month of 1697 the domainal lord, Mori Naganari, passed away after a period of illness.[51] As Naganari did not have any natural sons with his wife, the daughter of Mōri Tsunamoto, the pressing issue of succession had to be decided during his period of illness. Just before his death, Naganari therefore decided that Mori Atsutoshi should be next in line: the very same man who, when still called Seki Atsutoshi, had been in charge of the kennel building project less than two years before. Atsutoshi was the 12th son of the previous daimyo, Mori Nagatsugu, and in 1686 he had been adopted by the Tsuyama domain elder (*karō*) Seki Atsuyuki.[52] Only two days after the death of Naganari, Atsutoshi was informed by *bakufu* official Tsuchiya Masanao that he should present himself to the shogun as soon as possible in order to make the inheritance official. Unable to ignore such an order, Atsutoshi set off for Edo barely ten days after the death of Naganari. However, a week later, on the 11th day of the 7th month of 1697 Atsutoshi, still on his way to Edo, suddenly went mad due to the effects of a high fever whilst staying in the village of Nao in Ise province, about half-way between Okayama and Edo. Despite the attention of doctors, it seemed no medicine was effective in curing this sudden madness. Later accounts of the incident claim that Atsutoshi's

[51] Mikazuki-han kankei shiryō chōsa dan (eds.). *Mikazuki-chō no kobunsho mokuroku shū: Mikazuki-han monjo.* Hyōgo-ken: Mikazuki-chō, 1997. Pp.132.
[52] *Ibid.*

madness wasn't all that sudden and instead suggested that whilst it had fully developed on his journey to Edo, it could in fact be traced back to earlier erratic behavior. One of the particular instances referred to was Atsutoshi's command to one of his retainers, Wakabayashi Heinai, to commit suicide due to an alleged lack of oversight which had resulted in a number of rōnin breaking in to the kennel at Nakano village and killing some of the dogs.[53]

The extent and reason of Atsutoshi's madness notwithstanding, the fact remained that the domain and the Mori retainers were faced with a significant crisis now that the succession of Atsutoshi could not be relied upon. Well aware of the dangers posed by the infirmity of Atsutoshi, his natural father and former daimyo, Mori Nagatsugu, sent Hoshina Masayoshi and Torii Tadaaki to the capital to request a postponement of Atsutoshi's audience with the shogun. He also dispatched Hashimoto Takachika and the doctor Mashita Michie to Ise in order to tend to Atsutoshi and enable him to resume his journey to Edo. At the same time, Nagao Katsuaki, a high domainal official, sent a letter to the *bakufu* in Nagatsugu's name pleading for the continuation of the Mori family. None of these actions had the desired effect, however, and on the 2nd day of the 8th month of 1697 Nagatsugu was summoned to the castle in Edo. Upon being informed that, due to the death of Naganari and Atsutoshi's lapse into madness, the Mori holdings of Tsuyama would be forfeited, Nagatsugu pleaded for the continuation of the family line.[54]

Faced with this imminent change, the former vassals of Mori Atsutoshi immediately felt the impact of the attainder. The domainal residence in Edo was emptied of personnel and the residences in Kyoto and Osaka shut their doors. All retainers living there were forced to move back to Tsuyama or attempt to find new positions in these three cities in which many rōnin were

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[53] Watanabe Daimon. "Tsuyama-han seiritsuki no kisoteki kenkyū." *Kogakkan sōshō*, Vol.42, No.2 (2015), pp.11-12.
[54] *TSS, 3.* 1973. Pp.124.

already looking for reemployment. However, in the domain itself things were not much better and opinions were divided on how to proceed. After the *bakufu* attaindered the Mori domain, it assigned Tsuyama to Matsudaira Nobutomi, head of a branch of the Matsudaira family. As a result, the holdings of the Mori retainers were redistributed and assigned to those of the Matsudaira who followed their lord to the new domain. Though the domain was reduced to 100,000 *koku* from around 185,500 at the time of attainder, this still constituted an increase in holdings from what the new daimyo had had before. Despite this, however, the Matsudaira did not seek to increase the size of their retainer band through rehiring at the time of their move to Tsuyama.[55] Thus the former Mori retainers' chances of finding reemployment in the service of the new daimyo were slim.

In view of this, some Mori vassals felt that before the new lord of the domain arrived they should barricade Tsuyama castle and defend it. If it came to it, proclaimed some, it would be better to die defending the castle than to give it up (*shiro wo makura ni uchiji*).[56] These men signed a vow to defend the castle with their lives and started preparing for the siege, which they saw as their only option to avoid destitution. Mori Nagatsugu, who was at this time in Edo negotiating with the *bakufu* about the new holdings, received a letter from the *bakufu* demanding that the handing over of the castle and the rest of the holdings to the Matsudaira was to go ahead without obstacles. To support this statement, the *bakufu* reminded the Mori that if they failed to do so, the ongoing negotiations about new Mori holdings would be negatively affected. The heads of Mori branch families, such as Seki Nagaharu and Mori Nagatoshi, were told to do everything in their power to avoid any rash actions by any of their retainers. In Tsuyama itself, as retainers readied the castle to be defended against the Matsudaira, high Mori officials, such as Nagao Katsuaki, worked to negotiate with the retainers to avoid a confrontation. Luckily for Nagatsugu, and many

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[55] *TSS, 4.* 1995. Pp.308.
[56] *TSS, 3.* 1973. Pp.126.

others who stood to gain from a peaceful transition, these efforts ultimately proved successful as the initial anger subsided and the retainers decided against opposition.[57]

After the vassals decided to comply with *bakufu* orders, the castle doors were opened and everything was made ready for the new lord to move in unopposed as per the orders of the Tokugawa. Having been able to comply with the *bakufu*'s command for a peaceful transition, Nagatsugu was able to successfully negotiate the assignment of new lands for the Mori, in part due to the *bakufu*'s reluctance see an end to such an influential, well-connected and historically significant family.[58] It therefore appointed various, albeit severely reduced, holdings to the remaining members of the Mori family. The most notable recipient was Nagatsugu himself who received 110,000 *koku* in the Nishi-Ebara area in Bitchū province. However, since Nagatsugu was 88 years of age at this time, he made his 11th son, Naganao, his heir and, opting to remain in Edo himself, sent him to Nishi-Ebara. Atsutoshi, whose insanity was said not to have waned throughout this time of upheaval, was sent to live with his brother Naganao in Nishi-Ebara where he remained for the rest of his short life, dying less than a decade later in 1705 at the age of only 33. Two further branches of the Mori family, under the headship of Mori Nagatoshi and Seki Nagaharu, also received new holdings worth 15,000 and 18,700 *koku* respectively.[59] Even though this meant that the Mori had been assigned three domains, the family's original holdings had been reduced by a quarter. This demanded a severe restructuring of the retainer bands in service since the new domains were unable to sustain their current size.[60] Consequently, not only did the former retainers

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[57] *Ibid.*

[58] The Mori had served under Oda Nobunaga, who is often described as one of the 'three unifiers' of Japan, at the same time as the first Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. The first daimyo of Tsuyama domain, Mori Tadamasa was a younger brother of Mori Naritoshi, better known as Mori Ranmaru, the famous retainer of Oda Nobunaga who died with him at Honnō-ji. Kawaguchi Motoki. "Akō rōnin to Tsuyama Akō-hanshu Mori-shi." *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin*, Vol.1629 (Jan. 1998), pp.145-146.

[59] Mori Nagatoshi was assigned lands in the Mikazuki district of Harima province worth 15,000 *koku.* Seki Nagaharu received 18.700 *koku* in Niimi in Bitchū province. *TSS, 3.* 1973. Pp.131-132.

[60] *TSS, 3.* 1973. Pp.131-132.

of the Mori find themselves with limited reemployment opportunities under the Matsudaira, but the new holdings appointed to the Mori family were insufficient to support them all.

Mori vassals were ordered to leave the castle in Tsuyama within 30 days and were therefore rapidly faced with the realities of unemployment. One of the men who had to comply to this deadline was a man named Takahashi. Forced to leave Tsuyama castle town, he found himself without a home and, having been unable to secure new employment, he left the domain as a rōnin. Faced with forced eviction he wrote a farewell letter to his friend who was the head priest at the Takano shrine, which included a poem lamenting his expulsion through an allusion to a well-known poem from the *Kokin wakashū*,[61] that not only poetically underlined his position, but also showed Takahashi's strong connection to Tsuyama through its reference to Sarayama, a mountain just south of Tsuyama city. Like many others in his position, Takahashi shows a clear awareness of the tenuous nature of his social position now that he had been uprooted and sent adrift. Yet at the same time the letter highlights that he possessed links to well-positioned individuals, the high priest, as well as a clear education in the classics, a skill which could be leveraged in an attempt to obtain new employment. Though the threat of confrontation had subsided with the decision not to oppose the Matsudaira, for many of the Mori rōnin the challenge to regain employment and security had only just begun.

The sudden expulsion left many retainers, like Takahashi, without a means of making a living and meant that many faced considerable hardship as a result. They were, however, unlike many other former retainers faced with the same situation, not completely left to their own devices. In order to alleviate their hardship, house elders (*karō*) Mori Mitsutaka and Nagao Katsuaki

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[61] *Ibid.* Pp.133. The poem references a poem from the Heian era, *Kokin wakashū* ("*Mimasaka ya, kume no sarayama, sarasara ni waga na wa tateji yorozuyo made ni*), written in 859 at the occasion of the enthronement of emperor Seiwa. The poem juxtaposes the eternal nature of Sarayama mountain with the fleeting nature of human life and memory.

prepared an appeal to the *bakufu* for relief funds, which was given more weight by the support of Mori Nagatsugu. The appeal was accepted and in the 11th month *bakufu* officials put forward a measure for the provision of rice to the former Mori retainers.[62] The measure, signed by the officials Takemura Sozaemon, Moriya Sukejirō and Okada Goemon, presented a precise plan for the distribution of these rice stipends on the basis of rank for the limited time of 120 days, presumably to allow the former retainers to get their affairs in order and find new employment. As a result, 51 individuals received around 10 *koku* each, 155 people around 7 *koku* each, 119 people around 5 *koku* each, and another 119 around 3 *koku* each. By far the largest group, made up of 2401 individuals all received around 2 *koku* each. All together this amounted to the significant sum of around 7869 *koku* of rice which was to be distributed among 2845 individuals. Furthermore, it was declared that no changes were to be made to these totals under any circumstances and that the distribution of the amounts was to be overseen by officials who would act as witnesses to the accounts.[63] Thus, instead of leaving these retainers to their own devises, the *bakufu* provided them with support to enable them to find reemployment. Whereas in earlier years the *bakufu* would have imposed its will for attainder without giving any consideration to the social consequences, by this point the socio-political landscape had changed such that the *bakufu* was increasingly sensitive to the need to respond to the 'threat' of disenfranchised former retainers with policy rather than force. Having been given time to obtain new employment did not mean, however, that this process was equally easy for all former retainers. Though some were able to obtain new positions with the remaining Mori family branches in Nishi-Ebara, Mikazuki or Niimi, many were not so fortunate and opted to move to other domains in search of employment. Nearby domains such as Okayama saw a large number of rōnin petition for employment during last years of the seventeenth and early

[62] Kibi gunsho shūsei kankōkai (eds.). *Kibi gunsho shūsei,* Tokyo: Rekishi Toshokai, 1970. Pp.160-162.
[63] *Ibid.*

years of the eighteenth century, some of whom were clearly identified as *Mori rōnin* or *Tsuyama rōnin.*[64]

Many of those who were unable to leverage familial and personal connections in order to obtain reemployment in the new Mori households were forced to stay in Tsuyama domain and return to rural areas in order to settle and make a living. In the village of Kagaminaka in the Saihokujō district alone, seven rōnin "requested farmland and moved residence."[65] After their move, they were entered into a *gonin-gumi* (formal collective household group) and consequently absorbed into the village's farming population. Many of the Mori rōnin seemed to have taken advantage of the opportunities presented to them in the countryside, as revealed by the census into Mori rōnin, the *Mori-ke rōnin aratame* (Census of rōnin of the Mori family), that was ordered by Matsudaira Nobutomi soon after he assumed his new position of Tsuyama daimyo.[66] Through the documents created during this census, it becomes clear that the rōnin who settled in Kagaminaka village had not been the only ones to move to the countryside. In fact, the documents show that the villages of Takanohongo, Terawada, Omachi, Kuse, Kawabe and Oniwa all had two rōnin each who had moved there after the attainder of the Mori, whilst one rōnin was recorded to have settled in the villages of Kokubunji, Hikami, Konakabara, Kuwabara, Narai and Yono. The men that settled in these villages were often lower retainers whose prior stipends had been less than 200 *koku*. Whilst agriculture would have been an obvious choice for many as a means of generating their income once settled into these new villages, some sought out other forms of making a living. As highlighted through the example of Takahashi above, many of these men possessed a level of education which could be leveraged to gain new employment. For example, Takai Judayu, who

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[64] Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai (eds.). *Okayama Ikeda-ke monjo, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, 1920. Pp.265, 271.
[65] "Yabuki-ke monjo." In, *OKS, 7.* Pp.54.
[66] *TSS, 3.* 1973. Pp.132-133.

had been an inspector (*metsuke*) with a 100 *koku* stipend, and Oka Gozaemon, a former archery officer (*yumigumi azukari*) with a 100 *koku* stipend, settled in the countryside where they were registered as doctors.[67]

Despite having been the recipients of relief funds, Mori rōnin were forced to seek reemployment through creatively negotiating their social positions as they inserted themselves into local social hierarchies. Whilst some were able to find land to work, often through prior familial connections, others had to leverage their elite social background in an attempt to obtain reemployment. Especially for this last group, social changes that were taking place in the rural areas of Tokugawa Japan[68] provided potential for employment at the same time as blurring lines of social identity and status. Yet not all rōnin who moved to rural areas were easily absorbed into village populations and existing village hierarchies, and infringements on existing social hierarchies and identities could spur conflict. Long after the Matsudaira had entered Tsuyama castle, disruption caused by the Mori attainder still persisted in villages throughout Tsuyama domain.[69]

This was not the end of issues facing rōnin in Tsuyama. Barely 30 years after the attainder, Tsuyama domain had its holdings halved in 1726.[70] As a result, 276 of the 630 direct vassals of the Matsudaira were dismissed.[71] At a point when many rōnin had barely managed to re-stabilize their position in society, a new influx of rōnin occurred, once again highlighting the fact that the

[67] *Ibid.* Pp.133.
[68] Platt, Brian. "Elegance, Prosperity, Crisis: Three Generations of Tokugawa Village Elites." *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol.55, No.1 (Spring, 2000), pp.46.
[69] *OKS, 7.* Pp.173-175.
[70] This reduction was due to continued inconsistencies in the Matsudaira inheritance process. In 1721, after the death of his father Matsudaira Nobutomi, Matsudaira Asagorō was allowed to be appointed as daimyo despite the fact that he was only 5 years old. When Asagorō died at the age of 11 in 1726, the *bakufu* was convinced not to attainder the domain and allow Matsudaira Matazaburō, himself only 6 at the time, to assume the title. Though not applying full attainder, however, the *bakufu* reduced the Matsudaira holdings to 50,000 *koku.* See: Yabuki Kinichirō (ed.). *Tsuyama chihō kyōdoshi.* Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1977. Pp.132-146.
[71] *Ibid.* Pp.146-159.

creation of new rōnin had not been halted in the 1650s. Though the number of retainers in Tsuyama didn't decrease further, the following century also did not see the creation of a significant number of new retainer positions. A Tsuyama domain register listing the domainal retainers for the year 1812 therefore shows a total of 374 vassals, with most of the families identical to those in 1726.[72]

The attainder of the Mori was, for all involved, a period of intense insecurity, yet the nature of this insecurity was determined by individual position. Those who were secure enough in their stations, or who were assured rehiring by another branch of the Mori family, had a vested interest in the smooth transition of power. For them, the sudden illness of their lord had created problems, but these could be assuaged by compliance with Tokugawa demands. For many others, however, such a transition had the potential to leave them with nothing and to them opposition was a valid consideration. Both the request for relief funds and the willingness of the *bakufu* to accept the request indicate that the higher echelons of society at the domainal and *bakufu* level were aware of the need to respond with 'social policy' rather than force. This agreement then provided the former Mori retainers with the time and funds to find new forms of income, and aimed to avoid further potential conflict. Yet, though open conflict was indeed evaded, the integration of large numbers of rōnin into other social units could create tensions as people were forced to negotiate social hierarchies. Thus, this example exposes the delicate politics involved in resolving these moments of attainder and the ways in which their effects were not simply administrative and confined to political centres. Instead, the effects of attainder radiated out through villages and into other domains, complicating ideas of status, employment and place.

[72] "Tsuyama-han bungen chō." In, Yabuki Kinichirō (ed.). *Tsuyama chihō kyōdoshi.* Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1977. Pp.146-159.

## Nasu Sukenori and the Attainder of Karasuyama Domain

Whilst the Mori attainder highlighted the internal conflicts between retainers that could surface during moments of attainder, the attainder of the Nasu family of Karasuyama domain in 1687 demonstrates the ways in which networks of acquaintance were crucial for rōnin in the aftermath of attainder. Those who were able to leverage their connections and family relations in the wake of attainder were able to continue their life relatively uninterrupted despite their association with the rōnin label. Others, however, were not so lucky and were forced to pursue employment in any way possible. Rōnin, like *bushi*, were internally separated by vast differences in financial capital and interpersonal networks, further complicating group cohesion and rōnin identity. In addition to this, the attainder of the Nasu family reveals that although the *bakufu* had been willing to turn a blind eye now and then after the 1650s, it was forced to act if matters were officially brought to their attention.

The lord of Karasuyama domain at the time of attainder was Nasu Sukenori. Sukenori was the second son of the 4th lord of Hirosaki domain, Tsugaru Nobumasa, and his mother was the daughter of Masuyama Masatoshi.[73] Having been born in Hirosaki in 1672, Sukenori was adopted in 1683 by his maternal great uncle, Nasu Sukemitsu as he did not have an heir. His position as the heir to Sukemitsu was said to have been made official in the same year when he was invited for an audience by the shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi. However, Sukemitsu died not long after, in 1687, and Sukenori succeeded him as head of the Nasu family on the 25th day of the 8th month of that year. In his new position as head of the Nasu family, Sukenori thus became the ruler of Karasuyama domain in Shimotsuke province, modern-day Tochigi prefecture, that was valued at

[73] Kokuritsu Shiryōkan (eds.). *Tsugaru-ke goteisho.* Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppansha, 1981. Pp.xix.

20,000 *koku*. Initially it seemed that the transition of lord had gone without incident and on the 6th day of the following month Sukenori even presented gifts to the shogun from his adopted father's estate. To the shogun himself he presented a sword made by the weapon-smith Jōshū Nobukuni and a painting by his adopted father. To the wife of the shogun he presented a collection of poetry called the *Wakan rōeishū* in the calligraphic style of Tameshige Fujihara.[74]

Very soon after Sukenori was raised to his new position, however, a dispute arose concerning his legitimacy. The dispute was triggered by a claim that Sukenori had not been officially accepted as Sukemitsu's heir. Instead, Fukuhara Motohiro, second son of Sukemitsu, claimed with the support of his mother that he was the legal heir. To further support his claim, Motohiro and his mother pointed to various actions taken by Sukemitsu that they saw as illegitimate or unlawful, and which would disqualify Sukenori as his rightful heir and therefore from the position he now held. It was said that almost a decade earlier, in 1679, Motohiro, who had been 23 at that time, had sent a letter to Sukemitsu claiming that he was his legitimate son and that he should be recognised as such. Sukemitsu disputed this claim since he maintained that Motohiro was illegitimate due to the fact that his mother was not his legitimate wife and had decided not to accept the letter as a result. During this time, Motohiro's mother had become intimate with a rōnin named Katayama Hoki and eventually it was Hoki who arranged a meeting between a representative of Sukemitsu and Motohiro at the house of a man called Hirano Nagamasa. However, Sukemitsu maintained that Motohiro would not be considered a legitimate child and could therefore not be his heir.[75]

Motohiro and his mother, however, continued to insist on the legitimacy of Motohiro's claim and also put forward claims that Sukemitsu might have other natural children. These claims

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[74] Hayashi Jussai (ed.). *Kansei chōshū shokafu, Vol.12.* Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 2010. Pp.133.
[75] Tochigi-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tochigi-ken shi, Vol.3.4.* Tokyo: Tochigi-ken, 1975. Pp.213-214.

were spurred by rumors surrounding an incident the previous year when Sukemitsu had gone into a quiet retreat at the Fukagawa Hōjō-in temple in Edo. A widow who lived close to the temple had a daughter who Sukemitsu went to visit, accompanied by various attendants and two rōnin doctors named Hayashi Masuan and Hirai Tomoetsu. Upon returning to the temple for the night, he never mentioned the incident again. After Sukemitsu returned home from the Hōjō-in temple, Masuan and Tomoetsu remained behind, seemingly unaffected by the edicts that had been posted around the country forbidding rōnin from staying at temples. Whilst still at the temple, Masuan and Tomoetsu enjoyed themselves and spoke freely of their outing with Sukemitsu to others,[76] likely igniting rumors of yet another possible heir. Another issue put forward was the fact that Motohiro was suspicious of the events surrounding the Nasu family adoption. When Sukemitsu decided he needed to adopt a son as his heir, the initial person put forward was the son of Masuyama Hyōbe named Masahiro. However, Masahiro was ordered to be adopted by Tsugaru Masatoshi, Sukenori's maternal grandfather, so it was reasoned that Masatoshi's grandson should be adopted by the Nasu instead. Whilst it is unclear from the documents, Masatoshi's involvement in the adoption negotiations prompted suspicions as Motohiro and his mother felt he had used his influence to place his grandson in the position of Sukemitsu's heir.

At the same time as these challenges to Sukenori's legitimacy were put forward, Motohiro underlined his own devotion to his father and the fact that Sukemitsu had demonstrated his acceptance of him as a son through particular actions. The first example of such action given by Motohiro was the fact that after Sukenori was granted Karasuyama domain in 1681, Motohiro followed his father to Karasuyama and was granted a small stipend.[77] Some years later, there was a fire in Karasuyama castle town and Motohiro's residence was consumed by the flames, forcing

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[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Ibid.*

him to find shelter somewhere else. Sukemitsu heard of this whilst in Edo and, as a compensation, doubled his stipend to a total of 200 *koku*. Motohiro was also given leave to take temporary charge of some foot soldiers (*ashigaru*) for the reconstruction of his house. However, after the reconstruction was completed, the situation was not revisited and so Motohiro took permanent control over the foot soldiers. The 'assignment' of men under his control was interpreted by Motohiro as an official position and therefore acceptance by his father as it was seen as a tacit recognition of his legitimacy as a son.

Further spurring on Motohiro's claim was most likely the fact that Sukenori was only 15 at the time of his instalment as daimyo, something that was technically illegal. However, as has already been demonstrated, their earlier easing of inheritance laws meant that the Tokugawa were often willing to overlook these small infractions on the law.[78] However, since Motohiro started an official case against Sukenori, the *bakufu* was forced to look closely at the matter. As a result of the following inquiry, the *bakufu* court decided that Sukemitsu had indeed acted illegally when putting forward Sukenori as heir by hiding the existence of his true son Motohiro.[79] However, despite this verdict, Motohiro was not installed as the new lord of Karasuyama. Instead, the Tokugawa took away the domain all together, as it was displeased with the disruption caused by the public nature of the family dispute (*oie sōdō*). As a result of this, the domain was taken from the Nasu family and Sukenori deposed on the 14th day of the 10th month of 1687, having been in the position of daimyo less than two months. The domain was consequently transferred to Nagai Naohiro and the holdings were raised to 30,000 *koku*.[80]

[78] Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace*, 2012. Pp.6-7.
[79] *Tochigi-ken shi, 3.4.* 1975. Pp.213-214.
[80] Interestingly, Naohiro is once again moved in 1702, this time to the Akō domain due to the disappearance of the Asano family as a result of the Akō incident.

Despite his attainder, Sukenori was not harshly punished as it was decided that as a minor he would have been unable to discern right from wrong in the issue.[81] He was put in the charge of his birth father Tsugaru Nobumasa and returned to his birth family's Edo residence where he was effectively put under house arrest. He spent 13 years as a rōnin, during which time he moved between the Tsugaru residences in Edo and Hirosaki.[82] Despite officially being in the position of rōnin, Sukenori was able to enjoy the life of a wealthy *bushi* thanks to the help of his biological father. These concessions made by his father are clearly shown when, on the 27th day of the 9th month of Genroku 10 (1697), all of Sukenori's possessions arrived in Edo. Amongst them were not only his clothing and other everyday items, but also his weapons and armor. Though, as a rōnin, Sukenori was legally not allowed to present himself as a member of the *bushi* status group, he was not only in possession of multiple weapons and sets of armor but is said to have worn his two swords on a daily basis.[83] The wearing of two swords was a sign of *bushi* status legally not premitted to rōnin, however, it seems that Sukenori was given permission to wear them in public by Nobumasa.[84]

It was not just Sukenori who profited from his connection to the Tsugaru and the assistance given by his father. As a result of his attainder and subsequent move to the Tsugaru residence in Edo, a number of his retainers accompanied him. In the official diary of the Tsugaru residence in Edo, we see that at least 18 men who were originally retainers of Sukenori during his time as head of the Nasu family joined him in the Tsugaru household.[85] Amongst these were retainers such as Iwata Eimonbei who had been a retainer of Sukenori from before he became head of the Nasu

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[81] Hayashi (ed.). *Kansei chōshū shokafu, Vol.12*, 2010. Pp.133.
[82] Okasaki Hironori. *Kaieki to oie saikō.* Tokyo: Dōseisha. 2007. Pp.105-129.
[83] The relation between rōnin and the right to wear two swords (*taitō*) is further discussed in chapter 5.
[84] Okasaki. *Kaieki to oie saikō*, 2007. Pp.109.
[85] *Ibid.* Pp.109-110.

household. In his new position in the Tsugaru household, Eimonbei was given a stipend of 300 *koku*.[86] Though not as large a stipend as he had had before the attainder, the length of his service to Sukenori had secured him a position with the Tsugaru. Another retainer who was fortunate enough to be able to follow Sukenori to Tsugaru was Tokoro Yoshizaemon. However, since he had been in Sukenori's employ for a much shorter time than Eimonbei, he was only registered for 10 *ryō* and 8 men. Even some very low retainers, such as a sandal bearer, a lacquered box carrier and six palanquin bearers moved with Sukenori to the Tsugaru household and were taken up in the lists of stipended men.[87]

Thus, despite finding himself in a position in which he was frequently described as a rōnin, Sukenori's circumstances remained very much like those prior to attainder. Not only did he have his own 'retainers,' others saw him as a man who could help them regain their own position. Much like the daimyo discussed in the previous chapter, Sukenori received numerous petitions from rōnin pleading him to hire them. However, unlike many of these daimyo, Sukenori was dependent on his father and therefore not in the position to hire people himself, despite outwardly living like a full *bushi*. This is clearly reflected in the following letter, which was received by Sukenori on the 11th day of the 2nd month of Genroku 8 (1695) during his time in Tsugaru domain. The letter had been submitted by a rōnin called Nakane Danzaemon and stated that he had come all the way to Hirosaki looking for employment with Sukenori.

> My Lord, despite the distance, I wanted nothing more than to come to Hirosaki. I have conveyed my wishes to all, from serving officials to the Tsugaru house elders but it seems that you are now living modestly and therefore have no need for people

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[86] "Tsugaru-ke hanchō nikki: Edo nikki." In, *Ibid.,* Pp.109-110.
[87] *Ibid.,* Pp.110.

> and don't even have any subordinates. You can't hire new retainers and lord Nobumasa also does not take on new retainers.
> Despite the fact that I came all the way to Hirosaki, travelling funds were a large burden and if I want to return finding the funds will be very difficult, therefore I beg the house elders to be granted three silver coins.
> I beg you for your understanding.[88]

It is not known if Danzaemon was indeed reimbursed, but the letter is a strong reminder of the differences in circumstance between people who were all labelled as rōnin at the time.

With the help of his father, Sukenori was eventually raised to *hatamoto* position,[89] initially as a *koshinbu* and later as a *yoriai*[90] in 1700, thus having spent 13 years as a rōnin before reappointment as a full *bushi*. In 1701, he was officially appointed 1000 *koku* in the Nasu district in Shimotsuke province. However, despite regaining his status and independence through a stipend, his relationship with his birth father remained strong. When faced with financial trouble in 1703 he appealed to his father for help and was given 3000 *koku* worth of assistance funds by the Tsugaru. These funds seem to have helped him over his financial issues and during the New Year's celebration of Hōei 5 (1708) he presented the shogun with a catalogue of *daikatana* (large swords). In return, he was granted a personal audience with the shogun on the 5th day of the 4th month of 1708, after which he was further raised to the position of *kōtai yoriai*, technically a *yoriai* status, but one that allowed/forced him to participate in the system of alternate attendance (*sankin kōtai*).[91] However, barely two months later Sukenori died in the 6th month of 1708 at the age of 36

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[88] *Ibid.* Pp.122-123.
[89] *Hatamoto* were direct retainers of the Tokugawa. They were generally of middle-rank but there existed large discrepancies in wealth within the ranks of *hatamoto*. See: Ravina, Mark. *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp.18-19.
[90] These are two subdivisions of *hatamoto* (see n.71). *Koshinbu* were low ranking *hatamoto* and *yoriai* were *hatamoto* with a stipend no larger than 3000 *koku*. Within *yoriai* there was a further subdivision between *yoriai,* those who were not subjected to the system of alternate attendance (*sankin kōtai*) and those that were, *kōtai yoriai.*
[91] Hayashi (ed.). *Kansei chōshū shokafu, Vol.12*, 2010. Pp.133.

and was given the posthumous name Jōshin. He left a wife, only identified as the daughter of Hanabusa Ukon Masanori, a daughter and two sons, the oldest of whom, Sukechika, inherited his father's position and holdings.[92]

It was not only Sukenori who was able to reobtain some of his former position since once he was reappointed as a *hatamoto* he set out to hire many of the men who had held the position of *fudai* retainer before his attainder. One's position was, therefore, not only important whilst employed but could also be crucial in regaining an appointment if one's former lord had a turn in fortune. One of the men who was hired in this way was Minato Oribe who had been a house elder (*karō*) of the Nasu family since the time of Sukemitsu. Though it is unclear what he did during the years he spent as rōnin, Oribe was reemployed by Sukenori after he officially regained *bushi* status and found himself in need of a official retainer band.[93] Whilst the same happened to others, such as the Nagano and Itagaki families, it was not possible for Sukenori to rehire all former retainers. Sukenori's previous holdings had been worth 20,000 *koku*, whilst as *hatamoto* he initially had holdings worth only 1000 *koku*. We can see, therefore, that Sukenori had to be selective when rehiring and often favoured those men who had been part of the long serving retainers (*kyūshin*).[94] This meant that men who fell into rōnin status repeatedly became increasingly at risk; if rehired, they would be the first to be let go, and once let go, they would be the last to be rehired. It was this process that led to the emergence of a group of rōnin who were more at risk of continued or repeated periods of social and financial insecurity.

This example of the attainder of Karasuyama domain clearly shows the importance of family connections and the position of service before attainder. These factors had an enormous

[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Okasaki, *Kaieki to oie saikō.* 2007. Pp.172.
[94] *Ibid.* Pp.192.

influence on the experience of being a rōnin and one's chances of finding reemployment. A change in fortunes of one's former lord could mean almost automatic reemployment if one had been amongst the long-standing retainers. If not, one could find oneself repeatedly faced with insecurity. There were therefore vast differences in experience between those labelled rōnin. Though Sukenori's position was especially privileged, the fact that other rōnin looked to him for reemployment during this time highlights the disparity of experience amongst this social group. As stated before, rōnin group cohesion was absent not only due to a certain ambiguity in the application of the term, but also due to the fact that there was a lack of a communal 'rōnin experience,' something which was highlighted during moments of attainder.

## Conclusion

The continuing importance of attainders on the political and social landscape of the early Tokugawa period is hard to overstate. Though often viewed as individual events and as less 'nationally' significant, this chapter has highlighted that the many attainders that took place after the 1650s were of continued importance to those in power and still had serious ramifications, especially at the local level. More specifically, this chapter has shown that attainders were not experienced passively, but rather led those faced with rōnin status to act in varied, and at times opposing, ways. It has also shown that these events were moments of tension that could easily lead to violence. This violence, however, was less likely provoked by one's loyalty to a lord or anti-Tokugawa feelings, but more often indicated the perception of a deterioration in one's own socio-economic position. During these times, retainers were forced to actively negotiate their position, often calling on familial links to certain lands or areas in order to leverage their social standing.

Thus, these men were concerned about the insecurity which attainder meant for their futures and were forced to act with their own interests in mind. Conflict between the various echelons of the retainer band, such as in the case of the attainder of Tsuyama domain, shows that other men were therefore willing to use the rhetoric of violence in order to oppose the attainder. These men were confronted with completely different prospects when faced with attainder and many knew that simple acquiescence would leave them with nothing.

One of the defining distinctions made between retainers was the dichotomy between those who were considered long-standing retainers and those viewed as new retainers. Those classed as long-standing were seen to have a deeper connection to their lord and his household, and when the lord was able to regain status, as shown in the case of Nasu Sukenori, it was often these people who were able to profit from this. New retainers, on the other hand, were far less likely to be rehired and the position of long-standing retainer was virtually impossible to obtain after the 1650s. The result of this was that rōnin status too often became a longstanding situation, as those who had been rōnin were classed as new retainers and rehired in the lower rungs of the domainal hierarchy.

The 1650s formed a moment at which the Tokugawa government revised its approach to the application of attainders. The changes made to various laws made it less likely that daimyo would be removed from their lands, and the death of shogun Iemitsu in 1651 can retroactively be viewed as the end of a period of rule in which the Tokugawa aggressively asserted their newly claimed power. The effect of these changes was that the ‘rōnin problem,’ so keenly felt by many in power, was seen to have been solved. The battles and uprisings had been overcome and disaster had been averted. The reduction in the number of attainders, however, cannot simply be attributed to changes in laws made in the 1650s. Instead, this reduction was also the result of broader changes to the ways in which the Tokugawa viewed themselves and their relation to the realm. Though a

military government in name, many of the characteristics of the *bakufu* had changed it into a "civil government."[95] Not only were rōnin now viewed as an internal, social problem instead of simply outside elements or enemy combatants, but the *bakufu* was also forced to recognize the potentially negative effects of its actions and the need to supplement power politics with social policy. Added to this increased awareness of the effects of 'local' crises was the fact that daimyo were forced to think regionally at times rather than domainally in order to confront social issues brought about by events in neighboring domains, such as attainder or retainer band reductions.

By looking at two particular case-studies of attainders in the second half of the seventeenth century, this chapter has made clear the continued creation of a significant number of rōnin. However, what has also been demonstrated are the number of ways in which the *bakufu* and individual domains attempted to minimise the impact of these events. By looking at attainder in depth it has become clear that it was not the general *bakufu* laws concerning rōnin that had the greatest impact on solving issues concerning rōnin, but the actions of 'national' and local governments at the moment of attainder. As in the case of Tsuyama, the authorities increasingly recognised the need to provide aid in order to stave off potential problems with unemployed rōnin.[96] Despite this kind of help, however, rōnin were still forced to find new ways to sustain themselves and their families when attainder took place.

