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YANAGISAWA YOSHIYASU
A REAPPRAISAL

Beatrice M Bodart-Bailey

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ABSTRACT

Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, the influential Grand Chamberlain of the fifth Tokugawa shogun, has traditionally been cast in a bad role. This reappraisal attempts to show that his unprecedented rise from humble bannerman to powerful minister and the animosity it provoked were intimately linked with the shogun's efforts to establish autocratic power.

During the reign of the fourth shogun the fudai daimyo had come to dominate the administration, considerably weakening the authority of the shogunate. The fifth shogun attempted to remedy this situation by employing men who identified with his aim of strengthening central authority. Yoshiyasu, born into the household of the shogun-to-be and trained to obey and serve, was eminently qualified to become Tsunayoshi's dedicated minister. As the man who deprived the fudai of their influence in the administration and executed policies undermining the privileged position of the military aristocracy, his unpopularity was inevitable. Yoshiyasu was well aware of his powerful enemies and took elaborate steps to defend his reputation and to ensure the continued prosperity of his house after Tsunayoshi's death.

Using Max Weber's theory as a guide, it is suggested that Tsunayoshi's much criticised policies were motivated by his desire to turn a society with feudal characteristics into a centrally dominated state. The resultant increase in the sophistication of the bureaucracy led to the appearance of Japan's first "professional politicians" with Yoshiyasu distinguishing himself as the "leading politician."
This interpretation of the period is contrasted with Kurita Mototsugu's theory of change from militarism to civil administration. In addition the political writings of Ogyū Sorai are examined for their views on shogunal authority and for the light they throw on the government of the fifth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu.
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NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Names of historical figures are abbreviated by citing the personal name unless convention dictates otherwise (e.g. "Asano" and not "Naganori").

Age is given according to Japanese calculation.

The following abbreviations have been used:

- **Ason jikki**: Kai shōshō ason jikki
- **Eibyo**: Eibyo gojitsuroku (4 Vols: haru, natsu, aki, fuyu)
- **HJ**: Yanagisawa ke hizō jikki
- **KCS**: Kansei chōshū shokafu
- **MK**: Matsukage nikki
- **Nenroku**: Rakushidō nenroku
- **NZKS**: Nihon zaisei keizai shiryō
- **SJ**: Shōshō jiroku
- **TJ**: Tokugawa jikki
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INTRODUCTION
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INTRODUCTION

1. APPRAISAL OF EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

No sovereign in all history was ever more blighted in his career or reputation than Tsunayoshi by his favourite, Yanaqisawa ...

_A History of Japan, 1926_

Yanaqisawa Yoshiyasu, the Grand Chamberlain of the fifth Tokugawa shogun, has traditionally suffered from a bad reputation. Like other men whose rise from humble birth to high official appointment defied the strict hierarchical order of Tokugawa society, he was cast into the classical mould of the evil counsellor, Japan's equivalent to the eunuchs of China. Together with Tanuma Okitsugu (1719-1788) and Mizuno Tadaakira (1762-1834), Yoshiyasu was mocked in popular verse, and his many vices were described at length in theatrical plays, historical fiction and works which made more claims to scholarship.

When the ridiculing of upstarts lost much of its political significance with the Meiji restoration, Yoshiyasu's reputation still did not improve markedly. One scholar, Sakata Morotoshi, however, sat down to examine in thirty years of painstaking work all available documentation on Yoshiyasu's life and in one hundred Japanese volumes exhaustively

examined every charge brought against him. He came to the conclusion that Yoshiyasu's bad reputation was not justified and that, on the contrary, he was one of the most loyal and enlightened ministers of his age. Sakata's monumental work, completed in Meiji 30 (1897) and entitled Kai shōshō ason jikki had little impact upon the general trend of historiography and in spite of its meticulous scholarship remains unpublished to this day. Neither did a lengthy article published in the same year by Torino Kōji, similarly trying to give a favourable image of Yoshiyasu, have much effect.

Towards the turn of this century Japanese scholars were attempting to gain a more comprehensive view of the Tokugawa era and the theory of alternating periods of strong and weak government evolved. In this analysis the early reforms of Tsunayoshi's administration at the time of Hotta Masatoshi were seen as strong government, while the later period, that of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu's influence, was described as weak. The standard histories that appeared in the first half of this century, such as Ikeda Kōen's Tokugawa jidai shi, Tokutomi Iichirō's Kinsei Nihon kokuimin shi and Mikami Sanji's Edo jidai shi, all basically conformed to this view. It was not difficult to find documents proving the inefficiency and moral bankruptcy of Yoshiyasu's so-called chamberlain government in the writings of people deeply antagonistic to the rise of this upstart. Material, such as the relatively popular and easily accessible

2. For location of manuscripts see bibliography.
works of Arai Hakuseki - strongly critical of Tsunayoshi's later government - convinced many scholars that this negative view of the period and particularly of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was a justifiable one.

All the same there were some historians who did not follow this trend. In Taishō 1 (1912) Yoshiyasu was accorded posthumous honours by the emperor for his restoration of the imperial tombs prompting reappraisals of both the man and the period. Among the earliest was that of Kurita Mototsugu, who came to the conclusion that Tsunayoshi's government represented one of the high points of the Tokugawa period, marking the important change from militarism (budan shugi) to civil administration (bunji/bunchi shugi). 5 Another important contribution was made by Tsuji Zennosuke, who in the course of reappraising Yoshiyasu's character paid special attention to his religious and philosophical ideas and activities. 6 Also around this time excerpts from Sakata's painstaking work were for the first time made available to the public in a book-length work on Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, which quoted verbatim long passages from his Kai shōshō ason jikki, but failed to acknowledge this fact. 7

The trend towards reappraisal has continued in the second half of this century and produced such scholarly works as Tsuji Tatsuya's Kyōhō kaikaku no kenkyū, devoting much thought to Tsunayoshi's administration, and Morita Yoshikazu's careful study of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. The image of Yoshiyasu as the villain of Tokugawa history still exists, especially

5. "Inu kubō ron," Chōō shidan, 1.3, 1.5 (1920); "Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu ron," Chōō shidan, 2.5 (1921); Edo jidai shi (reprint, Tokyo, 1976). For discussion of Kurita's theory see Chapter 5, Section 4.

6. Tsuji Zennosuke, "Yanagisawa no ichimen," Shirin, 10.3 (1925), and Nihon bunka shi (Tokyo, 1953) betsuroku 3.

7. Hayashi Masaru, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (Tokyo, 1921).
in popular Japanese literature, but most historians now temper their description of his vices by some expression of doubt as to their historical soundness.

Also, English language works on Japanese history no longer uphold the extreme views of Murdoch's *History of Japan*. Two scholars, Donald H. Shively and Harold Bolitho, have written short but excellent studies on Tsunayoshi. Both writers have examined the problem of shogunal authority and its relationship to the appraisal of the period and it is in many ways their fundamental approach upon which this study is also based. 8

As a result the fifth Tokugawa shogun and his Grand Chamberlain Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu are no longer seen as caricatures, but as men, whose administration, however, had serious faults. The majority of writers are critical of at least two of Tsunayoshi's policies. Firstly, the devaluation of the coinage, usually seen as causing great financial hardship to his subjects. Secondly, the Laws of Compassion, resulting in the punishment of men for cruelty or negligence to animals; a policy with which even the most tolerant critics have been unable to justify. There is unanimity amongst Japanese historians that, if not the former, at least the latter policy must be ranked as the worst in Tokugawa history, inflicting untold sufferings on the people. Many historians seem strangely unconcerned that the prevailing impression of the Genroku period, spanning the greater part of Yoshiyasu's influence, is one of

prosperity, cultural renaissance if also moral laxity, prompting comparison with the boom of the Shōwa years. Not only the artistic heritage of the late seventeenth century, but also the perceptive observations of the novelist Saikaku confirm the picture of rising living standards, especially amongst the townspeople, and the euphoric mood which accompanied these changes. Scant evidence is found here of a suffering populace.

The economic historian Ōishi Shinzaburō noted on a more scholarly basis, this contradiction between the prosperity of the period and the image of a country oppressed by a cruel and autocratic government. While studying the economic progress of villages, he came to the conclusion that periods of prosperity were not associated with "moral" government, but, on the contrary, were periods much maligned for their corruption, such as that at the time of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. While in his earlier writings Ōishi had condemned Yoshiyasu's administration, he now held him up as one of the most enlightened statesmen of Tokugawa history. The commonly-praised early reforms of Tsunayoshi's government were called reactionary, while the policies of Yoshiyasu's administration, he saw as progressive and foresighted. He noted that surprisingly little detailed scholarship had been done on the period and condemned much of what had been done as coloured by moralistic prejudice.

Ōishi's new attitude placed emphasis on Yoshiyasu's political activity, something previous reappraisals had tried to avoid. Unable to come to terms with Tsunayoshi's policies, other scholars sympathetic to

10. For example in Nihon keizai shi ron (Tokyo, 1967), pp.76-77, 86.
12. ibid., pp.ii-iii.
Yoshiyasu had tried to establish his moral fibre by concentrating on his achievements outside the political arena, and at times gone so far as to assert that he had no political influence at all. Even Ōishi, however, could not fit the Laws of Compassion into his new interpretation of Yoshiyasu's administration, and, like his predecessors, had to view it in terms of moral bankruptcy. By implication Yoshiyasu must be seen as the man who tolerated what Ōishi also calls "the worst laws in the history of world feudalism." Thus having overcome some of the contradictions inherent in previous interpretations of the fifth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain, he still leaves us with the rather incongruous situation where an otherwise progressive and enlightened government enforces a cruel and misguided policy upon its subjects. Furthermore, Ōishi is compelled to resort to the same kind of moral judgement which he previously condemned to explain the adoption of this policy.

2. METHOD

My own research on this topic has shown that the question of central authority is one of the fundamental issues of this period. Under the fourth shogun Ietsuna shogunal power had greatly declined in favour of the fudai daimyo who carried on the administration of the country in the interests of the daimyo rather than the shogunate. Tsunayoshi's government and Yoshiyasu's career were shaped by the shogun's struggle to regain and enhance this lost authority.

A scholar who treated the issue of domination, authority and political power exhaustively was Max Weber. The scope of his scholarly activity finds expression in his Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft where he

13. Ōishi, Genroku jidai, p.20.
attempts to establish a pattern for forms of political and social organisation appearing throughout the course of human development. The "ideal types", or "models," he establishes are theoretical abstractions of basic trends in history. As representing the underlying pattern of historical reality they have, for Weber, universal validity.