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[95] Kurita Mototsugu. "Edo jidai." In, Kurita Mototsugu (ed.). *Sōgō Nihonshi daikei, Vol.9.* Tokyo: Naigai Tosho, 1926; Yamamoto. "Gōshi to rōnin," 2001.

[96] Tsuyama rōnin were not the only ones to receive some form of help during a moment of attainder. Former Takada domain retainers, for example, were aided by neighboring Kaga domain in their search for reemployment. See: Heki Ken (ed.). *Kaga-han shiryō, Vol.4*. Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 1980. Pp 645.

# Chapter 4

## *Returning to the Land*

In the later years of his life, the geographer and travel writer Furukawa Koshōken was asked by high *bakufu* official Toda Ujinori to produce a chorographic study of the area directly around Edo and Musashi province. Accompanied by Kashiwara Yoshiemon and Murota Tomezaburō, the then 67-year-old Koshōken set off to travel around the area and conduct his studies in 1793. After returning from his travels, he presented his findings to Ujinori and these were later published as two documents: the *Musashi gogunto* and the *Shijin chimeiroku*.[1] In these volumes, Koshōken describes the topographic, geographic and cultural characteristics of the area, as well as adding some historical background and personal observations. In relating the history of local place names in the Adachi area, Koshōken states that "[t]hese reclaimed fields have no history, the places named so-and-so-emon or so-and-so-hei[2] are named after those who reclaimed the fields. The fields reclaimed by rōnin and such are given their last names. Fields reclaimed by farmers are given their first names."[3] In describing these fields as lacking history, Koshōken is

[1] Furukawa Koshōken. *Shijin chimeiroku*, *Vol. 1-10.* [unpaginated]. NDL Digital Database, WA 21.11.(1-10). For a discussion on Koshōken, see: Bolitho, Harold. "Travellers' Tales: Three 18th Century Travel Journals." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies,* Vol.50 Nr.2 (1990), pp. 485-504; Plutschow, Herbert. *A Reader in Edo Period Travel.* Folkestone: Global Oriental Ltd., 2006. Pp.89-121.
[2] The suffixes '-emon' and '-hei' are common endings of male Japanese names at the time.
[3] Furukawa Koshōken. *Shijin chimeiroku, Vol.9 Adachi-gun, Sano mura.* [unpaginated]. NDL Digital Database, WA 21.11.9.

taking some liberty as many of them had in fact existed since the early years of the Tokugawa period, some 150 years prior. What he was referring to, however, was the continuous establishment of villages and the development of land around Edo for the purposes of agriculture. Just as the development of Edo under the Tokugawa had an explosive effect on the growth of the city itself, its need for produce also attracted large numbers of people to newly created villages in the wider area. However, given that previously much of the area surrounding Edo was sparsely-settled marshland, the settlement of agricultural workers to support the city often involved land reclamation and riparian works of varying size in order to create arable land. Amongst those who settled here were rōnin, many of whom were drawn to the area with the prospect of settling and generating income through cultivating the land.

Despite the focus on rōnin as a predominantly urban issue by the *bakufu*, and consequently later scholarship,[4] many rōnin who found themselves in pressing need of a livelihood looked towards more peripheral areas such as undeveloped land, reclaimed fields and mining towns. Though the opportunities open to rōnin outside of urban areas were equally influenced by larger socio-political factors, peripheries could offer hopes of both financial and social betterment, as well as less stringent, direct *bakufu* oversight. Whilst these areas can be described as peripheral, they often generated their own centripetal force and thus created alternatively centred geographies, which played crucial roles in the lives of rōnin seeking the opportunities they presented.[5] Edo, Osaka, Kyoto and the various large castle-towns across the archipelago did not necessarily play a central role in the lives of rōnin.

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[4] Following the works of Kurita Mototsugu and Asao Naohiro, much of the scholarly focus on rōnin has centred on urban areas such as Edo, Kyoto and Osaka. See: Kurita, Mototsugu. *Edo jidai shi, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1928. Pp. 308-312; Asao Naohiro. "Kinsei Kyōto no rōnin." In, Asao Naohiro (ed.). *Asao Naohiro cho sakushū, Vol.7: Mibunsei shakai ron.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004.

[5] This process occurred in much the same way as described by Kären Wigen in her analysis of the Ina valley. See: Wigen, Kären. *The Making of a Japanese Periphery, 1750-1920.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.

Koshōken's observation that many of the villages in the area later bore the names of rōnin, however, shows that it was not just income that was to be gained by a move to less urban areas. For many of these rōnin it offered a chance for social reintegration into the accepted Tokugawa social hierarchy, as well as a way of gaining local social prestige for themselves and their descendants. Particular opportunities in peripheral areas were limited by time, urban expansion, domainal finances and numerous other factors, which worked together to create an almost constant need for the development of the agricultural production base.[6] These opportunities in the countryside were attractive to many, yet formed an especially good prospect for rōnin looking to reclaim financial security and social esteem. Familial and acquaintance networks provided some with connections to the land and financial backing to undertake such ventures. This was furthered by the fact that many domains identified these projects as a chance to achieve two ends simultaneously; increase agricultural production and deal with the potentially disruptive social presence of rōnin.

This chapter will look closely at the opportunities open to rōnin in the periphery and the ways in which they approached them as they sought to secure a living and improve their social status. Looking at these people will once again reveal significant variations in the situations in which rōnin found themselves. Whereas some simply found a way to insert themselves into existing social hierarchies as farmers, miners etc., others were able to undertake large projects, such as reclamation and riparian works, in addition to positioning themselves and their future family as local power-holders. Domains not only allowed for this type of resettlement, but often

[6] This initially occurred in a number of domains during the late Sengoku period (1467-1568) and continued exponentially during the Tokugawa period. See: Furushima Toshio and McClain, James. "The Village and Agriculture during the Edo Period." In, Hall, John. *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.4: Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp.478-518; Sasaki Ginya. "Sengoku daimyō shihai to shōgyō" in Nagahara Keiji et al. (eds.). *Sengoku jidai: 1550-nen kara 1650 nen no shakai tenkan.* Tokyo, Japan: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1978. Pp.49-76.

actively encouraged it and adopted it as policy as their interests and those of these rōnin aligned. By highlighting the varying ways in which rōnin settled in the periphery, this chapter will show that, though often still spurred on by urban change, this social group can't be defined through their interactions with the city alone. In doing so, this chapter complicates prior understandings of the rōnin experience, shedding light on the influence exerted by rōnin on rural development and the ways in which they interacted with rural social hierarchy, both existing and newly established.

## Making Room to Grow: Rōnin and Rural Development

In the wake of the Keian and Jōō incidents discussed in chapter 2, many of the high officials in the *bakufu* government supported *rōjū* council members Sakai Tadakatsu and Matsudaira Nobutsuna's call for a full-scale rōnin expulsion from Edo in 1652. Their ideas were, however, not without opposition and another high government official, Abe Tadaaki, called instead for resettlement of rōnin in the countryside. Neither proposal was ever fully enacted, yet subsequent government action often tended towards the ideas of Tadakatsu and Nobutsuna, and expulsion edicts were issued throughout the period. At the same time, though his proposals were also not accepted as official policy, Tadaaki did continue to settle about 70 rōnin in his own domain of Oshi, in modern-day Saitama. Despite the small-scale, unofficial nature of Tadaaki's initiative, it demonstrates that he understood the underlying issues that animated the problems involving rōnin, which were seen to apex during the 1650s, and attempted to address the root of such issues rather than transporting them to other areas.

Tadaaki's proposal was not, however, the first of its kind though it is perhaps the most widely known. Decades earlier, initiatives of resettlement had been undertaken by the *Kantō daikan* (overseer of the Kantō area), Ina Tadatsugu and his son Ina Tadaharu, and had been implemented successfully across the Kantō region.[7] The Ina had been longstanding retainers of the Tokugawa and Tadatsugu's father, Ina Tadamoto, had served under the eldest son of Tokugawa Ieyasu, Matsudaira Nobuyasu. However, when Nobuyasu was ordered to commit suicide by his father for his alleged participation in a treasonous plot in 1579, Tadamoto found himself in the position of rōnin.[8] After a number of years, he was reappointed by Tokugawa Ieyasu in the 1580s and eventually given the important task of overseeing reclamation and riparian work in the Kantō area in the position of *Kantō daikan*. This position was later inherited by his son Tadatsugu and was passed down in the Ina family for the next ten generations.[9]

When Ieyasu moved his centre of power to what would become the city of Edo in the 8th month of 1590,[10] the position of *Kantō daikan* became vitally important to assure the growth of the city and the surrounding area. Not only was it necessary to drain much of the marshland that surrounded Edo, but the surrounding countryside needed to be reworked to accommodate grain and other agricultural production. Faced with a number of challenges, the Ina actively promoted numerous reclamation projects to stimulate agricultural production and to provide adequate supplies for the ever-growing city of Edo. In 1610, Tadatsugu passed away and his position was taken up by his second son Tadaharu, the third in the line of Ina family *Kantō daikan*. Tadaharu continued his father's work and actively encouraged the reclamation and resettlement projects

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[7] Koshigawa-shi (eds.). *Koshigaya-shi, Vol.1*, Koshigawa: Koshigawa-shi, 1975. Pp.392-400.
[8] For more on Nobuyasu and the reasons for his death, see: Pitelka, Morgan. *Spectacular Accumulation: Material Culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu and Samurai Sociability*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. Pp.38-39.
[9] *Ibid.*; Soka-shi Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Soka-shi shi, Vol.1*. Soka: Soka-shi, 1997. Pp.424.
[10] Before this the area had been controlled by the Hōjō whose power was centred in Odawara. Up to this point, the area where the city of Edo would later emerge was populated by a number of fishing villages, which were designated as the Tokugawa's new centre of power when they moved to the area under the orders of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

throughout the area.[11] In 1612, he sent letters to promote settlement in a number of newly reclaimed fields, two of which pertained to Miyanoi Shinden and Motai Shinden, in modern-day Saitama prefecture.[12] Both letters were dated on the 3rd day of the 5th month and stated that those who wished to settle and work the newly opened fields were welcome to do so. Despite this general invitation, however, both letters continued to outline four points regarding settlement and a number of stipulations. The third of these stipulations was specifically aimed at rōnin looking to resettle on the new fields, and stated that, "settlement is forbidden for rōnin who have come from other areas and who have disputes with their lords. Those [rōnin] who don't have these issues are welcome."[13] Similar letters, concerning other reclaimed fields in the area, contained comparable clauses concerning prior disputes and those "whose place of origin was unclear."[14] Though these letters show active attempts to settle the newly developed areas, the inclusion of specific clauses indicates the complex ways in which such settlement initiatives intersected with the rōnin population. Not only does it show that the opportunity of resettlement held promise for many rōnin as a source of income, but it also highlights the ways in which the concept of 'rōnin' itself could be internally differentiated between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable.' Though there was an evident desire to attract 'acceptable' rōnin, it was also made clear that those not conforming to this degree of acceptability were perceived as potentially disruptive elements.

The difference between the two government proposals of Tadaaki and Nobutsuna after the Keian and Jōō incidents was, therefore, the latter's characterization of rōnin as uniformly disruptive and unwanted. Whilst such proposals could count on support in the upper-echelons of the *bakufu* government, those closer to the problem, such as the Ina and the various daimyo,

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[11] *Koshigaya-shi, Vol.1*, 1975. Pp.396-400.
[12] *Shinden* is the romanization of the characters 新田, literally translating to 'new field.' This suffix often remained and many place names can be found in Japan ending in 'shinden.'
[13] Koshigawa-shi (eds.). *Koshigaya-shi shi, Vol.4 shiryō 2*. Koshigawa: Koshigawa-shi, 1973. Pp.785-786.
[14] Koshigawa-shi (eds.). *Koshigaya-shi shi, Vol.3 shiryō 1*, Koshigawa: Koshigawa-shi, 1971. Pp.342.

were confronted with a reality that did not match these political abstractions. As the almost routine inclusion of clauses concerning rōnin in such documents indicates, rōnin resettlement tended to be a large part of land development projects. As also noted by Furukawa Koshōken above, there were large numbers of rōnin working on the reclamation and creation of new fields in places such as far north as Nigōhan-ryō and beyond, in the area stretching from modern-day Adachi ward in Tokyo to Yoshikawa city, and even into modern-day Chiba Prefecture.[15] Thus, whilst expulsions and broad edicts could rely on centralized political support, their implementation was hard to police and had little actual effect. More local, nuanced social solutions therefore had to be implemented to address the roots of the issue.

Urban development has often been regarded as a major development in the creation of 'Tokugawa Japan,'[16] and it is indeed undeniable that the rate of urbanization was staggering.[17] Edo, though being symbolic for the enormous scale of urban development during the period, was not the only city that grew rapidly and regional centres also expanded.[18] Therefore, in order to support the growing urban centers and promote economic expansion, it was necessary to similarly increase the amount of arable land through reclamation and redevelopment projects. As a result, the period also witnessed sustained, large-scale rural development and the expansion of

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[15] Furukawa Koshōken. *Shijin chimeiroku, Vol.1-10.* [unpaginated] WA 21-11.

[16] Howell, David. "Urbanization, Trade and Merchants." In, Friday, Karl (ed.). *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850.* London: Routledge, 2012. Pp.356.

[17] Hanley, Susan. "Urban Sanitation in Preindustrial Japan." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol.18, No.1 (Summer, 1987), pp.1; Hall, John. "The Castle Town and Japan's Modern Urbanization." In, Hall, John and Jansen, Marius (eds.). *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.169-188.

[18] The growth of the various cities throughout Japan was uneven as some grew faster than others and during different periods. However, looking at research on cities beyond Edo, Kyoto and Osaka, it is clear that urban expansion was widespread throughout the first century of the Tokugawa period. For a general overview, see: Rozman, Gilbert. *Urban Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973. For particular examples, see: McClain, James. *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth-Century Japanese Castle Town*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1982. Pp.124.

the agricultural economy.[19] Such development and expansion had taken place during earlier periods, but with the absence of conflict brought about by 'Pax Tokugawa' their number and scope increased rapidly. As an increasing number of domains were confronted with financial issues from the 1640s, many undertook large-scale projects in order to increase output as well as support their growing urban populations.[20] Although it is difficult to precisely assess the size of the arable land or the quantity of agricultural output the numerous projects added during the Tokugawa period, the numbers point towards continued, large-scale economic and land development in rural areas.[21] The *kokudaka* (total estimated yield) figures of Okayama domain show that by 1632 the output from reclaimed and developed fields was around 21,759 *koku*. By 1835 this had almost quadrupled to 112,286 *koku*. In Okayama, expansion therefore continued throughout the Tokugawa period, however it was during the second half of the seventeenth century that the output from these new fields increased exponentially. Where in 1664 there was an assessed 34,265 *koku* being produced on the new fields, in less than 50 years, by 1711, this had risen to 104,597 *koku*.[22] Considering that the entire assessed *koku* figures of the domain during the period 1632 to 1868 as a whole were 315,000 *koku*, it is clear that such fields were of enormous importance for domainal finances. It is therefore no wonder that various domains

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[19] This transformation and expansion of the rural economy during the Tokugawa period has received much scholarly attention, though this is often geared towards Japan's eventual 'modernization' after 1868. See: Hanley, Susan and Yamamura Kozo. *Economic and Demographic Change in Preindustrial Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977; Hayami Akira, Ōsamu Saitō and Toby Ronald (eds.) *The Economic History of Japan: 1600-1990, Vol.1: Emergence of Economic Society ion Japan, 1600-1859.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; Smith, Thomas. *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959.
[20] Kikuchi Toshio. *Shinden kaihatsu.* Tokyo: Shibundō, 1964. Pp.21-24.
[21] The difficulty of assessment is mainly due to the fact that agricultural output was based on a system of assessed yield (*kokudaka*) rather than acreage. As a result of this, increases or decreases could be the result of a variety of factors, such as administrative reassessment or improved agricultural techniques, fertilizers etc. over time, thus obscuring acreage increase. For more on such issues, see: Furushima Toshio. "The Village and Agriculture during the Edo Period." In, *Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.4: Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp.478-518; and, Howell, David. "Fecal Matters: Prolegomenon to a History of Shit in Japan." In, Miller, Ian; Thomas, Julia and Walker Brett (eds.) *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i, 2016. Pp.137-151.
[22] Taniguchi Sumio. *Okayama-han seishi no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1964. Pp.407.

sought to settle people in previously unproductive or underproductive areas.[23] By opening up opportunities for rural development to those willing and able to undertake them, domains attempted to promote their economy at the same time as creating settlement and employment options for a varied group of people. The added bonus for the domains came from the fact that some of those who were resettled were from social groups who were perceived to be either disruptive or unproductive.[24] Consequently, it was not only rōnin who were envisioned by domains in their efforts to populate the countryside. For domains it did not necessarily matter who settled the new fields and thus 'acceptable' rōnin were not often targeted as a specific group but as part of a larger collective of people useful to domains through their desire to make a living, find a home and, often, achieve social reintegration.

Driven by the prospect of increasing income, domains thus took different approaches as they sought to populate new fields and villages. In Kaga domain, for example, many of those who had been forced to seek help from the poorhouses were encouraged to settle on newly developed fields. In the 1670s some of these people were aided in establishing the village of Kisabata. The domain even went as far as providing "houses, household furnishings, tools, firewood, salt and foodstuffs."[25] Another village named Nagasaka was founded some years later in the same manner.[26] For the domains, the main drive was to increase production and this benefited from anyone, regardless of social status group, settling in the countryside. Such projects therefore offered a chance to integrate previously 'problematic' populations, either by

[23] Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. Pp.80-81.
[24] Other such groups were the poor and outcasts though the recognition of begging associations in the early Tokugawa period was aimed at managing these groups. See: Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. Pp.78-81.
[25] McClain, James. *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth-Century Japanese Castle Town.* New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1982. Pp.129.
[26] *Ibid.*

inserting them into pre-existing local social units, or as in the above examples, by creating new units, which could be controlled and held accountable.

In order for people to settle these new areas, there was often a need for large-scale projects in order to transform unproductive land into arable fields. There were two main ways in which domains attempted to undertake these large reclamation and riparian works. The first was by incentivizing individuals to undertake these projects and assume the potential risks. These incentives often took the form of tax reductions, lightened duties for a number of years, or the offer of status increases. This approach typically required more long-term thinking on the part of domains since benefit of the newly developed areas could sometimes only be reaped after numerous years. Despite this downside however, the removal of financial risk could make it the only option open to more cash-strapped domains. The second way of approaching such projects was through initiatives subsidized with domainal funds and overseen by retainers, or men specifically hired for the purpose. Such projects assured full domainal control and provided benefit as soon as they were finished. However, as with many such large-scale projects they also brought financial risk. Not only did they put an extra strain on domainal finances, but potential failure could be financially catastrophic. Though both approaches occurred throughout the Tokugawa period, the latter type generally decreased in number as more and more domains were confronted with financial troubles.[27]

The reliance on 'private' entrepreneurs for land-development was vital for many domains and the incentives offered could secure the social and/or economic position of those willing to undertake them for generations. It is likely that it was with this in mind that a man named Tanaka Kakubei sent a proposal for a reclamation project to the lord of Kaga domain, Maeda Toshitsune,

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[27] Ravina, Mark. *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998. Pp.61-69.

in 1647. In his proposal, Kakubei outlined an ambitious project to create new fields in the area around Mount Tsuchishimizu. However, as these fields were removed from existing irrigation works, he also proposed digging an irrigation ditch stretching from Terazu village and running all the way along the base of Mount Tsuchishimizu in order to reach the new fields, some eight kilometres north.[28] We therefore see that in order to take advantage of such incentives, entrepreneurial individuals would often present petitions to the various daimyo so as to put forward their ideas for potential projects. These projects could range from simple, small-scale land reclamation to multi-tiered projects, such as the one proposed by Kakubei. These entrepreneurial projects would be funded by well-off individuals or through lending initiatives. The size of these projects varied wildly and could be intended to simply revitalise certain fallow fields or could stretch to include the creation of new fields and various irrigation and riparian works. As such developments therefore offered opportunities for social advancement, or integration, many of those proposing such projects were rōnin who were either well-off or had managed to secure a loan.

This need for financial fecundity in order to undertake such projects meant that people often joined forces in order to secure the funds needed. This is what happened, for example, during the first half of the seventeenth century, when Okayama domain initiated a number of reclamation projects. Like in many other domains, the new peace had created the opportunity to develop the land, but as domainal capacity often did not stretch to accommodate large-scale development programs, Okayama domain relied on private 'entrepreneurs' who would receive certain tax exemptions and other incentives in return for development. One of the men who looked to take advantage of this in Okayama was Waki Yozaemon, the son of a rōnin from

[28] "Naigaikoku jikki." In, Heki Ken (ed.). *Kaga-han shiryō, Vol.3*. Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 1980. Pp.227.

Matsushima village in the Tsū district in Bitchū.[29] Finding himself in the same position as his father, Yozaemon set out to obtain permission from the lord of Okayama domain, Ikeda Tadakatsu, to start reclamation work in the southern part of Mino district. Having been granted permission for this, Yozaemon went in search of a financier in order to raise the required capital. Eventually, he approached the rōnin Saitō Shirōbei from Nakata village, also in Tsū, who agreed to help finance the undertaking. Both Yozaemon and Shirōbei moved to the new fields with their families to begin the project, where they were joined by Shimamura Chōemon from Hamano village, again also in Tsū. These three families were the first to settle in the newly developed area and therefore were called the *genshu*, or 'original shareholders.'[30] However, though both Yozaemon and Shirōbei are referred to as rōnin, it is also certain that their ancestors had been part of the local *dogō* and that their families had long roots in the Tsū area.[31] Thus, instead of leaving the area in search for work, they, like many others, opted to stay close to where they had familial roots in order to reclaim or leverage their social position.[32]

According to a chronicle describing the history of the area, the *Biyōki*,[33] the size of the new fields, now named Yonekura Shinden, created through the work of the three families was 17 *chō*, 5 *tan*, 8 *se* and 19 *bu,*[34] and the estimated yield from them was assessed at around 233 *koku*. Administering to these fields were 11 households with a combined total of 69 people. Many of these families were related to one another and by 1798, of this total of 11 families there were 5 Waki households, 4 Saitō households and 2 Shimamura households, all related to one of the

[29] Okayama-shi Chimei Kenkyūkai (eds.). *Okayama no chimei.* Okayama: Okayama-shi, 1989. Pp.418-419. Also, in: Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, 7.* Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1986. Pp.195-196.
[30] Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama ken shi, 7.* Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1986. Pp.195-196.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Hasegawa Shin. "Chūsei – kinsei shoki teishitsuchi ni okeru 'mura' no keisei katei: Echigo no Kanbara heiya no kaihatsu to jōdo shinshū no kaihatsu wo kangaeru." In, Negishi Shigeo et al. (ed.). *Kinsei no kenkyū to kaihatsu.* Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2010. Pp.117-144.
[33] "Biyōki." In, Okayama-shi Chimei Kenkyūkai (eds.). *Okayama no chimei.* Okayama: Okayama-shi, 1989. Pp.419.
[34] This roughly equals 17,36 ha. See Appendix.

original settlers as either main family or branch family. These 11 families were the exact families registered before 1721, showing that the branch families had been set up early in the village's history and had not increased in number since.[35] Additionally, there were no new families that moved to the village after its establishment. This indicates that the hierarchies were established quickly after the settlement of the village and that further 'branching' of families or immigration was inhibited, something most likely due to a lack of available land or the curtailing of social movement through calcification of the social village hierarchy.

This establishment of an accepted social configuration becomes clearer through the fixity of intra-village relations. Despite financial reliance on one another in establishing the new village, it was the Waki family who were most successful in translating their position into local office. Looking at the main family of the Waki, it becomes apparent that Yozaemon's descendants went on to hold the positions of *shōya/ōjōya* (village headman) so often that it appears to have become hereditary.[36] These hereditary positions were often underlined and secured through the creation of genealogies and house histories, etc., which linked the family intimately with the village, thereby setting them apart from other families. Reclamation projects thus offered ways of establishing new villages and, consequently, new social hierarchies.[37]

As mentioned above, projects of resettlement often required preparatory projects and riparian work to make the land suitable for production. In Shibata domain, in modern-day Niigata prefecture, works to reduce flooding around the Shinano and Agano rivers opened up tracts of land estimated at 30,488 *koku* between 1598 and 1684.[38] In order to prepare the land for agriculture and to continue working it afterwards, the domain set out a number of initiatives to

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[35] "Biyōki." In, Okayama-shi Chimei Kenkyūkai (eds.). *Okayama no chimei.* Okayama: Okayama-shi, 1989. Pp.419.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] The further legal ramifications of the intersection between rōnin status and local official positions will be discussed in chapter 5.
[38] Niigata-ken (eds.). *Niigata-ken shi, Vol.3*. Niigata: Niigata-ken, 1987. Pp.455.

draw in people willing to settle and rework these former floodplains. On the condition that the land would be converted to agriculturally viable land, worked and managed, Shibata domain offered a three-year tax exemption in addition to the proviso that those who did so could reclaim an unlimited amount of land. This thus not only provided people with a possibility of avoiding taxes for a period of time but it also gave some the prospect of considerable local influence.[39] Similarly, a letter from 1641 shows that Kayatsutsumi village, further to the east in modern-day Tochigi prefecture, agreed to undertake the cultivation and management of newly opened lands in return for which they would get a five-year tax exemption.[40] It is therefore clear that such projects of land development were vital in promoting the domainal economy and were accompanied by domainal attempts to actively entice people to cultivate the new land through differing incentives.

Given that the Shibata incentives outlined above were aimed at anyone able to settle and maintain the land, as opposed to forming an agreement with a particular population, it attracted a variety of people. As a result, there were three main groups of people who decided to settle there.[41] Firstly, there were powerful local families (*dogō*) who had ties to the surrounding areas. Some were families who had served as intermediaries in matters of taxation and the like between the local communities and the ruling Uesugi family prior to the Tokugawa period, such as the family of Sekine Kuranojō who endeavoured to reclaim and work land in the Ibarasone fields. These people often looked to expand their local influence through new communities and management of the reclamation work. Secondly, rōnin from surrounding domains were drawn to the new fields in search of alternative opportunities for making a living. One them was a rōnin named Nabei who had come from Kaga to settle in Daigo and worked to reclaim fields in both

[39] *Ibid.* Pp.456-457.
[40] Tochigi-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tochigi-ken shi, 3.3*. Tokyo: Tochigi-ken, 1975. Pp.329.
[41] Niigata-ken. *Niigata-ken shi, 3*, 1987. Pp.455-458.

Daigo and Ibarasone. Another, Aoki Kyūbei, had been a retainer of the Takeda of Kai during the 1570s and 1580s and settled in Warino village. Other examples include the descendants of Ōta Yoshitsuna, who had died at the battle of Sekigahara fighting for the Toyotomi, who settled in Kaitsuka and Nakayanai. The remnants of the Asakura family, from Echizen, did the same in Sunakuzure, Tokorojima, Teshiro and Nishikasamaki.[42] Thirdly, there were former *bushi* from the domain itself who, finding themselves in the position of rōnin, returned to the land. In many ways, this third group of people spanned the bridge between the first and second group, and it can be difficult to make a clear distinction between them in all cases. Rōnin in this group were, however, generally identified as from Shibata domain rather than from other areas and as a result did not include 'foreign' rōnin (*yoso rōnin*). Many men from this third group settled in Shakazuka village. Yoshida Sukeyoshi, for example, had been a retainer to the local Niitsu family, and after losing his position he settled in Shakazuka where his descendants would go on to work the fields at Asahi and Niitsu.[43] By looking at these resettlements in Shibata, it therefore becomes clear that rōnin formed a large part of those involved in rural resettlement and development.

Looking at records on those who moved to the various areas in Shibata it becomes evident that rōnin from particular areas tended to settle in the same places. For example, a number of rōnin from Aizu established and settled in Funatoyama, some from Kaga in Dorogata and Akashibu, and others from Shinano in Nishisakaya.[44] What becomes clear here is that reclamation works, such as the ones in Shibata, tended to act as a 'gravity well' for rōnin from surrounding areas, pulling them in with the opportunity of making a living. This effect can also be observed in other domains, such as Murakami domain, also in Niigata. This domain had also

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[42] Ibid. Pp.445-456.
[43] *Ibid.* Pp.456.
[44] *Ibid*. Pp.457.

set out to develop tracts of land and sought to promote settlers through providing incentives. As a result, large numbers of rōnin from the surrounding areas, such as Aizu, Kaga and Shinano, decided to move to the area. In the Iwafune district, for example, we thus find a particularly large number of rōnin from Aizu.[45] Such immigration was therefore not random and settlers from certain areas tended to cluster together.

Such nodes were, however, highly changeable and subject to the local state of affairs. Some of them were indeed created by large development projects, but others could be more circumstantial in origin. This was especially the case during the 1590s and the first decades of the Tokugawa period as the Tokugawa extended their power over most of Japan and reorganized the geo-political landscape of the archipelago.[46] As the new lords moved to their new holdings as a consequence of attainder, as discussed in chapter 3, they were often confronted with the effects of the long period of warfare, as well as the consequences of its eventual end. War, in conjunction with social and financial factors, had left much of the rural landscape abandoned and unworked due to emigration, starvation and death. The attainder of domains, however, could further impact the countryside as retainers and attendants left domains to join their lord, leaving more of the land untended. These effects are evident in some of the earlier land surveys and could be cause for concern for the various lords, as empty lands meant a decrease in taxable production. One such survey conducted in Mikawa province in 1604 clearly shows the extent of this in its lists of the various fields and villages in the domain. These accounts are full of mentions of cultivators who had either moved to the Kantō area with their lord (*Kantō e koshi*), or who had died (*shini*). As a result of this, there are numerous fields indicated to be either

[45] *Ibid.* Pp.458.
[46] This is highlighted in chapters 2 and 3.

"without owner" (*nushi nashi*), or simply "abandoned" (*arechi*).[47] Especially during the earlier years of the Tokugawa period the responsibility for these fields could be hard to assign. This meant that certain domains were left with tracts of land for which, although unproductive, the Tokugawa nonetheless expected them to pay tax. By generating incentives for people to move to the countryside, domains could increase their agricultural output, as well as reintegrate potentially problematic elements of society such as rōnin. The early years of the Tokugawa period therefore offered a number of reasons why moving to the countryside could be advantageous, both for those relocating as well as the domains themselves.

Such incentives formed a very effective way of increasing domainal finances through boosting agricultural output. This was at times heightened through a degree of inefficiency in the creation of cadastral surveys that recorded total yield (*omotedaka*). Such surveys, which were handed over to the *bakufu*, were often recycled or simply used for multiple years, even decades in a row, thus leaving new, productive land untaxed for a number of years.[48] This financial advantage could, however, be overshadowed by the initial project of development, as reclamation works could be costly and at times did not produce the expected yield. As already indicated above, domains were therefore happy to leave such projects to individuals who offered to undertake them in return for certain incentives, such as tax exemption and social advantage.

Domains could not, however, fully rely on the presence of willing and able individuals to undertake large-scale rural projects and were thus often forced to undertake them themselves. In order to minimize financial risk, domains would therefore seek out men with the necessary talents to manage and plan such projects, as well as individuals who could put up the initial funds. Such an approach to expand its agricultural base was clearly taken by Nariwa domain, in

[47] "Keichō kyū-nen kenchi-chō shūsei." In, Shinshiro-shi Shihenshū Iinkai (eds.). *Shinshiro-shi shi shiryō, 6*. Shinshiro: Shinshiro-shi Shihenshū Iinkai, 1983. Pp.261.

[48] Smith, Thomas. *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959. Pp.1-2.

modern-day Okayama prefecture. In 1658, the Yamazaki family was moved from Takuma in Sanuki province to be the new lords of Nariwa domain.[49] In order to increase the productivity of their new domain they decided that they needed to reclaim land for agricultural purposes. However, due to the fact that the domain was small and had little funds to sponsor the project, the Yamazaki recruited Tawaraya Gorōbei, a townsman (*chōnin*) from Kyoto. The project encountered numerous difficulties and after a number of setbacks, Gorōbei decided that a large embankment was needed for the project to succeed. However, yet again the project encountered unforeseen challenges when a typhoon washed away the embankment in 1674 and Gorōbei was left without the funds to complete the project. It is said he lost the will to continue the project and took the tonsure, after which he built a small house in Yagara village where he eventually died due to illness.[50] After the failure of Gorōbei, the reclamation efforts were put under the auspices of a rōnin from Hiroshima domain, Ōshima Yasaemon, who was hired by the domain itself. It was Yasaemon who finally succeeded in completing the construction of the embankment in 1681, opening up the surrounding land for cultivation.[51]

Similarly, in Bizen province, in 1584, Ukita Hideie ordered a man named Chihara Kuzaemon to construct an embankment along the western part of Tsugawa river in order to create new farmland.[52] In doing so, he created land on the western side of Okayama city, areas now known as Hayashima and Kurashiki. Chihara was a rōnin from Nishiachi in Bitchū province who had initially been hired by Naoie to oversee the renovation of Okayama castle. It seems that Chihara demonstrated that he possessed the skills required for such projects as he was later also put in charge of the damming of the Ashimori river when Takamatsu castle flooded. Men like

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[49] *Okayama-ken shi, 7*. Pp.252.
[50] *Ibid.* Pp.252-253.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] "Chihara-shi monjo." In, Kibi Gunsho Shūsei Kankōsha (eds.). *Kibi gunshi shūsei*, *Vol.2*. Tokyo: Rekishi Toshosha, 1970. Pp.503-504.

Yasaemon and Chihara were thus able to use their skills to obtain employment in such domainal undertakings. In the case of Chihara we even see that he was hired by multiple domains, suggesting that he was successful in using his skills (and likely his social networks) to provide himself with continued income. In looking for reemployment rōnin were often able to highlight skills, or presumed skills, through their association to elite status, in order to generate an income. Additionally, we see that such projects carried with them a high risk-factor for those willing to undertake them.[53] Success could offer social and financial advancement, failure could spell personal disaster.

The use of private 'entrepreneurs' or skilled individuals by domains in undertaking large projects did not only, however, occur in the creation of agricultural land. Other projects that presented a financial risk were often similarly initiated through incentivizing entrepreneurial individuals. One of the industries in which this was most pronounced was mining. Although there was a marked shift in the individual strategies towards different mines over time, initially there was a large dependence on merchant 'investment capital' due to the inherent economic risks involved in mining. Because of the financial difficulties of both the domains and the *bakufu*, most prospecting was undertaken by merchants who, after reporting their discoveries to domain or *bakufu* officials, would often be charged with the development of the mines in exchange for titles, money, or stipends. The result of this reliance on private enterprise meant that, as shown by Yoon Byung-Nam, many mines were domain owned but contractor-run.[54] Besides the inherent economic difficulties, however, mining operations were faced with another issue. The political unevenness of the period made confiscation by the *bakufu* of contractor-run

[53] There are numerous works on the people hired by domains to develop particular areas of land. For examples, see: Mizote Masanori (ed.). *Sunamura Shinzaemon: Edo jidai shoki shinden kaihatsu no shōgai wo sasageta.* Yokohama: Tobira Shuppansha, 2008.

[54] Yoon, Byung Nam. *Domain and Bakufu in Tokugawa Japan: The Copper Trade and Development of Akita Domain Mines,* PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1995.

mines not uncommon, furthering the insecurity of mining as a financial venture for the individual domains. Therefore, even more so than with reclamation projects, domains provided incentives for individuals willing to bear the financial risks of mining projects.

These risks associated with mining did not only create opportunities for prospectors and management. As the creation of mines required specialised skills in order to produce accurate and reliable mining surveys, rōnin could leverage their skills in order to find employment in these developing areas of science.[55] The fact that some rōnin had enjoyed the benefit of elite schooling meant that they were able to employ their skills to obtain the positions created this way. Indeed, because of this, we see that there was a close relation between the need to reliably predict mining output and the evolution of Japanese mathematics.[56] Despite the risky nature of the mining business, the opportunities offered in their running were appealing to rōnin since many of them had the education to make for good candidates, such as Umezu Masakage, a rōnin who was put in charge of the management of mines in Akita domain.[57] As the Tokugawa period progressed, the evolution of Japanese non-urban areas increasingly opened up opportunities for employment and advancement, providing further incentive to look beyond the city.

## Learning to Be: Rōnin, Skill-based Labor and Rural Education

Though land reclamation and mining projects created many opportunities for rōnin to make a living and settle throughout the archipelago, these were not the only sectors open to rōnin. Influenced by urban living, and new and changing social circumstances, village populations, and

[55] Kobata Atsushi. *Nihon kōzan no kenkyū,* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968. Pp.61-62.
[56] Yamaguchi, Keiji. "Kinginzan no gijutsu to shakai." In, Nagahara Keiji and Yamaguchi Keiji (eds.), *Kōza Nihon gijutsu no shakai shi: Vol.5.* Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1984. Pp.154.
[57] Yoon, *Domain and Bakufu*, 1995. Pp.78.

especially its elites, increasingly generated a demand for education.[58] For rōnin, this demand not only provided opportunities for work but could also help to anchor local esteem as they became an important demographic in the history of rural education in the role of both producer and consumer. It is therefore important for this study look at the opportunities provided to rōnin by the increased spread of education and the proliferation of rural schools. Such rural schools had been a feature of the Tokugawa landscape since early on, yet their distribution was uneven. In certain domains, governmental officials set out to establish official schools in the countryside. Elsewhere, individuals took the initiative and endeavored to set up local schools themselves. In addition, elite countrymen often sought out private tutors for their children. All this not only led to a spread of education, but also drove up the demand for able teachers and tutors. As pointed out by Brian Platt, as time went by, this was reflected in "a transformation in the roles and identities of […] elites during the Edo period, a story in which early Tokugawa rural magnates grew increasingly dependent upon educational and literary credentials, and social connections to maintain local status and position."[59] For rōnin, then, education became important for two reasons: to find employment and to provide their children with the skills to maintain, or improve, their social position.

As teachers it was possible for rōnin to find a place in the communities in which they lived. Provided that they registered themselves, the position of teacher could assuage the worst effects of the rōnin label. However, since it was possible to generate an income through teaching, rōnin were not the only ones looking for possibilities to teach and those in the lower ranks of the

[58] On the cultural and educational changes in rural areas, see: Walthall, Anne. "Peripheries. Rural Culture in Tokugawa Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.39, No.4 (Winter, 1984), pp.371-392. For works specifically focussed on the spread of rural education, see: Dore, Ronald. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1965; and, Rubinger, Richard. *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

[59] Platt, Brian. "Elegance, Prosperity, Crisis: Three Generations of Tokugawa Village Elites." *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol.55, No.1 (Spring, 2000), pp.46.

*bushi* status saw it as a means of supplementing their meager stipends.[60] Even though this created a large amount of people looking for this type of work in urban centers, rōnin can be found registered as teachers in large numbers. Looking at the town register of the castle town of Takada domain compiled in in 1712, we can see that many rōnin were able to find work as teachers.[61] The register shows people living in the various districts in Takada and among other things lists their occupations. Amongst them are a number of rōnin who settled in the town and took up various occupations. Of the seven rōnin registered, three are listed as working as writing teachers, one as a reading instructor and one as a teacher of the Confucian classics. Another man, Uejima Jurōzaemon, was also listed as a teacher of the sword, but it was specifically noted that he was not included in the rōnin register.[62] The need for this addendum indicates the inferred relation between rōnin and teaching, especially when concerning martial skills. Though this shows that there were numerous options to find work teaching in urban centers, the growing importance of education in the lives of rural elites increasingly created employment opportunities in more peripheral areas. It was these more 'peripheral' opportunities in education that rōnin often had an easier time taking advantage of as they were less socially bound to the urban areas.[63]

As stated, however, even during the first century of the Tokugawa period, local schools, official or otherwise, became important parts of the rural landscape. In 1667, Ikeda Mitsumasa set in motion plans to establish schools in all districts of Okayama domain, as he felt that "young

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[60] Dore, Ronald. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1965. pp.256.
[61] *Niigata-ken shi, 6.* Pp.356-374.
[62] *Ibid*. Pp.358.
[63] Though the existence of rural *bushi* was widespread, John Hall shows that in many cities *bushi* made up between a quarter to two-thirds of the population, highlighting the concentration of *bushi* in these areas. This is especially clear when combined with Susan Hanley's estimate that *bushi* only made up 7% to 10% of the entire population. See: Hall, John. "Castle Town and Modern Urbanization." In, Hall, John and Jansen, Marius (eds.). *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.178; Hanley, Susan. *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan.* London: University of California Press, 1997. Pp.18.

farmers should study."[64] In order to establish the efficacy of the project, periodic surveys were undertaken outlining the number of schools established, teachers employed and students taught. One of these surveys, conducted three years after the plan had been set in motion, assessed that there were now 123 schools staffed by 129 teachers who were teaching 2,151 students.[65] The backgrounds of these students was diverse and many were the children of priests, doctors and farmers, as well as children of rōnin. It is more than likely that many of these were the sons of the men who had come to the countryside and had been able to gain important social positions through land reclamation or development, showing the potential for social advancement that rural land reclamation offered. A document from Chōshū domain issued in 1739 seems to echo the importance of education for the rōnin population. It stated that in providing funds for boarding students at the domainal school, preference should go to second and younger sons, and the children of rōnin,[66] showing an understanding that in absence of guaranteed inheritance, education could provide these children with a means of making a living. Education, therefore, was more than an opportunity for employment for many rōnin. Whilst some were able to make a living through teaching, others, who had been integrated into village hierarchies, could rely on education to secure and continue their socially advantageous positions. As a result, rōnin who were placed in significant positions within local communities would, much like other local elites, seek to further the schooling of their children by seeking out teachers or tutors, often rōnin themselves, that could be hired to come to the village.

Early in his life during the mid-eighteenth century, Ōzawa Shisan, a local elite in the village of Ōno, travelled to the castle town of Matsumoto in order to receive schooling from a

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[64] Fujii et al. *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*, 1983. Pp.463.
[65] "Biyō gunchū tenarai dokoro shōshi no ki." In, Okayama-ken (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi, Vol.24: Okayama-han monjo.* Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1982. Pp.1222-1288.
[66] Monbushō (eds*.). Nihon kyōiku shi shiryō, Vol.2.* Tokyo: Rinsen Shoten, 1970. Pp.662.

rōnin named Okamoto. After Shisan returned to Ōno, the Ōzawa family invited Okamoto to come to Ōno and become a tutor for the children there, which he did for a number of years.[67] This example therefore highlights the practices of local elites in providing schooling for their children. For rōnin this provided ample opportunities to gain employment as local elite status increasingly focused on education. Furthermore, the example of the Ozawa shows that teachers of many different disciplines could hope to find employment. Not only did local elites seek out teachers of skills such as reading, writing, mathematics, bookkeeping, etc., but it seems that 'less practical' skills were also in demand. Shisan's son Kameharu received instruction in *nō* theater, flower arranging and poetry.[68] Yet not all saw the positives of elite village dwellers attempting to improve their chances through this type of education. One writer paints them as lazy people who don't seem to know their place.

> Some of [these rich peasants or local elite] support a tame rōnin in their household and learn military arts unsuited to their station in life. [Some] find someone to teach them to write Chinese prose or poetry, take up calligraphy in Chinese style or study painting, either Chinese or Japanese style. [Others] take into their household a teacher of the tea ceremony, waka or haiku verse, or dancing, and spend their time acquiring these accomplishments.[69]

Despite the disapproval of writers such as this, who were often influenced by Confucian ideas of people's 'place in society,' the fact was that such studies could lead to social and financial advancements. Whilst the above writer states that such skills were unsuited for these men

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[67] Platt, Brian. "Elegance, Prosperity, Crisis: Three Generations of Tokugawa Village Elites." *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol.55, No.1 (Spring, 2000), pp.52.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] "Seiji kenmonroku."In, Kokumin Seishinbunka Kenkyūjo (eds.). *Nihon kyōiku shi shiryō sho, Vol.4.* Tokyo: Hokkai Shuppansha, 1937. Pp.292.

because they were generally associated with the highest of elite culture and thus carried the connotation of not only *kuge* (courtier) and *bushi* culture, it was exactly this association that worked in the favor of rōnin. Some rōnin would indeed have received education in such skills before becoming rōnin, but even for those who had not, the association of the label with *bushi* status could often be enough to confer on them assumed familiarity with the skills in question.

Unsurprisingly, the assumption of rōnin skill could lead to some try and take advantage by presenting themselves as teachers without actually possessing the necessary skills. This led some people to believe that rōnin undertook these pursuits purely for economic reasons, critiquing them for undermining the higher ideals of teaching. Lamenting this state of affairs, eighteenth century scholar Ise Sadatake wrote:

> There are people like the rōnin scholars who make a profitable thing out of this kind of school and use it to fill their bellies […]. They talk much about the Way of the Sages and the Rites and Music of the Three Dynasties, but their personal behavior is deplorable […]. They hold what they call poetry parties, hire a room in a tea-house for their meeting, get their poetry composition over with quickly and concentrate on the main business of wine and women. They do not copy the Sages; in the manner of the Chinese profligate eccentrics they talk scornfully of convention, and honest upright people they despise as smallminded.[70]

Though Sadatake's comments are likely made in an urban scholarly environment distinct from that of rural schools, his reference to "rōnin scholars" is telling. For Sadatake, and many like him, scholars were those who devoted themselves to scholarship in order to grow themselves and

[70] "Yōgaku mondō." In, Dore. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 1965. Pp.58.

those around them, not to make money.[71] In the case of teachers, especially in rural schools, this bar was much lower, but the numerous attempts by people to pass themselves off as teachers without the necessary skills would surely have led Sadatake to feel vindicated in his observations. Asakawa Zen'an had similar complaints concerning the ability of many of the rōnin "crowding Edo" offering their services as teachers. He, like Sadatake, saw these rōnin as simply in it for the money, without the necessary skills: "A man who was a day-laborer the year before becomes a doctor this year. Yesterday's fishmonger shows up today pretending to be a teacher of reading and writing."[72] Though the comments by these two men were as motivated by elitist conservatism as they were by concerns for educational integrity, they highlight the potential for some to try and take advantage of those seeking education.[73]

Adding to this dismissive attitude towards such teachers was the idea that many of them, even if not actively trying to scam people, were at best barely competent. This attitude is reflected in the following excerpt from the *Terakoya monogatari*:

> [A teacher], supposedly descended from a Kyoto *bushi* family, a flabby individual and a dullard if there ever was one. He had no idea when it came to the origins of characters or spelling in kana. His hand went uncertainly down the pages like a rudderless ship on an ocean, with no distinguishable style. Yet he had no other accomplishments nor the financial means to start a business. He realized this was audacious, but he had to make a living.[74]

[71] Interestingly, many established Confucian scholars were themselves rōnin. See: Beerens, Anna. *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons: Japanese Intellectual Life in the Late Eighteenth Century, A Prosopographical Approach.* Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006; Wildman Nakai, Kate. "The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies,* Vol.140, No.1 (1980), pp.157-199.
[72] "Saiji shichisaku." In, Dore. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 1965. Pp.248.
[73] This comment could also be an indication of the ingenuity, flexibility and adaptability of rōnin, even if sometimes skirting the boundary of the illegal. See chapter 5.
[74] "Terakoya monogatari." In, Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 1965. Pp.256.

Clearly the opinion was that 'those who can, do, and those who can't, teach in rural schools.' Whereas many rōnin worked to leverage their skills for advancement, others, lacking such skills, simply performed the role of the capable rōnin in order to obtain a position as teacher. Partly due to this, many teachers went to various lengths to avoid such preconceptions and hiring often occurred through social networks, such as with the teacher Okamoto above. As the potential for fraud and incompetence was thus present, connections could be important for those seeking to make a name teaching, not only to show their academic pedigree, but to prove their ability and skill. For many of these men, association with renowned and well-known schools could offer legitimation as well as access to advantageous social connections or greater social advancements. Many therefore solicited their service at various prestigious schools or with well-known scholars throughout the country. An example of this comes from the diary of Rai Shunsui, father of the famous writer Rai Sanyō, where he describes that on the 22nd day of the 7th month of Bunka 3 (1806) two rōnin called in on his school in Hiroshima looking for employment as Confucian scholars.[75] From the brevity of this description it seems that this was neither rare, nor that the two men were successful in their attempt to obtain employment. Much in the same way that other rōnin presented written petitions with references, those seeking employment as teacher could also benefit from the endorsement of good social connections.

Other rōnin opened their own schools instead of finding existing ones at which to work. Such schools, often situated in rural areas, were increasingly established towards the end of the Tokugawa period as the demand for education grew. Though domainal and *bakufu* oversight of such schools was generally minimal,[76] some domains did try to curb their numbers or impose at least a modicum of control. The most prevalent way in which domains attempted to do this was

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[75] "Shunsui nikki, Vol. 26." In, Kizaki Aikichi and Rai Seiichi (eds.). *Rai sanyō zensho: zenshū furoku.* Kagoshima: Rai Sanyō Sensei Isekikenshōkai, 1932. Pp.469.
[76] Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 1965. Pp.87

by prohibiting the establishment of schools by out-of-domain rōnin.[77] As the number of schools established by rōnin increased rapidly, differentiating between 'domestic' and 'foreign' rōnin (*yoso rōnin*) became increasingly necessary. Though prohibitions specifically aimed at non-domainal rōnin were not uncommon, as shown throughout this work, they were often the result of relevant social problems of the time. Despite these prohibitions, however, a number of rōnin managed to set up schools, many of which became locally important centres that helped to spread rural education.[78]

The awareness of the importance of education in obtaining employment and gaining, or maintaining, social position resulted in large numbers of rōnin actively pursuing education to high levels. Resultantly, many famous and less famous local scholars were men carrying the rōnin label. Some of these men gained positions in domainal or shogunate employ such as the Confucian scholars Arai Hakuseki or Kumazawa Banzan. Far larger numbers, however, pursued their studies as local elites, village teachers and rural doctors etc. It was mostly due to the efforts of these men, rather than the efforts of central institutions, that the understanding of Western astronomy, medicine, metallurgy, geography and many more subjects were developed.[79] Rural education was thus one way in which rōnin were able to find employment by leveraging of their skills. Yet, even if such skills were absent, rōnin could attempt to take advantage of their rōnin label through its association with elite, *bushi*, education. Such interaction with the rōnin label shows that it could be deployed and manipulated in ways that were non-static and were situationally and locally dependent.

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[77] Monbushō (eds.). *Nihon kyōikushi shiryō, Vol.3*. Tokyo: Rinsen Shoten, 1970. Pp.160.
[78] Rubinger, Richard. *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. Pp.40.
[79] Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, 1965. Pp.160.

## To Be or Not to Be (Rōnin): Social Label Change

The local and situational character of the rōnin label meant that some individuals and groups sought to manipulate it in order to gain social advantage. Many of these people therefore either sought to obtain the rōnin label or to retain it into perpetuity. This manipulation took place on varying levels and caused a widening of the application of the rōnin label. As mentioned above, *Kantō daikan* Ina Tadatsugu and his son Ina Tadaharu worked to promote settlement in the Kantō area to spur on agricultural production and support the growing city of Edo. In doing so, they encouraged people such as various rōnin to settle there to work the land. However, it seems that in order to assure production in certain areas, they also imported experienced agricultural workers from the Tokugawa home province of Mikawa. Though some of those who immigrated were vassals, others, such as the family of Sano Shinko, had originally been cultivators. After their move to the Kantō area, however, they became increasingly associated with *bushi* status as they were included in retainer genealogy registers as rōnin. Thus, although the Sano family had no prior presence as warriors, lived in a village and worked the land like so many *nōmin* (farmers) they were elevated through their initial relation to the Ina. Such an application of the rōnin label through either prior association with a certain family or appointment for short-term purposes became an increasingly regular occurrence during Tokugawa period.[80] For this purpose, Shinko was registered as a rōnin and was effectively employed by the Ina to work the land. What is even more unusual is that two generations later we see that Shinko's grandson, Heidayū, who

[80] This type of short-term appointment to *'bushi'* positions was a regular practice throughout the period but an increased need for talented individuals with administrative skills led to a steady increase in the trend. See, Stewart, Daniel. "Temporary Samurai: Status and Service in Early Modern Japan." PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2003.

was not employed by the Ina in any capacity, was still listed in retainer registers as rōnin.[81] The fact that these people, who lived as farmers in the countryside, were identified as rōnin in registries indicates that that term had come to take on hereditary elements[82] and that application of the label could be influenced by a interaction with the 'social gray area' within which it existed. In addition, the retention of the rōnin label indicates that the negative interpretation which was so prevalent in *bakufu* rhetoric was differently experienced as many chose to adopt it for its positive effects.

As discussed in chapter 1, with the period of unification in Japan came efforts to remove retainers from their places of entrenched power and separate, both socially and physically, the *bushi* from the peasant population. This had been initiated on a domainal level during the Warring States period and was extended to a national level during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568-1603). The clearest articulation of these initiatives was the separation edicts (*mibun tōsei rei*) issued by Hideyoshi in 1591.[83] One of the driving factors behind the edicts had been the need to exert more control over the *bushi* population, which often resided on their lands spread throughout the country. As a result, they were expected to urbanise, leaving behind their lands for mansions in the cities, and exchange income through directly collected taxes in favor of stipends allocated to them by their liege lords. These stipends in turn were generated by taxes imposed on a peasantry expected to work the fields. This drive towards status-based geographical and social separation was continued and expanded by the Tokugawa *bakufu* after it had come to power.[84] Though this matured into what we now understand as the Tokugawa status

[81] See, Tokyo-tō Adachi-kuritsu Gōshi Hakubutsukan (eds). *Rōnin-tachi no furontia: Mura to chō no kaihatsu to rōnin yuisho*. Tokyo: Adachi-ku Gōshi Hakubutsukan, 2011. Pp.7-8.
[82] The increasingly hereditary nature of the term will be further discussed in chapter 5.
[83] This process is analyzed in great detail by Yoshida Yuriko, see: Yoshida Yuriko. *Heinō bunri to chiiki shakai.* Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 2000; Yoshida Yuriko. *Hei to nō no bunri.* Tokyo: Yamagawa Shuppansha, 2008.
[84] Hall, John. "Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies,* Vol.1, No.1 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 43-47.

system, its initial, and lasting, focus was a separation between *bushi* and non-*bushi*. As with many such edicts, however, its effects were far from uniform and the desired separation never fully materialized. Complex prior social interconnections remained and difficult-to-define groups existed along the perceived line of status separation. This was furthered by the fact that many local and rural *bushi* were given the choice to either move to the city, or to renounce their *bushi* status and remain in the countryside. In order to fortify their positions these families often bought up large tracts of land to secure future family fortune and many of them, despite renouncing their claim to *bushi* status, used their prior connection to the elite in order to place themselves in socially advantageous positions.[85] Despite this, the separation edicts of 1591 and their descendants positioned *bushi* status as a geo-social force which presupposed a status-based area of experience, as a result of which *bushi* were expected to live in urban areas.[86] Though institutionally the above system was implemented during the Tokugawa period, the reality was that the status system was more locally determined than this 'central' system of status might imply. The separation of *bushi* from the land, or at least direct control over the land, was in many ways more of an institutional abstraction than it was a social reality.

Regardless of the edicts outlined above, certain domains continued to employ systems that effectively allowed for the direct control of lands by retainers and research by John Morris shows that this type of land management was, in fact, exceedingly common.[87] Either *bushi* were never truly severed from their connections to the land, or domains sought to resettle *bushi* in the countryside during times of financial hardship in order to lighten the financial burdens of

[85] Platt, Brian. "Elegance, Prosperity, Crisis: Three Generations of Tokugawa Village Elites." *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol.55, No.1 (Spring, 2000), pp.48.
[86] Though this also created certain expectations for other social groups, as with many such edicts, the focal point was the *bushi*. The *bushi*/non-*bushi* dichotomy was created through the definition of *bushi*, rather than a definition of both.
[87] See, Morris, John. *Kinsei nihon chigyōsei no kenkyū*. Osaka: Seibundō, 1988.

stipends and increase production. Rural *bushi* were therefore widespread despite outwardly being an urban elite class, however, the exact expression of the relation between status and place for these rural *bushi* was locally configured.[88] In some domains, such as Satsuma, there were numbers of rusticated samurai (*gōshi*) who would be rotated periodically from the village to the castle town.[89] Similarly, Tosa domain maintained many of its rural *bushi* in the form of *jizamurai*, descendants of the many rural warriors who served under the Chōsogabe.[90] All these processes complicate ideas of urban/rural and *bushi*/non-*bushi* divides as they watered down clear-cut differentiation. With the influx of a variety of people and the continuing existence of entrenched local positions, status distinctions in rural areas often presented a complex network of interlinked labels that can be difficult to place within the expected social hierarchy.

In addition to this, many people attempted to position themselves in socially advantageous positions through creative manipulation of social labels in the gray areas between lower retainer and high-status peasant. The historian Yokota Fuyuhiko highlights this process by tracing the lineage of a man who lived in Kai province, modern-day Yamanashi prefecture, called Ita Nagayasu.[91] In the official family lineage written by Nagayasu, he states that, "our family has been a *bushi* family for the many generations since its foundation."[92] To underline

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[88] Much of this depended on the different ways in which rural *bushi* were inserted into the rural social environment. There has been much research into the presence of the rural *bushi*, but most works, such as that of Marius Jansen and Robert Sakai, tends to present it as an exception rather than representative of a larger trend. Jansen, Marius. "Tosa in the Seventeenth Century." In Hall, John and Jansen, Marius, eds. *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.115-129; Sakai, Robert. "The Consolidation of Power in Satsuma-han." In, Hall, John and Jansen, Marius (eds.). *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.131-139.
[89] Brown, Philip. *Cultivating Commons: Joint Ownership of Arable Land in Early Modern Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. Pp.70.
[90] See: Jansen, Marius. "Tosa in the Seventeenth Century." In Hall, John and Jansen, Marius, eds. *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp.89-129; and, Roberts, Luke. *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchant Origins of Economic Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Tosa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[91] Yokota Fuyuhiko. "'Rōnin hyakushō' Ita Nagayasu no dokusho." *Hitotsubashi ronsō,* Vol.134, No.4 (Oct, 2005). Pp.94-117.
[92] *Ibid.* Pp.95.

this, he listed the illustrious lords he claimed his family had served. In doing so he took no half measures and referred to his ancestors' appointments by the Minamoto family under Yoritomo, as well as their service to the Takeda, the Toyotomi, and the Tokugawa. However, like many of these documents, Nagasuke's representation of his family's appointments and achievements was a fabrication, specifically designed to bolster his social position and lend gravitas to his claim to social power.[93] Looking at the Ita family 'record of relatives,' written in 1725, it becomes clear that they had only held elite status for the last three generations, starting with Nagayasu's great-grandfather who had managed to climb the social ladder through military service during the Sengoku period. After the establishment of the Tokugawa *bakufu* the family had retained its *bushi* status, because of which Nagayasu's father, Nagatsugu, initially was an attendant to a member of the *rōjū* council and lord of Maebashi domain, Sakai Tadakiyo. However, despite having been conferred this position, in 1665 at the age of 25, Nagatsugu returned to the village of Shimoijiri where his family had owned fields and a residence for generations. The reason given for this was that he had become ill and therefore had "given up his aspirations for a *bushi* household"[94] and so had returned to the village to become a '*rōnin hyakushō,'* or rōnin peasant. Nagayasu's mother's family on the other hand had all, except for her uncle Maruyama Bennosuke, been peasants, albeit that many of them had held the position of village headman (*nanushi*) and therefore belonged to the higher echelons of the peasant status group. The Ita are therefore an example of a family in which people of various status groups mixed. Despite the process of separation between warrior and peasant, lower retainers and higher status peasants

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[93] The importance of the difference between 'official' genealogy records and family genealogy records is discussed in the work of Luke Roberts, who shows that 'official' records could often contain both accepted obfuscations of the truth as well as outright lies. See: Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012.
[94] *Ibid.* Pp.96.

were not far removed from one another in actual social position.[95] They were so close in fact that, as with Nagayasu's parents, intermingling between the two regularly took place.

The intermingling occurring in the gray area between peasants and *bushi* is further highlighted when looking at the marriage practices of the children of Nagatsugu's brother Jūrōemon, uncle of Nagayasu. Focused on the male line, the Ita family genealogy lists Jūroemon as having one son and four sons-in-law.[96] His son, also named Jūrōemon, was, like his father, a retainer to the Masuyama family of Nagashima domain with a stipend of 100 *koku*. As for his sons-in-law, two were stipended retainers, one as a unit commander (*monogashira*) and the other as a house elder (*karō*), but the remaining two were both rōnin. One of these was described as a *rōnin hyakushō* from Shimotsuma village in Hitachi province. The other son-in-law was simply described as rōnin, but it was noted that his two sons, Jūrōemon's grandchildren, had obtained positions as *bushi*.[97] In addition to positioning himself and his family in close proximity to *bushi* status, the fortunes of the Ita had increased whilst they were living in Shimoijiri. When Nagayasu came to live in the village they had owned around 33 *koku*, but at the time of his death this had increased to a sizable 556 *koku*.[98]

Throughout Nagayasu's writings he strategically used the terms *nōjin* (farmer) and rōnin in designations of his family in order to position himself both as part of his community as well as of elite status. This creative interaction with social position and social labels is further highlighted in 1725 when the magistrate of the *bakufu* territory, Miyayama Mokunoshin, was tasked with setting up a rōnin register (*rōnin aratame*), which would cover Shinoijiri village in which Nagayasu lived with his family. Nagayasu was therefore required to register himself and

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[95] *Ibid.*
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Ibid.*
[98] Fujimura Junichirō. "Kinsei chūki ni okeru jinushi keiei no jitai: Kai Shimojiri-mura Ita-ke no baai." *Shigaku Zasshi*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (1959), pp.129.

his family. In doing so, he registered himself as rōnin, but he registered his son Norinaga under the name Yoemon and entered his status as '*Otonabyakushō seki*,'[99] a status distinction aimed at indicating he was part of a powerful peasant elite who were generally regarded as having long-standing and deep roots in the community of which they were a part. In 1737, Nagayasu again attempted to change the position of himself and his son to that of '*rōnin atoshiki*,' or rōnin heir. In doing so he once again changed his name, this time to Ikkan Hitoshi and that of his son to the anything but subtle Ikkan Taitō.[100]

In such situations then, it was necessary to position the rōnin label within an understandable framework of domainal hierarchy, something which could be difficult because of the numerous interpretations of the term. As a result of this, many domains turned towards 'modular' registration status indicators in which a number of status, or sub-status, indicators were combined to describe people who did not conform to either of the two institutional entities indicated. In the case of rōnin, this often indicated their rōnin status supplemented by their current employment, for example *rōnin hyakushō* as seen in a register from Iwafune village that was created to monitor the population of newly created fields there.[101] We thus see nebulous social gray areas instead of clear delineations, within which some were able to creatively manipulate their social labels. Moreover, the manipulation of social labels could clearly be adapted to the situation at hand. Not only could one claim rōnin status in order to establish relations with the social elite of the Tokugawa period but its potentially negative interpretation necessitated a creative interaction that was able to dynamically respond to different circumstances. As social identity is necessarily an amalgam of various identities, one's interaction with others was predicated on which identity one highlights at any particular point in

[99] 長百姓 can be read as either *otonabyakushō* or *osabyakushō*.
[100] '*Taitō*' is also the name for the right to bear two swords, a right that was reserved to those of *bushi* status.
[101] *Niigata-ken shi, 3*. Pp.458.

time. Though this did not offer a social carte blanche, it allowed for socially literate individuals to use, adapt or divest, social labels such as rōnin to their advantage.

Many rōnin who did not have long-standing local connections still, however, attempted to claim them in order to obtain local prestige, social position or tax exemption. Indeed, one of the largest challenges when conducting research on rural 'rōnin' is the fact that some invented lineages to associate them and their family with *bushi* status. This issue has been extensively studied by Yamamoto Eiji who has shown that in Kai, modern-day Yamanashi prefecture, numerous people, similarly to Nagayasu, faked lineage documents to associate themselves with former retainers of the Takeda family.[102] These types of documents often linked families to figures in the employ of particularly illustrious or well-known lords. As a result, the men from Kai changed their social label in response to the social environment around them, as this would confer certain tax benefits or assuage the burden of their expected duties. The Kai rōnin thus sought to contest their precise position within the community in order to gain social advantage.[103] However, despite adopting the rōnin label, their place in the local social makeup was never questioned and therefore they were never confused with the 'unacceptable' rōnin and excluded from integration. Central to the use of the rōnin label for social advantage was thus employing it in discussions on *how* one was positioned within the local community and not *if* one was included. Through periodic processes of registration, such as, for example, the religious inquisition registers in Kaji village in the Kabiki district of Echigo province, rōnin could therefore position themselves within communities. These village registers demanded that everyone had to register with their local temples, initially to root out Christians, but something

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[102] Yamamoto Eiji. "Kinsei no nise bunsho, Takeda rōnin wo jirei ni." In, Hisano Toshihiko and Tokieda Tsutomu (eds.). *Nise bunsho-gaku nyūmon.* Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2004. Pp.79-93.
[103] *Ibid.* Pp.91.

that had developed into an effective instrument of rule during the Tokugawa period.[104] During the registration in Kaji village, it was found to have 72 males, 62 females, 4 monks, 1 zen practitioner and 1 *zatō* (blind masseur), coming to a total of 140 people. The report continues to state that all people are included and that therefore among the registered people are small and large farmers, tenants (*shakuya no mono*), rōnin, merchants, craftsmen, children, and priests.[105] Looking at the way this register was presented, it is therefore evident that rōnin were unproblematically registered alongside 'regular' villagers and not listed separately, such as the zen practitioner or *zatō*. Through such acts of 'modulation' and registration, rōnin were divided into 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' categories.

The relation between certain families and the area where they had settled thus carried much weight in the continuation of social prestige within the community. Where for the Kai rōnin relation to the former Takeda lords of Kai gave them local elite status, others too, such as the Kitsuki rōnin from Kyūshū, as discussed below, built their local prestige on linking their social label closely to the Matsudaira daimyo of the time.[106] However, even when there were no prior connections, narratives were created to cement the standing of the descendants of those who established the village. As has been demonstrated above, such narratives were often interwoven with family connections to illustrious historical figures. In other instances, events of a supernatural nature are interwoven with these narratives in order to lend further credence to the founder, his descendants and the village as a whole.[107] In many such narratives where no longstanding family connection was claimed, it was rōnin who provided the link between village

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[104] Hur, Nam-lin. *Death and the Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity and the Danka System.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. Pp.79-106.
[105] *Niigata-ken shi, shiryō-hen 6*. Pp.440-443.
[106] Kodama Hiromi. "Kitsuki-han ni okeru zaitaku rōnin no dōkō ni tsuite." *Ōita-ken chihōshi,* Vol.52 (Dec. 1968), pp. 20-35.
[107] Kalland, Arne. *Fishing Villages in Tokugawa Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995. Pp.40.

elite and *bushi* society. A letter concerning the establishment of a village in Iwatsuki domain highlights the use of such a narrative by combining links to rōnin and the supernatural.[108] Signed by one of his descendants, the narrative concerns Watanabe Koemon, who had been a retainer at Iwatsuki castle during the reign of the daimyo Kōriki Tadafusa. One day an altercation occurred at the castle between Koemon and his fellow retainer Takabashi Banemon. A fight had ensued and Koemon had ended up striking and killing Banemon. As a result of this incident Koemon decided it would be best to flee from the castle town and ended up in a village called Shimane, in modern-day Adachi-ward in Tokyo, where he went into hiding. Aiding in his decision to flee was the fact that Koemon had been informed of the plans of Banemon's son, Monjirō, to exact vengeance for the killing of his father. Having settled in Shimane village, Koemon stayed there for a time after which he moved out of the village and began cultivating land to the east of the village. His attempt at hiding had, however, not been as effective as he had hoped, and "Monjirō came all the way [to Shimane] and inquired [about Koemon's whereabouts]."[109] The villagers must have given him the information he wanted as he then turned up at the fields that Koemon was developing. However, the tale states that Koemon was aware that Monjirō had arrived in Shimane as he "[…] had a dream in which a goddess in white clothing appeared to him, […] and told him about Mojirō's plans to avenge his father."[110] Despite this knowledge, Koemon had been alone in the middle of his fields when Monjirō approached and "drew his blade" ready to strike down his father's killer. At the last moment, however, Koemon was suddenly filled with "divine strength" and managed to kill Monjirō.[111] Thus Koemon could finish the development of the new fields and the village subsequently established on the site was named Koemon Shinden

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[108] "Koemon daimyōjin roku." In, Tokyo-tō Adachi-kuritsu Gōshi Hakubutsukan (eds.). *Rōnin-tachi no furontia: Mura to chō no kaihatsu to rōnin yuisho*. Tokyo: Adachi-ku Gōshi Hakubutsukan, 2011. Pp.34.
[109] *Ibid.*
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Ibid.*

after its founder. From the same letter in which this founding tale is related, written in the late eighteenth century, it becomes clear that the village had experienced significant growth through the fact that in addition to Koemon's descendants, the letter is signed by seven other families who had settled there. The inclusion of divine elements is not uncommon in tales pertaining to the creation of new villages and fields throughout Japan. As shown by Arne Kalland, the use of these documents, as well as the creation of village legends, was a way in which people were able to secure their social position.[112]

The use of rōnin in such tales, as shown above, was widespread as they provided founders and villages with a link to elite society, and in the case of new villages 'with no history,' such as described by Koshōken, this could link to larger historical narratives.[113] This way of creating a 'history' for such newly established and peripheral areas through connection with larger narratives did not just occur in agricultural villages, but many other geographically peripheral communities had their own legends concerning their establishment. Myths surrounding the discovery and opening of mines such as the Innai mine in Akita domain often involved rōnin stumbling upon the veins of precious metals around which the community would be centered. In this way, the Innai mine was said to have been discovered by four men, from the Kinai and Hokuriku, of which three were rōnin. After the battle of Sekigahara these men are said to have secretly travelled up north to pan for gold. In 1606 they stumbled on a large silver vein and reported this to the domainal authorities of Akita domain, who proceeded to establish the mining town there.[114] Though these narratives are not necessarily factually reliable, as with the

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[112] Kalland. *Fishing Villages in Tokugawa Japan,* 1995. Pp.40.
[113] See: Yamamoto Eiji. "Kinsei no nise bunsho, Takeda rōnin wo jirei ni." In, Hisano Toshihiko and Tokieda Tsutomu (eds.). *Nise bunsho-gaku nyūmon.* Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2004.
[114] Yoon, *Domain and Bakufu,* 1995. Pp.82.

narratives referring to supernatural events, they demonstrate, at the very least, a connection in the popular imagination between the rōnin and the establishment of certain communities.