Amongst these "models" the most interesting and relevant for this thesis is that concerning itself with the change from feudal society to modern central bureaucratic state. In the European setting this was a slow process, taking approximately half a millennium to complete. The dominant feature of this development, for Weber, is the attempt of the feudal ruler to establish an autocratic government by expropriation of the material goods and authority hitherto held by his most powerful vassals. To assist him in this attempt, he relies on men with the requisite education outside the military aristocracy, within which he so far has stood as primus inter pares. The new men whom the ruler calls into his service are of relatively humble status and completely dependent upon him for the advancement of their career and material sustenance. Assisting him in the execution of his policies with undivided loyalty, they become his most important tool in the fight for authority against his powerful vassals. Once the process of centralisation has begun, the development of a central bureaucracy is essential to fulfill the new demands made upon the administration of the country. The ruler's new men distinguish themselves by their service in this institution and some advance to the position of what Weber terms "leading politicians."14

14. Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (reprint Tübingen, 1972), pp.823-37 (henceforth cited as WG). The greater part of this work has been translated as Economy and Society (New York, 1968), but Section 8 of the last chapter has been omitted. References to the translation are given where appropriate.
It is suggested here that this particular model in Weber's theories can profitably be employed to analyse the significance of the period under discussion and the part played by Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu in the government of the fifth Tokugawa shogun. This should not be seen as an attempt to interpret the period in terms of European history. It must be emphasised that Weber's model is only an abstraction of human behaviour. As such it classifies the underlying similarities of the political process as a manifestation of this behaviour.

In this context some explanation is needed of the term "feudal." The question whether it is permissible to apply the word in the context of Japanese history is a controversial one. In this thesis the term is used within the reservations and limitations proposed by Hall when he writes that "Japan during a certain period of its history developed a pattern of society which bore a specific resemblance to the essential features of an admittedly theoretical social model."\(^{15}\)

Max Weber saw Tokugawa Japan as feudal but without the system of secure land tenure characteristic of some types of feudalism.\(^{16}\)

Another question to be discussed is Weber's statement that the development of a rational bureaucratic state was not possible in the Far East due to the irrational magical beliefs to which governments were subject.\(^{17}\) During the period under discussion, the governing élite as well as the rest of the population were strongly influenced by what Weber would term "irrational beliefs." There is no indication, however, that these beliefs influenced practical administration. Ceremonial

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16. WG, p.627-29; *Economy and Society*, 3:1072.
17. E.g., WG, p.826.
taboos were strictly adhered to and natural catastrophies interpreted as reproof by the gods, but they did not significantly alter political strategies. These beliefs, in fact, were no more or less irrational than some of the Christian doctrines that appeared throughout the ages and which, similarly, did not prevent the formation of rational bureaucratic institutions.

Finally it must be made clear that in adopting Weber’s model of change from feudal society to central bureaucratic state, it is not suggested that such a fundamental change took place within the thirty-year period of Tsunayoshi’s government. It is suggested only that in the period under discussion an early stage of this development took place, characterised by the initial efforts of the ruler to acquire some of the authority hitherto vested in his powerful vassals. Inherent in this process was the rise of a man like Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. In replacing the upper military aristocracy as senior administrator of the country and executing the shogun’s policies, which eroded the privileged position of the samurai and especially the daimyo, he played a significant part in this development.

Seeing the period and Yoshiyasu against the background of Weber’s model has several advantages. The most important of these is that moral value judgements can be dispensed with. Apart from the fact that subsequent subjective judgements serve no useful purpose in describing historical events, the documents furnish inadequate information on the private character of either Tsunayoshi or Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, and the little reliable information that is available does not support the

18. See Chapter IV, Section 2, where it is suggested that the Laws of Compassion, though prompted by religious sentiments, were not due to “irrational beliefs.”
traditional picture. In the process of such an analysis it becomes apparent that the bad reputation of the ruler and his Grand Chamberlain was the natural result of the struggle for political domination; one party in this contest - the upper military aristocracy - using its influence in later decades to popularise its one-sided version of this confrontation. Both the opposition Yoshiyasu already encountered during his lifetime and the extent to which his personal behaviour was slandered after his death, were indicators of his effectiveness in increasing shogunal authority at the expense of the daimyo.

Furthermore, when the policies of the period are seen against the framework of Weber's model, they no longer appear as the erratic schemes of a half enlightened and half evil government, but as conforming to a consistent pattern of political thought. In the final analysis it was the shogun's efforts to establish autocratic power which resulted in such apparently unconnected measures as the monetary reform and the strict enforcement of the Laws of Compassion.

This reappraisal of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu will be structured in the following way. The final part of this first chapter will discuss the primary sources used in the thesis. These primary sources form the backbone of the argument and consequently some thought must be devoted to their reliability and limitations. Secondary sources have been consulted at length, but as, in general, their fundamental approach differs, they have frequently not been cited in the text. On the whole, the existing secondary literature relies heavily on some works which are here regarded with suspicion and has neglected others, which have been found of great value. However, apart from occasions where it is relevant to the argument, criticism of individual writers has been avoided.
Instead an attempt has been made to look at the period free from the value judgements that resulted from the traditional preference for certain selected sources.

The second chapter is devoted to a narrative of Yoshiyasu's life, based mainly on two documents which so far have received little attention from historians: the diary of his concubine and a record compiled by the Confucian scholars of his house. The purpose is to acquaint the reader with the background and main events of Yoshiyasu's career, and little attempt has been made at analysis.

The third chapter begins with an examination of the socio-political situation confronting the fifth shogun on his accession and the measures he chose to deal with it. This is followed by an analysis of both the men he called into his service and the new offices he created to make use of their potential ability. Yoshiyasu's rise to a position of influence is examined in this context and some attention paid to the opposition produced by this process. In conclusion, Weber's model is applied to the subject under discussion and the question examined whether Yoshiyasu can be seen as a forerunner of Weber's "leading politician."

Some of the major policies of Tsunayoshi's government are discussed in the fourth chapter. Both the role Yoshiyasu played in their execution and the effect these measures had in promoting the political aims of the shogun are analysed.

The fifth chapter is devoted to various aspects of Yoshiyasu's reputation. To begin with, material is presented to document that already during his lifetime Yoshiyasu was well aware of the politically dangerous path he was treading. An account is given of the elaborate precautions he took, both to fortify his reputation against later
slander and to ensure the continued prosperity of his house, even after his personal influence had ceased. In this context the writings of the philosopher Ogyū Sorai are examined with regard to the information they furnish about the thought - and the perpetuation of this thought - underlying the policies administered by Yoshiyasu. Finally the theory fundamental to Kurita Mototsugu's revaluation of Yoshiyasu and the period is examined and juxtaposed to that of Max Weber.

3. SOURCES

As in other areas of Tokugawa history, the basic work for the period is Tokugawa jikki. Although this nineteenth century compilation is not strictly speaking a primary source, it nevertheless provides a detailed and generally reliable description of events. The work is mainly based on the monumental Edo bakufu nikkī, a detailed and as yet unpublished record of the daily events of the government, which has not been available to the writer. It is hoped that the main drawback of Tokugawa jikki - the fact that the selection of material is limited to matters deemed important to the compiler - has been overcome by cross-checking the material with basically similar documents which were available in the original.

The most important of these, and a work frequently cited in Tokugawa jikki, is Kembyō jitsuroku, the official account of Tsunayoshi's reign. Controversy exists about its authorship. Usually it is attributed to the scholar Ogyū Sorai, who spent the early part of his career in the Yanagisawa mansion and was also later supported by the family. Assigning the authorship to Sorai appears to be justified by the story

19. Manuscript, see Bibliography.
that Yoshiyasu asked Sorai why he had attributed to him responsibility for the policy known as Laws of Compassion.\footnote{Ken'en zatsuwa translated in Olof G. Lidin, *The Life of Ogyū Sorai a Tokugawa Confucian Philosopher* (Lund, 1973), p.161.} One can argue, however, that the source containing the story, compiled after Sorai's death by an unknown disciple, is not altogether reliable on this point. The passage in *Kembyō jitsuroku* does not completely lay the blame on Yoshiyasu's shoulders, but by subtle argument shifts it to the rest of the officialdom; a piece of writing one could well imagine to have come from the hand of the man who personally had to apply these policies.\footnote{See Chapter IV, Section 2 for elaboration of this topic.} Several sources state that Sorai received his final increase of stipend on completing this document for presentation to the eighth shogun Yoshimune,\footnote{*Eibyō gojitsuroku, haru, natsu.* Manuscript, see Bibliography and below (henceforth cited as *Eibyō*). Also *Yanagisawa ke hizō jikki*, in Vol.3 of *Kai sōsho kankō kai, Kai sōsho* (Tokyo, 1974), 54-55, 76, (henceforth cited as *HJ*).} but this does not necessarily imply that he wrote the work. It could merely indicate that he was responsible for editing the final draft,\footnote{See Lidin, *Ogyū Sorai*, p.56.} which would be in line with the claims made by another retainer of the Yanagisawa family, the scholar Hattori Nankaku. Nankaku maintains that the *Kembyō jitsuroku* was written with his assistance by Yoshiyasu during the latter's retirement.\footnote{Letter of Hattori Nankaku quoted by Hino Tatsuo, *Sorai gakuha* (Tokyo, 1975), p.182.} Most probably several scholars worked on the document under Yoshiyasu's direction and, at any rate, there can be little doubt of its historical reliability. It is said that the eighth shogun studied the work carefully and approved all, except the passage discussed above concerning the responsibility for the Laws of Compassion.
Apparently not inclined to tolerate any excuses on behalf of his predecessor, Yoshimune maintained that the fifth shogun was solely responsible for this unpopular measure and the work was altered accordingly.26

A manuscript seldom mentioned by historians, but of great value to this thesis, is Rakushidō nenroku,27 similarly compiled by the Confucian scholars of the Yanagisawa mansion. The circumstances of its origin are well documented. A sudden fire in Genroku 15 (1702) burnt down the Yanagisawa mansion, allowing not even the family records to be saved. Concerned at this loss, Yoshiyasu set out to search for oral testimony and chronicles about his ancestry as well as his own life and finally managed to obtain documentation covering about half the records that had been destroyed. It was then compiled into one manuscript and named Rakushidō nenroku, and from that time on daily entries of Yoshiyasu’s official life were added.28

Rakushidō nenroku starts with a summary of Yoshiyasu’s distant ancestry and concludes with his retirement several months after Tsunayoshi’s death in Hōei 6 (1709). Except for the initial discussion of Yoshiyasu’s genealogy it is written in the form of dated entries, although at first these were not daily. All the same, even during the early stages of Yoshiyasu’s career, information is fairly detailed and covers events not mentioned in more official documents, such as a broken promise of marriage, when the groom-to-be of an adopted daughter fell from grace with the shogun.29 By about Genroku 8 (1695) a profuse amount of detail starts to

27. See Bibliography (henceforth cited as Nenroku).
29. ibid., Vol.21, 4D 2M Genroku 7. The groom-to-be was Yamana Yasutoyo. TJ, 43:189 of this date merely notes that Yamana was punished.
fill the pages, noting every gift exchanged and ceremony performed. In later years the manuscript painstakingly records all occasions on which Yoshiyasu or a member of his family visited Edo castle - not infrequently several times daily - and goes to the extent of specifying the type of garments worn.