In both examples above, that of Koemon and the legend surrounding the Innai mine, it is interesting to note that the people who established these communities were exactly the type of rōnin who were highlighted as 'unacceptable' in official parlance. In Koemon's case, though the legal circumstances of the case are unknown, his involvement in the incident in which he killed his fellow retainer would at the very least have warranted domainal investigation. In the case of Innai, the fact that these men fled north after Sekigahara also hints at the fact that they would not only have been on the Toyotomi side during the conflict but had also ignored *bakufu* law that prohibited rōnin from travelling to the northern parts of Japan.[115] It was thus not always rōnin who had been forced into their position through attainder or retainer band 'downsizing' who set out to try their hand at agricultural labor. Though other reasons for dismissal can be difficult to ascertain, men who were dismissed due to either misdeeds or disputes with their lords did find opportunities to make a living in the countryside, despite the injunctions that could make this more difficult for those deemed 'unacceptable.'

This division between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' was not, however, the only way in which rōnin were subdivided and this dichotomy was often backed by another divide; that between 'domestic' and 'foreign' rōnin.[116] This meant that active differentiation was made between rōnin who were identified as having roots in a certain domain, and those who had come from outside. Beyond guiding domainal approach, this meant that rōnin were routinely identified as a 'rōnin from X domain,' or 'X province,' anchoring them more than their popular images as

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[115] Vaporis, Constantine. *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Centre, 1995. Pp.103-104; Stanley, Amy. *Selling Women: Prostitution, Markets and the Household in Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012. Pp.27-29.
[116] This will be further explored in chapter 5.

'wanderers' would suggest. Rōnin identified as part of a certain domain were therefore often differently understood and interpreted than those from other areas and domainal efforts to settle rōnin in peripheries were often predicated on ties to a particular locale. As a result of this, certain domains specifically attempted to place 'domestic' rōnin in socially understood positions in order to mitigate both the negative effects of being rōnin and the disruptive potential of these men. One of the ways in which domains did this was by installing rōnin in the countryside as semi-officials, thereby preserving some degree of their social position. The above-mentioned Kitsuki domain in Kyūshū opted for this due to the financial troubles it was facing (like many other domains at the time) that forced it to reassess its expenditure during the beginning of the eighteenth century. Consequently, the domain decided to cut back on retainers and proceeded to set about handing out 'redundancies.' As part of this group of dismissed retainers, Yamamichi Sazaemon, Midamura Ihei, and Yanagi Sakuemon and his son Shinjurō found themselves stripped of their stipend around 1706.[117] As a result, they were forced to move out of the Kitsuki castle town and were resettled in the more rural areas as *hyakushō rōnin*. Yamamichi moved to the village of Ishimaru, Midamura to the village of Hata, and the Yanagi and his son to Kutsukake. What is notable is that in these resettlements all were moved to different villages and were resettled in places where they would be the only *hyakushō rōnin* registered. Where in other domains new social labels were constructed during times of resettlement, the label of *hyakushō rōnin* had existed for at least a century in Kitsuki prior to these resettlements. Evidence of this can be seen from other areas of Kitsuki domain where earlier other *hyakushō rōnin* families had already settled, such as the Mikami family, for example, who settled in Nagamatsu village

[117] Kodama Hiromi. "Kitsuki-han ni okeru zaitaku rōnin no dōkō ni tsuite." *Ōita-ken Chihōshi,* Vol.52 (Dec. 1968), pp.20-35.

around 1652.[118] Thus, it seems that in Kitsuki domain, *hyakushō rōnin* were scattered around the countryside, keeping their number to one *hyakushō rōnin* family per village, instead of allowing them to cluster in a particular area as we have seen previously. On top of this, when looking at the map of Kitsuki, we see that all the villages in which *hyakushō rōnin* were settled were situated on the border with Shimabara domain. Based on this, and the fact that these *hyakushō rōnin* functioned as domainal semi-officials, the work of Kodama Hiromi shows that they were likely placed in these villages by the domainal government for the purpose of domainal border oversight.[119]

Such reliance on support from one's own domain could, in many instances, provide advantages in relation to one's social status, but at the same time it could have negative consequences at times of domainal penury or once the need for certain rōnin had decreased. Thus, whilst people often retained the rōnin label, this did not mean that their position in the community in which they lived didn't alter. As shown by Edward Pratt, social circumstances in rural areas changed markedly throughout the Tokugawa period and as some local rural elite gained more power as a "protoindustrial elite,"[120] others, such as the *hyakushō rōnin* from Kitsuki domain discussed above, lost their favored position. These men, who had held elite status within their villages, increasingly saw their privilege erode. This erosion, however, took place over a number of generations and occurred in a number of steps. In Kitsuki the *hyakushō rōnin*, previously under the direct auspices of the domainal government, were formally put under the jurisdiction of the village headman, which saw a further integration into the village structure. This change was spurred by increasing poverty, as the relations with the domainal authorities

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[118] *Ibid.* Pp.25.
[119] *Ibid.* Pp.33-35.
[120] Pratt, Edward. *Japan's Protoindustrial Elite: The Economic Foundations of the Gono.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999. Pp.23-27.

began to fade more and more. By the Bunsei years (1818-1831) this had happened to almost all *hyakushō rōnin* within Kitsuki.[121] In addition, they now became registered as *zaitaku rōnin* (resident rōnin) in a particular village and included within the village hierarchy under the auspices of the headman.

The fate of these Kitsuki rōnin also mirrors larger social changes throughout the mid- and late Tokugawa period. As landholdings slowly equalised amongst those living in villages, and social and economic 'status' could compete, former landholding elites lost their social standing as other landholders insisted they deserved equal roles in village politics.[122] In Kitsuki, however, it was not just elites whose status was based on landholding who saw their privileged positions evaporate in the face of social change, but local elites whose power was based on ties with the domainal authorities equally saw a loss in power and position. In 1826, one of the *zaitaku rōnin* from Kitsuki, Yanagi Hirasuke, the descendant of the earlier mentioned Yanagi Sakuemon, went to the castle town of Kitsuki for the formal New Year's greetings.[123] This in itself shows that the *zaitaku rōnin*, despite the faded relations with the domainal authorities, still held a separate position within the village that allowed them to attend these formalities. However, once Hisasuke had arrived, the district commissioner scolded him on the fact that his attire did not adhere to the standards for such a meeting. Hisasuke replied that: "Throughout the generations we have become more and more impoverished, and things have become this dire. As a result," he continued, "my public appearance reflects this situation."[124] Thus, though their status provided to them through their continued association with the rōnin label did indeed afford them certain privileges, this could no longer be translated into financial prosperity.

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[121] Kodama. "Kitsuki-han ni okeru zaitaku rōnin no dōkō ni tsuite," 1968. Pp.22-23.
[122] See: Ooms, Herman. *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Power, Law.* University of California Press, 1996, pp.74-77; and, Smith, Thomas. *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan.* Stanford University Press, 1959.
[123] Kodama, "Kitsuki-han ni okeru zaitaku rōnin no dōkō ni tsuite," 1968. Pp.26.
[124] "Kutsukake-mura meisaiki." In, *Ibid.* Pp.27

The above examples show that different interactions with the rōnin label could have different results depending on when and how it was implemented. In the case of the Kai rōnin, the rōnin label could be successfully used by a group to reinterpret their position within rural society.[125] These men were able to use the social position and social duties of rōnin at different times throughout the Tokugawa period and manipulate their position accordingly. Similarly, families or communities could use the rōnin label in order to link themselves to larger historical narratives or secure their place within the social environment. In both cases above, the rōnin label was successfully leveraged in order to gain social position. As for the Kitsuki rōnin, however, they were unable to readjust their position and as a result saw their financial prosperity dwindle despite a continued degree of heightened social prestige. These examples therefore offer instances of the reinterpretation or creative engagement with established boundaries of social hierarchy through the use of the rōnin label. Long after moments of land-development and settlement, the rōnin label remained an active part of the rural social landscape.

## Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the integral role played by rōnin in rural development during the Tokugawa period. In addition, it has shown that local interactions with the rōnin label shaped and defined it in ways that defied typical understandings of the positions of rōnin in Tokugawa society. Though the choice to leave behind the urban centers could, in some ways, be viewed as a renunciation of the claim to *bushi* status, the reality was far more complex. When looking beyond the urban centers of *bakufu* power we can see numerous areas where rōnin found ways to

[125] Yamamoto Eiji. "Kai-kuni 'rōnin' no ishiki to kōdō." In, Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai (eds.). *Kinsei shi bukai: Hatanaka toshiyuki 'hyakushō' to 'kawata.'* Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1990. Pp.120-134.

settle and make a living. At times this was through the creation of new villages and new fields, yet even when this was not possible rōnin found ways to integrate into existing social hierarchies in the numerous villages scattered throughout the archipelago.

As highlighted in chapters 1 and 2, a return to rural areas had been an option recognized by many rōnin since before the Tokugawa period. For some this meant that they attempted to reclaim lands to which they had some form of familial connection. Those for whom this was not an option were forced to find a place in existing villages through the availability of empty fields, marriage or other measures. However, projects of land development and reclamation increasingly provided new opportunities for rōnin to generate income and elevate their social position at the local level. Through the creation of new rural communities some rōnin could ensure an elevated local social position for their family. Others were able to act on the evolution of rural areas and the increased demand for skilled individuals to fill positions such as that of teacher, surveyor or project manager.

It was, however, as shown by this chapter, not only rōnin themselves who initiated the turn to rural opportunities. Domains faced with financial hardship often sought to set up projects of rural development and land reclamation. The issue this presented was that projects of such size necessitated initial investment, which would have to be gained back over time. The presence of individuals able and willing to undertake these projects, and willing to take the financial risks involved, offered domains new opportunities. Through the use of tax reduction and other incentives, domains could benefit without having to face initial investment or the financial threat of failure. The fact that many of these people were rōnin forced domains to interact differently with the rōnin label. Simple expulsions and other general edicts had to be partly ignored for these rōnin to be able to undertake development projects or simply settle in the area. As a result, the

mutually beneficial nature of these projects and domainal need for people to populate the countryside resulted in the further bifurcation between rōnin who were deemed 'acceptable' and those who were not. Like in many other instances, rōnin were not objectionable simply through their identity as rōnin. Instead, the rōnin label became a sub-status indicator, the relevance of which was contingent on circumstance. Rōnin who registered, settled in communities etc. were, in varying ways, interpreted as different social entities from those who had not. This dichotomy was furthered by the differentiation between 'foreign' and 'domestic' rōnin. Not only did domains make clear institutional divisions between these two, as will be further explored in the chapter 5, but rōnin with roots in the area were often able to leverage these into an advantage. Those who found themselves in domains in which they did not have familial roots, however, were often hard-pressed to find a place. Though rōnin identity was officially presented as monolithic, this was overridden by local social convention.

The rōnin label was not, therefore, simply passively applied. Instead, as has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, it was actively deployed, negotiated and repurposed. Many who retained the rōnin label combined it with other status indicators or were able to manipulate it in ways that could generate social advantage. Yet the rōnin label did not only function as a kind of sub-status indicator for those who initially had it applied to them. It also gained a hereditary element and was, despite the fact that this went against the centralized idea of the rōnin label as individual and non-hereditary, often conferred from father to son. The importance of family registers in this process meant that some attempted to adapt their family history in order to gain social advantage through association with the rōnin label. As indicated in this chapter, however, the effects of this hereditarization of the label could be both positive and negative, with local

specificities rearticulating the exact impact of the rōnin label, thereby complicating its application as a clearly identifiable social marker.

The rōnin label therefore interacted with, and was complicated through, its interaction with the social realities of the Tokugawa world. As shown through this chapter, rōnin sought out opportunities in peripheral areas and encountered different ways in which they could deploy their label in relation to the social realities around them. This not only highlights the internal variety of the rōnin label but also shows the locally determined meaning of status. As a result, rōnin played in integral role in the development of peripheral areas despite their general association with the urban condition.

# Chapter 5

## *Regulating Rōnin*

The *Tsugaru henran nikki*, a compilation of documents pertaining to the history of Hirosaki domain, contains a letter sent to the daimyo of Hirosaki dated the 7th month of 1669. The letter contains an in-depth description of the presence of *ezo* peoples (non-ethnically Japanese from the North) in the Tsugaru peninsula as well as a report of an "*ezo* revolt"[1] in Hokkaidō.[2] This revolt, generally referred to as 'Shakushain's revolt,' was led by an Ainu chieftain named Shakushain in an effort to regain control of local resources in the face of increased Tokugawa interference in the region.[3] In an effort to fully inform the authorities in nearby Hirosaki domain of the revolt and those involved, the author includes a description of the background of Shakushain stating that, "in the Shibuchari area of Matsumae domain there is a chieftain called Kamokutain who was originally from Menashi. A rōnin named Shakushain who is also from Menashi came to

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[1] "Tsugaru henran nikki." Kanbun 9, 7th month. In, Aomori-ken shihensan kinsei bukai (eds.). *Aomori-ken shi shiryō hen, kinsei 1*. Aomori: Aomori-ken, 2001. Pp.427-430.

[2] Hokkaidō was not a part of the Tokugawa state during the period and only came to be called Hokkaidō after the Meiji Restoration. Diplomacy and trade with the Ainu were channeled through the Matsumae domain in the southern-most tip of the island. For more on the Ainu and interactions between the Tokugawa state and the Ainu, see: Howell, David. *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society and the State in a Japanese Fishery*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995; Walker, Brett. *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.

[3] Walker, Brett. *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001. Pp.48-72.

where Kamokutain lived and settled there."[4] Though no further reference is made to Shakushain's history before coming to Shibuchari, the use of the word rōnin in describing him points at a period of transience and unboundedness before he settled there. What is significant is that this use of the term rōnin clearly demonstrates that it held an overarching definition that was sufficiently unproblematic as to be useful as a socio-economic descriptor in particular instances; in this case to make the situation of an Ainu chieftain understandable for a Tokugawa audience.[5]

As has been explained in previous chapters, this general understanding of the term rōnin was closely tied up with early Tokugawa state-building efforts and understandings of power, as they were viewed as disruptive and unwanted outsiders. It is this seemingly unproblematic and sweeping understanding of the term that occurs in the vast majority of *bakufu* documents of the period and which has consequently shaped much of the interpretation of rōnin in scholarship on the Tokugawa period.[6] However, whilst there existed a broad definition of the term (which allowed it to be used as an effective descriptor as in the case of Shakushain) it could simultaneously hold a number of ambiguities and internal differences. This coexistence of both

[4] "Tsugaru henran nikki." Kanbun 9, 7th month. In, Aomori-ken shihensan kinsei bukai (eds.). *Aomori-ken shi shiryō hen, kinsei 1.* Aomori: Aomori-ken, 2001. Pp.428.

[5] Though a degree of cultural adaption had taken place amongst the Ainu, they were still viewed as decidedly foreign, see: Howell, David. *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society and the State in a Japanese Fishery.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. Pp.17-18; and, Walker, Brett. *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001. Pp.9.

[6] As explained in the introduction, his view is especially prevalent in English language scholarship and as there are no studies focusing on this population only a handful of works hint at a more complex social reality, most notably the work of David Howell and Anna Beerens. Though this view has also influenced much of the Japanese scholarship, there is a longer history of discerning research into rōnin especially after the work of Asao Naohiro. More recent studies by scholars such as Kodama Hiromi Yamamoto Eiji and Yokota Fuyuhiko have expanded on this history by highlighting the incongruities between the image and the social realities of rōnin. For references to the more complex nature of rōnin see: Howell, David. *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Pp.53; Beerens, Anna. *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons: Japanese Intellectual Life in the Late Eighteenth Century, A Prosopographical Approach.* Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006. Pp.277. For more recent work expanding the understanding of the rōnin label and their social experience in Japanese, see; Kodama Hiromi. "Kitsuki-han ni okeru zaitaku rōnin no dōkō ni tsuite." *Ōita ken chihō shi,* Vol.52 (Dec. 1968), Pp.20-35; Yamamoto Eiji. "Kai kuni 'rōnin' no ishiki to kōdō." In, Rekishigaku kenkyū kai (eds.). *Kinsei shi bukai: Hatanaka toshiyuki 'hyakushō' to 'kawata'* Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1990. Pp.120-134; Yokota Fuyuhiko. "'Rōnin hyakushō' Ita Nagayasu no dokusho." *Hitotsubashi ronsō,* Vol.134, No.4 (Oct, 2005). Pp.94-117.

definition and ambiguity within the same term might seem contradictory at first glance but, as highlighted by Luke Roberts, apparent internal contradiction was not uncommon in Tokugawa society, nor was it necessarily problematic.[7] In fact, much of the Tokugawa institutional structure was underpinned by the coexistence of an outward obeisance to *bakufu* laws and regulations, and the understanding that internal discrepancies were allowed as long as the outward appearance of compliance was preserved. In the case of rōnin, this duality mapped onto the difference between those rōnin considered 'acceptable' and those generally deemed a nuisance or threat. Outwardly, the *bakufu* generally reacted to the existence of the second category and expected domains to do the same. In reality, however, domains, and occasionally even the *bakufu,* were forced to interact with those labelled rōnin in ways that were not in line with these more general edicts. As long as domains took care to avoid open issues involving rōnin, they could approach the population at their discretion.

This chapter will highlight the ways in which rōnin were managed by a variety of institutions and how these institutions attempted to incorporate rōnin within a legal and political framework so as to render their position socially understandable and acceptable. It will look at the difference in approach to this problem between *bakufu* and domains, as well as between domains themselves, showing that the imposition of regulations, and changes in processes of law and employment created further differentiation within the rōnin label. Rōnin, though 'outwardly' understandable as a unit, were inwardly increasingly locally defined and differentiated. Yet within this process, rōnin themselves were not passive bystanders and many sought to use the ambiguity that their label provided or capitalize on its potential for social advancement.

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[7] Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.33-42.

## Approaching the Rōnin Label

The main reaction to rōnin by the *bakufu* had been, and would continue to be, the creation of expulsion edicts. These edicts were periodically instated and called for the expulsion of all rōnin from cities or ordered all people providing shelter to rōnin in a particular area to turn them out.[8] These types of edicts were, however, not uniquely applied to rōnin and often concerned various groups regarded as disruptive or vagrant, such as unregistered commoners (*mushuku*) or unestablished beggars.[9] In these types of crackdowns, the shogunate was especially forceful in the main areas of power such as Edo, Osaka and Kyoto, and edicts were repeatedly issued there. Central to the *bakufu*'s reactions to groups such as rōnin were therefore concerns about law and order in its centers of power to the extent that issues beyond these urban centers were often ignored. Partly as a result of this, there was no formation of a recognizable, *bakufu* policy on rōnin and at the domainal level much was left open to interpretation. Though the *bakufu* periodically ordered institutions across Japan, such as temples, not to give shelter to rōnin and made slight changes in how to handle those who broke the law,[10] in the case of domains, the challenge of how to actually deal with rōnin was generally left to the individual domains themselves. Local modes of social ordering, the emergence of certain areas holding a particular attraction to rōnin, and the creation of a juxtaposition between 'local' and 'foreign' rōnin (*yoso rōnin*) all contributed to the fact that it was increasingly necessary to address rōnin issues at the local level. Though often forced to make an outward show of following more sweeping *bakufu* injunctions against rōnin, domains needed to balance this with local realities, complicating many

[8] Kinsei shiryō kenkyūkai (eds.). *Edo machibure shūsei, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Hanawa shobō, 1994.
[9] Botsman, Daniel. *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Pp.97.
[10] Inoue Kazuo. *Shohan no keibatsu*. Tokyo: Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1965. Pp.36-37.

of the issues at hand. Bounded by the realities of the Tokugawa socio-political world, this dynamic lead to a myriad of legal and extra-legal approaches to rōnin.

In the 1650s, the *bakufu* set out to address the issues they saw as responsible for creating the large rōnin population by changing laws of attainder and inheritance. In doing so, they not only showed a focus on 'trickle-down politics,' but also on a very specific type of rōnin. By removing insecurity and discontent amongst the higher echelons of the *bushi* population the *bakufu* expected issues lower on the social ladder to be solved.[11] Though the decrease in attainders and changes to inheritance laws aimed at increasing political stability did stem the explosive growth of the rōnin population, this did not mean that all, or even enough, issues had been addressed. Where scholars such as Kurita Mototsugu and John Hall see a change from a military government to a more civil administration during this period,[12] central reactions to rōnin were generally stuck in the former as they were based around expulsion, repression and registration. The reason for this was that, as shown in previous chapters, the *bakufu* had a very specific type of rōnin in mind in its application of these measures and was therefore unable to address issues faced by the large variety of rōnin actually in existence. As shown in chapter 2, part of the reason for this was the fact that the 'rōnin problem' itself was an amalgam of various other social problems confronting the Tokugawa polity at the time.

Despite the numerous difficulties faced by rōnin during the first half of the seventeenth century, however, multiple factors during the second half made reemployment, if anything, equally problematic. As Kanehira Shinji has pointed out, along the same lines as Kurita and Hall,

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[11] Roberts. *Performing the Great Peace,* 2012. Pp.78.
[12] Kurita Mototsugu. *Edo jidai.* In, Naigai Tosho (eds.). *Sōgō Nihonshi daikei, Vol.9.* Tokyo: Naigai Tosho, 1926; and, Hall, John. "Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies,* Vol.1, No.1 (Autumn, 1974), pp.39-49.

this was the period that the "Tokugawa peace" truly began to take hold.[13] Domestic conflict such as that at Osaka or Shimabara came to an end and foreign chaos and insecurity, such as that created by the Ming-Qing transition on the continent, also abated. In addition, the *bakufu* created fewer new daimyo after the 1650s, domainal law became more actively implemented and retainer bands became more fixed as their positions were progressively seen as hereditary.[14] The most significant factor impacting rehiring opportunities for rōnin, however, was the increasing demands on domain finances, which meant that daimyo became increasingly cautious when it came to hiring, something which had already emerged as a problem by the 1640s. All of these factors combined to not only made positions as full retainers scarcer and more difficult to obtain, but also resulted in the rōnin label becoming permanent, rather than short-term, more often.

Faced with a population of long-term, or permanent, rōnin, some domains sought to organize them in the same way as other social groups. To be able to project its power in the face of lacking state capacity,[15] the Tokugawa *bakufu* based its institutional framework around numerous accepted and semi-autonomous units of control. Such units, like the *mura* (village), *za* (guild) and *ie* (family), were able to function autonomously and were expected to be aware of the duties etc. that came with their position. In addition, these units were internally hierarchized and would be collectively responsible for infractions on tax and corvée duties. In cases of inter-group interaction, the units would communicate with one another through their village headmen, guild leaders and family heads. Additionally, groups could assert their rights and privileges, and make sure they would be preserved. Following this logic of compartmentalization, the solutions for

[13] Kanehira, Shinji. 'Kinsei zenki no rōnin meshikakae to daimyō kachū.' *Rekishi Hyōron*, Vol.803 (Mar. 2017), Pp.20.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] This does not imply a weak government. The lack of capacity here refers to the direct ability to assert full control. For more on Tokugawa capacity and the relation between capacity and power see: White, James. "State Growth and Popular Protest in Tokugawa Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol.14, No.1 (Winter, 1988), pp.1-25.

groups such as rōnin, were to either insert them into existing units or to create a new unit that would provide oversight of the rōnin population and make them more governable. The main way in which this rationale translated itself into reality was through forcing rōnin to register in a particular place or community. Though registration was often applied by the *bakufu* in conjunction with expulsion and repression, no matter potential contradiction, domains were forced to be more discerning in their approaches as the complicated and socially integrated nature of many rōnin made such approaches virtually impossible. Consequently, though the same rationale was at play throughout Japan, the actual details of its execution could vary widely as individual domains decided on different approaches.

As large-scale 'national' incidents involving rōnin did not occur again after the 1650s, *bakufu* approaches to rōnin evolved little and were thus practically unchanged for much of the period. Locally, however, where many of the issues remained and changing circumstances demanded action, domains were forced to address rōnin more systematically. As indicated above, as the Tokugawa period continued, more and more domains were confronted with financial problems that were often the result of Tokugawa impositions and taxes, bad management, price fluctuation, bad harvest or simply bad luck.[16] The reasons notwithstanding, the result of this was that many retainers became the victims of domainal 'downsizing.' Where some domains actively attempted to find solutions to look after their former retainers, others felt less bound by their former lord/retainer relation. Furthermore, whilst many domains sought to incorporate rōnin within the existing institutional framework, the social mutability of the rōnin label and the internal variety within those labelled 'rōnin' made their incorporation within existing social and legal frameworks difficult and demanded different reactions to the various

[16] Such difficulties often directly affected the lives of *bushi,* especially on the lower rungs of the domainal hierarchy. See: Yamamura Kōzō. "The Increasing Poverty of Samurai in Tokugawa Japan." *Journal of Economic History,* Vol.31, No.2 (1971), pp.378-406.

manifestations of the rōnin label. Thus, domains were often forced to try and come up with their own ways to deal with issues involving rōnin, not just in the case of sudden changes, such as the attainders discussed in chapter 3, but as persistent social policy.

In the face of these domainal approaches, rōnin were, however, not simply passive subjects. Instead, many of them actively managed their social labels in order to retain privileges and social capital in the form of lessened taxes, local elite position or markers of status. As the examples in this chapter will show, this interaction could take various forms, often involved dialogue between domain and subject, and functioned in ways that did not correspond to the *bakufu* interpretation of the rōnin label. Furthermore, as interaction with the term shifted the parameters of the label, the identification of rōnin with *bushi* status became problematized and the institutional conception of rōnin as *bushi* became virtually meaningless in local context. In addition to this, domainal attempts to reorganize the position of rōnin could interfere with the privileges of other status groups as rōnin were often integrated as parts of existing hierarchies such as a village or household. Most of the domainal approaches incorporated dichotomies within the rōnin label, such as those of ‘acceptable’/’unacceptable’ and domestic/foreign, thus dispelling, even in a legal sense, simple definition. Despite domains following *bakufu* statutes on rōnin on the surface, the realities of their interactions were often far more complicated and varied. This variation maintained a social gray area that could be navigated by rōnin in order to capitalize on their social position, especially since it persisted even in the legal framework.

## Law and Jurisdiction: Domains and Rōnin

Domainal variations in approaches to the reintegration of rōnin were based around the local social realities of the time. Financial, political or social disruptions were almost ubiquitous throughout the various domains but, as stated above, the times and scope of these problems varied and shifted. In addition, the legal ambiguities surrounding rōnin manifested in a number of ways and these changes meant that domains attempted to find individual methods to integrate the rōnin populations into domainal social life. This often involved attempts at registration, but also included the creation of new institutions and positions especially for the purpose. Additionally, both the domains and the *bakufu* not only attempted to differentiate between the earlier mentioned 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' rōnin but in doing so the legal status position of rōnin became increasingly unclear. The following section will explore domainal attempts at integration and the creation of legal rules for rōnin and highlight the numerous problems such attempts encountered.

Rules that applied to rōnin were part of a larger system seeking to regulate social life and ensure that people fell within understandable units. As part of this system, it becomes clear that instead of regulating rōnin as a cohesive group, the focus of regulation lay on 'policing' the boundary between those who were 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable.' In 1702, for example, the domain of Okayama issued an edict aimed at the regulation and prevention of crime in the castle-town.[17] Included in the edict was a clause aimed at increasing the regulation of rōnin employment within its city limits. The clause lays out a set of procedures that needed to be followed when hiring rōnin in order to make sure one did not hire potentially problematic,

[17] "Machi jūgo shioki jōmoku." In, *Okayama-ken shi, 25*. Pp.541-547.

'unacceptable,' rōnin. The edict stated that "even rōnin whose conduct is known, for example if they [were known to have been] merchants (*shōnin*), can't simply be employed."[18] In order for these rōnin to be allowed to go about their daily business, the clause demanded that they prove that they had relatives or a guarantor who was able to vouch for them, which was standard practice in any rōnin hiring. On top of this, the clause continues by stating that "their actions are to be to be scrutinized by [their respective] village head (*nanushi*), elder (*toshiyori*) or formal collective household group (*gonin-gumi)*."[19] Once these conditions had been met and they obtained permission from their respective oversight unit they were allowed to go to the city commissioner (*machi bugyō*) in order to obtain official recognition. The institutions or officials indicated in the clause, such as the *nanushi* or *gonin-gumi,* indicate that these rōnin were to be put under non-*bushi* control and were thus, despite scholarly assumptions to the contrary, not considered part of the *bushi* status group in any legal form.[20]

A similar edict was instated in Osaka during the 4th month of 1648 which not only questions the direct relation between rōnin and *bushi,* but also highlights the slight local differences many of these seemingly identical edicts contained. The edict sets out rules for those letting accommodation to rōnin and requires them to make sure that these rōnin have a guarantor from amongst the elders (*sōtoshiyori*) and to check that they had the right to rent with the town commissioner (*machi bugyō*).[21] Failure to comply with these demands, the reader is reminded, would result in incarceration. This threat is bolstered by another edict issued 5 months later that

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[18] *Ibid.* Pp.543.
[19] *Ibid.* Pp.543.
[20] *Bushi* and non-*bushi* fell under different institutions of oversight within the Tokugawa social order. Though the exact ordering of the institutions could differ between domains, all evinced a clear divide between these two groups on an institutional and legal level. Rōnin, though often assumed to fall under *bushi* jurisdiction, especially when not specifically inserted into other social units, could and often did fall within non-*bushi* jurisdiction. For a discussion on this, see: Miura Hiroyuki. *Hōseishi no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958. Pp.251-252.
[21] Kawano Mio. "Rōnin tōsei ni tsuite." In, Tsukada Takashi (ed.). *Kinsei Osaka no hō to shakai.* Tokyo: Seibundō, 2007. Pp.440.

stated that not only the offending landlord would be incarcerated for 100 days but that this punishment would be extended to the neighborhood association (*gonin-gumi*) and the ward elder (*machi no toshiyori*).[22] Interestingly, Kawano Mio has compared this to edicts from Kyoto and has shown the differences that existed in the procedures for the rōnin's rights to rent.[23] Whereas in Osaka rōnin were required to gain a guarantor from amongst the community elders, in Kyoto they were specifically required to have a family member (*enbiki no kata*) act as guarantor. Though seemingly a small difference, Kawano notes that in Osaka this meant that the renting of accommodation was effectively forbidden to rōnin as community elders were unlikely to act as guarantors for random rōnin.[24]

The above edicts echo many others that demanded rōnin provide guarantors in order to be allowed to register. Such registration was widespread and registration ledgers show that the main consideration when it came to interactions between the various governing institutions and rōnin was to curb the rōnin transience. Whilst chapter 4 demonstrated that such ledgers worked to tie rōnin to particular places, what is of importance in this chapter is that in doing so they also tied them to a network of institutional oversight. This form of registration remained important throughout the Tokugawa period and formed one of the main dividing lines between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' rōnin. As a result, it could be necessary for rōnin to highlight the fact that they were registered, and thus 'acceptable,' when interacting with the authorities. In a record of a court case in 1829 we therefore see that one of the men called in for examination, Date Asanosuke, is not simply described as a "rōnin" but instead as "*rōnin ie-mochi*" (a home owning rōnin) from Honryōgae-chō, modern-day Nihonbashi hongoku-chō in Tokyo, indicating the fact

[22] *Ibid.* Pp.441
[23] *Ibid.* Pp.440-445.
[24] *Ibid.* Pp.441.

that he would have been registered with the authorities in Edo and was therefore an accepted part of society.[25]

This relation between registration and rōnin is often ignored in scholarship and rōnin are frequently taken to be per definition unregistered. The idea of rōnin cut off from society and existing in a state of legal limbo is reflected in the work of Herman Ooms. Discussing the fate of those who were officially excluded from the village community, he writes that:

> It changed the official status of the person in question. A disinherited person was thus legally a nonperson and, because he or she was not attached to a legal group, perhaps the village equivalent of a rōnin, or masterless samurai. Such a person was thus cut off from the village in all possible ways, having neither obligations to the village nor privileges, including the privilege of protection. He was an outlaw.[26]

Unlike the villagers in the above example, cut off, set adrift and no longer part of the community, being rōnin did not mean one was not part of a community, nor that one was not registered. In many domains, rōnin did indeed have assigned obligations and privileges, as well as the presence of legal oversight, and could thus rarely be described as an "outlaw."

Similar references to rōnin as unregistered are made in relation to the population of unregistered transients (*mushuku*) in the work of David Howell. Referring to the work of Tsukada Takashi, Howell points out that *mushuku* were set apart due to their unregistered state rather than their actual lack of domicile and that "they were thus commoner counterparts of masterless samurai (rōnin), and the shogunate often paired the two in its calls for the restoration

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[25] Wigmore, John Henry (ed.). *Law and Justice in Tokugawa Japan: Materials for the History of Japanese Law and Justice under the Tokugawa Shogunate, 1603-1867, Part VIII-A Persons: Legal Precedents.* Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, 1982. Pp.135-214.

[26] Ooms, Herman. *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Power, Status, Law.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996. Pp.45.

of social order."[27] Though this is indeed the case, the reference here is once again to the institutional definition of rōnin rather than the actual manifestation of their social position, which was not necessarily *bushi* nor unregistered. It was the existence of rōnin in a gray zone between definitions that not only complicated their social position, but also spurred institutions, especially domains, to address the problems this ambiguity presented.

As many of the *bakufu* injunctions concerning rōnin were limited to edicts demanding expulsion or vigilance, the individual domains across the Japanese archipelago were forced to devise their own solutions in dealing with rōnin in order to address the ambiguity of their social positions. Many of the domains were aware that, as Abe Tadaaki had pointed out in the 1650s, these *bakufu* rules just moved or postponed the issues at hand. Domains were therefore forced to devise policies individually to deal with their rōnin populations. These initiatives could take a number of forms but were most often predicated around the idea of creating a socially and legally identifiable group with its attendant hierarchy, as this was how other groups were integrated into the Tokugawa social fabric. Based on this logic, a number of domain authorities tried to set up the position of *rōnin bugyō* (rōnin magistrate). In this process, however, the institutional ideal of social ordering ran into problems when confronted with the varied social realities of the rōnin label and, as a result, the simple solution of setting up a general office in charge of 'rōnin-affairs' often fell apart quickly. In Tsushima domain, for example, the establishment of a *rōnin bugyō* encountered fierce resistance not from the rōnin population itself but other groups who were variously engaged with them.[28] *Bushi* families, and others, who had rōnin in their employ did not appreciate this meddling in, what they saw as, their affairs.