Nevertheless, amongst all these trivia a wealth of more important information can be found. Correspondence received by Yoshiyasu is copied, ranging from notes by the shogun himself to letters from religious dignitaries and court nobles. There are what appear to be facsimiles of documents such as shogunal patents and word-for-word records of religious and philosophical debates, often in Chinese with the Ming pronunciation carefully noted in Japanese script. Of greatest interest to this thesis, however, are the verbatim reports of Tsunayoshi's speeches on Yoshiyasu's promotions. One might question whether these are in fact a true record of the shogunal words and not Yoshiyasu's version for posterity. However, if the shogun's speeches had been tailored by hagiographical considerations, it is most likely that this fact would have been noted somewhere in the later writings of the many famous and less famous scholars serving at one time or another at the Yanagisawa mansion, for Rakushido nenroku was not kept secret. This is apparent from the fact that, for instance, the record of Ienobu's reply to Yoshiyasu's petition for retirement, after Tsunayoshi's death, is not included, it being only noted that such information was kept elsewhere. When Rakushido nenroku was completed several months later, after Yoshiyasu had finally been permitted to retire, this issue was still a

sensitive one. Yet if the scholars responsible for the record had been sworn to secrecy, such precautions would have been unnecessary. In view of the above, it seems highly unlikely that Yoshiyasu, with his great concern for his reputation, would have charged his scholars to falsify the shogun's public statements on his promotions.

*Rakushidō nenroku* supplies a wealth of detail about Yoshiyasu's life, but in its terse, semi-official style does not volunteer any information about the more personal side of his existence. This gap is filled by *Matsukage nikki*, the diary of his concubine Machiko. In the strict sense of the word, it should not be called a diary, for it is not a record of daily occurrences, but a sophisticated narrative, artistically weaving together individual events. Reminiscent in style and language of the great works of the Heian period, it is what Earl Miner would call a "poetic diary." Frequent allusions to the classical literature of China and Japan expand the horizon of the narrative and give Yoshiyasu's life deeper symbolic meaning. Poetry is used to further heighten the artistic element, yet never serves as mere embellishment. Miner points out that poetry was an integral part of upper class life, and also in *Matsukage nikki*, the verses cited are those composed by Yoshiyasu, his family and friends, or an expression of the author's deep-felt sentiments.

In spite of the literary merits of this work, its authenticity cannot be doubted. All its descriptions of major events correspond


accurately with evidence from other documents and when the shogun's words are quoted, they closely resemble those recorded in Rakushidō nenroku. One may, of course, suspect that Machiko based her diary on the latter document when, after Yoshiyasu's retirement, she decided to write her personal account of his career. If she did, it would nevertheless not detract from the value of her work, for frequently it is not the description of actual events, but her personal comments, observation of detail and recollection of common talk which subtly reveal a great amount of information.

In her final pages Machiko frankly admits that Matsukage nikki was written for a purpose. It was to counteract the malicious gossip surrounding Yoshiyasu and furnish, for his descendants, a record of his remarkable achievements. The reader, therefore, has reason to suspect hagiographical tendencies. Machiko was well aware of this possible charge and protested that even though her account might sound flattering, she could only faithfully describe the events she had witnessed. If, in spite of Machiko's protestations, some allowance is made for the fact that she was after all Yoshiyasu's concubine and mother of his second and third sons, her diary is still of great historical value.

The importance and reliability of Matsukage nikki is also conceded by Matsuura Seisan (1760-1841), who as an associate of Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758-1829) is an unlikely candidate to defend upstarts such as Yoshiyasu. It is to this diary of Yoshiyasu's concubine that he refers his readers for a true picture of Tsunayoshi's government in his

34. MK, p.227.
criticism of two other works, which gave rise to much of the colourful but historically unsound literature on the fifth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain.  

The first work he censures is Sannō gaiki, a mock biography in the terse style of the Chinese classics, parodying the lives of the fifth, sixth and seventh shogun, with by far the most imaginative treatment being accorded to the alleged vices of Tsunayoshi. The author chose to remain anonymous, but the work is generally attributed to Dazai Shundai, a view to which Matsuura Seizan also subscribes. Shundai was a disciple of Ogyū Sorai and it is unexpected that he should set out to slander the fifth shogun and Yoshiyasu, men with whom his teacher had stood in high favour. Yet Shundai was a somewhat reluctant student of Sorai's, jealous of the greater attention younger disciples received and was not beyond later criticising his teacher on various points. One of the differences between the two men hinged on the proper approach to the ancient Chinese sages, perhaps prompting Shundai to parody Sorai's treatment of the classics and to ridicule the patrons of his teacher in Sannō gaiki.  

Matsuura Seizan greatly condemned Shundai's spread of "false scholarship" and was adamant that not more than one tenth of this work  

36. There are a number of works such as Nikkō kantan makura, Genroku Hōei shinwa, Genshō kanki, Tōeizan tsuya monogatari, etc. Because of their total unreliability they have not been used or discussed in this thesis.  

37. Sannō gaiki (Tokyo, 1880). The work is written in the style of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien's Historical Records.  

38. See also Shively, "Tokugawa Tsunayoshi," pp.88-89.  

described actual events. He quoted the authority of his teacher Hayashi Jussai (1768-1841), but this judgement can soon be verified by cross-checking the contents of Sannō gaiki with other, more reliable documents.

The second work which Matsuura Seizan condemns as spurious is Gokoku onna taiheiki, believed to have been written by a dissatisfied minor official at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Contemporaries knew it was pure fiction, he notes, but as time passed people began to wonder whether it might not have been true after all.

Seizan is somewhat less critical of another writer, also frequently cited to document the moral bankruptcy of the Genroku period, namely Arai Hakuseki. Although he notes that this scholar, who came to prominence under the sixth shogun, Ienobu, never ceased to criticise the preceding government of Tsunayoshi, Seizan is satisfied that Hakuseki did not carelessly slander people and mislead posterity with falsehoods.

The high moral standards Hakuseki had set for himself would hardly have allowed him to consciously distort historical events. Yet he believed in the Confucian dictum "put in History that only which is worthy of the record," and consequently decided that such shameful acts as Ienobu's passion for dancing in no performances should find no mention.

41. A thorough rebuttal of Sannō gaiki is contained in Sakata Morotoshi, Kai shōshō ason jikki, manuscript, see Bibliography (henceforth cited as Ason jikki). A good shorter work is Morita Yoshi-kazu, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (Tokyo, 1975).
42. Tsukamoto Tetsuzō, Gokoku onna taiheiki (Tokyo, 1927). For authorship and date see Kasshi yawa, p.253.
43. ibid.
44. Kasshi yawa, p.253.
While Hakuseki saw it proper to prune in such a fashion the history of the government he served, he obviously did not follow the same principles when writing about that of the preceding shogun. Thus while Hakuseki might have seen himself as a scrupulously honest historian, uncritical acceptance of his writings — without due allowance being made for his different approach to different periods — must necessarily result in a distorted picture of actual events.

In a similar vein Hakuseki occasionally cannot resist quoting malicious gossip about people he disliked, such as Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. He duly gives some indication that he cannot vouch for the complete authenticity of such stories, but the fact that a serious scholar like Hakuseki considered them worth citing, might easily lead a reader to ignore these weak protestations. Thus Hakuseki's strong bias against the period under discussion in general and Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu in particular, together with the fact that at times he is simply misinformed, means that his evidence must be treated with great care.

Machiko's diary had been written to correct damaging gossip circulating during Yoshiyasu's lifetime. After his death in Shōtoku 4 (1714), the spread of malicious rumours took on even greater proportions, aided in no small measure by the circulation of manuscripts such as the two discussed above. This threat to the reputation of the Yanagisawa family now prompted one of their senior retainers, Yabuta Shigemori, to record his personal experience of Yoshiyasu's achievements and attitudes.

46. For examples see Chapter II, section 6 and Chapter IV, section 2.
47. For examples see Taya Hirokichi, Kinsei ginza no kenkyū (Tokyo, 1963), pp.187, 194.
48. Yabuta Shigemori was also known as Gorōemon and later became Yanagisawa Ichi no Kami with a stipend of 3,000 koku. Kōfu shiyaku sho, Kōfu ryakushi (reprint, Tokyo, 1974), p.106.
The manuscript, dated Genbun 5 (1740) is known as Eibyō gojitsuroku or Genkō jitsuroku.\(^{49}\) In its complete form it has not been printed, but the first half, with some variations, is known as Yanagisawa ke hizō jikki, and has been published.\(^{50}\) At some stage the second part of a certain copy of Eibyō gojitsuroku must have been lost, leaving the owner of this particular manuscript without the information supplied at the end of the original, such as author and date of completion. This fragment was then renamed Yanagisawa ke hizō jikki. To my knowledge the close relationship between Eibyō gojitsuroku and Yanagisawa ke hizō jikki has not been pointed out previously, the introduction to the printed versions of the latter document stating merely that the author was an unknown retainer of the Yanagisawa family.

The information contained in Eibyō gojitsuroku accurately reflects the position of its author and therefore ideally complements that furnished by other records. Here the practical implications upon the running of his house of Yoshiyasu's unparalleled career are discussed and the views he imparted to his retainers find expression. Episodes not deemed interesting or prestigious enough to merit inclusion in either the official record of Yoshiyasu's life or the diary of his concubine are narrated and expose different sides of his character. At times these events do little to enhance the reputation of the Yanagisawa family and their inclusion gives the impression that the author was earnestly

\(^{49}\) Morita's statement that the title on the outside cover of the manuscript is Kembyō jitsuroku, is presumably a misprint. Morita, p.274.

\(^{50}\) Published in Hayakawa Junsaburō, Rekkō shimpi roku (Tokyo, 1914), and in Kai sōsha, Vol.3, referenced above. The latter edition has been used in this thesis. For convenience, references to Eibyō are accompanied by references to HJ where appropriate, with differences in the text duly noted.
trying to convey a true picture of his dead lord, rather than merely attempting to whitewash his tarnished reputation. In conjunction with other material and with the possibility of hagiographical tendencies kept in mind, the work becomes a useful tool in the study of Yoshiyasu's life.

Besides the above-mentioned sources, a number of other works of official as well as of private nature, shed light on various aspects of Yoshiyasu's career. In as much as they constitute the usual fare from which the student of history must piece together the subject of his or her research, they need no further elaboration.

Finally, however, some mention must be made of writings which generally are not used as documentation for the government of the fifth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain. These are the works of the philosopher Ogyū Sorai.

Sorai's important works all fall within the reign of the eighth shogun Yoshimune and it is with the latter's government that his political thought is generally associated. Under Yoshimune, however, Sorai never achieved the standing he had under Tsunayoshi, and although various assignments were passed to him through official channels, he was not even accorded the honour of a shogunal audience until shortly before his death.51 Previously, as Yoshiyasu's retainer, Sorai had been closely associated with the men responsible for the government of the country, and in a letter to a friend he recalled these days in glowing terms:

"... thanks to the power of the outstanding and enlightened lord of our clan, although I was only a baishin retainer, yet I went to the golden castle of court, I ascended the jade steps, I was a guest among

great guests, I received honours from the dragon
(the shōgun); for more than ten years I enjoyed
this. This was by no means a short time! ...."52

During those ten years Sorai had the opportunity to gain the prac-
tical experience upon which his later theories were based, and conversely
his mature thought bears the stamp of this environment in which his in-
tellectual development had taken place. Sorai's political philosophy -
it is suggested here - constitutes the theoretical framework on which
the actual policies of Tsunayoshi's and Yoshiyasu's government were
based.53 As an exposition of the thought underlying the political activ-
ity of this period, Sorai's writings are valuable in understanding
Yoshiyasu's career. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the praise
Sorai earned and the harsh criticism of the actual policies upon which
his writings were based, well demonstrate the bias with which the period
and the career of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu has been viewed.

52. Letter to Yamagata Shūnan, translated by Lidin, ibid., p.80.
53. See Chapter V, Section 3, for elaboration of this topic.
CHAPTER II

YANAGISAWA YOSHIYASU'S LIFE AND BACKGROUND
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1. ANCESTRY AND EARLY YEARS

Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was born on the eighteenth day of the twelfth month, Manji 1 (1658).¹ The family was only of lower bannerman (bata-moto)² status, but, like many samurai, prided itself on its descent from the Seiwa Genji branch of the imperial house. Matsukage nikki succeeds admirably in elegantly summing up the intricate genealogy the family lays claim to:

In ancient times there lived a grandson of the emperor Mizuno-o by the name of Lord Tsunemoto. He was the very first of the Genji warriors. The courtier Yoriyoshi of this family was the sixth generation descendant of the emperor Mizuno-o. These men of past generations all impressed their names upon the world as champions of the court.³ His third son was called Lord Shiragino Saburō Yoshimitsu. He was appointed lord of Kai. His children, grandchildren and other descendants populated that province and they were therefore called Kai Genji. Twenty generations lie between this same Yoshimitsu and our present lord.⁴

¹. Unless otherwise stated the information contained in this section is taken from Nenroku, Vol.1.
³. Allusion to Genji monogatari, Chapter I, Kiritsubo.
⁴. Also "Shira."
⁵. MK, p.120. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
Amongst the descendants of Yoshimitsu the Takeda family came to rule over the province, their victories culminating in the famed conquests of Takeda Shingen (1521-73). Yoshiyasu's forefathers served them in battle. The family settled at Koma-gun and together with related houses became known as the warriors of Mukawa (Mukawa shū). While the claim of Yoshiyasu's descent from the emperor Mizuno-o might be regarded with some suspicion, his family's position as a member of this warrior group is reasonably well documented.6

Yoshiyasu's grandfather, Nobutoshi, was born the third son into the house of Aoki. Later he was ordered by Takeda Shingen to succeed to the related house of Yokote. In Tenshō 8 (1580) the head of yet another collateral branch from Yanagisawa village was ordered to commit suicide by Takeda Katsuyori (1546-1582) for disobedience and Nobutoshi was installed as head of the Yanagisawa family.

When Katsuyori two years later was defeated by Oda Nobunaga and himself committed suicide, the warriors of Mukawa unanimously decided not to follow suit. After a brief spell under Nobunaga, the land fell to Tokugawa Ieyasu and the warriors of Mukawa became some of his staunchest supporters. Their valiant fighting in Ieyasu's quest to establish himself in the Kantō area is documented by a letter, in which Ieyasu gratefully acknowledges their support.7 Also various enfeoffments speak of their slowly rising fortunes under Ieyasu.

Yoshiyasu's grandfather, Nobutoshi, died in Tenshō 19 (1589) and was succeeded by Yasuyoshi, Yoshiyasu's uncle. His father, Yasutada,

6. For members of the Mukawa shū and discussion of the concept of shū, see Nakamura Kōya, Ieyasu den (Tokyo, 1965), pp.210-12.
was the younger son. However, in Genna 1 (1615), at the age of only thirteen, Yasutada took the place of his sick elder brother at the battle of Osaka. As a consequence he was granted an audience with the second shogun Hidetada and his brother's stipend of 160 koku was transferred to him. Afterwards both brothers came into the employ of Iemitsu's unfortunate younger brother, Tadanaga, whose domain included Kai, the home of the Mukawa warriors. Their service came to an end when in Kan'ei 10 (1633) Tadanaga was forced by Iemitsu to commit suicide.

In Keian 1 (1648) Yoshiyasu's father finally became part of the retinue of the then three-year-old Tsunayoshi. On this occasion his stipend was increased by seventy koku. When Yoshiyasu was born ten years later, his father had reached the position of Chief of Finance (kanjō gashira) with a stipend of 530 koku.

Yoshiyasu was born in his father's house at Ichigaya in Edo. He was first named Fusayasu and, as was the custom, changed his name several times. Finally the shogun granted him the use of the character yoshi, and he became Yoshiyasu. He was his father's eldest son, although his cousin, whom his father had adopted previously, was senior to him in the family hierarchy. His mother was a secondary wife, who for unknown reasons returned shortly after her son's birth to her original family, by the name of Sase, at Fukuro-mura, part of his father's fief. Yoshiyasu was brought up by his father's main wife, who came from the related family of Aoki, and apparently until his stepmother's death was unaware that he was not her true son. Later, however, motivated by a strong

8. One koku is equal to 5.1 American bushels.
9. Information until the end of this section is taken from Nenroku, Vol.3 unless otherwise stated.
sense of filial duty, he sought out his true mother and installed her in his mansion, where she lived till a ripe old age.\textsuperscript{10}

At the age of seven Yoshiyasu for the first time had an audience with the then nineteen-year-old Tsunayoshi. Besides the fact that Yoshiyasu performed the various ceremonies appropriate at the different stages of childhood and youth, nothing else is known about his earlier years. Stories that Tsunayoshi took a strong liking to the boy at their first meeting\textsuperscript{11} are not substantiated by a document such as Rakushidō nenroku, which conceivably would have made the most of any early signs of favour from the future shogun. What one may assume, however, is that Yoshiyasu's boyhood education differed considerably from that of the daimyo's sons, with whom he was later to compete in office. Like them, he most probably underwent instructions in the martial arts and the Confucian classics. Yet unlike the sons of the daimyo, he would have been trained not how to govern and command, but in the art of serving. Yasutada himself had achieved his position through years of faithful service and similarly any career for his son would necessarily depend on how much he was able to assist and endear himself to his lord. As, for instance, Tsunayoshi was known to prefer the early Confucian classics to the Neo-Confucian works studied by the Hayashi school, Yoshiyasu's father most probably saw to it that his son was educated in such a way that he could respond to and appreciate his lord's discourses on his favourite topics. Similarly, his father would have instructed him in other likes and dislikes of his lord, and Yoshiyasu, no doubt, grew up with a definite appreciation of Tsunayoshi's authoritarian temperament.

\textsuperscript{10} MK, p.292-93.
\textsuperscript{11} Morita, p.33.
Historians frequently attribute Yoshiyasu's rise to power to an early homosexual relationship with the future shogun. Apart from the fact that such relationships were in no way unusual, there is no evidence to either prove or disprove this allegation. Analysis of Yoshiyasu's career, however, demonstrates that it was his ability to finely attune to his lord's thoughts and temperament, rather than any other factor, which brought about his unprecedented rise to high office.

In Emp6 3 (1675) Yoshiyasu's father reached the age of seventy-four and retired. Yoshiyasu, then eighteen, succeeded as head of the house and was granted his father's stipend of 530 koku. At the same time he was employed as Page (kosho) in Tsunayoshi's residence at Kanda. Soon afterwards Yoshiyasu married a girl carefully matched to his background, named Sadako, from the house of Sone. The family was related to his father's side and, according to his concubine Machiko, as "she was also a descendant of the Kai Genji, their life together was especially harmonious."\[12\]

When Yoshiyasu was twenty, his step-mother died. Since his early youth he had been preoccupied with religious matters, and it appears that the death of the woman, whom he had always believed to be his mother, suddenly intensified his need for spiritual guidance. He began to doubt whether he would ever become master of his emotions, but he looked in vain for someone to resolve his questions. Finally his search for truth led him to a senior Rinzai priest. Machiko wrote:

At about that time he went to the abode of the abbot Jukudō. It was around the eleventh month and as he went on his way the air was heavy with sleet and icy cold. But brushing his sleeves he

12. MK, p.121.
went ahead and the sage, deeply impressed, listened to him. Finally he taught him a kōan of great value.\textsuperscript{13}

Jukudō was to die seven years later, but the kōan Yoshiyasu received on this occasion continued to provide him with a topic for spiritual reflection and became the basis for dialogue with many well-known Zen masters.