[27] Howell, David. *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth Century Japan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Pp.53.
[28] Yoshida Sadahiko. "Kurume-han 'rōnin' seido to 'kokuon' no ronri." *Hikaku shakai bunka*, Vol.7 (2001), pp.21-31.

Especially in the minds of the *bushi* families, the creation of a *rōnin bugyō* would infringe on their rights as *bushi* to manage their own household (*ie*) free of outside influence.[29] The different positions of rōnin thus made them an amorphous social entity spread across a number of legal jurisdictions meaning that a centralized office could not practically claim jurisdiction over the whole population, once again therefore failing to address the rōnin population as a whole.

Though these problems of jurisdiction made the position of *rōnin bugyō* short-lived in Tsushima domain, other domains simply curtailed its legal jurisdiction to a particular subset of the rōnin population. Thus, though a *rōnin bugyō* might exist in a given domain, this did not mean that it was automatically in charge of all rōnin-affairs. Instead, in many cases, rōnin were subdivided in an official, legal sense. In Kurume domain, a large number of men had been sent to the front during the Shimabara rebellion whilst registered as *yoriki* (constable). After Shimabara, however, they fell under the auspices of the *sakite monogashira* (vanguard captain), but were eventually placed under the control of the newly designed *rōnin bugyō*, the first of whom was a man named Ōkada Hachirōbei.[30] However, this meant that the magistrate only had control over a particular portion of the rōnin population and numerous people identified as 'rōnin' fell outside of his jurisdiction. Thus, it becomes clear that the implementation of seemingly identical solutions to issues concerning rōnin could have widely varying aims or consequences.

The fact that rōnin registration was commonplace did not, however, remove the distinction of being registered as commoner or *bushi* and, as shown above, the particular institutions involved made this distinction very clear. Some rōnin therefore attempted to manipulate their registration in order to avoid identification as a commoner. The same lawsuit that highlighted Date Asanosuke as a registered rōnin above, continues by highlighting the

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Yoshida Sadahiko. "Kurume-han 'rōnin' seido ni okeru kisoteki kosatsu." *Kyūshū bunkashi kenkyū-jo kiyō*, Vol.42-43 (Mar. 1999), pp.94.

infractions of another rōnin in relation to his registration. This man, referred to as Zenemon, had served under the head Abbot of Nikkō, during which time he had had the name Saka Kingo. After some form of infraction on his part, however, he had been discharged from service and banished from Edo. Having lived in exile as a rōnin for a number of years, he was included in a shogunal amnesty and allowed to return to Edo. Not all was forgiven, however, and it was decreed that Kingo should register as a commoner in the city, thereby giving up his *bushi* status.[31] However, unwilling to renounce his privilege by registering as a commoner, Kingo engineered it so that he was included in the official *bushi* genealogy of his father Saka Daigaku, thus officially retaining *bushi* status. Surprisingly, he was able to continue being registered as *bushi* in this way for 15 years despite the explicit statement that this would not be allowed. After the discovery of his infraction he moved to Takemachi where he finally registered as a commoner with the name Zenemon.[32] Though later charged for this transgression, the ease with which Zenemon was able to switch status identity is indicative of the ways in which many rōnin attempted to assuage the impact of their positions.

Registration with the appropriate authorities was thus one of the central ways of status indication during the Tokugawa period and those not registered by abode were outside of the governing logic of the status system.[33] Yet, as the manner of registration and the official institution of oversight involved in one's registration would determine one's status position, it could remove the possibility for social mobility. As above, inclusion in an officially submitted

[31] Occasional amnesties were given for a variety of reasons and on a number of occasions, such as the commemorations of the death of a previous shogun. For an example of such an amnesty, see: Taniguchi Shinko. "Okayama-han ni okeru shogun kaiki hōyō no onsha." *Shikan,* Vol.165 (Sep. 2011), pp.1-18. For more on amnesties and pardons, see: Hiramatsu Yoshirō (ed.). *Kinsei keiji soshōhō no kenkyū*. Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1960. Pp.1023-1055; Shimoda Momoko. "Kinsei chūkōki ni okeru bakufu no onsha to jiin: Hōji ni okeru sha ni tsuite." *Tokyo daigaku nihon shigaku kenkyūshitsu kiyō,* Vol.21 (Mar. 2017), pp.35-53.
[32] Wigmore. *Law and Justice in Tokugawa Japan: Part VIII-A*. 1982. Pp.138-139.
[33] Botsman, Daniel. "Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan." Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Pp.97.

*bushi* genealogy census would indicate *bushi* status, whereas registration with a commoner authority such as a village or guild leader would put one within civil, non-*bushi*, jurisdiction. In light of this, various domains opted to circumvent the issue by assigning new status designations that skirted the issue and avoided possible confrontation. As with the *rōnin bugyō* in Kurume above, this would apply status to a particular group of rōnin rather than forcing certain groups to be included into pre-existing units or attempting to address the rōnin population as a whole. In doing so, domains often assigned new, 'modularized' status indicators that either combined existing ones, or created specifically delineated groups.

Though this approach resulted in the creation of a large number of officially recognized status distinctions in certain domains and created further differentiation within the term rōnin, it established a framework for placing these people into understandable and acceptable units. This practice was especially pronounced in Awa domain on the island of Shikoku for which a census document of 1657, the *Munetsukechō*, lists roughly 27 different status indicators.[34] Many of these were due to attempts to incorporate socially ambiguous groups, some of which were made up to various extents by rōnin. One of these newly invented status indicators was the term *harashi*.[35] These *harashi* can't be found in other domains in name, yet in effect they were strikingly similar to other forms of rural *bushi*. The term, however, did not just pertain to their rural nature, but instead indicated a very particular group of rural *bushi*. As with the group of rōnin making up the jurisdictional boundaries of the *rōnin bugyō* in Kurume domain, this status indicator referred to a very narrowly defined group set apart by the particular time and circumstance of their creation. This creation of the *harashi* in Awa occurred in the 1650s when,

[34] Fukui Yoshiyuki (ed.). *Tokushima-ken no rekishi*. Tokyo: Yamagawa Shuppansha, 1978. Pp.122; Tokushima-ken shihensan iinkai (eds.). *Tokushima-ken shi, Vol.3.* Tokushima: Tokushima-ken, 1969. Pp.110.

[35] *Harashi* is the romanization of 原士 meaning something like 'field *bushi.*' It can therefore be seen to be related to terms such as *gōshi* (郷士) and *jizamurai* (地侍).

after an inspection tour, the large amount of undeveloped land in the domain was brought to the attention of the daimyo, Hachisuka Tadateru. He therefore instructed the *karō* (house elder) Nagatani Kawagoe to recruit 55 men amongst rōnin and land-holding peasants and inducted them into the retainer band as *harashi*. Most of these men, 36 in total, were installed in villages in the Awa district, but some were also moved to the Itano, Myōzai and Kaga districts.[36] Though generally spread out, in some areas there were clusters of *harashi* families, for example 16 settled in the villages of Kitahara. Other areas of concentration were Kami village, where five families settled, and Kōzaki, Chiejima and Saijō, in each of which four families settled. They were generally not expected to fulfil similar duties (in the forms of taxes etc.) expected of full retainers, but in times of war would be immediately placed under the authority of the *karō* and expected to form military units. At the same time, they did have the honor of being allowed an audience with the lord at the new year. *Harashi* were therefore not simply rural retainers, but a particular group of rural semi-retainers who were installed during the 1650s by daimyo Hachisuka Tadateru with particular duties and privileges, whose descendants inherited the title.[37] Other groups listed in the *Munetsukechō* were similarly specific, such as the *muyakunin* which referred to those exempted from corvée labour, or the *ichiryō ippiki* who were men similar to the *harashi,* but established early on in the Tokugawa period and who were expected to support one horse for potential combat.[38] Also listed are registered rōnin who retained their label and who were split into roughly three groups. The first were the *guntsuki rōnin*, who were men who did not have an official position and fell under the direct jurisdiction of the district commissioner

[36] Tokushima Shimbunsha Chōsa Jigyō Kyoku (eds.). *Tokushima-ken hyakkajiten.* Tokushima: Tokushima Shimbunsha, 1981. Pp.822.
[37] *Ibid.*; Tokushima-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tokushima-ken shi, Vol.3.* Tokushima: Tokushima-ken, 1965. Pp.113-116.
[38] Tokushima-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tokushima-ken shi, Vol.3.* Tokushima: Tokushima-ken, 1965. Pp.128-129.

(*gun bugyō*). First generation *guntsuki rōnin* were expected to provide corvée labor to the domainal lords, but their descendants, despite retaining the label, would be exempt. The second group, the *gōtsuki rōnin*, were men who held an official village positions and whose entire family was exempt from providing corvée labor. Lastly there were the *yoko rōnin*, these men lived in the countryside as rural *bushi* and were given a stipend by the domainal authorities.[39] At the same time, however, even this increased number of listed status indicators were unable to encompass all those within the rōnin population. In addition to the 27 listed categories therefore, there are also those listed as simply 'rōnin' as well as non-standard compound indicators such as *rōnin harashi.*[40] Thus, whilst new status indicators gave some groups understandable social positions, they did little to rationalize the rōnin position more broadly.

Other domains similarly sought to integrate rōnin into domainal society by recognizing them as a separate social group. This happened, for example, in Tosa domain, where a particular group of people, of about 400 individuals, was legally recognized as 'rōnin' in the domain registers. These rōnin were very closely related to the rural *bushi* (*gōshi*) in the domain, had specified duties and taxes, and were carefully regulated by the domainal authorities.[41] The fact that 'rōnin' were regulated in this manner did not, however, mean that this applied to all those assigned the rōnin label. The designation, though simply identifying this group as rōnin was understood to not include individuals beyond this particular registered and regulated subset.[42]

Lastly, some domains sought to approach the rōnin registration issue in line with more general differentiation between *bushi* and non-*bushi.* In Sendai domain, for example, rōnin were registered in ways that reflected their previous status and created a clear divide within the

[39] *Ibid.* Pp.124-128.
[40] Tokushima-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tokushima-ken shi.* Tokushima: Tokushima-ken, 1963. Pp.238-244.
[41] Hirao Michio. *Kinsei shakai shi kō.* Kōchi: Kōchi Shiritsu Shimin Toshokan, 1962. Pp.91-103.
[42] *Ibid.*

population of registered rōnin. Therefore, rōnin in Sendai were divided into *shirōnin* (*bushi* rōnin) and *bonge rōnin* (common rōnin); the former made up of former high-ranking *bushi*, and the latter made up of the groups of *sotsu* (low retainers) and *baishin* (sub-retainers).[43] Whereas the *shirōnin* often ended up being rehired into retainer positions, the *bonge rōnin* were instead forced to find work in other capacities, as a result of which many ended up becoming local rōnin doctors.[44] In addition to overcoming the issues presented by rōnin and their position in relation to *bushi* status, this Sendai domain system also highlights another division already present within retainer bands: that between high-ranking retainers and low-ranking retainers.[45]

Whilst the creation of new, separate status groups did not solve all the issues of ambiguity, to the domainal authorities it at least provided a social framework which was supposed to internally police those who fell under its authority. Though the exact definition of the newly created groups often involved sparring between domainal authorities and the groups themselves on issues such as privilege and social significance, the framework provided the possibility of assigning duties, taxes and jurisdictional oversight to particular groups. Additionally, the dialogue involved in the creation of new groups often prescribed what outwardly visible status-markers these rōnin were allowed to adopt and which they were not. Rules could therefore inhibit certain groups' abilities to manipulate their social position and this was often an area of contention.

[43] Jang Giseon. "Nihon kinsei – kindai no shakai to ishi." PhD Dissertation, Tohoku University, 2009. Pp.132.
[44] *Ibid.* Pp.158.
[45] The division between high and low retainers was further complicated by the division between *jikisan* and *baishin.* This division was based around the relation between those enfeoffed directly by the *bakufu* or those granted their position through local families and daimyo. See: Kasaya, Kazuhiko. *Kinsei buke shakai no seiji kōzō.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1993. Pp.68-74.

## Looking the Part: Rōnin, Clothing and *Taitō*

The articulation of society in terms of status was perhaps most overtly indicated through highly prescribed rules regarding its aesthetic representation. From the cut and material of one's clothes to the particular hairstyle one wore, rules outlined acceptable personal appearance, thereby enabling groups to outwardly demonstrate their status affiliation.[46] Such aesthetic rules were set out by the *bakufu* and the various domains, and sought to make visible the distinctions between different status and social groups. The actual differences between these styles could be fairly small, however, and leave room to skirt the outer edges of what was considered acceptable for one's social position. The *Morisada mankō*, a work describing different hairstyles, points out that the hairstyle of merchants during the Hōreki era (1751-1764), for example, "was very similar to that of *bushi,* but with the topknot slightly smaller."[47] For rōnin and other groups such small differences allowed for the subtle appropriation of aesthetic markers in attempts to manipulate their status identity. Though certain restrictions existed for rōnin, such as not being allowed to wear two swords or certain hairstyles, the ambiguity of their position often allowed for a degree of status 'cross-dressing.' The importance of aesthetic markers therefore meant that attempts to amend existing rules could have significant social consequences as their attempts to delineate between status groups could narrow social gray areas and therefore the ability of rōnin to skirt the edges of status performance.

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[46] Shively, Donald. "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Modern Japan." *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol.25 (1964-1965), pp.123-125.
[47] Asakura Haruhiko and Kashikawa Shūichi (eds.). *Morisada Mankō, Vol.2.* Tokyo: Tokyodō shuppan, 1992. Pp.18.

One of the moments when such dictates on personal appearance changed was through a number of reforms instated during the 1720s and 1730s, collectively known as the Kyōhō reforms.[48] These reforms were largely aimed at improving the economic position of the *bakufu* and the various daimyo in order to ensure stability.[49] Amongst a number of economic reforms, such as the reordering of the rice market and the imposition of various taxes, was the imposition of frugality laws as a way to curb individual spending and the demand for luxury goods. As a result, the reforms were directly aimed at the ways in which people dressed through tougher restrictions on material or style depending on status. Though such regulations on appearance had been in place prior to the Kyōhō reforms, the new restrictions worked to inhibit spending. In addition, however, they curbed the appropriation of social status indicators by forcing institutionalized conceptions of status more strongly onto the complicated social landscape. As a result, various people utilized the domainal petition boxes to voice their unhappiness,[50] one of whom was Yamashita Konai, a rōnin from Kishū domain.[51] Konai was strongly opposed to the reforms proposed by the *bakufu* as he felt they impacted too much on the every-day lives of people and voiced this opposition by satirizing the edicts imposed by the *bakufu*.

> Notice to the fox: From now on, even if you change into a woman, the wearing of silk garments embroidered with gold thread is not allowed.
> Note to the monkey: You will not make your backside red.

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[48] Though often referred to as a single set of reforms, these were actually a number of separate events that took place during and around the Kyōhō period (1716-1736).
[49] For an overview of the Kyōhō reforms, see: Tsuji, Tatsuya. "Politics in the Eighteenth Century." In, Hall, John and McClain, James (eds.). *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.4: Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1991. Pp.425-456.
[50] For more on these petition boxes, see: Roberts, Luke. "A Petition for a Popularly Chosen Council of Governance in Tosa in 1787." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol.57, No.2 (Dec. 1997), pp.575-596.
[51] Takimoto Seiichi (ed.). *Nihon keizai sōsho, Vol.5.* Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Sōsho Kankōkai, 1917. Pp.i-v.

> Note to the gold beetle: Due to the fact that your name is brazen, you will [from now on] be the brass beetle.[52]

By using examples from myths and folklore such as the above, Konai was attempting to show that the *bakufu*'s demands were ridiculous in that they would remove the essential markers that made different groups identifiable. His satirizing continues:

> Notice from the King of the Underworld to all of Hell: Be thrifty!
> Up to now, demons have worn loincloths made of tiger skin, but that ends now. Instead dye cotton cloth [to make it look like] tiger stripes. Instead of metal staffs use oak. Even gilding these will be considered wasteful![53]

The criticisms he advances through his text cannot be disentangled from his position as a rōnin. As discussed before, the ambiguity of the rōnin label left space for social label manipulation. The tightening of sumptuary regulations and laws, however, would make this more difficult, as clothes were a way in which rōnin could show their distinctiveness from the commoner population or underline their claim to *bushi* status. Such proposals for more frugal, stringent regulations on clothing would therefore, even if not strictly enforced, have posed a threat to the ability of rōnin to gain social status and employment through a fluid use of visible status markers as those at the edges of status boundaries would necessarily be most affected.[54]

In addition to sumptuary regulations, more overt rules of status distinction were also in place. As a government that strove towards a monopoly of violence, and in many ways was predicated upon it, the Tokugawa state constantly sought to control the material manifestations

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[52] "Yamashita Konai jōsho." Takimoto Seiichi (ed.). *Nihon keizai sōsho, Vol.5.* Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Sōsho Kankōkai, 1917. Pp.8.
[53] *Ibid.* Pp.12.
[54] Shively. "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Modern Japan," 1964-1965. Pp.133-137.

of violence, i.e. weapons. In the case of swords, however, the importance did not lay on possession alone, but rather on their aesthetic and social value. Though a number of social groups could wear a sword, the right to wear *two* swords (*taitō*) was reserved for *bushi* and therefore a highly restricted privilege. In legislation the focus was therefore on the manner of wearing swords and the public display of this act, rather than on the physical existence of the swords. For rōnin, as shown above, outward representations were highly important as they allowed them to manage their status within the gray area of their social position. The wearing of two swords was for them the most potent symbol in attempts to claim *bushi* privileges. It is therefore unsurprising that this became one of the most mentioned legal issues in relation to rōnin since, despite the fact that they were not allowed to wear two swords, many rōnin attempted to find ways in which they could adopt this potent symbol of power. Addressing this was especially important as changes in hiring practices meant that some non-*bushi* were temporarily given the right to wear two swords when in short-term employ of various lords.[55] In addition, local elites increasingly adopted *bushi* culture and *bushi* fashion, further muddying certain aesthetic markers of status. This happened to such an extent that Owaki Hidekatsu concludes in his research that the general discussion on rōnin and *gōshi* (rural samurai) from the mid-Tokugawa period "[…] is indivisible from the attempts by peasants and city-dwellers to obtain the right to bear two swords."[56] Such attempts were widespread and in a letter from 1747 it is recorded that various rōnin are wearing two swords despite this not being allowed.[57] The letter, sent to the city guard of Okayama castle-town, urges the guards to make sure the rules are being followed. However, the document continues to state that since there had been a reduction

[55] Stewart, Daniel. "Temporary Samurai: Status and Service in Early Modern Japan." PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2003. Pp.28-29.
[56] Owaki Hidekatsu. "Gōshi taitō to gōshi kabu: Yamashiro kuni Mibu mura gōshi to gōshi Maegawa-ke no sōshutsu." *Chihō shi kenkyū*, Vol.65, No.6 (Dec. 2012), pp.41.
[57] *Okayama-ken shi, 25, Tsuyama-han.* Pp.701.

in land the previous year some of these men had only recently fallen into rōnin status and they would therefore be exempted from this rule for the time being.[58] This example not only highlights the way in which rōnin denied the right of *taitō* often sought to appropriate it as a powerful marker of status, but also how domains individually decided on the right vis-à-vis certain rōnin groups.

Whilst some rōnin, as well as people from other groups such as high-status peasants, simply flouted rules stating they could not wear two swords, others sought ways to claim the right by entering into negotiations with the authorities. These negotiations most often took the form of petitions and their arguments typically focused around the idea at the heart of the Tokugawa legal system - precedent. By showing that their family had held the right of wear two swords before, the argument was that this should be continued in the present. In seeking to prove the position of their family or themselves, rōnin often used the ambiguity of the status label in order claim precedent, either through manipulation or falsification of facts. Therefore, though these petitions were presented as families seeking to reclaim lost privileges, many were calculated manipulations of Tokugawa law and social ambiguity.

Many of those submitting such petitions would refer to the connection between their ancestors and well-known or locally important lords, as the mention of such individuals could confer a certain amount of cultural capital. In the same vein, the reference to specific lords would show deep and lasting ties to the area and demonstrate the local importance of the family in question. In establishing these connections, it is significant to note that the majority of petitions refer back to ancestors who had been in the employ of a certain lord during the turbulent second half of the sixteenth century. In referring to this specific period, petitioners sought to use the heightened social ambiguities of the time of warfare and state-building to gain social advantage.

[58] *Ibid.*

Whilst the right to wear two swords was strictly limited and regulated under the established Tokugawa, during its early years and the preceding decades, law was less well defined and it was possible for almost anyone to assume the right.[59] To claim it over a century later thus shows awareness on the part of these rōnin of the potential for social advancement offered through the manipulation of prior social ambiguity.

A petition received by the Kyoto *machi bugyō* office in 1713 requested the right of *taitō* for five men. The petition had been signed by the headman and elders of Mibu village in Yamashiro province and was accompanied by detailed genealogies and support for the petition by the local temple. All five genealogies included a reference to an ancestor, either five of six generations earlier, who had been in the employ of an illustrious lord, such as Akechi Mitsuhide, the Ashikaga family, Rokkaku Yoshikata or Oda Nobunaga.[60] In addition, all genealogies showed that these ancestors had become "rōnin" after they served these men and had found their way to Mibu, where they had "been *gōshi* for generations."[61] Interestingly, in addition to showing the possibility of obtaining status privileges, this example also highlights the limits of such petitions. Though four of the petitioners were granted the right of *taitō*, one of them was denied it. This rejection was, however, not based on the family relations presented or the validity of the claim. Instead it was stated that as the man held a village office at the time of the application, it was impossible to grant him a right not afforded to commoners.[62] Though the other petitioners had also held high village offices prior, their current positions as rural elite left room for ambiguity. The position of village official left none such ambiguity. Status ambiguity

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[59] The long era of war preceding the establishment of the Tokugawa is often referred to as the era of *gekokujō* (low overthrowing the high) indicating the lack of fixed social positions during the era. Also see: Owaki Hidekatsu. "Gōshi taitō to gōshi kabu: Yamashiro kuni Mibu mura gōshi to gōshi Maegawa-ke no sōshutsu." *Chihō shi kenkyū*, Vol.65, No.6 (Dec. 2012), pp.43.
[60] *Ibid.* Pp.44.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] *Ibid.* Pp.45.

and management was therefore possible in the margins as long as it was not in open contradiction to official laws on status and position.

Other examples from Yamashiro show similar attempts to obtain the right to wear two swords. Here, however, there were more active attempts to 'massage' the records. Relations were not a given and, in many cases, ambiguous positions would need to be navigated during moments of inheritance. In these moments one could either lean on falsification or mediation. In case of the first, the family would either create false documents, or lie about the position of either the deceased or the heir.[63] When opting to mediate, conversely, the family would approach the authorities and make a case to be granted particular privileges or a particular position, often through influential interlocutors. Yet in most cases a combination of the two was brought to bear. One such negotiation, as shown in the work of Yoshida Yuriko, occurred when the family head of the Kawashima family of Kawashima village in Yamashiro province, Kawashima Sezaemon, passed his position to his heir Jingobei at the time of his death.[64] The Kawashima family had been longstanding local powerholders (*dogō*), but had been registered as rōnin after the establishment of the Tokugawa *bakufu* and Sezaemon's father had been a rōnin all his life. Sezaemon himself had been taken into the employ of Mizuno Katsutane, daimyo of Fukuyama domain, for a short time, but he soon returned to Kawashima village where he took the tonsure and was once again registered as rōnin.[65] Despite their rōnin position, however, it seems the Kawashima had been able to retain the right to wear two swords. This can be seen in a report filed in 1715 by the village elder of Kawashima village informing the *Kyoto bugyō* office of Sezaemon's death. The report was accompanied by a letter requesting that Jingobei be accepted

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[63] For example, see: Yamamoto Eiji. "Kinsei no nise bunsho, Takeda rōnin wo jirei ni." In, Hisano Toshihiko and Tokieda Tsutomu (eds.). *Nise bunsho-gaku nyūmon.* Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2004. Pp.79-93.
[64] Yoshida Yuriko. *Heinō bunri to chiiki shakai.* Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 2000. Pp.202-206.
[65] *Ibid.* Pp.202.

as heir and that he be granted the right to wear two swords. This formal request was required because, as a rōnin, Sezaemon's right to wear two swords would not automatically be conferred onto Jingobei. The request was supported by the head priest of the Enpuku temple, which was the family temple of the Kawashima family, and the privilege of wearing two swords was eventually granted to Jingobei.[66]

In 1720, however, a specific question as to the exact social position of Jingobei arose: namely, whether or not he was a rōnin or a *gōzamurai* (rural samurai). According to the *Kyoto bugyō* office, rōnin were those who had had personal experience with employment in a warrior household and were considered to be essentially *bushi*. On the other hand, *gōzamurai* were peasants who were temporarily granted to the privilege of wearing two swords and during this time provisionally not considered peasants.[67] Jingobei, therefore, would be considered a *gōzamurai* as he was granted the privilege of wearing two swords, but had never himself been employed by a lord. Yet, when in 1735 Jingobei officially appointed his son Sezaemon as his heir and requested that his privilege of wearing two swords be transferred to him, the official letter sent by Enpuku temple in support of his request referred to him as "Kawashima Jingobei, rōnin of lord Mizuno of Mimasaka."[68] In addition, in the village register of 1736 handed over to the authorities for the rōnin register, both Jingobei and his son Sezaemon are listed as rōnin. The importance of aesthetic markers of status, and the right to wear two swords in particular, led to varied attempts to obtain them and the ability to claim these rights could have significant social consequences, especially as such social labels tended to stick and take on hereditary properties as families sought to mobilize such positions for social advantage.

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[66] *Ibid.* Pp.204.

[67] The practice of temporarily granting *bushi* status was not uncommon during the Tokugawa period, see: Stewart, Daniel. "Temporary Samurai: Status and Service in Early Modern Japan." PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2003.

[68] Yoshida. *Heinō bunri,* 2000. Pp.206.

By regulating the ways in which people were allowed to dress and present themselves the *bakufu* sought to maintain aesthetic distinctions between various status groups. Sumptuary laws were therefore specifically designed to further dictate consumption patterns and aesthetic differences in attempts to curb spending. However, as such laws also worked to clarify aesthetic status markers, opposition to them stemmed from the fact that they inhibited people's manipulation of gray areas. For certain individuals, every newly instated law could represent a curb on the ways in which a position such as rōnin could be leveraged. As the various authorities sought to rationalize the position of rōnin, however, such issues were further problematized by the fact that the rōnin label, as evidenced above, moved beyond the individual and became hereditary. This not only forced the authorities to take this into consideration, but it also confronted women and children with the social and economic consequences of association with the rōnin label.

## Women, Children and the Hereditarization of the Rōnin Label

Looking at the ways in which rōnin were able to traverse the social realities of the Tokugawa period we are presented with an overwhelmingly individual and overwhelmingly male narrative. However, as highlighted throughout this work, many of these men were variously socially connected and had longstanding roots in particular areas. These attachments raise questions about the presumed individual nature of the rōnin label and force us to consider the ways in which it impacted on a wider circle of family members. Though for some the rōnin label rendered them undesirable marriage partners, the wide range of social positions encapsulated by the term meant that others indeed had families. The result of this was that numerous women and

children were similarly associated with the rōnin label, despite the fact that the appellation was supposedly applied to the individual rather than the family. As already highlighted in chapter 1, men identified as rōnin fighting for the Toyotomi brought their families to Osaka in such numbers that whole areas of the city were inhabited by them.[69] Yet even after this tumultuous period it is crucial to recognize that rōnin continued to live lives that involved women and children.

While the fact that rōnin attempted to set up families was not inherently problematic, these family members presented certain complications in relation to the rōnin label, its application and its meaning. As Tokugawa social ordering was based around the head of the household, generally the husband, status was conferred in relation to that of the head of the family. The problem for rōnin was that the label was, in theory, an individual one. This meant that although wives and children should not have been able to adopt the rōnin label, it was conferred onto them as they were assigned the status of their husband or father in Tokugawa law. Resultantly, they were often also confronted with the difficulties presented by the ambiguity of the rōnin label.

References to these rōnin family members appear in a number of sources, but this is often confined to the experiences of sons of rōnin through the increasingly hereditary nature of the rōnin label.[70] Looking at family registers from Takamatsu domain, it quickly becomes clear that the label not only became a hereditary one, but also that once it had been applied to a certain family it was difficult to fully erase. Abe Mototsugu from Ikenoe village, for example, became

[69] Tsuji Tatsuya. *Edo kaifu*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974. Pp.231.
[70] During the Tokugawa period this would generally mean conference of status onto the eldest son or another appointed heir, be they kin or adopted from outside of the kin group. This patrilineal and non-partible-inheritance-based stem family system was especially pronounced in warrior households. Status in this context was based around the identity of the head of the household. See: Drixler, Fabian. *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013. Pp.62; Yonemoto, Marcia. *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016. Pp.164-167.

rōnin after having held the position of *yoriki* (constable). His son, Jutarō, however, never held a stipended position, but was also registered as rōnin after the death of his father some two decades later.[71] Even clearer is the case of Yoshida Nagatomi who had been employed as domainal doctor in Takamatsu. During his career Nagatomi requested to be dismissed from his duties due to illness and was subsequently registered as rōnin, after which his descendants, without ever obtaining retainer positions, remained registered as rōnin in the village of Higashi-Ota for generations.[72] Similarly, Aoki Heisuke had been employed by the Ikoma lords of Takamatsu domain during the first decade of the seventeenth century, yet despite the fact that neither his son nor his grandson, Tadanoshin, had ever held a retainer position, the Aoki were still registered as rōnin during the Hōreki era (1655-1658).[73] This same trend can be seen to hold for numerous other families, once again indicating that the institutional parameters set for the application of the rōnin label, though held up in various edicts and laws, fell apart on a more local level as people attempted to retain their privileges and their potential for social advancement.

This process of hereditization was closely linked to attempts to integrate rōnin into socially understandable positions with the aim of promoting stability. As long as one's social position was understandable and part of the social hierarchy, the transferal of the label to future generations did not necessarily pose problems. However, although the label could be conferred to future male generations without a problem, it could create uncertainties when associated with women. Whereas the status of the head of the household was generally conferred onto female members of the family,[74] it is unclear how this worked in relation to the rōnin label. This is

[71] Urabe Hideaki (ed.). *Takamatsu-han hanshiroku.* Higashi Kagawa: Urabe Hideaki, 2011. Pp.4.
[72] *Ibid.* Pp.293; Inoue Kōsen (ed.). *Sanuki Matsudaira hanshi yuishoroku.* Takamatsu: Takamatsu Daigaku Shuppan, 2002. pp.350.
[73] Urabe. *Takamatsu-han hanshiroku.* 2011. Pp.1.
[74] Whilst this was generally the case, it could be complicated by the nature of the Japanese family system. See: Yonemoto, Marcia. *The Problem of Women in Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016. Pp.13-16.

especially hard to determine as most women are simply registered as 'woman,' 'wife' or 'daughter.' Even within socially understandable units, such as the household, it can therefore be difficult to determine the gendered aspects of the rōnin label. Due to this, it is often only during times of sudden status change that the stories of women come to the fore and that their experiences can be traced.

One of the most detailed example comes from the work of Amy Stanley, who presents the story of a rōnin wife named Tsuneno during the late Tokugawa period.[75] Tsuneno, Stanley shows, left her home in Echigo to find work in Edo and managed to secure a post as a maidservant. During her time in Edo she met a man named Izawa Hanzō and they married. Hanzō was, however, a rōnin and was resultantly often faced with unemployment and penury. This became such a problem that Tsuneno eventually decided to divorce Hanzō and returned to her parents' house in Echigo. Whilst Tsuneno was in Echigo, however, fortune favored Hanzō and he was able to obtain employment in the household of Tōyama Kagemote, an Edo city magistrate (*machi bugyō*). Having obtained this stable and important appointment, Hanzō wrote to Tsuneno informing her of his new position and inviting her to return to him in Edo. Hanzō's new position seems to have convinced Tsuneno of returning to Edo and the two later remarried.[76] As this particular woman's experience demonstrates, the ambiguity of the social position of rōnin could impact their wives in significant ways. However, what the example also shows is that marrying a rōnin presented the possibility of social advancement,[77] and that rōnin could use their social label's connections with *bushi* status to gain a certain advantage on the marriage market. Thus, the hazy nature of rōnin status could be employed as a source of leverage in marriage and

[75] Stanley, Amy. "Maidservants' Tales: Narrating Domestic and Global History in Eurasia, 1600-1900." *American Historical Review*, Vol. 121, No.2 (Apr. 2016), pp.437-460.
[76] *Ibid.* Pp.447.
[77] *Ibid.* Pp.445-446.

even if it did not necessarily confer any economic advantage, it could provide opportunities for future generations.

Whilst Tsuneno was able to return to her family in Echigo after her and Hanzō divorced, other women were not necessarily so lucky. For these women, the sudden rōnin status of their husbands could not be solved by 'transferring' to their fathers' household and their fate was far less clear, even on a judicial level. This confusion is evident in a letter sent by Katō Sezaemon, a retainer of Abe Masahisa, in 1849. The letter was addressed to a high *bakufu* official and asked for information on the proper procedures vis-à-vis the wives of discharged retainers. The reply shows both that the matter caused confusion and that the reliance of Tokugawa jurisprudence on precedent did not necessarily provide answers for the issue, even this late in the period.

> Concerning the married status of the wife in cases of the husband being punished by permanent discharge from service and banishment from [the city], as enquired about in your letter. It is clear that such penalties are not of the nature to affect the married status, so the wife should follow the husband in exile. However, even the Shogunal court, when it decrees such punishment on the husband, is usually silent as to the status of the wife. Whether or not she is returned to her native family is left to the dictate of the traditional custom of the lord's house, so that it is hardly possible for us to give a definite answer to your inquiry.[78]

This general omission of women from the judicial language of the time thus provided women such as Tsuneno with the opportunity to return to their "native family" and in this way avoid the insecurity of the rōnin experience, whilst for others it left them in a precarious position. However, the reply is also indicative of the general lack of attention paid to the ways in which these changes in status and position affected anyone other the rōnin themselves and their

[78] Wigmore. *Law and Justice in Tokugawa Japan: Part VIII-A*. 1982. Pp.36.

potential sons. The above letter once again highlights the fact that though the shogunate had instated general rulings on such matters, the details were to be left to more local authorities who were saddled with the task of creating legal and social ordering that could contain potential disturbance.

As the story of Tsuneno highlights, an appointment could make significant difference to the life of individual rōnin as well as their family and so it is no surprise that many rōnin sought ways to obtain a position in a retainer band. Many were therefore seeking employment at a time when hiring new retainers was often unattractive. As a result, domainal authorities put in place new hiring practices and procedures in order to standardize the process and avoid potentially unwanted rōnin from flocking to their domains.