In the fifth month of Empō 8 (1680) the fourth shogun Ietsuna died and three months later Tsunayoshi was proclaimed as the fifth Tokugawa shogun. With this sudden turn in the fortunes of his lord, Yoshiyasu's career prospects similarly took on new dimensions. Moving with Tsunayoshi's household into Edo castle he now became part of the bakufu, and in the eleventh month of that year was officially appointed Attendant (konando).\textsuperscript{14} Soon his salary was raised commensurate with his new position: 300 koku were added to his stipend.\textsuperscript{15} It was his first increase in salary, the first of numerous shogunal promotions which later were to arouse the envy and anger of his contemporaries.

Yoshiyasu's position in terms of bakufu hierarchy was still rather a lowly one. His close mental affinity with the shogun, however, was demonstrated when he became Tsunayoshi's disciple in Confucian learning in the sixth month of Tenna 1 (1681).\textsuperscript{16} During the following New Year's

\textsuperscript{13} *MK*, p.138. A kōan is a religious episode, usually containing a question by a monk and the oracle-like answer of a famous Zen master. The kōan Yoshiyasu received relates how a monk came to the master Umon and asked "When emotions no longer arise, is there anything more to do?" The master answered: "Shumisen" (mountain at the centre of the universe). See also Eikeiji, * Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu kō san zen roku* (Kōriyama, 1973), pp.16-17.


\textsuperscript{15} ibid., 25D 4M Tenna 1.

\textsuperscript{16} ibid., 3D 6M Tenna 1. *Menroku* merely states that he became Tsunayoshi's disciple, but *Eibyō*, natsu and *HJ*, p.76, make it clear that Tsunayoshi was his teacher in Confucian learning.
celebrations Yoshiyasu was given the honour of delivering the first reading of the Confucian classics, a ceremony he was to perform yearly until Tsunayoshi's death.

Tsunayoshi's interest in Yoshiyasu's education seems to indicate that already at this time he was purposely grooming him for high office in years to come. The shogun's advice on how to succeed was contained in a short poem for Yoshiyasu, appropriately entitled "Loyalty to One's Lord":

If, indeed, a man were not to forget the two characters that stand for the word sincerity (makoto),
he would prosper for generations to come.  

These words were not lost on Yoshiyasu. It was his unconditional loyalty and obedience to the shogun which distinguished him from other officials and - as Tsunayoshi had promised - resulted in the prosperity of his house.

In Tenna 3 (1683) a further rise in income gave Yoshiyasu a stipend of over 1,000 koku. In that year, however, an incident occurred which could have jeopardised the career of a man of lesser standing with the shogun. His father's adopted son, Nobuhana, became involved in a quarrel within the precincts of Edo castle and eventually died of his wounds. Bloodshed within the walls of the castle was considered a serious crime and Nobuhana's stipend was confiscated, leaving his heir without an inheritance. Customarily Yoshiyasu, as his stepbrother, would have been

17. Nenroku, Vol.3, 11D IM Tenna 2. The two characters of the word makoto must refer to the literal style of writing it with the characters for SHIN (truth) and koto. The original is in kana.
similarly liable to punishment, but he was pardoned by the shogun. Several months later the shogun personally praised Yoshiyasu for his services, showing his appreciation with a gift of gold coins and ceremonial garments. Apparently Yoshiyasu's untiring work had well compensated for the misbehaviour of his stepbrother.

2. RISING TO HIGH POSITION

By the time Yoshiyasu had reached the age of twenty-seven, it became apparent that in spite of his low samurai origins, traditionally placing severe limits on his career, the shogun was to keep his promise and reward him richly for his loyal services. At the end of Jōkyō 2 (1685) he was honoured with the lower fifth court rank and became Dewa no Kami. Shortly afterwards his stipend was nearly doubled to reach 2,030 koku. As a courtier he now attended the official New Year reception, was invited to the shogun's own no performances and presented with a precious sword by Tsunayoshi personally. His new standing was further reflected by the fact that he was now considered well-to-do enough to receive a concubine from one of Kyoto's noblest families. She was Tanaka Machiko, who was later to use her education and skill to furnish a permanent record of Yoshiyasu's achievements in the pages of her Matsugake nikki.

Machiko was the daughter of the high-ranking courtier Ōgimachi Dainagon Sanetoyo. Her mother was probably not of noble descent. It is

likely that for this reason Machiko's name does not appear in the Ōgimachi genealogy\textsuperscript{24} and that she was adopted into the Tanaka family whose name she used. Perhaps this somewhat obscure background on her mother's side was responsible for the various rumours concerning her origin. The suggestion was made that she was a common dancing-girl, offered by the merchant Kawamura Zuiken to Yoshiyasu to procure his own advancement.\textsuperscript{25} The highly sophisticated style of \textit{Matsukage Nikki}, spiced with learned allusions, makes such a proposition highly unlikely. Furthermore, Machiko's own account leaves no doubt that she was not only the daughter of Sanetoyo, but was also brought up close to her father's side. Although she had several brothers, it was she whom he always called to keep him company, mix his ink and dip his brush.\textsuperscript{26} The experience of watching her father at work during her childhood was most probably responsible for her erudite bent and the literary skills she displayed during later years. At the age of sixteen she gained the opportunity of being introduced to Edo society by a relative attached to the shogunal household. At first she hesitated, reluctant to venture so far from home, but finally she embarked on the journey. Soon after her arrival in Edo she entered the Yanagisawa household as Yoshiyasu's secondary wife.\textsuperscript{27} Yoshiyasu at that time was increasingly occupied with large amounts of government business and Machiko observed him as "working diligently night and day, without a break."\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Hogetsu Keigo and Iwasawa Yoshihiko, \textit{Keizu San'yō} (Tokyo, 1973-76), 5:423-24.
\textsuperscript{25} Sanada Zōyo, \textit{Meiryō Kōhan} (Tokyo, 1912), p.532.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{MK}, p.203-204.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{MK}, p.204.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{MK}, p.121.
In Jōkyō 3 (1686), Yoshiyasu's aging father fell seriously ill. The shogun showed his great concern by sending medicines and ordering his personal physicians to attend the bedside of the ailing Yasutada. Daily messengers from Edo castle inquired after the old man's state of health and the shogun's righthand man, the Grand Chamberlain (sobyōnin) Makino Narisada, visited the Yanagisawa mansion to convey Tsunayoshi's personal messages. The shogun - Machiko noted in her diary - gratefully remembered the long years of service Yasutada had rendered, and, she quickly added, his deep sympathy on this occasion was, of course, also due to the important work Yoshiyasu was now performing.29

One day when Yasutada's health had somewhat improved, Makino Narisada announced that he had been charged by the shogun to hear the old man's final requests. At first Yasutada refused this honour, but in response to the Grand Chamberlain's pleading, finally consented. A loyal retainer, he first unselfishly addressed himself to the problems surrounding the shogun himself. As a result of Tsunayoshi's strict judgement of the Echigo quarrel (Echigo sōdō) the lord of this domain, Matsudaira Mitsunaga, had been deprived of his fief and placed under house arrest. The shogun did no more than carry out justice, but Yasutada imagined that he must personally suffer from watching the plight of this man, who was his relative. Yasutada, therefore, thoughtfully made it one of his last wishes that Matsudaira Mitsunaga be pardoned.30

Secondly, Yoshiyasu's father was concerned about the state of the bureaucracy. Increments which had previously been paid only during the performance of special official duties, were, according to a recent

29. ibid.
order, to be added permanently to a family's stipend, even when such duties were no longer performed. Yasutada had noticed some slackness in the bureaucracy and suggested that if higher salaries were paid only during the performance of higher duties, officials might show more diligence in their work.³¹

Only Yasutada's final request was of a more personal nature. It was a plea for promotion of his grandnephew, Yamataka Nobutaka, whose career had so far not shown much promise.³²

The shogun granted all of Yasutada's three wishes, although some years were to pass before they were implemented. Matsudaira Mitsunaga eventually was pardoned and became the heir of Matsudaira Naotoshi with a stipend of 100,000 koku. In Genroku 5 (1692) salary increments were again made dependent on the continued performance of specific duties and on Yasutada's thirteenth death anniversary, the shogun distributed gold coins to lower officials in memory of his late retainer's services. Finally, Yasutada's grandnephew became attached to the entourage of the shogun's adopted daughter upon her marriage to the Lord of Mito.³³

Before Yasutada died at the venerable age of eighty-six, he was able to witness the birth of his grandson, and to proudly hand to the infant the sword with which he had fought for the Tokugawa house at the battle of Osaka.³⁴

The child, who was later granted the name Yoshisato by the shogun, became the focus of what is generally known as the Yanagisawa quarrel

³¹. Increments were added to salaries in the fourth month of Tenna 2. See Kitajima Masamoto, Edo bakufu no kenryoku kōzō (Tokyo, 1964), pp.474-76.
³³. Eibyō, haru and HJ, p.51. For salary increments, see Kitajima, Edo bakufu, p.476; for gold coins, see MK, p.176-71.
³⁴. MK, p.125.
(Yanagisawa sōdo). He was born to Yoshiyasu's concubine, Someko. Both Sannō gaiki and Gokoku onna taiheiki, however, claim that he was in fact not Yoshiyasu's son, but fathered by the shogun himself, and that although this was kept a well-guarded secret, it was ultimately responsible for Yoshiyasu's rise to influence and prosperity. In Hōei 6 (1709) - so these works claim - the shogun and Yoshiyasu were planning to reveal the true identity of Yoshisato and have him proclaimed shogunal successor. Official chronicles maintain that the fifth shogun died in the first month of that year from an attack of measles, an illness from which various members of his family and entourage had already suffered for several months. 35 According to Sannō gaiki and Gokoku onna taiheiki, however, he died by the hand of his own wife. Apparently more devoted to the future of the country than her husband, she prevented the impending disaster of having his "bastard" son rule over the Japanese isles, by stabbing first the shogun, and then herself. 36

There are some obvious flaws in this story. A number of historians, for instance, have pointed out that Tsunayoshi's first official visit to the Yanagisawa mansion took place only in Genroku 4 (1691), five years after Yoshisato was born, and that consequently he could not have been the child of Someko and Tsunayoshi. 37 There is, of course, no way to prove that she did not, prior to this event, secretly meet the shogun. However, if a boy had been born as the result of such a union, it seems likely that he would have been proclaimed the shogun's son upon his birth. Curiously enough, the same works which claim that Tsunayoshi

35. E.g. TJ, 43:721-23.
37. E.g. Morita, p.137.
carefully kept the existence of a son secret for some twenty years, also maintain that his overwhelming anxiety for a successor finally drove him to proclaim the infamous Laws of Compassion. It appears reasonable to assume that if Someko had been found pregnant with the shogun's child, she would have been moved to Edo castle as his concubine to give birth there to Tsunayoshi's longed-for heir.

Another contradiction inherent in the story of Sannō gaiki and Gokoku onna taiheiki is the fact that Ienobu had officially been installed as Tsunayoshi's successor some years prior to the intended proclamation of Yoshisato as heir to the fifth shogun. Moreover, the circumstances surrounding Ienobu's birth and childhood somewhat resembled those attributed to Yoshiyasu's eldest son. Ienobu was born the son of a chambermaid when his father, Iemitsu's son Tsunashige, was only nineteen. So that this fact might not preclude Tsunashige's marriage to a girl of suitably high status, the birth was kept secret and the child brought up by a retainer. Only when Tsunashige died without an heir, was Ienobu's true identity revealed and he was permitted to inherit the domain of his father. It appears highly unlikely, therefore, that Tsunayoshi would have installed the "illegitimate" child of his brother as his heir, if he himself had a son born under similar circumstances.

It might even have been the story of Ienobu's birth and childhood which led some people to assume that Tsunayoshi similarly had asked his loyal servant Yoshiyasu to bring up his illegitimate child, when they looked for an explanation for Yoshiyasu's wealth and influence. Moreover, Tsunayoshi is quoted as having once expressed his regret at not

38. See Chapter IV, Section 2.
39. See Section 4 of this chapter.
having made Yoshisato his son-in-law.\textsuperscript{41} Such statements, together with the fact that Yoshisato was generously treated by both Tsunayoshi and his successor Ienobu, must have further induced people to speculate about the true identity of Yoshiyasu's eldest son.

There can be little doubt that the claims made by \textit{Sannō gaiki} and \textit{Gokoku onna taiheiki} are spurious. Yet this story was apparently too colourful to be ignored and even historians writing in recent times are known to have defended it with arguments such as that Yoshiyasu would have been too busy to beget his own child.\textsuperscript{42}

It is true that after Yoshisato's birth the fortunes of the Yanagisawa family continued to rise, but \textit{Matsukage niki} points out that Yoshiyasu's success was due to other reasons:

\begin{quote}
As the fleeting days and months passed we came to the year called Genroku 1 (1688). As his lordship was working steadily without a single break, his stipend was increased this winter. From the shogun's own hand he received the sword named Aoe.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

The increase of stipend Machiko referred to was a substantial one of 10,000 koku, which placed Yoshiyasu with a total income of 12,030 koku amongst the ranks of the daimyo.

The year Genroku 1 (1688) not only witnessed Yoshiyasu's rise from bannerman to daimyo status, but was also significant in terms of his career within the bakufu. The shogun commanded that henceforth Yoshiyasu was to work alongside two of his Grand Chamberlains. The order is

\textsuperscript{41} Eibyō, haru; \textit{HJ}, p.45.
\textsuperscript{42} Kodama Kōta, \textit{Jimbutsu Nihon no rekishi} (Tokyo, 1976), 13:39. Gomi Yasuke, the author of this section, is also wrong in stating that Yoshisato's title of yakatasama was limited to children of the shogun, \textit{ibid.}, p.40.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{MK}, p.125.
generally taken to indicate that from then on Yoshiyasu, too, had acquired this status.\textsuperscript{44}

In his new function Yoshiyasu accompanied the shogun on most occasions, be it on his frequent calls on Keishō-in, his mother, or visits to the mansion of his senior Grand Chamberlain, Makino Nariesada. Shogunal presents of food, ceremonial clothing or coins, became too frequent to mention.\textsuperscript{45} Tsunayoshi’s appreciation of Yoshiyasu’s services was again demonstrated when early in Genroku 3 (1690) his stipend was more than doubled, reaching a total of 32,030 koku.\textsuperscript{46} In addition a loan of 30,000 ryō was granted by the bakufu to cover the expenses of several changes of residence.\textsuperscript{47}

Yoshiyasu, however, did not become complacent as a result of these exceptional favours. On the contrary:

During recent months and years his lordship had a great amount of government business to attend to and even in the evenings stayed at the castle. This year, too, he generally remained almost every second night at the castle. Thus when around mid-summer it became unbearably hot, even the shogun felt sorry for him and ordered that henceforth he was to return home every night.\textsuperscript{48}

Such diligent efforts were again rewarded at the end of the year (1690), when Yoshiyasu was promoted to the lower fourth court rank and a few days later was granted permission to have the two-lance insignia

\textsuperscript{44} Nenroku, Vol.3, 12D 11M Genroku 1 records the order that Yoshiyasu was to work alongside the shogun’s Grand Chamberlains, while TJ, 43:26 of this date notes that Yoshiyasu was appointed Grand Chamberlain.

\textsuperscript{45} Nenroku, Vol.4.

\textsuperscript{46} Nenroku, Vol.5, 26D 3M Genroku 3.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{ibid.}, 28D 3M Genroku 3.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{MK}, p.126.
(nihon dōgu) carried in front of him, a privilege granted to senior daimyo only.49

The following year (1691) the Yanagisawa family for the first time was given the great honour of receiving the shogun in their own mansion. Machiko well recalled the feverish activity that overcame the household once the shogun had announced his intention. The estate, which only recently had been granted to Yoshiyasu, proved too small for the buildings to be constructed for this occasion, and the adjacent land, occupied by another daimyo, was hurriedly resumed by the bakufu and bestowed upon Yoshiyasu. The new buildings were elaborate; there was an audience hall for the shogun of fifty square ken,50 a new Eastern and a new Western residence, additional store houses and kitchens, a theatre, rest houses for his attendants and private quarters for Tsunayoshi himself. The gardens were rearranged too, and great care was taken that trees and shrubbery would please the shogunal eye. Yoshiyasu was happy with the result, and finally:

Thus the day of the shogun's visit, the twenty-second of the third month, drew near. At the break of dawn his lordship went to the castle to hear the shogun's formal announcement of his visit today. However much he thought about it, there was no way to describe the buildings shining brilliantly on this balmy spring day. In the Northern mansion hung the picture of a horse with cherry blossoms, painted by the shogun's own hand and mounted most exquisitely. Two vases of silver with indescribably beautiful flowers were placed in front of it. An inkstone decorated in gold and lacquer depicting falling maple leaves, a scroll painted by the shogunal

49. *Nenroku*, Vol.6, 25D and 29D 12M Genroku 3. *Nihon dōgu* was granted only to kunimochi daimyo, those in possession of one or more than one province. For exact definition of kunimochi daimyo, see Sasama Yoshihiko, *Edo bakufu yakushoku shūsei* (Tokyo, 1965), p.73.

50. One square ken equals 3.31sq.m.
artists and a congratulatory urn decorated with scenes of the tea harvest at Uji were placed on or above the shelves ....

The Senior Councillors (rōjū) Ōkubo Kaga no Kami, Abe Bungo no Kami, Toda Yamashiro no Kami and Tsuchiya Sagami no Kami, and the Grand Chamberlain (sobayōnin) Makino Narisada, as well as other "important officials and friendly lords" thronged the Yanagisawa mansion. Finally at noon the shogun himself arrived. Once the appropriate ceremonies had taken place, it was time to proceed with the exchange of innumerable presents. Even the women of the household, Yoshiyasu's mother, wives and daughters, were presented with shogunal gifts, while his retainers were rewarded with coins. Later the shogun delivered a lecture on the Great Learning to the patient audience of his ministers, Confucian scholars and invited clergy. Next Yoshiyasu was called upon to expound the same Confucian classic in front of this select company, and his retainers, too, received the honour of having their interpretations heard by the shogun. These learned discourses finally were followed by several nō plays, and the beauty and excitement of the performances left Machiko at a loss for words. All the splendour and extravagance for which the Genroku period has become famous, and for which later Tsunayoshi was to be severely criticised in more stringent economic times, is vividly reflected in Machiko's account of this occasion.

The shogun, apparently, had been pleased with his visit, for during that same year he called four more times on the Yanagisawa mansion. Three to five times yearly was to become the average number of such shogunal outings, bringing the total number of visits with which

51. MK, pp.127-29.
52. Tō, 43:109, 9D 5M; p.121, 11D 9M; p.123, 13D 10M; p.128, 11D 12M.
Tsunayoshi honoured that family to fifty-eight. The shogun, Machiko maintained, was greatly burdened with government affairs and was in need of a place where he could relax in a casual atmosphere. His visits to the Yanagisawa mansion, therefore, provided him with a most stimulating, as well as interesting, experience. Yoshiyasu, on the other hand, was kept so occupied with these frequent shogunal entertainments that he had barely time to pray at his father's grave or supervise the construction of an appropriate memorial temple.

At the end of Genroku 4 (1691) Yoshiyasu was granted permission to visit Go no Maru, the mother of the shogun's only surviving child, Tsuruhime. It was a rare privilege, as Machiko points out:

In the eleventh month his lordship was given permission to visit the lady called Go no Maru and for the first time have an audience with her. Since early times he had frequently communicated with her in writing, but it was difficult to see her in person, for as the shogun greatly relied on her, everything she did became the subject of gossip.

A few days later Yoshiyasu received an invitation likewise to visit Tsuruhime, again an honour which would have been considered extraordinary, even for the most high-ranking daimyo.

Tsunayoshi has frequently been criticised for relying upon the advice of his mother. The above passage indicates that his favourite concubines also received his confidence in important matters. The route via the women's chambers provided throughout the existence of the

53. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.45.
54. MK, p.135.
55. MK, p.132-23.
56. MK, p.135.
shogunate an important unofficial approach to the ruler. Generally, however, officials had no direct access to the women of the immediate shogunal entourage and more subtle means, such as passing messages to the attendants of these ladies, had to be employed.\textsuperscript{58} In his capacity as Grand Chamberlain, Yoshiyasu was in charge of all official communications with the shogun. Establishing direct contact with the important women of the shogunal household meant that this second avenue to Tsunayoshi also came under his control.