## Employing Rōnin: Changing Ways of Hiring

Early in the 4th year of Meireki, 1658, a man called in on the residence of Matsudaira Nobutsuna, the daimyo of Kawagoe domain and a high-ranking *bakufu* official. The man, only described as a rōnin, had come in order to present a legal suit against Nobutsuna, much to the latter's astonishment.[79] A few months before, the Great Meireki Fire had swept through Edo destroying enormous parts of the mostly wooden city and claiming around 100,000 lives. During the fire, which had lasted for three days, the man now standing in front of the Matsudaira residence had been hired, along with others, to help extinguish the flames and save as much of the compound as possible. After this, he and his companions had been put to work to clear the rubble and rebuild the Matsudaira residence. However, after finishing this work, Nobutsuna had cut loose

[79] Yoshida Kōichi (ed.). *Chinōshō.* Tokyo: Kōten Bunko, 1988. Pp.404.

the men and dismissed them. In doing so, in the mind of the rōnin, Nobutsuna had forfeited his duties since the men had been hired in the position of a stipended retainer of the *yoriki* rank and were thus owed a fuller commitment on his part. After hearing the rōnin's complaints, according to Nobutsuna's account, he berated the man with a monologue on both the factual and moral failings of his claims, reminding him that he had provided the men with work during difficult times, despite their position, and that he had the families of those who perished in the flames to think about. He then stated that, sufficiently impressed by this scolding, the rōnin realized his impertinence and "became red-faced with shame."[80] Following the admonishment, the rōnin retreated from the house never returning to file the suit against Nobutsuna again. Although we can question the details of the account, as it was taken from the personal memoirs from Nobutsuna himself, it is indicative of an increasing dissonance between the expectations of lords and rōnin.

Adding to other issues influencing rōnin opportunities for re-employment was the fact that hiring by domainal authorities occurred increasingly in terms of short-term contracts. The preference for such contracts had become more common throughout Tokugawa society as long-term commitment in hiring someone could present financial problems for employers further down the line when large retainer bands became economic burdens. Hiring on short-term contracts also offered officials the opportunity to hire skilled men from non-*bushi* backgrounds to temporarily fulfil *bushi* positions without the long-term commitments that a full retainer appointment would entail. In doing so, these men were only temporarily elevated to the level of *bushi* for the length of their contract, albeit often on an aesthetic level alone.[81] For rōnin, this

[80] *Ibid.* Pp.206.
[81] Stewart, Daniel. *Temporary Samurai: Status and Service in Early Modern Japan.* PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003. Pp.28-29.

tendency towards short-term contracts made the possibility of obtaining a position that would guarantee retainer status to them and their heirs all the more challenging.

The difficulties brought on by the rise in short-term contracts were increased by the fact that, despite having 'solved' the 'rōnin problem' in the 1650s, the *bakufu* remained wary of rōnin. In its eyes they remained a threat, and moments of upheaval and uncertainty, such as the Great Meireki Fire, were therefore times to be extra vigilant and remove problematic elements related to rōnin. This was the case with the expulsion of Yamaga Sokō from Edo who, though other factors were also certainly at work,[82] was primarily exiled because the *bakufu* feared that he might stir unrest among rōnin in the capital and lead some to plot an uprising much like those in 1651.[83] This continued suspicion of the rebellious potential of rōnin, combined with broader concerns about the power of the various local lords, meant that domainal hiring of rōnin came under increasing scrutiny from the *bakufu*. These suspicions were widely known outside of the *bakufu* and the daimyo of Okayama domain, Ikeda Mitsumasa, mentioned in his diary that numerous daimyo were weary of hiring rōnin, not only because larger retainer bands could mean larger expenses, but also because, as demonstrated in chapter 2, it could raise the suspicion of the *bakufu*. However, Mitsumasa continued to point out that many daimyo were very keen on hiring individuals with particular talents, skills and pedigrees.[84] These two opposing influences, trepidation and enthusiasm, competed with one another making it difficult to draw generalized assumptions when it comes to hiring. In order to manage these two impulses, most domains set up guidelines for retainers in the hiring of rōnin, often stating that hiring had to be reported or

[82] Besides his relation to rōnin, Sokō was generally viewed as an iconoclast and involved in a number of scandals. For more on Yamaga Sokō, see: Uenaka Shuzo. "Last Testament in Exile: Yamaga Soko's Haisho Zampitsu." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.32, No.2 (Summer, 1977), pp.125-152.
[83] Nakayama Kyūshirō. *Yamaga Sokō.* Tokyo: Hokkai Shuppansha, 1937. Pp.63-65.
[84] Fujii Shun, Mizuno Kyōichirō, and Taniguchi Sumio (eds.). *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*. Meireki 3, 1st month, 20th day (1657). Okayama: Sanyō tosho shuppan, 1967. Pp.383-389.

that express permission had to be given by the daimyo.[85] The main changes seen within these guidelines during the seventeenth century were the regulation of the application process and the change to long-term hiring. These new practices, however, often reinforced the fact that certain rōnin were more likely to be hired and once again created internal division within those labelled rōnin.

Applications or petitions for employment to the various daimyo were, as shown in previous chapters, a common occurrence. However, despite the fact that attainders were still very much a part of the Tokugawa political world, large-scale changes became increasingly rare and moments of hiring large numbers of rōnin dwindled. In addition, as the Tokugawa period progressed, domainal lords were disincentivized to hire additional retainers. In order to deal with the growing number of petitions being submitted by desperate rōnin looking to gain employment, domains therefore often attempted to formalize the process and set up rules of conduct. Ikeda Mitsumasa already noted the increased number of petitions in 1644 and warned that many rōnin were using false letters of reference in their attempts to obtain employment.[86] In relation to those that were not forged he remarked; “I received petitions from various domains; from rōnin from Kishū and Fushimi, from a man from Tango called Yoemon, and one from a man called Kuranojō from Harima. I even received some from Hiroshima and Takamatsu.”[87] When looking closely at the large number of petitions Mitsumasa received, it becomes clear that there was a certain local character to the issues at hand, as all rōnin came from domains or provinces bordering on, or close to, Okayama. It therefore becomes clear that for these rōnin, like those discussed in chapter 4, there was an ‘alternate geography’ at play, which was neither simply domainal nor ‘national.’

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[85] See: Heki Ken (ed.). *Kaga-han shiryō, Vol.4.* Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 1980. Pp.25.
[86] Fujii et al. *Ikeda Mitsumasa Nikki,* 1967. Pp.71-72.
[87] *Ibid.* Pp.70-71.

Due to this influx of rōnin seeking employment there was therefore a need to standardize the application process. Though this manifested differently depending on domain, a number of practices were generally adopted. As highlighted in previous chapters, by subdividing rōnin into 'domestic' rōnin and 'foreign' rōnin it was possible to show favor to rōnin likely to have ties in the domain. Though aiming initiatives at 'domestic' rōnin could indeed be seen as a way to assuage discontent within the domain, this was, however, not simply an expression of benevolent rule. The reality behind such trends was equally influenced by a concern about potential *bakufu* scrutiny. As rōnin were generally identified through their place of origin, rōnin from a certain place misbehaving could reflect badly on domainal authorities. In 1770 the authorities of Tsuyama domain issued an order to be on the lookout for people pretending to be Tsuyama rōnin or even Tsuyama retainers, as they were causing discontent in villages by demanding money.[88] The division of rōnin between 'foreign' and 'domestic' therefore held a number of advantages and helped in the management of both employment petitions and rōnin more generally.

In addition to a general bias towards 'domestic' rōnin, there were also procedural changes that worked to curtail the number of petitions to be considered and at the same time favored certain, well-placed, rōnin. These changes can be seen in one of the clauses in the Ikeda laws for retainer households issued by Ikeda Mitsumasa.[89] The clause not only set out procedure for employment petitions, but also likely curbed the hiring of rōnin and dissuaded certain rōnin from coming to Okayama by stating that petitions would not be accepted from rōnin themselves. Instead, rōnin were required to find a sponsor or intermediary who would apply on their behalf.[90] When a rōnin came to present a petition for employment in 1640, for example, it was recorded

[88] "Goteishu." In, *Okayama-ken shi, 25 Tsuyama-han*. Pp.1122.
[89] Fujii et al. *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*, 1967. Pp.2.
[90] Suzuki Hisashi. "Hatamoto kehō ni tsuite: shiryōkan shojō banshū Ikeda ke monjo ni yoru chōsa." *Shiryōkan kenkyū kiyō,* Vol.2 (Mar. 1969), pp.1-58.

that "A rōnin from Akō came looking for employment, he presented a petition and his name is Kuranojō. [However] because he did not have anyone to be his sponsor he cannot be hired."[91] Another man submitted a petition in the same manner in 1655 and was equally rejected.[92] Whilst not explicitly stating local connection as a prerequisite for employment, these rejections show that rōnin were expected to have some degree of local ties since without them it would have been almost impossible to secure a sponsor for their application. This need to demonstrate, at least indirectly, pre-existing ties to Ikeda retainers would have been advantageous for 'domestic' rōnin, yet this mode of hiring also privileged those with influential social networks.

Another way of obtaining employment as a retainer in Okayama domain was to have the sponsorship of someone from another domain since rōnin could sometimes depend on the support of their former lords. In these cases, the petitions were submitted by the lords themselves and were often requests from a main family to a branch family. As it was typically hard for branch families to refuse such a request, they had a high chance of success. The Matsudaira of Takamatsu domain therefore hired the rōnin Naitō Jirōzaemon at the request of its main family branch in Mito in 1652 and, similarly, the Itakura of Kameyama domain hired the rōnin Akabori Gengoemon.[93] Such petitions were, however, not always between related families and there are many instances where highly placed individuals sponsored the applications of rōnin to a variety of other families. Though such requests were likely to be granted, there was no guarantee. One such petition came from Kanno Motokatsu in 1654 when he requested that Ikeda Mitsumasa enfeoff one of his relatives.[94] In response to this request, Mitsumasa stated that he would do so, but that from now on he would grant no more requests for rōnin reemployment by Motokatsu.

[91] Fujii et al. *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*, 1967. Pp.2.
[92] *Ibid.* Pp.322.
[93] Ujiie Makino (ed.). *Katakiuchi fukushū no sahō.* Tokyo: Sōshisha, 2013. Pp.140.
[94] Fujii et al. *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki,* 1967. Pp.235.

Similarly, he received a request from Arima Toyouji on the 9th day of the 3rd month of 1644 concerning the latter's nephew, the rōnin Sassa Kenzō. Toyouji's request was also granted and Kenzō was given a stipend of 300 *koku*.[95] However, when Mitsumasa received a request in 1642 from the Saka family to hire a man named Shinohara Gonemon, the request was turned down despite the sponsorship of a highly placed individual.[96] The reason for this given by Mitsumasa was that two years ago he had fulfilled a similar request by the Saka family and he therefore couldn't comply to a second from the same family. The warning to Kanno Motokatsu that such a request would only be granted once was thus not a hollow one.

It was therefore not simply one's skill that played a role in reemployment; social networks were equally, if not more, determining when it came to rehiring. Additionally, though general rules were put in place to curb the hiring of rōnin, requests for rehiring by important individuals could often override them. As much of this was determined by one's position before becoming rōnin, those who had been higher on the social ladder during their time as retainer often had more to gain from working within acceptable rules than those who had started with less. This increasing marginalization of certain rōnin created further rifts and made a shared experience all but impossible. However, even those lucky enough to be rehired were often placed in lower retainer positions with lower stipends than they had previously. A low-level officer such as Murakami Kyūzaemon, who was hired in Okayama in 1647 and granted 500 *koku* and the command of 20 gunners as a captain (*monogashira*), could count himself lucky as many rōnin of his time were not rehired for more than 200 to 300 *koku*.[97] Especially as the Tokugawa period progressed, newly hired retainers were often placed in lower positions. In Takamatsu domain, for example, the majority of newly hired rōnin, such as Ikeda Chinosuke and Nagayama Kōzō, were

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[95] *Ibid.* Pp.56.
[96] *Ibid.* Pp.37.
[97] *Ibid.* Pp.96-97.

given the position of *kachi* (foot-soldier of low *bushi* rank),[98] which placed them at the very bottom of internal *bushi* hierarchy. This trend is pointed out in the works of Kōzō Yamamura, who has shown that in the later part of the Tokugawa period it became less attractive to be a retainer to a daimyo since daimyo were increasingly unable to offer competitive wages.[99] Though retainers of the *bakufu* were able to keep up their wages due to *bakufu* aid, the wages of daimyo retainers could fall sharply as domains faced financial issues. This often happened due to the fact that daimyo "borrowed" from their retainers' stipends to fill domainal financial shortcomings.[100] For rōnin this meant that it could be more advantageous to look for income elsewhere, instead of seeking reemployment in a retainer band.[101] Despite this trend many rōnin continued to look for rehiring in retainer bands as for many of them a link to the *bushi* status provided the possibility of social advancement despite its 'diminishing returns' in monetary value.

## Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the administrative and legal ways in which domains sought to insert rōnin into socially understandable and acceptable positions. This process took numerous forms, but the general approach was to impose a sense of governability. The nodular character of Tokugawa society could, however, throw up impediments to these attempts as areas of jurisdiction were contested. At the same time, the continuing ambiguity in the way rōnin were

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[98] Urabe. *Takamatsu-han hanshiroku,* 2011. Pp.19; Inoue Kōsen (ed.). *Sanuki Matsudaira hanshi yuishoroku.* Takamatsu: Takamatsu daigaku shuppan, 2002. Pp.237.
[99] Yamamura Kōzō. "A Study of Samurai Income and Entrepreneurship." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.
[100] *Ibid.* Pp.131-133.
[101] Hanley, Susan. "Everyday Things in Premodern Japan." London: University of California Press, 1997. Pp.17.

understood could lead to creative interaction with the term by both the authorities and those to whom it was applied.

Though the codified image of rōnin that had crystalized by the 1650s still held, many domains were aware that this did not always correspond with reality. In order to deal with this more ambiguous population, domains therefore attempted to come up with more persistent social policy in order to govern this population and make them socially understandable. The centrally issued edicts on what to do with rōnin were enacted in theory, but beyond this tacit show of obeisance domains had to assess their own issues and respond to them. The majority of these domainal attempts at reintegration and reengagement of rōnin did not, however, solve the issue of the multifaceted and ambiguous reality of the rōnin label. In part, this was because clear delineation was not necessary, nor, in the case of many rōnin, wanted. The few attempts outlined in this chapter to define or bracket the rōnin label, be it directly or indirectly, were met with opposition from a number of sides. Sumptuary laws aimed at more defined aesthetic representation met with criticism from rōnin themselves but other initiatives, such as the creation of a *rōnin bugyō*, met with fierce opposition from non-rōnin. The rōnin label was so intertwined with multiple jurisdictions and privileges that it was almost impossible to impose rules that were all-encompassing.

Despite the outward creation of a popular and institutional understanding of rōnin, the ambiguity of the label continued to have a significant influence on the way in which people interacted with it. This ambiguity is represented in the legal reactions to rōnin and highlights the inability of the authorities to create legal procedure in line with its broad definition of rōnin. The creation of edicts, laws and procedures aimed at the regulation and management of the rōnin population highlighted and intensified the internal divisions that ran through those labelled

'rōnin.' As laws were unable to encompass the population as a whole they were instead created for, or aimed at, particular subsets. The result of this was that they not only created in-groups, but also out-groups, which would be a constituent of and conform to ideas popularly associated with rōnin such as 'foreignness,' 'transience' or 'un-connectedness.' Though the exact configuration of accepted rōnin groups varied from domain to domain, all were constructed around the idea of other, 'unacceptable' rōnin. The following chapter will therefore explore the ways in which those who most closely aligned with this category of the 'unacceptable' rōnin sought to get by in a social environment where many of them were increasingly marginalized.

# Chapter 6

## *Being 'Bad'*

In his *Teijō zakki*, written between 1763 and 1784, Ise Sadatake describes rōnin as "vagrant men who are without a lord and who have neither tax or corvée duties, nor are registered."[1] Earlier in his *Buke chōhōki*, Namura Jōhaku had put it more succinctly when he stated that rōnin were "vagrant people."[2] He further explained, however, that the word 'rōnin' could be written in a number of ways, noting that beyond the use of the character for 'wave' (*nami*), "it can also be written with more shameful characters."[3] This sense of shamefulness is echoed in Nakamura Tekisai's *Kinmō zui* of 1695.[4] In all these descriptions, which overlap in their focus with many edicts and laws issued by the authorities, rōnin are therefore presented as wandering or vagrant men (*rurō suru hito)* who are somehow unwanted.

Attempts at regulation by the Tokugawa *bakufu* and the various domains led, as shown in the previous chapter, to a variety of initiatives at incorporating rōnin into understandable social units in an attempt to assuage rōnin violence and stave off movement. In Satsuma domain for example, rōnin were allowed to marry into *gōshi* families provided this took place within their

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[1] Ise Sadatake. *Teijō zakki, 2(1).* [unpaginated] NDL Digital Database 210.09-I521t (3).
[2] Namura Jōhaku. *Buke chōhōki.* [unpaginated] NDL Digital Database 840-50.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Nakamura Tekisai. *Kashiragaki zōho kinmō zui, Vol.3.* [unpaginated] NDL Digital Database 特 1-1940.

district.[5] This encouraged 'domestic' rōnin to further establish their roots and prevented them from moving around in search of better marriage prospects. Such attempts to 'place' rōnin, however, were not always successful and certain rōnin actively pushed the blurred lines of their position in order to find opportunities for advancement. In conjunction with ideas of rōnin as disruptive and potentially violent, unregulated movement was therefore the main focus for the internal distinctions between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' within the rōnin label as something that could circumvent institutional control and challenge social stability.[6]

What this chapter highlights, however, is that even when transient and associated with violence, rōnin were contextually interpreted and assessed. Whilst the general distinction between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' pervaded all mention of the term rōnin, these two distinctions were themselves not monolithic. Whereas the 'acceptable' rōnin have been shown to manifest in numerous ways in previous chapters, the two main characteristics of 'unacceptable' rōnin, movement and violence, were equally contextually interpreted. The differences between the highly-placed 'gentlemen rōnin' confirming to ideals of artistic and/or religious movement were not considered in the same terms as those on the move due to more 'mundane' or 'vulgar' issues such as income or livelihood. This was in part due to the fact that the nature of the Tokugawa social environment was, as earlier discussed, more varied and open-ended than is often fully appreciated. Though variance in official designation and social reality is present in any society, the way power was projected and distributed meant that the societal 'messiness' incorporated as part of the Tokugawa social environment, and did not subtract from the nature of

[5] Haraguchi, Torao et al. (eds.). *The Status System and Social Organization of Satsuma: A Translation of the Shūmon Tefuda Aratame Jōmoku.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1975. Pp.74-75.

[6] Much of the social stability of the Tokugawa polity was based around the ways in which the state attempted to restrict and manage movement. For examples, see: Vaporis, Constantine. *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, 1994. For the management of travel by women, see: Nenzi, Laura. *Intersections: The Place of Recreational Travel in Edo Culture and Society.* PhD Dissertation, University of California Santa Barbara, 2004; Nenzi, Laura. *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

the polity and, many ways, it was an integral element of the Tokugawa state. Though, as discussed by Luke Roberts, the Tokugawa state was outwardly harsh in its interaction with ambiguous elements, room for discrepancies was given as long as the appearance of accordance was upheld.[7] This resulted in a system in which individuals could exist as outliers as long as their units of social ordering conformed to central ideas.

As demonstrated in chapter 1, the pre-Tokugawa history of the term rōnin largely formed around ideas of non-controlled movement and this focus was mirrored in its Tokugawa incarnations. Despite the myriad of characteristics that separate the concept of a 'Tokugawa rōnin' from its predecessors, the idea of movement remained a consistent part of its interpretation. Such movement was often temporary and most of the time overshadowed by periods of, at least geographical, stasis. For some rōnin, however, geographical stasis was either impossible or unwanted. For these men, as the opportunities offered by social reintegration were unavailable, movement offered a vital means of economic and social survival in spite of the fact that, in certain contexts, this came with the risk of being charged with vagrancy and facing official action.[8] Although official preoccupation with rōnin as 'free radicals' tended to overemphasize this movement as a distinctive feature of the population as a whole, the interpretation of rōnin movement was in actual fact greatly dependent on personal circumstances, time, and place.

Uncontrolled movement was not only an issue for the Japanese early modern state and descriptions of the ills inflicted on society by those in violation of vagrancy laws and injunctions are unsurprisingly consistent, whether one is looking at Japan, Britain, Russia or anywhere else

[7] Roberts, Luke. *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp.5-8.

[8] Vagrancy, begging and itinerancy were prevalent in Tokugawa Japan, though much of it was regulated. For a fantastic in-depth study on this topic see: Ehlers, Maren. *Give and Take: Poverty and the Status Order in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018.

during this period.[9] Lists describing the dangers presented by 'vagrant' populations seem identical; soldiers were trained in violence, beggars spread impurity,[10] street performers gathered crowds and hawkers overstepped guild control.[11] Works on vagrancy in Europe link clearly to the rōnin condition as described in the majority of works on Tokugawa history and, indeed, when holding to the translation of 'masterless samurai' it is hard not to draw broad parallels based around vagrancy, especially in the light of influential titles on the topic such as A.L. Beier's *Masterless Men*.[12] This is further reinforced by the fact that 'vagrancy' as an offense is typically not one defined through action but is instead dependent on a state of being since, "individuals merely need to exhibit the characteristics or stereotypes of vagrants for authorities."[13] The variety inherent within the term of vagrancy in both historical and contemporary legal terms is also what makes it useful as a "broad, overarching mechanism to control and punish a selective group of people."[14] A concern with vagrancy was therefore directly related to the ascendency of central control. Though, in the case of Tokugawa Japan, vagrancy was far from confined to rōnin, the inherent broadness of the concept made it effective in dealing with a particularly amorphous population.

By focusing on ideas of movement and violence, this chapter will show that even within the group of people seen to have conformed to the stereotype of a rōnin, subdivisions were present. Therefore, though the previous chapters have shown that most rōnin sought reintegration

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[9] Slack, Paul. "Vagrants and Vagrancy in England,1598-1664." In, *Economic History Review,* Vol.27, No.3 (Aug. 1974). Pp.360-362.
[10] This impurity could take a number of forms. In Europe it was generally interpreted as disease. In Japan beggars were often linked with the concept of pollution (*kegare*), yet even when these charges were disputed, they tended to be associated with moral impurity. Ehlers, *Give and Take*, 2018. Pp.83-84.
[11] Slack. "Vagrants and Vagrancy in England,1598-1664," 1974. Pp.363.
[12] Beier, A.L. *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640.* London: Methuen, 1985.
[13] Ocobock, Paul. "Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective." In, Beier, A.L. and Ocobock, Paul (eds.). *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective.* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009. Pp.1.
[14] *Ibid.*

into Tokugawa society and wished to simply make a living for themselves, this does not mean that the more traditional view of rōnin as 'drifters,' 'vagabonds' and 'scoundrels' was a simple fabrication. Some rōnin did indeed not reintegrate, and either sought out or were forced to turn to more socially unacceptable ways of getting by. This led many of them to attempt to circumvent Tokugawa social parameters, be it through fighting against them or by removing them entirely. In doing so they were responding to social circumstance, time and resources, not simply acting in politically or ideologically reactive ways. It was this relatively small group of men, the ones who did not conform to ideas of the 'acceptable' rōnin, who became a key determinant for the characterization of late Tokugawa rōnin as "wandering the countryside alone or in groups, causing disruption and conflict."[15]

## Waves of Opportunity: Beyond the Tokugawa State

Throughout this work the close interconnection between an institutional, negativized conception of rōnin and the Tokugawa state has been shown. It is therefore unsurprising that some rōnin sought to extract themselves from the Tokugawa social context in order to remove the label and its attendant negative effects. There are numerous references to rōnin going abroad in search for employment and a new life, yet these need to be approached with caution. Firstly, such references are often based around partial, stereotyped understandings of rōnin and therefore focus on those who left due to ideological conviction such as the Christian daimyo Takayama Ukon who emigrated to the Philippines with a number of his retainers.[16] Secondly, as the social label effectively loses all meaning outside of the Tokugawa social sphere it is difficult to track

[15] Kurita, Mototsugu. *Edo jidai shi, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha,1928. Pp.312.

[16] For more on Takayama Ukon and his time in Manilla, see: Ebisawa Arimichi. *Takayama Ukon.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1958. Pp.204-233.

any given individual's position as rōnin, especially in a time when many claimed relations to *bushi* ancestors if possible. Lastly, the opportunity to go abroad was not open to all and the dangers inherent in such an undertaking were great. In spite of these challenges, however, by tracing rōnin who took advantage of chances to go abroad it is possible to complicate assumptions around 'unacceptable' movement. Although some rōnin creatively sought to make the best of their position within the Tokugawa system, others chose to extract themselves from this context in which their social label could have a negative impact on their opportunities. Although these stories can be elusive, they are an important part of the broader narrative of rōnin experience that are not so dissimilar to those of rōnin who moved throughout the Japanese archipelago.

Early on in the Tokugawa period there were a variety of ways in which to redirect one's skills and attempt find employment. One of the ways in which this was possible was through the commercial networks which extended far beyond the Japanese archipelago, and despite the limitations on foreign interaction, this never meant a full disentanglement from these networks.[17] In considering these networks, such as those around East and Southeast Asia during the first decades of the Tokugawa era, it is important to not simply envision them as routes for the exchange of goods, but as conduits for the exchange of ideas, culture and experiences, as well as physical capital. That is to say, it is impossible to understand trade without understanding the people who trade themselves, be it in goods or labor. Especially since Japanese domestic issues had a profound effect on who travelled these networks, what they ended up doing and why they

[17] Much has been written on Japan as a 'closed country' (*sakoku*) during the Tokugawa period. Though the general view of Tokugawa Japan as 'closed' still persists, much work has been done to show the intimate international links between Tokugawa Japan and the wider world. For an excellent discussion of this issue, see: Toby, Ronald. "Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimization of the Tokugawa Bakufu." *The Journal of Japanese Studies,* Vol.2, No.2 (Summer, 1977), pp.323-363; Arano Yasunori. "The Entrenchment of the Concept of 'National Seclusion.'" *Acta Asiatica*, Vol.67 (1999), pp.85-103.

travelled them.[18]

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Japan was heavily involved in trade in both East and Southeast Asia. Individual merchants or domain merchants sometimes conducted this trade, but increasingly, as the 'unifiers' extended their power across the archipelago, the focus came to be on trade conducted by vessels issued with an officially sanctioned red seal (*shuinsen*). Katō Eiichi estimates that between 1604 and 1635, 356 vessels traded in the red seal trade in Southeast Asia alone.[19] However, not all trade was done within the confines of this system and it is difficult to get a full grasp on the number of vessels leaving Japan at any point. The increase in trade resulted in an increase in the number of Japanese attempting to profit from it and the creation of trading posts abroad, which slowly expanded into towns mainly inhabited by Japanese (*nihon-machi*). Research by Iwao Seiichi shows the large number of *nihon-machi* spread throughout Southeast Asia around 1600.[20] These *nihon-machi* were often set up by Japanese merchants in order to initiate trade and as a result the focus of research into these far-flung Japanese settlements has often been on their merchant communities with merchants such as Suetsugu Kōzen figuring prominently. Merchants like him were able, through their familial, trading and official connections, to partake of the lucrative red seal trade of the time. Through the use of the connections open to him, Kōzen, for example, was able to set up a lucrative trading network spanning Vietnam, Taiwan, Luzon and Siam.[21] However, as the ships used by merchants such as Kōzen set off, they took with them more than trade goods and, as a result, hundreds of rōnin left Japan during this time in search of employment in these foreign

[18] Tsuji Zennosuke. *Kaigai kōtsū shiwa.* Tokyo: Naigaisho Kabushiki Kaisha, 1942. Pp.636.
[19] Katō Eiichi. "The Japanese-Dutch Trade in the Formative Period of the Seclusion Policy, Particularly on the Raw Silk Trade by the Dutch Factory at Hirado, 1626-1640." *Acta Asiatica*, Vol.30 (1976), pp.48.
[20] Iwao Seiichi, *Zoku nanyō nihon machi kenkyū.* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987.
[21] Tran Quoc Vuong and Nguyen Vinh Long. *Hanoi: From the Origins to the 19th Century*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977. Pp.87-91.

settlements.[22]

One of the employment opportunities open was to work directly in the trade or on trading ships since merchants were often looking for men willing to work their junks. This, combined with the Dutch and English looking for men in Nagasaki and Hirado, and in other foreign ports, created an appealing employment opportunity for rōnin. Not only was there the option of the seafaring trade but foreign powers were often also actively looking for mercenaries and we therefore find Japanese fighting men in Portuguese employment in the Melaka garrison, in Dutch employ in Amboyna, Thai employ in Ayutthaya and in many other places.[23] Others joined naval bands which were active in Southeast Asian seas and along the Chinese coast for much of the period.[24] Though these bands were made up from people from a number of places, they were so associated with the Japanese that they were often referred to as Japanese 'pirates' (*wakō*).[25] Some of these men even attempted to establish their own settlements, such as, for example, a group under the leadership of a man called "Tayfusa" who travelled to Cagayan in Northern Luzon[26] where they temporarily established a small settlement.[27]

Though it is difficult to trace the origins of these people, descriptions of them, more commonly provided by Western observers, indicate that many of them likely came from warrior

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[22] Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. Pp.74.

[23] Ishizawa Yoshiaki. "Les Quartiers Japonais dans l'Asie du Sud-Est an XVIIème siecle." In, Nguyen The Anh and Forest Alain (eds.). *Guerre et Paix en Asie du Sud-Est.* Paris: Harmatton, 1998. Pp.88; Ribeiro, Madalena. "The Japanese Diaspora in the Seventeenth Century: According to Jesuit Sources." *Bulletin of Portuguese Japanese Studies,* Vol.3 (Dec. 2001), pp.55,75; Iwao Seiichi. "Renreibo wo tsūjite mitaru Batabia no nihonjin." *Tōhōgaku,* No.1 (Mar. 1951), pp.76-94.

[24] Shapinksy, Peter. *Lords of the Sea: Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2014. Pp.25-28.

[25] Xing Hang. "Between Trade and Legitimacy, Maritime and Continent: The Zheng Organization in Seventeenth-Century East Asia." PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2010. Pp.40; Shapinsky, Peter. *Lords of the Sea: Pirates Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan.* Ann Arbor, MI: Centre for Japanese Studies Publications University of Michigan, 2014.

[26] Luzon is now part of the Philippines. During the time it was claimed by the Spanish.

[27] Gil, Juan. *Hidalgos y Samurais, España y Japon en los Siglos XVI y XVII.* Madrid: Alianza, 1991. Pp.24-25; Reed, Robert. *Colonial Manila: The Context of Hispanic Urbanism and the Process of Morphogenesis.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978. Pp.53n.8

backgrounds.[28] The most famous case of this comes from the written works of Jeremias van Vliet who was a Dutch officer in the Dutch East India Company (VOC) stationed in the city of Ayutthaya in modern day Thailand. Though much of van Vliet's description is focused on Yamada Nagamasa, a Japanese man who managed to obtain high rank in Siamese political circles, he also describes other Japanese inhabitants. He noted that the Japanese traders in Siam were mainly interested in the trade of deerskin, ray-skin and Sappan wood, and that the Japanese population and the *nihon-machi* in Ayutthaya grew rapidly.[29] However, he also notes the presence of 70 to 80 Japanese warriors who had a prominent role in the army of the Siamese king. They stood out through their "costly clothing, manly dignity and wondrous weapons,"[30] and were described as "carrying two weapons."[31] Less flattering was his description of them as "bald-headed rogues" (*kale booswichten*).[32] The negative overtone in this particular description was aimed at a large group of Japanese who were mostly mercenaries who aided in a coup in Siam in 1629 led by the Head of the Japanese village in Ayutthaya, Yamada Nagamasa.[33] Thus, van Vliet's description of these and other men indicates that they were most likely rōnin before travelling abroad. Yet it wasn't just in Siam that Japanese were described in these terms. Antonio de Morga, a Spanish official in the Philippines, described them in almost identical terms: "They go around bareheaded and shave the top of their heads as far back as the crown. Their back-hair

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[28] The difficulty here once again being the fact that the idea of a separate and recognizable *bushi* class was still forming during this period.
[29] Van Vliet, Jeremias. *Beschryving van het Koninkryk Siam.* Leiden: Frederick Haaring, 1692. Pp.90.
[30] *Ibid.* Pp. 19-20,24.
[31] Van Vliet, Jeremias. *Historiael Verhael der Sieckte ende Doot van Pra Interra Tsia 22en Coninck in Siam & den Regherende Pra Onghsry.* Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1956. Pp.56.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] Yamada Nagamasa had been given an official role in the Ayutthaya state apparatus by King Songtham. After Songtham's death, Nagamasa became involved in a succession dispute between Songtham's sons and the future king, Prasat Thong. Van Vliet's negative description of the Japanese was further reinforced by the fact that earlier, in 1612, Japanese soldiers had also been involved in an attack on the palace in Ayutthaya where they kidnapped the then new king Songtham in addition to getting away with "great treasur, using muche violence." Baker, Chris and Phongpaichit, Pasuk. *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam and the Early Modern World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp.123-124.

is long and fastened upon the skull in a graceful knot. They carry their swords (*cattans*) large and small at the belt."[34] The details provided in these descriptions conjure images of *bushi* in Japan; wearing two swords, having a topknot etc. It is therefore highly likely that these men had held *bushi* status at some point, after which they had left Japan as rōnin in search for opportunities abroad. By paying attention to such descriptions, it becomes clear that rōnin appear throughout East and Southeast Asia, and possibly even as far away as Guadalajara in Mexico,[35] in their attempt to avoid unemployment back home by integrating themselves into expanding commercial networks.

Access to these foreign opportunities was, however, centered in Kyūshū and as a result the option of seeking employment abroad was mostly limited to those originally from that area. As was the case with employment opportunities within Japan itself, opportunities for employment beyond the Japanese archipelago similarly worked as local 'gravity wells,' drawing in men from bounded local areas. Harbors therefore acted in the same way as did mines, reclaimed fields, and cities by creating locally based centers of opportunity. Although it is often difficult to ascertain the places of origin of those who went abroad, there are indeed indications that most of these were from Kyūshū. A Dutch letter concerning the Amboyna incident lists 11 names of Japanese men hired to serve in the VOC forces at Amboyna who had been arrested.[36]

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[34] De Morga, Antonio. *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas. Dirigido a Don Cristoval Gomez de Sandoual y Rojas, Duque de Cea*. Mexico: Casa de Geronymo Balli, por Cornelio Adriano Cesar, 1609. Pp.246.

[35] Hayashiya, Eikichi. "Los Japoneses que se Quedaron en México en el Siglo XVII. Acerca de un Samurai en Guadalajara." *México la Cuenca del Pacífico*, Vol.6, No.18 (Jan-Apr. 2003), pp.11.

[36] The Amboyna incident, also known as the Amboyna massacre was the result of the rivalry between Dutch and British interests in the clove producing island of Ambon (Maluku). In 1623, the VOC executed a number of men they suspected of plotting to take over the island for the British, amongst whom 11 were Japanese who were in the employ of the VOC. It was alleged that these men had been persuaded by the British to support them. See: Clulow, Adam. "Cruel, Unjust and Barbarous Proceedings: Japanese Mercenaries and the Amboyna Incident of 1623." *Itinerario*, Vol.31, No.1 (2007), pp.15-34.