With such well-established connections it is perhaps not surprising that in the next year (1692) his work on behalf of the shogunate was again rewarded handsomely. Yoshiyasu's stipend was once more virtually doubled, bringing it to 62,030 koku.\textsuperscript{59}

While Yoshiyasu's career progressed brilliantly, shadows were cast over his personal life. His second son, the child of his concubine Someko, had been born in Genroku 3 (1690). Now two years later the child fell sick and soon afterwards died. "Like blossoms falling before their bloom" mourned Machiko.\textsuperscript{60}

A visit from the fifth Ōbaku patriarch, the Chinese priest Kōsen, in the next month might have brought spiritual solace. Yoshiyasu had many religious topics to discuss with the well-known sage and on his departure was again given a kōan to help him on the road of spiritual development.\textsuperscript{61} It was indicative of Yoshiyasu's rise to influence during the last fifteen years that he no longer arduously had to seek

\textsuperscript{59} Nenroku, Vol.13, 14D 11M Genroku 5.
\textsuperscript{60} MK, p.137.
\textsuperscript{61} MK, p.138 and Nenroku, Vol.11, 17D 4M Genroku 5.
out a teacher, but that the most high-ranking priests were grateful for an opportunity to visit his mansion.

3. LORD OF KAWAGOE CASTLE

In Genroku 7 (1695) Yoshiyasu received new status by being appointed lord of Kawagoe castle. At the same time his stipend was increased by a further 10,000 koku.62

New challenges awaited Yoshiyasu in administering a fortress, which owing to his heavy load of government work, he himself would hardly have time to visit. At the same time his promotion created fresh opportunities for his retainers, and Machiko was obviously impressed with the large delegation that was despatched by her lord to take command of his new domain.

Senior officials of our house were appointed as Castle Superintendents, and to other positions of importance. On the day of their departure his lordship was in high spirits and the retainers that had been appointed were overjoyed and bustled about excitedly. Their earnestness and determination to do their duties in every respect with the utmost seriousness and devotion was just delightful and, more than that, reassuring. As these one hundred to two hundred men in full formal dress stood in rank along the road, he gave them detailed orders concerning their journey to the castle and the taking up of residence there. Putting his heart with great seriousness into these solemn orders he instructed them gravely and very articulately and sent them on their way.63

The same ambition that drove Yoshiyasu to exert himself to his utmost in his service for the shogun now turned him into a model domain lord. His lengthy instructions to his retainers concerning the running

63. MK, pp.141-42.
of the castle are still extant and the elaborate programme of land-recclamation he initiated soon afterwards to resettle the Musashino plains, testifies to his constant endeavour to perform at the highest standards.

Yoshiyasu acquired further prestige when he was granted the imperial title of Gentleman-in-waiting (jijū) and his eldest son was accorded the honour of using the two-lance insignia (nihon dōgu) like his father. Yet again his joy over such unusual success in his career was dampened by a tragic event in his personal life. The third son of his concubine Someko also died in infancy. Several months later, however, he was rewarded with another male heir, and this child was to grow up to reach manhood. It was Machiko's first son, who owing to the death of his step-brothers was to receive the shogunal honours and public attention due to the second-oldest of the Yanagisawa mansion.

Yoshiyasu's increasingly prestigious position brought him into close contact with the highest-ranking men of the country. The imperial prelate of Nikkō, Kōben Shinnō, on several occasions had been his partner in discussions of government affairs. In Genroku 9 (1696) Yoshiyasu was privileged to receive this member of the imperial family together with his entourage of a large number of Buddhist dignitaries at the Yanagisawa mansion. It was the first informal encounter between the two men and a rare privilege for Yoshiyasu to be in personal contact with such a senior member of the imperial family. A shogunal messenger with presents and food for the banquet to be served further heightened the dignified atmosphere on this occasion.

64. Nenroku, Vol.22, 10D 2M Genroku 7.
65. ibid., Vol.34, 21D 9N Genroku 8. See also Chapter V, Section 1.
66. ibid., Vol.28, 9D 12M Genroku 7.
67. MK, p.142.
68. MK, pp.148-49.
The sixth Ōbaku patriarch, Senka, was the next distinguished visitor at the Yanagisawa mansion. His predecessor, Kösen, had recently died and Senka’s call, shortly after his appointment, demonstrated that he was similarly concerned to establish close ties with Yoshiyasu. Senka, too, was Chinese and Machiko recalled with delight the strange sounds of his language: he was speaking Chinese while Yoshiyasu replied in Japanese. When it came to more difficult topics the two men conversed in writing and some of the things Yoshiyasu wrote for the patriarch were astonishing indeed. In no uncertain terms Yoshiyasu impressed upon him that in recent years the members of his sect had neglected their religious obligations and in a self-indulgent fashion were preoccupied with secular matters. The continued success or decline of the sect rested on Senka's shoulders and Yoshiyasu urged him strongly to exert himself and root out this evil.69

This was no longer the posture of a man reverently looking up to religious dignitaries, but the stance of a politician, whose commands could significantly influence the future of the clergy. The patriarch acknowledged Yoshiyasu's authority by humbly accepting this harsh criticism and as a further gesture of acquiescence pleaded for Yoshiyasu himself to set out new guidelines for the order.70

Senka was not alone in paying homage to Yoshiyasu's authority. As the shogun's right-hand man the latter had been assigned to supervise a project of great importance to Tsunayoshi, namely the restoration of ancient temples and shrines. All petitions had to be channelled through Yoshiyasu, sending an endless stream of supplicants to his gates.

69. MK, p.151.
70. Ibid.
"When on occasions he approved some project, people were overjoyed and happily worshipped him like a god" Machiko remembered with some pride. 71

By the time Yoshiyasu was forty, in Genroku 10 (1697), he occupied a position of great prestige. His income was steadily increasing, amounting at that time to over 90,000 koku. 72 The shogun was not only frequenting his mansion several times a year with undiminished splendour, 73 but also called on the newly established residence of his eldest son. 74 A villa at the hamlet of Komagome, which he had previously bestowed on Yoshiyasu, 75 Tsunayoshi now selected as his rest place for a planned shogunal pilgrimage to the sanctuary at Nikkō. 76 Yoshiyasu was on friendly terms with the shogun's favourite concubine, and Keishō-in, the shogun's mother, similarly made known her affection by according him the honour of a visit. 77

Yoshiyasu in turn could boast of an army of scholars under his roof, whose far-reaching knowledge never failed to impress his distinguished visitors. He unquestionably had great talent in selecting men of high intellect. Only the previous year (1696) he had employed an unknown scholar who had been content to serve in the Yanagisawa mansion at an extremely low stipend. During the shogun's visit ten days later, this fledgling scholar - later known as Ogyū Sorai - had stood his own in a discussion with the head of the Confucian school, Hayashi Nobuatsu, and so pleased the shogun that he was rewarded with a ceremonial robe.

71. MK, p.152.
72. Menroku, 26D 7M Genroku 10.
73. E.g. MK, p.156.
75. ibid., Vol.30, 21D 4M Genroku 8, the present-day Rikugien.
76. ibid., Vol.47, 4D 5M Genroku 10.
77. MK, p.157.
An order that Sorai present himself at the castle a few days later further indicated shogunal recognition of his talents. From then on Sorai attended upon Tsunayoshi three times monthly and was honoured with invitations to shogunal nō performances several times a year. Even amongst the official scholars employed in the castle, there was none to equal him. "An ornament to our house" Yoshiyasu called him proudly.

Relatively little is known about the exact nature of Yoshiyasu's involvement in day-to-day government affairs during this period. His own chronicle, Rakushidō nenroku, makes no mention of the documents that passed through his hands or decisions made, and Matsukage nikki limits itself to events of significance to the writer. But in spite of Machiko's selective approach one gains the impression that, as during his later years, Yoshiyasu was handling in a general fashion all matters concerning the shogun, whether of public or private nature, being more deeply involved in those issues of special interest to Tsunayoshi.

At the beginning of Genroku 11 (1698), for instance, Yoshiyasu was charged with supervising the construction of a large new temple, the Kompon Chūdō, at the shogun's ancestral sanctuary at Toeizan. His efforts to satisfy his lord with an early completion of the project kept him more than busy, but the next month he had to attend Tsunayoshi on a procession to the related house of Owari, whose daughter the shogun was adopting. In the summer of that year another of Tsunayoshi's adopted daughters, Yaehime, formally entered the house of her groom, the Lord of Mito, similarly a member of the Three Related Houses (gosanke). Here also, Yoshiyasu was responsible for handling "matters great and small"

79. Eibyō, natsu; HJ, p.76.
pertaining to the elaborate ceremonies and festivities of this occasion. 80

"He executed the manifold affairs entrusted to him without a single misjudgement, but it left him not the slightest leisure." Finally the strain proved too much. "When the heat became so unbearable that even the soil cracked, his lordship fell sick." 81 The shogun was greatly distressed by Yoshiyasu's illness. Daily he sent messengers to inquire after Yoshiyasu's state of health, and gifts ranging from cakes to new bedding were sent to alleviate his uncomfortable condition. The shogun's wives and daughters also showered him with gifts and the constant stream of high ranking well-wishers was a suitable reflection of Yoshiyasu's important position. "People might well be jealous of such attention" mused Machiko. 82

Yoshiyasu had hardly risen from his sickbed when the elaborate ceremonies for the opening of the new temple at Tōeizan had to be organised. His exertions on behalf of this project were duly rewarded. He was greatly honoured by receiving the imperial title of Lesser Commander of the Guards (sakon'e no shōshō). 83 During the lengthy rites for opening the new temple he was seated closest to the shogun, above all other officials. 14

The joy at Yoshiyasu's rise to new honours was soon marred when disaster struck the Yanagisawa mansion only days later. A fire broke out in the neighbourhood and fanned by southerly winds quickly engulfed

81. MK, p.162.
82. MK, p.162.
84. ibid., Vol.57, 3D 9M Genroku 11.
the residence. With the concerted efforts of other daimyo the shogunal villa within the compound could be saved, but the appartments of the children and retainers all fell to the flames. The fire spread as far as Tōeizan and finally destroyed the ancestral hall of the fourth shogun, but the newly built temple was spared. Generous presents from the shogun and his family compensated for some of the material loss Yoshiyasu had suffered, but the feeling of contemporaries and later generations that the fire was sent by the gods as a warning against the upstart's rise to power, could not be eliminated.