Of these 11, all are listed as having come from Kyūshū.[37] Similarly, the registers of baptized Japanese in Batavia show that out of the 113 listed more than half came from Kyūshū.[38] It is likely, however, that this percentage is even higher as the origins of 39 of the listed Japanese were unknown. These types of documents therefore show that the opportunity to go abroad and find employment was likely far easier for those who lived near harbors such as Nagasaki or Mogi, or near foreign settlements such as at Hirado. Such places therefore acted in much the same way as other areas of opportunity throughout Japan, and the possibilities provided by foreign travel should therefore not be seen as an exception, but as one permutation of the many ways in which rōnin sought to improve their social situation.

In addition to those seeking employment, some of the Japanese heading abroad during this time were Christians, many of whom fled the country due to religious persecution. Whilst many in Japan had renounced their newly found faith, or had gone underground, daimyo such as Takayama Ukon and Konishi Yukinaga had refused to do so. Yukinaga was executed after the battle of Sekigahara, but Ukon instead fled the country with his followers in 1614 as a rōnin and settled in the Japanese village (*nihon-machi*) in Manila. Other Japanese Christians also travelled to places such as Phnom Penh where, in 1618, a Japanese Church was established,[39] and Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) where, as mentioned above, a number of them were entered into baptism registries (*Doopboek*).[40] In the current body of literature these people have been looked at as Christians first and foremost and as a result have been separated from the rōnin experience.[41]

[37] *Copie Autentycq van de Confessien ende Sententien van Mr. Tourson and Complicen voor de Moordadige Conspiratie op 't Casteel Amboyna*. [unpaginated] VOC, 1080. Nationaal Archief, The Hague, the Netherlands.
[38] Iwao Seiichi. "Renreibo wo tsūjite mitaru Batabia no nihonjin." *Tōhōgaku,* No.1 (Mar. 1951), pp.76-94.
[39] Iwao Seiichi. "Early Japanese Activities in Indo-China," in Nihon Gaiji Kyōkai (eds.). *Contemporary Japan: A Review of Far Eastern Affairs, Vol.10.* Tokyo: Foreign Affairs Association of Japan, 1941. Pp.627.
[40] Iwao Seiichi. "Renreibo wo tsūjite mitaru Batabia no nihonjin." *Tōhōgaku,* No.1 (Mar. 1951), pp.76-94.
[41] This focus is especially pronounced in early Western scholarship on the topic. Ellison, George. *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973; Boxer, Charles, R. *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650.* London: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1993.

However, their position as rōnin, combined with their Christian identity, presented them with a particular situation which led them to take advantage of the same opportunities and travel along the same routes as other Japanese venturing abroad. For many it was ultimately their rōnin identity, rather than their Christian identity, which they were able to leverage in order to obtain reemployment in their new homes.

Whilst many ventured abroad during the early decades of the seventeenth century, as the Tokugawa state consolidated its power, foreign avenues of opportunity were slowly restricted. As worries about foreign interference and problems with Japanese abroad increased, the *bakufu* issued edicts limiting the ability of rōnin to venture abroad, such as the February 1621 *bakufu* restriction on the use of Japanese mercenaries and the 1635 restrictions on trade and travel. Despite these trends towards controlled foreign interaction, however, there were at least two instances when the *bakufu* itself contemplated foreign intervention; an invasion of the Philippines in 1636 and military aid to Ming supporters in China in 1646. Revealingly, on both occasions, plans were put forward that relied on a large number of rōnin, thereby presenting opportunities for the literal removal of the 'rōnin problem' from Japanese soil. Though they never materialized, these two proposals for foreign interventions were compatible with both the period's broader approach to foreign relations and the desire to expel a troublesome population.

The provenance of the first plan to invade what is now the Philippines is unclear and different reasons have been proposed. Some, have suggested that the planned attack was a retaliation for an attack on a Japanese ship by the Spanish in the previous year.[42] Though possible, it seems unlikely this would have resulted in a full-scale invasion as the *bakufu*

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[42] Blair, Emma and Robertson, James (eds.). *The Philippine Islands, Vol.27.* pp.229-230.

increasingly distanced itself from issues concerning Japanese abroad.[43] Another reason is put forward by Yamamoto Hirofumi who posits that the plan did not originate in Edo, but was instead concocted by officials in Nagasaki who were out for profit.[44] These officials supposedly did so to curry favor with their superiors and were spurred on by the fact that earlier such invasions had been discussed in the highest echelons of government. In 1616 the *bakufu* itself had been in discussion with two Englishmen, Richard Cocks and William Adams, who directed the *bakufu*'s attention to the badly defended Spanish colonies in the Philippines.[45] By invading these, it was suggested, it was not only possible to extend influence but also to remove the Spanish from the Japanese backyard, something that must have been an attractive prospect for both parties as the Spanish formed the main thrust behind the Christian influence in Japan and attacking their colony would be in line with fierce anti-Catholic sentiments of many English at the time.[46] This plan was, however, never enacted. In 1630 the daimyo Matsukura Shigemasa also forwarded plans to invade the Philippines which eventually came to nothing.[47] When discussing their plans for an invasion six years later in 1636, the Nagasaki officials turned to the VOC for support and proposed that an invasion force of 10,000 rōnin should be assembled.[48] These men would be easier to muster and would be an expendable force who could be dispatched without undermining the political status quo. Though it is unlikely that these plans would have

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[43] In letters to foreign potentates, Tokugawa Ieyasu "publicly renounced any claim to legal authority over [Tokugawa subjects], and insisted that all offenders should be dealt with according to local law." Clulow, Adam. "Like Lambs in Japan and Devils outside Their Land: Diplomacy, Violence, and Japanese Merchants in Southeast Asia." *Journal of World History*, Vol.24, No.2 (Jun. 2013), pp.337.

[44] Yamamoto Hirofumi. *Kanei jidai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 1989. pp.54-55.

[45] Thompson, Edward (ed.). *Diary of Richard Cocks, Cape-Merchant in the English Factory in Japan, 1615-1622: With Correspondence, Vol.1*. London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1883. Pp.256-257.

[46] Screech, Timon. "The English and the Control of Christianity in the Early Edo Period." *Japan Review*, No.24 (2012), pp.3-40.

[47] Iwao Seiichi. "Matsukura Shigemasa no Ruzon-tō ensei keikaku." *Shigaku Zasshi*, Vol.45, No.9 (1934), pp.81–109.

[48] Yamamoto Hirofumi. *Kanei jidai.* Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 1989. Pp.56.

been eventually realized, they were fully shelved when the *bakufu* was forced to turn its attention to domestic issues in the form of the Shimabara Rebellion.

Ten years later, a second opportunity for foreign intervention arose after the Tokugawa received a number of requests for aid from Chinese Ming loyalists. The Ming had been invaded by Manchu from the north and by 1644 they had conquered most of Northern China and turned their attentions south towards the remnants of the Ming empire.[49] In their search for help against the Manchu invaders, one of the Ming loyalists and head of the influential and powerful "Zheng organization," Zheng Zhilong, sent numerous letters to Japan.[50] In the 8th month of 1646 one of the many requests for help arrived from the Zheng and the issue was seriously discussed by Iemitsu and his highest councilors.[51] Though consensus was hard to reach, plans were eventually drawn up and it was agreed upon that a number of daimyo would be required to supply troops in addition to the fact that one of the main units would be made up out of 10,000 rōnin.[52] Once again rōnin appear to be looked upon as a dispensable population whose deployment abroad could once again be advantageous on two fronts: preventing Tokugawa vulnerability at home and removing a potentially problematic population. As with the planned invasion of the Philippines, the plan to aid the Ming loyalists was not enacted as the Ming Longwu emperor passed away and the Zheng and the Manchus came to an agreement. Invading after this turn of events would have left Japan without its Zheng allies and as a result it was decided that Japan

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[49] Struve, Lynn. *The Southern Ming, 1644-1662.* New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1984; Rowe, William. *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. Pp.13-27.

[50] The reason Zheng Zhilong turned to Japan was largely due to the fact that he had links to Japan through earlier trade and was married to a Japanese woman named Tagawa Matsu. For an in-depth analysis of Zheng Zhilong and the powerful Zheng maritime trade organization, see: Xing Hang. *Conflict and Commerce in maritime East Asia: The Zheng Family and the Shaping of the Modern World, c. 1620-1720.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

[51] Carioti, Patrizia. "The Zheng Regime and the Tokugawa Bakufu: Asking for Foreign Intervention." In, Andrade, Antonio and Hang Xing (eds.). *Sea Rovers, Silver and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550-1700.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. Pp.164-165.

[52] Kimiya Yasuhiko. *Nichika bunka kōtsū shi.* Tokyo: Toyamabō, 1955. Pp.642; Ishihara Michihiro. *Minmatsu shinsho nihon kisshi no kenkyū.* Tokyo: Toyamabō, 1946. Pp.80-87.

would not interfere in continental issues.[53] These two aborted plans demonstrate is that the prospect of using rōnin abroad was attractive and seriously considered by the *bakufu*. Not only would it provide the Tokugawa with expendable troops, but it would address domestic issues at the same time.

Even though these plans never materialized and the availability of employment abroad had been curtailed, certain rōnin continued to look beyond the shores of the mainland for ways to make a living. As highlighted in previous chapters, numerous rōnin attempted to take advantage of the fact that they were less confined in their opportunities for income than other social groups. In addition to this, the various domains had proven to be amenable to private enterprise if it could provide advantage to them in the long term. As discussed in chapter 4, many such undertakings took the form of the development of fields or the location of ore veins, in which private capital and risk-assumption were exchanged for certain privileges from the authorities. Such ventures could, however, also extend beyond Tokugawa Japan, such as the one proposed by the rōnin Ogasawara Nagahiro in 1702. However, as Nagahiro's plans extended beyond the shores of the Japanese archipelago he had to get permission from the *bakufu* itself rather than one of the many daimyo, as foreign travel was prohibited at the time. In order to circumvent the edicts forbidding foreign travel, Nagahiro claimed that his ancestor, Ogasawara Sadayori, had discovered the Bonin Islands, about 1000 kilometers south of Edo, and that he therefore wished to go there.[54] The *bakufu* seems not to have questioned these claims and allowed him to set out to the islands in 1702. This willingness to accept Nagahiro's claim in the absence of any clear proof was likely reasoned along the same line of proposals to develop fields; Nagahiro would assume

[53] Carioti, Patrizia. "The Zheng Regime and the Tokugawa Bakufu: Asking for Foreign Intervention." In, Andrade, Antonio and Hang Xing (eds.). *Sea Rovers, Silver and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550-1700.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. Pp.165.
[54] Yamada Kiichi. *Sanshinsaku to Ogasawara guntō.* Tokyo: Hōten gishuku shuppanbu, 1916. Pp.73.

the risk and financial burden of the venture, and if he proved to be successful, the *bakufu* could claim the islands in name of the Tokugawa and tax them. After having been given permission, Nagahiro sought out a financial backer and managed to secure funds from a rich merchant.[55] When this merchant died, however, Nagahiro found himself at a financial loss and was forced to back out of the venture. Nagahiro's story, though rather exceptional in its details, demonstrates both the risks some rōnin were willing to take and the inventiveness they showed in their attempts to secure an income.[56]

By looking beyond the boundaries of Tokugawa Japan, attempting to find employment abroad offered one avenue for circumventing the effects of the rōnin label. Since it removed one from the confines of Japanese society, it also removed the exact social conventions which were needed for the social label of rōnin to have any meaning. To ascertain the number of rōnin who went abroad to look for employment opportunities would be nigh on impossible. In an environment where this label held no meaning of import, it was rarely applied. However, as the examples discussed above demonstrate, certain rōnin actively sought out opportunities abroad. What becomes clear is that foreign travel was one in a constellation of options which would have been more readily available to some rōnin than others due to personal connections and geographic location.[57] As with rōnin who decided to stay in Japan, rōnin who ventured abroad capitalized on their transience. Unlike those who remained within Tokugawa society, however, those who left Japan also left behind the social circumstances that made the rōnin label meaningful.

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[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Kublin, Hyman. "The Discovery of the Bonin Islands: A Reexamination." In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.43, No.1 (Mar. 1953). Pp.33-34.

[57] In his work at the time, Fujiya Chōhei notes that many rōnin gathered in Nagasaki looking for foreign employment. See: Fujiya Chōhei. *Nagasaki mushi megane.* Osaka: Fujiya Chōhei, 1704. [unpaginated] NDL Digital Archive WB1-1.

## Hiding in Plain Sight: Rōnin, Komusō and the *Fuke* Sect

The popular image of rōnin often includes references to wandering men wearing straw hats attempting to obscure their identity whilst they begged to get by. Much of this image was influenced by the relation between rōnin and the *Fuke* sect. The sect, with its main temples in Edo and Kyoto, was a Zen sect that was focused around mendicant monks called *komusō* who played a flute known as the *shakuhachi*. The sect is said to have been built around a doctrine based on the wisdom of the *Chan* (Zen) Buddhist wise man named Pu Hua.[58] Whilst in China in the thirteenth century, these teachings were adopted by the Japanese monk Kakushin who brought them to Japan where they were spread by him and his followers. This narrative of the sect's origins is recorded in the *Kyotaku denki*, which takes pains to map out a long history, connections to Zen Buddhism, illustrious practitioners, and certain doctrinal idiosyncrasies. The text is, however, a complete fabrication. The *komusō* movement, which developed into the *Fuke* sect, was, as shown by James Sanford, "actually a purely Japanese product that began in or just prior to the Tokugawa era, […] with no discernible Zen connections whatsoever."[59] Though invented history is not necessarily problematic for religious movements per se, the exact composition of the history presented is important here because it is intimately tied up with the relation between the sect and rōnin. In the *Fuke* sect we therefore see attempts to organize rōnin into an understandable social unit who could retain the freedom of movement to explore opportunity and gain social advantage.

[58] The name of the sect, *Fuke* (普化), is the Japanese reading of Pu Hua.
[59] Sanford, James. "Shakuhachi Zen: The Fukeshu and Komuso." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.32, No.2 (Winter 1977), pp.412.

Though the precise establishment of the sect, somewhere around the turn of the sixteenth century, is difficult to ascertain, its ranks quickly swelled with large numbers of rōnin.[60] Due to this influx of rōnin into the sect it not only grew in size but also in influence, as some of these rōnin had connections to highly placed individuals.[61] The sect was made particularly attractive to rōnin due to the lodges it had established across the country in which wandering monks could rest. According to Nakatsuka Chikuzen, this loose association of 'lodges' was thus co-opted by the large number of rōnin who joined during the early Tokugawa period to create what would become known as the *Fuke* sect.[62] During this time the *komusō* movement transformed from "a fraternity of wandering beggars," to a Buddhist sect with its main temples Ichigetsuji and Reihōji near Edo and Myōanji in Kyoto.[63]

This transformation was cemented by two key documents which were as much political as they were religious, the first of which was the *Kyotaku denki* mentioned above. The second document is generally referred to as the 'Charter of 1614' and was supposedly issued by the *bakufu* during the Keichō era (1596-1615). The problem with this document, however, is that it was almost certainly a forgery and that multiple versions exist with slight variations in content.[64] As stated before, the former of the two key documents, the *Kyotaku denki*, set out to establish the movement as a religious sect with a long and illustrious history linked it to Zen Buddhism and historical figures, such as the monk Kakushin. Furthermore, it linked the movement to Kusunoki Masakatsu, a fourteenth century warrior who had supported the Southern Court during the time

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[60] Nishiyama Matsunosuke. *Iemoto monogatari*. Tokyo: Shuei Shuppansha, 1971. Pp.187-192; and, Yamashita Yajūrō. *Komusō: Fukeshū reihōji no kenkyū*. Ome: Tama Gōshi Kenkyū no Kai, 1972. Pp.27-35.
[61] Nakatsuka Chikuzen. *Kinko-ryū shakuhachi shikan.* Tokyo: Nihon Ongaku sha, 1979. Pp.43.
[62] *Ibid.* Pp.132.
[63] Sanford. "Shakuhachi Zen," 1977. Pp.414.
[64] *Ibid.* Pp. 418; Yohmei-Bladel, Christopher. *The Shakuhachi: A Manual for Learning.* Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo Sha, 1988. Pp.103.

of a disputed Imperial succession known as the *Nanbokuchō* period.[65] This connection not only provided them with a well-known ancestor, but the link to Masakatsu provided a 'martialized past' which helped to explain certain idiosyncrasies amongst *komusō*, such as the wearing of swords and armor. Whilst the *Kyotaku denki* sets out an historic connection to a warrior, the 'Charter of 1614' goes one step further and presents a direct linkage between the sect and rōnin: "the *komusō* of Japan (*Nipponkoku*) are established to be a temporary shelter for warriors who have become rōnin."[66] The document goes on to state that the sect's purpose was to prevent rōnin from falling into abject poverty and outlines numerous special privileges that the *komusō* should receive that map directly onto attempts to retain *bushi* status. Perhaps most significantly, the document states that the *komusō* were to enjoy 'extraterritoriality' and that they would therefore be outside of the jurisdiction of any local institution and would only answer directly to the *bakufu* Commissioner of Temples and Shrines (*jisha bugyō*). Other privileges included unlimited freedom of travel, the right to carry weapons, exemption from tolls and boat fares, and free admission to plays and sumo matches.[67] Other versions of the document included additional articles, such as the (for a Buddhist sect unusual) stipulation that one was free to leave at any time.[68] However, what all the versions indicate is that the document was supposedly an agreement made between the sect and Tokugawa Ieyasu himself.[69] By claiming this direct link to

[65] *Nanbokuchō* literally means the period of the Southern and Northern Courts. In 1336 the Ashikaga overthrew the ruling emperor Go-Daigo and founded the Ashikaga shogunate. This resulted in two factions within the imperial family; one supporting the Ashikaga, known as the Northern Court, and one led by Go-Daigo, known as the Southern Court. The period of conflict that ensued is known as the *nanbokuchō* period, in which the Northern Court was eventually victorious. See, Goble, Andrew. "Go-Daigo, Takauji, and the Muromachi Shogunate." In, Friday, Karl (ed.). *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012. It is possible that the interpretation of this event as the overthrow of a ruler by someone considered a pretender had resonance with some rōnin in light of the recent defeat of the Toyotomi by the Tokugawa.
[66] "Komusō okitegaki." In, Yamashita Yajūrō. *Komusō: Fukeshū reihōji no kenkyū*. Ome: Tama Gōshi Kenkyū no Kai, 1972. Pp.35-36.
[67] *Ibid.* Pp.36.
[68] Yohmei-Bladel. *The Shakuhachi,* 1988. Pp.103-107.
[69] Sanford. "Shakuhachi Zen," 1977. Pp.418.

the founder of the Tokugawa *bakufu,* the document emphasizes that these special privileges were to be taken seriously and were in many ways 'sacred.'[70]

A further crucial component of all documents is the focus on links between the sect and *bushi* status, and in one version from 1677 it is explicitly stated that peasants and townsmen should not be allowed to join.[71] In other versions, though not explicitly stated, the exclusion of non-*bushi* is made apparent through requirements listed for one to join. In addition to a statement explaining the reasons for joining and a signed oath promising to uphold the rules set out by the sect, acolytes were required to present the sect with three documents. The first of these was a certificate that attested that the applicant was not Christian. Though not uncommon, such a certificate was likely also inspired by the occasional link between rōnin and Christians because of events such as the Shimabara rebellion and well-known Christian rōnin such as Takayama Ukon. Secondly, and most tellingly, the applicant was required to present a family genealogy that proved *bushi* pedigree. By requiring applicants to provide such a document the sect therefore effectively barred all non-*bushi*, despite the fact that this was only explicitly stated in the 1677 version of the 'Charter of 1614.' Lastly, one had to provide a guarantor who would be willing to attest to these claims and vouch for the character of the person in question. Once one had fulfilled these requirements, they would be issued with the items needed for their new position as a member of the sect; a Buddhist name, "the three seals and three implements" as well as "a long sword and a short sword."[72] Given the close correlation between the sect and rōnin outlined above, the last of these items, the two swords, was a clear attempt to retain certain status markers

[70] This reference to the founder of the Tokugawa dynasty was made even more potent by the deification and continued symbolic importance of Tokugawa Ieyasu, see: Pitelka, Morgan. *Spectacular Accumulation: Material Culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu and Samurai Sociability.* Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. Pp.145-163.
[71] Sanford. "Shakuhachi Zen," 1977. Pp.420n.38.
[72] *Ibid.* Pp.420.

and privileges which rōnin would have otherwise lost. The *Fuke* sect was therefore significantly shaped by rōnin and came to serve, essentially, as a repository for many of them.

The *komusō* movement received a degree of leniency from the *bakufu* who, despite likely knowing that the above documents were fakes, had its own reasons for turning a blind eye. As discussed in previous chapters, the *bakufu* itself had done little to successfully address issues involving rōnin. Even the changes in the laws of inheritance and attainder had been mostly aimed at *bushi* and avoiding people becoming rōnin rather than the rōnin population itself. Considering this lack of success in comprehensively addressing rōnin, the *komusō* movement could offer an internally regulated institution for rōnin, no matter how fictionally based, which would be directly responsible to the *bakufu*. This, however, proved not to be the case and it soon became clear that many saw *komusō* as a nuisance or even a threatening presence. Though *komusō* were allowed to beg according to its charters and a number of laws, the 'begging' of the *komusō* was soon described as something closer to extortion.[73] As these men were armed, *komusō* quickly became identified with violence or as armed ruffians. This image was not helped by the fact that one of the main identifiable implements of the sect were woven basket-hats called *tengai*, that provided anonymity and could, when combined with the transient nature of *komusō*, easily be interpreted in terms of unaccountability. Quickly, both the authenticity of the documents providing privileges to the *komusō* and the Buddhist nature of the sect were questioned.[74] Despite these suspicions and repeated edicts warning people for *komusō,* it was only in the 1840s, however, that the government itself became overtly aware that its imagination of the *Fuke* sect as a useful repository for rōnin had failed and 'discovered' the fact that the charter was a fake. This change in attitude to the sect was spurred by a number of reasons, but foremost among

[73] *Ibid.* For a number of edicts specifically identifying *komusō* as problematic and threatening people, see: "Goke goteishu." In, *Okayama-ken shi, 25 Tsuyama-han*, Pp.1315.
[74] Yohmei-Bladel. *The Shakuhachi*, 1988. Pp.103.

these was the failure of regulatory bodies of the sect to maintain order. The transient nature of the *komusō* meant that 'policing' its members was beyond the capacity of the temples and their effective control did not extend far beyond the grounds of the main compounds.[75] Other social issues were likely to have also influenced the *bakufu*'s 'discovery' and in a social environment increasingly confronted with internal rifts and external incursion, a sect which could serve as refuge for discontented elements of society formed a threat to the *bakufu* and later the new Meiji government. Despite this continued scrutiny by the ruling powers, however, the sect was only fully forbidden and abolished in 1871, thereby outliving the Tokugawa state itself.[76]

The *Fuke* sect thus provided an institutional framework that was able to include a large number of rōnin and link them to an internally regulated framework that could, at least supposedly, police their actions. Whilst initially the sect offered an attractive partial solution to problems with rōnin in the eyes of the *bakufu*, over time the lack of oversight and the consequences of the sect's falsely claimed privileges made it too loose and unregulated to be effective. However, the image of the *komusō* with his basket hat and *shakuhachi* roaming the roads became closely identified with rōnin throughout the Tokugawa period. Despite the degree of unrest created by the *komusō*, their inclusion into a social unit provided their roaming condition with an acceptable context. Itinerant monks were not unfamiliar to the Tokugawa social landscape and it was therefore the unrest that they caused, rather than their movement, that ultimately made the komusō 'unacceptable.' Transience was thus interpreted through the social organization of which these men were a part.

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[75] Sanford. "Shakuhachi Zen," 1977. Pp.421.
[76] Yamashita. *Komusō,* 1972. Pp.206-208.

## Overstepping Boundaries: Begging and Criminality

Though the *Fuke* sect formed an institution that rōnin could use in an attempt to circumvent certain negative effects of the rōnin label, the experience of mendicancy was not confined to them. Instead, the sect was one expression of a larger trend of transience and mendicancy. Though many options for employment and reemployment have been highlighted throughout this work, some individuals were not fortunate enough to obtain a new place or, as highlighted before, intermittently fell into the position of rōnin before securing new employment. It was this movement and unboundedness that became the defining feature of rōnin through both a focus on these characteristics by authorities and the fact that many people's experience of rōnin was confined to those who were indeed transient, be they *komusō* or unattached beggars. As outlined by Maren Ehlers, vagrancy and mendicancy were an important issue throughout the Tokugawa period and very much part of the daily life of many, be it actively or passively.[77] Much of this type of begging was, however, regulated and thereby given a place within the social order of Tokugawa society.[78] The problem was not necessarily begging itself, but the unlicensed begging by unattached transients, which often strayed into illegality. It is therefore that generally negative characteristics were subjectively interpreted and that 'acceptability' and 'unacceptability' of rōnin could be divided by nebulous lines.

Incidents involving begging rōnin occurred throughout the archipelago and throughout the period, and many of the reports on these events are strikingly similar. In Tsuyama domain, in the early 1770s it seems that there was a spate of 'scamming' incidents involving begging rōnin,

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[77] Ehlers. *Give and Take,* 2018. Pp.19-32.
[78] *Ibid.*

leading a number of village officials to write letters to the domainal authorities complaining about the disruption this caused.

> Lately rōnin and such go around villages to beg for alms from farming families. Those who give small alms of a *sen* or so are verbally abused. Others beg to be put up for the night, then they say that they are ill and [the families] are forced to have them stay for 4 or 5 days.[79]

These descriptions of rōnin begging and overstaying their welcome comes up again and again in letters, and the above complaint is repeated almost word for word in a letter from 1843.

> […] they go by houses of commoners and beg for alms and if the alms they give are small, they insult and abuse [these people]. Others beg for lodgings and will say that they are ill. During their stay, they will cause various grave problems.[80]

It was not only village officials in Tsuyama that reported the disturbances caused by this issue however. In what is now Niigata prefecture, similar practices were used by rōnin and in an edict from 1835, the same practices are described.[81] In Fukui domain people described as “looking like rōnin” (*rōnin-tai*) were also reported to go around in groups of two or three and illegally beg using excessive force.[82] Numerous decrees that prohibited the strong-arm tactics employed by these mendicants were issued during the late eighteenth century and most specifically mentioned rōnin and *komusō* monks.[83] Whilst these edicts emphatically stated that mendicants were in their

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[79] “Goteishu.” In, *Okayama-ken shi, 25 Tsuyama-han*. Pp.1122.
[80] *Ibid.* Pp.1315.
[81] *Niigata-ken shi, 6*. Pp.889.
[82] Fukui-shi (eds.). *Fukui-shi shi: shiryō hen 3, kinsei.* Fukui: Fukui-shi, 1986. Pp.228.
[83] Takayanagi Seiichi and Ishii Ryosuke (eds.). *Ofuregaki tenmei shūsei (3rd Edition).* Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1976. Pp.922-923.

right to ask for alms, provided they did so without resorting to untoward practices, this right did not extend to rōnin who "did not have the right to collect alms," under any circumstances.[84] Other scams were also used and back in Tsuyama, the Matsudaira issued warnings to be vigilant in light of rōnin pretending to be Tsuyama retainers and visiting the houses of commoners and farmers in the guise of some official capacity.[85]

Despite official interest in these mendicants, villages could opt to take matters into their own hands as edicts often did not have actual effect. In order to control those looking for alms and other vagrants, villages hired watchmen charged with removing these people from the village. As shown by Maren Ehlers, in the village of Nakano in Ōno domain, the contract of the new watchman, Sanemon, stated that he was responsible for driving out "rōnin, travelers who solicited money for straw sandals, drifters and mendicant monks."[86] It is important to note that, though separately mentioned, rōnin could be included in any of the groups listed, something which was likely seen to justify their particular mention and position them as a particularly 'troublesome' group. Strikingly ironic and illustrative of the complex and subjective position of rōnin within the Tokugawa social world, however, is the fact that some of those employed to keep the peace and protect villages from roaming rōnin, were rōnin themselves. In the 1780s, for example, one of the village guards appointed in Ōno domain was himself a rōnin from Kaga domain.[87] Similarly, a rōnin was appointed as an overseer of an *eta* village in Matsushiro domain where he too, in addition to the oversight of agricultural production, was meant to keep out rōnin and other unwanted elements, and preserve the general peace.[88] Rōnin were therefore never a

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[84] *Ibid.* Pp.922-926.
[85] "Goteishu," in *Okayama-ken shi, 25 Tsuyama-han*. Pp.1123.
[86] Ehlers. *Give and Take,* 2018. Pp.93.
[87] *Ibid.* Pp.105-106.
[88] Yazaki Takeo. *Nihon toshi no hatten katei.* Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1962. Pp.158.

singular, homogenous group, but were continuously differentiated between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable.'[89]

Though begging and violence did indeed go hand-in-hand at times, on many other occasions rōnin simply sought to raise enough money to survive. The sight of such rōnin begging in the streets was common and in a late Tokugawa picture book on everyday scenes in Edo, one picture of a man sitting in front of a façade with drums in hand reads: "*Nō* singing is a pastime enjoyed by *bushi* of high standing, but some of them may fall into misfortune and become rōnin. These end up sitting in the dust by the side of the road, beating drums and begging for alms."[90] Many of these men therefore struggled to get by and were often forced to beg without membership to one of the accepted begging guilds.[91] One of these men was Suzuki Riheita, about whom not much is known except for the fact that he was a poor rōnin who is described as homeless and forced to beg. The only reference to Riheita comes from the *Edo hankachō* in the year 1799 and it is reported that he had committed suicide due to his situation.[92] In the abundant references to rōnin strongarm tactics, ruffianism and arrogance it is easy to forget that many faced intense hardship that could become too much for some.

As rōnin were often seen as either troublemakers or beggars who presented an unwanted nuisance, they were often associated with disturbances, even if it was unclear who the exact culprits were. Therefore, when complaints about troublemakers came from a number of residents of Edo, it was quickly decided that rōnin, regardless of the vast internal differences within the

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[89] Interestingly, these two examples also show the interaction between rōnin and 'outcast' groups. In Ōno specifically, the watchmen were traditionally hired from a group known as the *koshirō,* a group of accepted beggars. It is therefore interesting that this rōnin from Kaga became accepted as part of this group and subsequently appointed as a guard, once again blurring the status associations of rōnin. See: Ehlers. *Give and Take*, 2018. Pp.105-106.

[90] "Ehon edo ōrai." In, Kano Shigeru. *Nihon no nōgaku.* Tokyo: Watanabe Shoten, 1989. Pp.15.

[91] As mentioned, beggars often formed their own guilds and organizations in order to regulate the practice. See: Ehlers. *Give and Take,* 2018.

[92] Higuchi Hideo (ed.). *Edo hankachō: shinsōban*. Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1995. Pp.169.

rōnin population or their actual involvement, were not welcome. This response was so widespread that the *bakufu* felt it necessary to issue a public edict to all local leaders that reiterated that registered rōnin were in fact allowed to live in the city.

> Concerning the housing supporting rōnin in the city. Despite recent opinion, it is allowed [for them to live there]. As for moving residence, this is also in accordance with city law.[93]

Amidst public anxiety, it was therefore necessary at times for the authorities to underline the differences between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' rōnin. The edict therefore continued by stating that to be 'acceptable,' rōnin needed to be registered and supported by a guarantor. Not only does this edict indicate the power that the popular and negatively imbued imagination of rōnin had, but it also demonstrates the subdivisions the *bakufu* upheld despite its more general edicts. The issue was not the rōnin label itself, but the situation and context of its manifestation. All rōnin were still rōnin despite the internal differences, but they became 'acceptable' once inserted into a unit of social control and thus 'tethered' by society. Imparting an understanding of these differences to the general population was important as, to the *bakufu*, registered rōnin living within the city of Edo were likely to cause less problems than a group of people sent adrift due to suspicions by their neighbors.

Issues involving begging rōnin continued throughout the Tokugawa period and even worsened during the final decades as people were caught in the midst of the turmoil.[94] As begging had been an accepted and frequent part of the Tokugawa social environment, many had

[93] "Goteishu", in *Okayama-ken shi, 25 Tsuyama-han*, Pp.1123.

[94] The final decades of the Tokugawa period saw a number of issues crop up with which the *bakufu* was unable to deal. Economic, political and social factors all helped to create an environment of uncertainty. For an in-depth exploration of these issues, see: Wilson, George. *Patriots and Redeemers: Motives in the Meiji Restoration.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

hopes that the new Meiji government would put an end to what they saw as a public nuisance. Looking back at the changes that had occurred in the period, a local elite wrote in 1873, with praise for the new Imperial government, that much had changed for the better. Foremost among these changes was the end to the Tokugawa system of managed mendicancy that had emerged during the period.[95]

> As for the common folk – no more beggars and poor people are wandering about, calling at their houses for alms; no people of monk and nun appearance, no rōnin and gangsters; all solicitation has ceased.[96]

Though likely hyperbolic in his fervor to applaud the new government, the truth was that mendicancy had indeed been a large issue during the Tokugawa period and for many this was synonymous with rōnin. Faced with a lack of income and no viable opportunities of gaining one, certain rōnin were forced to resort to begging in order to make some money. Though it is impossible to ascertain if all those described as rōnin in reports of unlawful begging were indeed 'officially' recognized as rōnin, the fact that they are described as such is significant, as it establishes, at the very least, how rōnin were imagined and perceived.

As highlighted above, numerous rōnin skirted the gray areas between legal and illegal in their attempts to make a living or to simply get by. Some, however, acted fully and knowingly outside of the law. These men were either desperate or felt that their social condition was incommensurate with what they felt was their rightful place in society.[97] In their pursuit of

[95] Ehlers. *Give and Take,* 2018. In particular Chapter 3, pp.115-160.
[96] "Shoyōdome (nojiri)." In: *Ibid.* Pp.159-160.
[97] This unhappiness amongst, especially lower. *bushi* was due to impoverishment combined with the increasingly stratified nature of *bushi* hierarchy which meant that many lower *bushi* fell into poverty due to the duties, demands and expectations of their status. This frustration is best summed up by Thomas Smith in his description of the changes brought about by the Meiji restoration: "the opening of careers to talent was not an abstract issue but a

recognition, capital and '*bushi*' lifestyle, their actions often led them to fall squarely within the category of 'unacceptable' rōnin. One of these men was a rōnin called Ushino Hyōjirō, about whom not much is known before he managed to obtain lodgings from a man called Kyūjurō at the Tazaemon boarding house in Edo in 1792.[98] During his time in Edo he was observed paying repeated visits to the house of a man called Nagakura from around the 7th month of 1792. The reason for these visits, it was later discovered, was that Hyōjirō was secretly meeting with the wife of Nagakura, Mine. These visits, witnesses later stated, continued for about 10 days between the 2nd and the 12th day after which they stopped. It seems that Mine had entered into an intimate relation with Hyōjirō in which some form of payment took place. Despite the business aspect of the meetings, however, there was a suggestion that Hyōjirō had grown attached to Mine and became increasingly vocal about his frustration with the fact that he was in debt, something which he felt was "unbecoming of his status."[99]

Despite the setbacks however, Hyōjirō persisted in his pursuit of Mine and continuously called on the Nagakura residence. By doing so he eventually managed to persuade Mine to take a stroll with him in the Takanawa neighborhood. However, once outside of the house, it is said that he abducted her to Kamakura. His plan had been to force Mine to work at an establishment in Fujizawa as a *meshimori-onna,* a serving girl at an inn who was also expected to serve the sexual needs of its customers.[100] Having sold her to the establishment, Hyōjirō returned to Edo.

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matter of the greatest personal urgency – offering hope of escape from poverty, boredom and helplessness." Smith, Thomas. *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988. Pp.170-172. Also see: Yamamura Kōzō. "The Increasing Poverty of Samurai in Tokugawa Japan." *Journal of Economic History,* Vol.31, No.2 (1971), pp.378-406. The particular poverty of the lower *bushi* was acknowledged and even early on in the Tokugawa period, some, such as the daimyo Matsudaira Sadamasa, even decided to act in protest of this impoverishment, see: Hur, Nam-Lin. *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University East Asia Center, 2007. Pp.79.

[98] Higuchi Hideo (ed.). *Edo hankachō: shinsōban*. Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1995. Pp.160.

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] Silverberg, Miriam. *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006. Pp.79-80.

However, he was apprehended by Mine's husband, who had decided to chase the two down. It is noted that Nagakura was deeply affected by what had happened to his wife, so much so that his behavior was unsympathetically documented as "most unbecoming of a samurai."[101] Hyōjirō was judged to have acted out of greed, was found guilty on all of charges against him, and it was decided that according to precedent, Hyōjirō was to be exiled to Hachijōjima.[102] Though the case of Hyōjirō is clear-cut, it shows the lengths some went to in order to make a living. The increased marginalization of certain groups of rōnin, as shown throughout this work, inevitably led some to criminality.

Even when clearly identified as criminals, however, it was clear that in a legal sense, rōnin were not understood as a single group. Generally, though locally this could differ significantly, rōnin were to be tried as *bushi* during the first half of the Tokugawa period.[103] Increasingly, however, the dichotomies within the rōnin label made equivalence before the law almost impossible. It therefore became necessary to differentiate between the various manifestations of the rōnin label and during the second half of the Tokugawa period it was decided that "rōnin without family name would be sentenced like commoners in cases of violent assault and ruffianism."[104] Rōnin, even when breaking the law, were not considered equal. As the Tokugawa period continued, the increased understanding of the ambiguous and internally diverse position of rōnin became incorporated into the socio-legal framework, as discussed in the previous chapter, despite the fact that popular and outwardly projected institutional understandings remained prevalent.

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[101] Higuchi. *Edo hankachō,* 1995. Pp.160.
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] Inoue Kazuo. *Shohan no keibatsu*. Tokyo: Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1965. Pp.36.
[104] *Ibid.* Pp.36-37.

As many rōnin were confronted with uncertainty and penury, some of them strayed into illegality in order to make some sort of living. This criminality could manifest in various ways: from unlawful begging, racketeering and causing social disruptions, to kidnap and theft. Whereas some simply sought food and shelter, others were driven by feelings of disenfranchisement and disaffection. Many of the edicts put up by the *bakufu* and the various domains were aimed at transient rōnin and villages increasingly sought ways to minimize the unrest they caused. However, even within these moments of criminality the differentiation between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' rōnin increasingly took hold as legal practice was slowly adapted to incorporate the variation within the rōnin label: the connection between transience and criminality was strong, but subjective. Yet where most rōnin strayed into legal gray areas and petty crime, others such as Hyōjirō, went further. For these rōnin discontent ran deep and they felt that their social position was somehow unfair or unbecoming. It was these men, desperate, vagrant, destitute and hopeless who were the main concern of those in power. Continually marginalized through new laws, procedures and cutbacks, these rōnin fell outside of the general institutions of control. Their disenfranchisement made it so that the authorities continued to see in these men the possibility of the violence that had been experienced in the early 1600s.

## Martial Matter: Rōnin and the Knowledge of Violence

Despite the association between violence and 'unacceptable' rōnin, some were able to capitalize on their association with it in ways that were not only 'acceptable,' but at times actively sought after. Though actual violence could present a clear disruption to the social order, as outlined above, the knowledge of violence was a whole different matter and could be used in attempts to

make a living as, for example, a teacher of martial arts. Even those who themselves had little or no knowledge of the martial arts could try to capitalize on the popular assumption that rōnin were competent at violence. Therefore, the association with violence, like that with transience, could be interpreted both negatively and positively. Though the time of open warfare and large-scale military mobilization were finished by the mid-seventeenth century, the knowledge of violence could still hold value and create opportunities in the new 'time of peace.' Martial knowledge remained important as both the basis of Tokugawa power and *bushi* identity,[105] yet as this need was social rather than physical, much of this knowledge became formalized. Most rōnin who capitalized on this defining feature of their social label were hired into *bushi* families to teach their children. In a social environment where few *bushi* had any fighting experience,[106] but all were expected to have martial skill, rōnin were often the people *bushi* families turned to for tuition. In addition, however, the increasing desire of affluent non-*bushi* to teach their children elite skills created a growing market for rōnin.[107] As a result, many were able to find work as teachers of the sword or other martial skills in both cities and the countryside.

Whereas certain *bushi* and non-*bushi* families were affluent enough to hire a rōnin tutor for their children, many others were unable to support another member of the household. For these people, which again included both lower *bushi* families and well-to-do merchants and local notables, an attractive, affordable option was to send their children to schools run by rōnin.

[105] Though *bushi* increasingly came to perform administrative duties within the Tokugawa state, the context of warrior-rule remained in place and *bushi* identity was based, at least theoretically, around the performance of martial duties. For an example of the influence on *bushi* identity and socialization, see: Roberts, Luke. "Growing Up Manly: Male Samurai Childhood in Late Edo-Era Tosa." In, Frühstück, Sabine and Walthall, Anne (eds.). *Child's Play: Multi-Sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2017. Pp.41-59.

[106] An example of inexperience comes from the report of a 18th century Tosa official on one of his hunting trips. When unexpectedly cornered by a boar he managed to kill it and wrote in his diary that "this was the closest [he] had ever come to using the military skills he practiced regularly." Roberts, Luke. "Mori Yoshiki: Samurai Government Officer." In, Walthall, Ann (ed.). *The Human Tradition in Modern Japan.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc., 2002. Pp.26.

[107] Walthall, Anne. "Peripheries. Rural Culture in Tokugawa Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.39, No.4 (Winter, 1984), pp.371-392.

Unlike some of the private teachers, however, those who taught in schools were often not transient rōnin in search for work, but registered in a particular area and part of the local social hierarchy. Indeed, for some of these rōnin, integrated as part of the social fabric, the focus on martial skill was heightened as their new positions could be predicated on their duty to provide martial aid to the domainal lord if requested. With no other way of showing their competence and ability to fulfil this duty, creating a school of martial arts could enable rōnin to demonstrate their martial prowess in an age that didn't allow for people to prove themselves on the battlefield. As an example of this, both the *harashi* and the *ichiryō ippiki* of Awa domain, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were given their new position on the basis of their military preparedness and martial skill.[108] As there was therefore a direct relation between their privileges and martial knowledge, it is, for example, no surprise that there was a flourishing of martial schools in the areas *harashi* were settled. Though many of these schools taught multiple skills, they all specialized and became known for excellence in areas such as swordsmanship, spearmanship, bow techniques, gun techniques, judo and horsemanship. The names of these schools often bear the names of the *harashi* families such as the Sekiguchi school, the Ōshima school and the Asaka school.[109] The generally perceived link between the rōnin label and a *bushi* background could often be enough to provide rōnin with an aura of assumed knowledge. The potential to use assumed or practical knowledge of violence to advance their status in society thus provided rōnin with a chance of leveraging the popular image of their social label. By providing teaching in the martial arts, these rōnin played in on the demand for these skills driven by an increasingly clerical *bushi* elite as well as the drive for upward social mobility by affluent

[108] Tokushima-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tokushima-ken shi, Vol.3.* Tokushima: Tokushima-ken, 1965. Pp.113-116,121.
[109] Tokushima Shimbunsha Chōsa Jigyōkyoku (eds.) *Tokushima-ken hyakuryō jiten*. Tokushima: Tokushima Shimbunsha, 1981. Pp.822.

non-*bushi*. Therefore, whilst the creation of the Tokugawa state removed the direct need for martial skills, it created new ways in which these skills could be deployed to make an income.

Though the transmission of knowledge was the most widespread and likely way to make an income, there were other routes that could transform the knowledge of violence into something positive and marketable. One of the most interesting ways in which the knowledge of violence could lead to income and social advancement was through the aesthetic and delineated manifestation of competition and warfare – sport. Though the various daimyo throughout Japan were no longer at war with one another, a sense of internal competition remained. The importance of the domain as a social and economic unit has been shown in the works of scholars such as Mark Ravina and Luke Roberts, in which they show the importance of domainal economic prosperity as well as the role played by the domain in the creation of personal identity and a sense of belonging.[110] This sense of belonging and domainal pride could manifest itself through direct competition that rōnin could capitalize on in their search for employment. Born in Takamatsu domain in Shikoku as the son of a rōnin priest, Aibiki Uranosuke managed to do just this. Though little is known about his earlier years, we are told that he spent much of his time building his strength by "lifting bricks."[111] It is likely that he became interested in sumo wrestling at this early age, but there is no clear evidence for this. After he moved to Edo, however, he appears on a number of sumo bills from the Tenpō era (1830-1844) on which he is listed as a sumo wrestler from Takamatsu and is registered as a "rōnin wrestler" (*sumo tori rōnin*).[112] During this time, he managed to make a name for himself and climbed to the rank of

[110] Expressions of domainal 'nationalism' and pride have generally been researched in relation to the idea of *kokueki* and the growth of a domainal economy. For an explanation of this and an overview of research on this topic, see: Ravina, Mark. *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998; Roberts, Luke. *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchant Origins of Economic Nationalism in 18th-Century Tosa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp.2-12,21-30.
[111] Sangawa-chō Shihenshū Iinkai (eds.). *Sangawa-chō shi.* Kagawa: Sangawa-chō, 1985. Pp.374.
[112] *Ibid.*

champion (*ōzeki*). Word of his success must have reached home as at this point he returned to Takamatsu domain where he lived in the capital as a domainally sponsored sumo wrestler and teacher, hired by the daimyo Matsudaira Yoritaka. In spite of initially being registered as rōnin, he received an income of 8 *koku* and by the time of his death had become registered as a full retainer with an increased income of 10 *koku*.[113] Uranosuke's success was made possible by the fact that sumo had become a means through which inter-domainal rivalries could be expressed and domains, or daimyo, could gain an increased sense of pride.[114] In this way, the relation between martial knowledge and actual ability was combined to create a new arena in which combatants could test each other and in which lords could compete without the risk of losing assets or life. It is unsurprising that this new environment led to an increased formalization of martial arts which rōnin could use to leverage their real, as well as assumed, skills.

When unrest once again emerged in the final decades of the Tokugawa period this association between rōnin and violence once again became heightened. During the late Tokugawa period, numerous foreign powers began to encroach into the Tokugawa political sphere, and even before Commodore Perry turned up at Uraga in 1853,[115] numerous foreign ships attempted to engage in trade with Japan.[116] Seeing this as a threat to the security of the state, especially because the shogun's authority was ultimately derived from his ability to keep 'barbarians' at bay, the Tokugawa ordered various domains to set up defense units to oppose

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[113] *Ibid.* Pp.375.

[114] Other daimyo known for hiring sumo wrestlers in this manner were the Matsudaira of Takamatsu, the Hosokawa of Kumamoto and the Tokugawa of Owari. See: Furukawa Miki (ed.). *Edo jidai ōsumō.* Tokyo: Yuzankaku Shuppan, 1968. Pp.47.

[115] The 'opening' of Japan is often attributed to the US commodore Perry who arrived in Japan in 1853 to force Japan into direct trading agreements with the US.

[116] Even before Perry a number of ships had attempted to trade with the Japanese. There are many works highlighting such incidents. See, for example: Cullen, Louis. *A History of Japan, 1582-1941: Internal and External Worlds.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp.175-205; Ravina, Mark. "Tokugawa, Romanov and Khmer: The Politics of Trade and Diplomacy in Eighteenth-Century Asia." *Journal of World History*, Vol.26, No.2 (Jun. 2015), pp.269-294; Wilson, Noelle. *Defensive Positions: The Politics of Maritime Security in Tokugawa Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University East Asia Center, 2015.

these foreign incursions and protect important sites such as Kyoto and Edo. In these domains, various calls went out for people to join defense units to be stationed in Kyoto and in Takamatsu domain, for example, they consisted of large numbers of provincial samurai (*jizamurai*) and rōnin, such as Sano Gorōzaemon and Hayashi Yanoshichi from the Ōuchi district, who had been specifically targeted in a call to join.[117] Similar calls must have been issued throughout a number of districts in Takamatsu as rōnin, such as Baba Buzaemon from Kita Nishinojo village in the Aya district, also decided to join. However, the domainal officials were aware that the financial and time commitments demanded of militia members could prevent some of these men from joining. They therefore decided that for rōnin alone, the requirement of providing one's own equipment would be waved and training hours would be limited in order to entice them to join.[118] It was further stipulated that the defense units were to train with a gun and *one* sword.[119] Although this requirement made it possible for non-*bushi* to join, as they were not allowed to wear two swords, it would have likely stopped *bushi* or those granted the right to wear two swords from joining. For rōnin, who were technically not allowed to wear two swords, this stipulation took away none of their legal rights and provided the domains with men whose knowledge, or assumed knowledge, was valuable in organizing and training such units.

It was not just defense units for other areas that were set up in Takamatsu and in 1863 it was decided that further rural defense units would be established. The domain issued a statement proclaiming that: "Farmers have long been prohibited to practice the martial arts. Nevertheless, because the state of affairs is challenging, it is now permitted to practice with a gun, but this right is not to be abused."[120] As made clear by the above statement, however, the domainal

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[117] Koyama Yasuhiko, "Takamatsu-han no Kyōto keiei." *Kagawa kenritsu monjokan kiyō*, Vol.6 (2002), pp.127.
[118] *Ibid.*
[119] *Ibid.* Pp.132.
[120] Sangawa-chō Shihenshū Iinkai (eds.). *Sangawa-chō shi*. Kagawa: Sangawa-chō, 1985. Pp.369.

government felt that farmers would have no real experience using the weapons and they appointed two men as instructors: Kanda Naoyoshi, a man from Soda, and Shiroi Yoshiemon, a rōnin from Kagawa district.[121] Thus, despite the fact that rōnin like Yoshiemon had been detached from true martial matters for generations, their connection to the idea of martial ability allowed them to take advantage of the opportunities presented by this sudden need for armed men. Though speculative, another reason helping rōnin into such positions was likely their ability to capitalize on the ambiguous nature of their position. Whereas *bushi* would likely balk at the opportunity of training groups of commoners and being forced to wear one sword, for some rōnin the opportunity of employment and need of an income could have overridden such issues.[122] As we have seen throughout this work, the dividing gray area between *bushi* and commoner was one often traversed by rōnin.

As the Tokugawa period witnessed the re-emergence of large-scale unrest and violence during its final decades,[123] rōnin were once again presented with potential opportunities for advancement through violence, as all sides in the conflict sought willing supporters. Though the opportunities presented by the association with the knowledge of violence created livelihood for some, underlying suspicion toward rōnin remained, and in moments of open violence it was often rōnin who were imagined as the prime culprits. This suspicion was once again, like during the early decades of the Tokugawa period, underbuilt by the focus on a particularly visible group of 'unacceptable,' anti-establishment rōnin who joined groups with particularly violent anti-

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[121] *Ibid.*

[122] Though not directly addressing rōnin, a number of works have been written on the influence these defense units had on martial employment, see: Jaundrill, Collin. *Samurai to Soldier: Remaking Military Service in Nineteenth-Century Japan.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016; Norman, E.H. "Soldier and Peasant in Japan: The Origins of Conscription." *Pacific Affairs,* Vol.16, No.2 (Jun. 1943), pp.149-165; and, Wilson, Noelle. *Defensive Positions: The Politics of Maritime Security in Tokugawa Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University East Asia Center, 2015.

[123] Wilson, George. *Patriots and Redeemers: Motives in the Meiji Restoration.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

*bakufu*/anti-foreigner aims. Exemplifying this stereotype was Kiyokawa Hachirō, who had, along with other rōnin, been involved in the murder of a Dutch interpreter and was part of a group with anti-*bakufu* sentiments, the *kobi no kai*.[124] Yet despite this focus on rōnin, many others likewise joined such groups as evinced by lists of their members.[125] Though most rōnin had little or nothing to do with such groups or the increasing general unrest, they were once again singled-out because of associations with their social label.[126] The last decades of the Tokugawa period[127] were also a time when various sides, either supporting the *bakufu* or opposing it, actively sought out rōnin to join their cause, and whereas some rōnin found employment with the *bakufu*, for example in the defense units discussed above, others joined anti-*bakufu* causes. In 1867, for example, Saigō Takamori sent a man named Imuta Shohei to Edo with the express order to recruit rōnin to oppose the *bakufu*.[128] Though many who joined were likely sympathetic to Takamori's cause, promised remunerations and the opportunity for further gain should not be discounted as a motivating factor.

The focus on the last decades of the Tokugawa period lies therefore on anti-Tokugawa rōnin in both contemporary writing and recent scholarship.[129] Despite the fact that throughout the

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[124] Hesselink, Reinier. "The Assassination of Henry Heusken." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.49, No.3 (Autumn, 1994), pp.346.
[125] Oyamatsu Katsuichirō (ed.). "Seiyūsō: Kiyokawa Hachirō ryochūki." Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1969. Pp.256.
[126] This can be seen especially in the descriptions of foreign observers of the time. For examples, see: Fox, Grace. *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969. Pp.127; "Letter from Mr. Pruyn to Mr. Seward, January 10, 1863." In, *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 1st Session of the 38th Congress, 1864.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864. Pp.980; Nihon shiseki kyōkai (eds.). *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1968. Pp.215.
[127] These final decades (from the 1850s until 1868) of the Tokugawa period are often called the *bakumatsu* period. This label, evidently only applied by later scholars, literally translates as "end of the *bakufu*." For a discussion on the period, see: Jansen, Marius. "The Meiji Restoration." In, Jansen, Marius (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Japan: Vol.5 The Nineteenth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Pp.308-366.
[128] Hesselink, Reinier. "The Assassination of Henry Heusken." *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.49, No.3 (Autumn, 1994), pp.346.
[129] This focus is particularly pronounced in earlier scholarship on this period in which rōnin are presented as the main thrust behind anti-*bakufu* action. For examples, see: Hall, John. *Tanuma Okitsugu, 1719-1788: Forerunner of Modern Japan.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955. Pp.7-8; Totman, Conrad. *Early Modern Japan.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. Pp.127; Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai (eds.). *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo, Vol.1.* Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1968. Pp.215.

Tokugawa period (and before) rōnin had been able to position themselves throughout society and had been so varied that the label had little meaning beyond the law, they were once again summed up as free radicals seen as the cause of unrest and violence.[130] This would continue into the Meiji period and as late as Meiji 2 (1870) edicts were still being issued to curtail the movement of rōnin and present them as unwanted elements of society. In the collected document of the Sakai family we find an edict from the 2nd month of that year stating that: "All rōnin loitering within the domain boundaries will be apprehended."[131] Soon, however, the changes implemented by the new Meiji government removed the social framework underlying the Tokugawa polity.[132] By removing the status system as a parameter of social differentiation the position of 'Tokugawa rōnin' ceased to exist as the 'early modern' made room for the 'modern.'

## Conclusion

As the internal variance of the rōnin label became more pronounced, preconceived notions attached to rōnin could manifest in a number of ways. Ideas of movement and transience were not necessarily negative when placed within the right context. Similarly, assumptions around rōnin's potential for violence could lead them to be viewed as a threat as easily as it could position them as a fount of knowledge. It is therefore not the rōnin label itself which determined

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[130] Kawata Junshi. "Haikai suru rōnin ni yoru keiyaku no tenkai to sono genkai." *Tochigi kenritsu monjokan kenkyū kiyō,* Vol.11 (2007), pp.44-62.

[131] Obama-shi Kyōiku Iinkai bunka-ka (eds.). *Sakai-ke hennen shiryō sōran.* Obama: Obama-shi Kyōiku Iinkai, 1989. Pp.289.

[132] The new Meiji Government quickly set out to remake Japan into a 'modern and prosperous state.' In the process, many of the existing Tokugawa institutions were quickly discarded, amongst which were the status system and the system of semi-independent domains. See: Jansen, Marius. "The Ruling Class." In, Jansen, Marius and Rozman, Gilbert (eds.). *Japan in Transition: From Tokugawa to Meiji.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986. Pp.68-90; Umegaki Michio. "From Domain to Prefecture." In, Jansen, Marius and Rozman, Gilbert (eds.). *Japan in Transition: From Tokugawa to Meiji.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986. Pp.91-110.

how individuals were understood but rather the dichotomies between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable,' registered and unregistered, 'domestic' and 'foreign,' and well-connected and unconnected.

The idea of rōnin as a transient entity was heightened through the fact that many were forced to look for new opportunities for income. Whereas some were able to detach themselves from the social environment which was the prerequisite for their social label by going abroad, this option was only open to a few and was curtailed early during the Tokugawa period. In lieu of opportunities to leave Japan or become integrated into settled social units, institutions such as the *Fuke* sect created social spaces where some rōnin could move freely and attempt to find ways to make a living. However, the sect also opened up space to abuse the advantages membership offered. Such public abuse of common activities, such as begging, along with other, more extreme acts of criminality perpetuated by some rōnin, reinforced common stereotypes of rōnin. The marginal position of those rōnin who were not in a position to take advantage of opportunities of employment (or unwilling to do so) could entice some to engage in illicit activity.

The relation between rōnin and violent criminality could have severe consequences and the suspicions aimed at rōnin remained throughout the period. Yet if one could find a position which was acceptable and did not remove one from the social hierarchy, this association to martial skill could open up possibilities for social advancement. Through the creation of martial arts schools, the demand for teachers of martial skills and the need for sanctioned keepers of the peace, rōnin could leverage their presumed connection to violence in order to obtain employment and an 'acceptable' place within the Tokugawa social order. However, the central focus on rōnin as potentially violent and oppositional elements throughout the Tokugawa period cemented their

position as a disturbing and unwanted factor in both popular discussions at the time as well as much contemporary scholarly discussion on the period. By analyzing transience and violence, this chapter has shown that even with regards to the two most often associated characteristics of rōnin there was internal differentiation based upon context. Characteristics generally interpreted as negative and belonging to 'unacceptable' rōnin could become positive when placed in the right circumstance. Movement and violence were not necessarily understood as negative and much of their interpretation rested on already instated dichotomies between rōnin within the system and those outside of it.

## *Conclusion*

On the 2nd of June 2018, the Asahi Newspaper reported that a number of government agencies showed concern that the number of rōnin in the Tokyo metropolitan area and the Kantō area was on the rise.[1] Eight months later a local newspaper discussed discrimination specifically aimed at women and rōnin.[2] Though published 150 years after the fall of the Tokugawa *bakufu*, these reports are strikingly similar to Tokugawa period accounts of rōnin gathering in urban areas or edicts specifically barring rōnin and women from certain places. However, whereas most Tokugawa era readers would have imagined disruptive men roaming the countryside, for contemporary readers these reports conjure images of Japanese teenagers in school uniform studiously hunched over a desk. In modern-day Japan, the term rōnin has been adapted to refer to high school students forced into a year of additional, independent studying after failing to pass university entrance exams.[3] The continued existence of rōnin as a meaningful social label as demonstrated by these articles reveals both the contextual adaptability of the term as well its

[1] Doi Shinpei and Masuya Fumio. " 'A-hantei' demo fugōkaku, fueru rōninsei, nyūgaku kotowaru yobikō." *Asahi Shimbun Digital,* June 2, 2018. https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASL5H77NVL5HUTIL067.html.
[2] "Igakubu nyūshi, fukusū daigaku ga fusei ka: joshi ya rōnin no atsukai furi ni." *Fukui Shimbun,* October 12, 2018. https://www.fukuishimbun.co.jp/articles/-/717689.
[3] Stevenson, David and Baker, David. "Shadow Education and Allocation in Formal Schooling: Transition to University in Japan." *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol.97, No.6 (May 1992), pp.1643.

consistent association with the broad notion of un-rootedness and a sense of lack, with individuals unable to fulfil the potential of their assumed position.

This dissertation set out to examine the meaning of the term rōnin within the Tokugawa context and shows that even within this context the rōnin label was far more complex and varied than presented. By looking at the application and experience of the rōnin label across diverse contexts within Tokugawa Japan it elucidates the seemingly incompatible difference between what a rōnin was, and what a rōnin was supposed to be. This difference was essential to the lived experience of Tokugawa rōnin who existed not on the margins of society, but were instead integrated elements of a system thoroughly at home with what, in modern eyes, might seem like incompatibilities. Whilst this work therefore expands and complicates previous discussions of the position rōnin held in the Tokugawa period, it also contributes to broader literature on the interaction between institutional and everyday understandings of identity and status. Specifically, the examination of rōnin enables the subjective and mutable nature of social labels in a pre-modern context to be demonstrated. In order to find an 'acceptable' place within society, rōnin actively and creatively engaged with their social label. At times they were able to use the 'gray area' the label occupied to their advantage, for example by highlighting familial connections to *bushi* status or assumed skills, whilst at other times its negative associations forced them into precarious socio-economic positions.

Despite their typical discussion, in both popular and academic texts, as 'outsiders,' this research reveals that rōnin were a vital demographic through which authorities navigated the incongruities between the idealized institutional Tokugawa social model and the reality of a social landscape riddled with pre-existing and locally constituted social identities. At the same time, rōnin themselves have been shown to be active and creative social actors whose positions

changed and evolved throughout the Tokugawa period, guided by personal interest and social circumstance.

Variations and differences between rōnin and the ways in which they interacted with society are, as shown in this work, found in documents throughout the Tokugawa period yet, despite this, the popular interpretation of rōnin as 'outsiders,' 'rebels' or 'ruffians' could have very real and negative consequences. Resultantly, a group which was in reality extremely diverse was often reduced to the image of its most visible and disruptive subset. Though certain rōnin did indeed 'loiter in the streets of Edo' or 'roam about the countryside,' the reduction of rōnin to such descriptions is more indicative of the social, political and economic changes and difficulties facing Tokugawa Japan than it is of the diverse and complex social reality of being rōnin.

This complexity has hitherto been further obscured by the conception of rōnin as necessarily *bushi.* Whilst in the social context of Tokugawa Japan status was certainly one of the clearest markers of social place and social identity, as this dissertation has shown, its institutional understanding did not always map onto its everyday manifestations. Consequently, there was a distinction that was crucial to rōnin experience between the theory and practice of their social position. Drawing on the work of Luke Roberts, Maren Ehlers and David Howell, this research has added to understandings of the 'messiness' of the Tokugawa state, from the high echelons of *bakufu* government down to the negotiations of social status within villages. However, what this dissertation has additionally demonstrated is that even when taking a varied and reality-based approach to social status in Tokugawa Japan, the concept of rōnin resists any clear social meaning, thereby further complicating understandings of how people navigated their social positions.

Though often presented as existing on the margins of the status system, rōnin in fact acted as full members of the Tokugawa system. However, whilst other 'peripheral' groups, such as the *eta* or *hinin,* were able to coalesce into independent, socially understandable units, this research has argued that the internal variety of the rōnin population prevented those carrying the label from forming a cohesive group identity. Whereas in certain domains rōnin were grouped under the auspices of a *rōnin bugyō,* even these groupings were based on experience and circumstance rather than the rōnin label itself. As a result, many rōnin were forced to seek integration into existing units of social control, be it with the aid of their label or despite of it. By looking at a variety of domainal interactions with their rōnin populations, this work has shown that rōnin integrated within social units were not local idiosyncrasies. Though the exact manner of their social position varied, the integration of rōnin as part of recognizable social units was a fundamental part of Tokugawa society.

For the Tokugawa, therefore, rōnin were not problems until they outwardly conformed to the characteristics of transience and violence set as 'unacceptable' because they were in opposition to the governing logic of the Tokugawa state. As with other potential 'problems,' rōnin were tacitly allowed to exist as long as they were integrated as part of the accepted social hierarchy. For domains this meant that alternative configurations of status, such as the *harashi* and *guntsuki rōnin* of Awa domain, were an effective means of avoiding *bakufu* scrutiny of their rōnin population by 'rooting' them within local hierarchies. Moreover, by creating new social categories, domains were able to avoid the dissatisfaction certain rōnin could feel at being placed within 'lower' status groups which would not afford them the rights to which they felt entitled. This 'modularization' of the rōnin label shows both the complexity of the social landscape of Tokugawa Japan and the fact that in certain circumstances the descriptive capacity of the rōnin

label was insufficient. Central to understanding the rōnin label is therefore the interplay between social discourse and social experience, and the ways that formal and informal institutional practice interacted. The re-examination of rōnin in this work reveals the dialogic nature of the creation of socially understandable groups and highlights the incongruities and ambiguities that made up the 'messiness' inherent in the Tokugawa system.

The 'messiness' of the Tokugawa system was in many ways a result of the incorporation of pre-Tokugawa social forms and practices into the new state. By exploring the pre-Tokugawa history of the term rōnin, this work establishes that, though often directly linked to the social and political environment of the Tokugawa period, it had had a long and complex history before the seventeenth century and did not arrive in 1603 free of intellectual baggage. Instead, prior ambiguities inherent in the conception of rōnin remained embedded within the term despite its crystallization and adaptation during the Tokugawa period. Further, this crystallization of the term occurred during the formative period of Tokugawa power and was in many ways dictated by the preoccupations of the newly established order. The concept of a 'rōnin problem' shown to have emerged in the 1650s was therefore, retrospectively, less about rōnin and more about the adaptations Tokugawa society, in particular its elites, was undergoing in coming to terms with the new social, political and economic realities of peace.

It was, however, the creation of the Tokugawa state and its subsequent evolution that determined the institutional understandings of what rōnin were. As incongruities in one's place in society became increasingly visible, the rōnin label became at odds with the logic of social ordering due to its indication of a 'lack of place.' Established characteristics related to movement and belonging embedded through earlier usage were juxtaposed with Tokugawa ideas of social place to make the institutional understanding of rōnin that of perennial 'outsiders.' It is this

centralized image that led to rōnin being cast as disruptive, transient 'outsiders' in the subsequent historical narrative of Tokugawa Japan. However, as shown in this work, the outward articulation of what rōnin were did not always correspond to the realities of their lives or indeed with the actions taken by the *bakufu*.

The *bakufu* understanding of rōnin was heavily shaped by the events of the first decades of the Tokugawa period such as the siege of Osaka, the Shimabara rebellion and the attempted coups of the 1650s. Though some rōnin did indeed take up arms against the Tokugawa due to their dissatisfaction with the new order, however, many others found ways to reintegrate themselves into society, for example as doctors, farmers, or teachers. The rōnin population was therefore subjected to a broad, implicit divide between those deemed 'acceptable' and those who were 'unacceptable' according to the governing logic of the Tokugawa state, and as this dissertation makes clear, there was no such thing as a 'Tokugawa rōnin,' either at the level of institutional understanding or social experience. During the second half of the seventeenth century the label became increasingly involved in the legal matters of status distinction and social position, its ambiguity and increasing hereditation making it a potent vehicle for social mobility. Active dialogue therefore took place between domains and rōnin wishing to alter or adapt their official social label. Providing one was in possession of, or had the ability to create, the necessary documents or lineage, it was possible to manipulate and manage one's social position. The 'gray area' in which the rōnin label functioned offered multiple ways to leverage family background in an environment where status was hereditary and legal procedures were based on precedent.

At the same time as dialogue became increasingly necessary between domain and rōnin, the *bakufu* was similarly forced to adopt a more dialogic approach to attainder after the 1650s, as

the simple, raw application of power became less viable. Though less frequently and more carefully applied, this did not mean that moments of attainder became less important and locally they had long-lasting social ramifications. As the rōnin created through such events sought new homes and livelihoods, they were forced to use the resources at their disposal and decide where their best interests lay in order to contend with the possible negative effects of their new social label.

The evolving social and economic realities of the Tokugawa period presented rōnin with opportunities of employment and resettlement which were not only found in the growing urban centers, but throughout Japan as peripheral areas could form 'gravity wells' for those in search of employment or income. Whilst rōnin have typically been associated with cities, much of this preconception is once again based around the idea that rōnin were essentially *bushi* who formed the majority of urban populations. However, rōnin can be found across the Japanese archipelago in village registers and domainal surveys, and as crucial actors in land reclamation and mining projects. Not only do these registers demonstrate the increasingly hereditary nature of the rōnin label, but they also reveal the ways in which it could be leveraged for advantage in unexpected ways. Whilst the label held negative popular and institutional meanings, within a local social landscape its connections with *bushi* status and particular skill sets could be capitalized on, highlighting its subjective and mutable nature. Even characteristics associated with 'unacceptable' rōnin, such as violence and transience, were also, however, contextually interpreted. Not only could rōnin utilize their education or martial ability to gain 'accepted' employment, for example as teachers or sumo wrestlers, but even those who did not possess such skills could leverage the popular, and often 'negative,' associations of their label to their advantage.

## *Conclusion*

Rather than being 'outsiders' on the margins of society, rōnin have been shown to have existed at the center of the Tokugawa social world. The interactions between these people and the institutions of authority shaped the ways in which the differences between institutional status and social reality were navigated. Rōnin did indeed roam the land in Tokugawa Japan creating problems and harboring the potential for violence and disruption. However, this was only a small part of what rōnin were. For every rōnin taking part in a street brawl, many others worked the land and for every rōnin seeking to rebel against the Tokugawa, numerous others tethered their success to the status quo.

## Appendix: Measurement Conversions

**Area:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 *ken* | = 1 *tsubo/bu* | = 3.30 $m^2$ |
| 30 *bu* | = 1 *se* | = 99.49 $m^2$ |
| 10 *se* | = 1 *tan* | = 0.099 Hectare |
| 10 *tan* | = 1 *chō* | = 0.99 Hectare |

**Volume:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10 *shaku* | = 1 *gō* | = 0.1807 Litres (0.318 pints) |
| 10 *gō* | = 1 *shō* | = 1.807 Litres (3.18 pints) |
| 10 *shō* | = 1 *to* | = 18.048 Litres (3.97 gallons) |
| 4 *to* | = 1 *hyō* | = 72.374 Litres (1.99 bushels) |
| 10 *to* | = 1 *koku* | = 180.389 Litres (4.96 bushels) |
| 2.5 *hyō* | = 1 *koku* | = “ “ ( “ “ ) |

## Reference Abbreviations

**OKS** - Okayama-ken Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Okayama-ken shi [30 Volumes]*. Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1985-1991.

**TSS** - Tsuyama-shi Shihensan Iinkai (eds.). *Tsuyama-shi shi [7 Volumes].* Tsuyama: Tsuyama shiyakusho, 1973-1985.

**ROJ** - Osakajō Tenshukaku (eds.). *Ronin-tachi no Osaka no jin.* Osaka: Osakajō Tenshukaku, 2014.

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