The price Yoshiyasu had to pay for his ambitious devotion to his work increasingly began to show. Hardly had he attended the burial of his elder sister in the fifth month of Genroku 13 (1700), than his attendance was urgently requested by the shogun. And although he was still supposed to remain in seclusion for the religious rites of mourning, he hurried to the castle to deal with government business which could suffer no postponement. Such strain took its toll; again Yoshiyasu fell sick. Although the illness was not serious, it was extremely painful. The shogun was desolated by Yoshiyasu's absence. When the illness had somewhat abated, Yoshiyasu pulled himself together and attended the castle, but the onset of the summer's heat again worsened his condition. Continued treatment by the country's most famous physicians eventually improved the state of his health, but it was not until the eighth month that Yoshiyasu was finally able to take up his usual round of government duties. The doctors were handsomely rewarded for restoring back to health a man of such importance to the government.

86. MK, pp.172-73.
After his suffering during the heat of summer, Yoshiyasu took new interest in his retreat at Komagome and set out for a visit. Machiko recalled later:

The way was a little path, difficult to negotiate, but with unusual charm. The further we went, the remoter it felt. It was a retreat with great emotional appeal, where clusters of trees swayed in the wind and even the tips of the ordinary grasses ceaselessly rustled in the autumn breeze. In recent months, his lordship had had absolutely no leisure to attend to such a distant place, and the gardens had scarcely been touched. The sense of remoteness was heightened by the incessant chirping of the crickets.87

It was perhaps at this stage of his life that the idea of early resignation from government service slowly entered Yoshiyasu's mind, leading to the creation of the still famous Rikugien gardens as his seat of retirement.

A year after this visit to Komagome, Keishō-in, the shogun's mother, gave Yoshiyasu the honour of selecting his retreat as a place to rest during her visit to temples of the neighbourhood. This prompted a flurry of activity to tame the natural beauty of the landscape into well-cared-for gardens, worthy of such a distinguished visitor. Rare trees and shrubs were planted, rocks piled up into waterfalls and nine additional villas were built to accommodate Keishō-in and her large entourage. When finally her long procession of attendants, courtiers and monks arrived, it provided an unusual spectacle for the local inhabitants.88

4. THE PINNACLE OF SUCCESS

With the beginning of the eighteenth century, Yoshiyasu's career reached its peak. On three different occasions the shogun singled him out with great honours and extravagant praise. Because he was born the son of a bannerman, Yoshiyasu could not occupy such high positions as Senior or Grand Councillor (rōjū or tairō), but there could be little doubt that next to the shogun he was the most influential man in the country. Yet even as he was climbing the last rungs in the ladder of success, Yoshiyasu increasingly showed signs of weariness from the pressure of government business.

At the end of Genroku 14 (1701) Yoshiyasu and his sons were given the rare distinction of receiving the shogunal family name, Matsudaira. The announcement was made on one of Tsunayoshi's visits to the Yanagisawa mansion. Preparations were more elaborate than usual and even the Buddhist clergy had been invited in full numbers. Once the usual ceremonies had been completed, the shogun called Yoshiyasu to his side and made a lengthy speech, the most important parts of which Rakushido nenroku summarises:

Following the orders of the third shogun, your father Yoshitada served us for many decades since our childhood. You, Yoshiyasu, have attended upon us since you were young. From the time you received the order to become our disciple you have acted in accordance with our wishes and have faithfully executed your duties, and as a consequence you have been successively promoted. You have become a model for all officials. Today we bestow upon you the name Matsudaira as well as an ideogram from our personal name. Henceforth we consider you a member of our family.89

From then on Yoshiyasu was known as Matsudaira Mino no Kami, the style

of Matsudaira Dewa no Kami being already that of Matsudaira Kiyotake. Yoshiyasu's eldest son was granted the same honours as his father, receiving the name Matsudaira Ise no Kami Yoshisato. His second and third sons, the children of his concubine Machiko, were similarly permitted to call themselves Matsudaira. As a further honour these two boys at only six and eight years of age were made the shogun's disciples, just as their father had been when he was young.

Barely four months later the shogun again had reason to bestow high praise on Yoshiyasu's services. Through Yoshiyasu's efforts the emperor had consented to bestow the first rank upon Keishō-in, the shogun's mother.

Keishō-in's origins are somewhat obscure. Various chronicles claim that she was born the daughter of a lowly greengrocer in Kyoto. After her father's death her mother entered the house of Honjō, a retainer of the Ichijō family, as a servant, taking her children with her. Eventually Keishō-in, when a young girl, came to accompany one of Kyoto's noble ladies as an attendant to Edo castle. There Keishō-in, apparently a great beauty, caught the eye of the third shogun, Iemitsu, and finally received official recognition as his concubine when she bore him a son. Her lowly origins have been made much of by historians as the cause of her bad influence upon her son. It appears reasonable to assume that during her lifetime her humble background had put her at a disadvantage to those ladies of the shogunal household who could boast of aristocratic or even imperial ancestry, and her elevation to the

90. Hotta Masaatsu, Kansei chōshū shokafu (Tokyo, 1917-18), 1:265 (henceforth cited as KCS).
highest rank in the imperial hierarchy was therefore of special significance. Naturally the court had been reluctant to grant these extraordinary honours to a woman of such humble descent, and it had required great diplomacy and skilful manipulation of Yoshiyasu's connection with members of the imperial household to finally be granted the title.93

Yoshiyasu's task had not been easy. Yet whatever his efforts, he could rest assured that not only Keishō-in, but also the shogun himself, with his strong sense of filial piety and deep respect for his mother, would reward them appropriately. Tsunayoshi's gratitude was expressed in the following words:

The petition for her ladyship our mother's94 investiture was in the very first instance despatched by Yoshiyasu for submission at the court. Our great act of filial piety in obtaining the first rank for her ladyship our mother in her old age, entirely relied upon Yoshiyasu's help. Over and above this we consider the fact that he conducts private and official matters for us single-handedly a true indication of his talents. For these reasons we bestow on him an increase in salary of 20,000 koku.95

Barely a month after Yoshiyasu was honoured by such extravagant shogunal praise, misfortune again befell his house. During the night a fire broke out in the Yanagisawa mansion and before help could be summoned the flames spread and razed the whole property to the ground.96 Was it an accident that coincided with Yoshiyasu's new honours, or did some human hand help to make known the disapproval of the gods? If Yoshiyasu suspected arson, it found no mention in the records.

94. San no maru sama.
This time even the villa used by the shogun could not be saved and Yoshiyasu himself had to move into the house of his retainer Yabuta Shigemori. Tsunayoshi and his family helped by supplying clothing and utensils, but the loss went far beyond the goods of everyday use. Among the burnt property were, for instance, a valuable collection of swords, many of them shogunal presents, and paintings and writings by famous men. Perhaps most painful to Yoshiyasu, however, was the loss of his family records.97 Machiko recalled:

His lordship was most grieved by the loss of all the records of our house, and whenever he had a spare moment he devoted all his energies to looking into this matter. He summoned his scholars together and charged them to do likewise and finally around this time the task was completed. Because he had put his great influence behind this project, the scholars were able to reconstruct most of the records. Material from the days of his distant ancestors until this year were collected in over eighty-eight volumes and called Rakushiō nenroku. Rakushi might have been the name of a temple. Even now they continue to record year by year the events of this unparalleled reign.98

With the generous assistance of the shogun and his family the Yanagisawa mansion was quickly rebuilt, and only five months after the fire had totally destroyed the residence, Tsunayoshi and his entourage could inspect the new buildings.99

At the same time Yoshiyasu's retreat at Komagome was being further improved. His workload did not permit him to visit the location himself, and his retainers, furnished with sketches of his ideas, went back and forth daily. As Yoshiyasu's interest in the gardens became known, a

stream of gifts arrived to add to its embellishment. Innumerable cart-loads carrying rocks of unusual shape and rare plants and shrubs made their way to Komagome.100

Finally Yoshiyasu went to inspect the gardens:

They were exquisite beyond compare. The tranquility of the broad lake, the outline of the mountains looming in the distance, the composition of the rocks and the evanescent trees and plants formed a setting of unparalleled beauty.101

As Yoshiyasu was enthusiastically inspecting every corner of his retreat Machiko observed this and concluded:

Hearing him chant "make your fame, make your name and then ..." people knew what he had his heart set on.102

Yoshiyasu was alluding to a saying from Lao-tzu, which suggests that a man should retire once he has reached the peak of his career.103 His ambitions in the political arena of Edo had been fulfilled. He was still unerringly executing his duties for the shogun, but from now on his personal interests lay in more leisurely pursuits. Besides the elaborate landscaping of his gardens at Komagome, poetry, and the arbitrator of this art, the imperial family, increasingly became the focus of his attention. In spite of the pressure of government business, Yoshiyasu found time to compose over 1,000 poems for judgement by the retired emperor and to keep in constant correspondence with Machiko's elder brother, who acted as his go-between with the imperial family.104

100. MK, p.199.
102. Ibid.
103. Lao-tzu, Chapter 9.
104. See Chapter V, Section 2, i.
Yoshiyasu's flagging enthusiasm for government service might well have diminished further when at the end of Genroku 16 (1703) natural calamities devastated part of Edo and the Kantō region. On the twentieth day of the eleventh month an earthquake of unheard-of proportions shook the city and its environments. Areas along the coast were completely wiped out by the ensuing tidal waves, while in Edo and the surrounding villages, houses collapsed as tremors continued for several days. But worse was to come. Machiko wrote:

On the twenty-ninth day of that month a fire of again unheard-of size broke out and spreading to frightful proportions burned over one third of the city. When the so-called Ryōgoku Bridge collapsed in the blaze, innumerable people who in their distress had fled from the neighbourhood to the bridge died in the flames. When I think back on the events of this period, everything is so thoroughly frightful; I am not going to write any of it down.105

It was not only the loss of life and the destruction of the city the government had to worry about. Without doubt the disaster had to be seen as a horrible punishment sent by the gods, and the question of who bore the guilt could increasingly be heard. Machiko maintained that the government was not at fault, for there had been no negligence in its workings. Were there perhaps rumours that the calamities served as divine punishment for the rise of an upstart to unprecedented influence and riches? And was this one of the "thoroughly frightful" things she refused to write down?

Tragedy of a more personal nature struck the shogun only a few months later. Tsuruhime, his only child, died in the fourth month of

Genroku 17 (1704). Tsunayoshi's sole male heir, Tokumatsu, had died in childhood. Tsuruhime, suitably married to Kii Tsunanori, a member of the Three Related Houses, had represented the shogun's only hope of installing a direct descendant as his successor. Had she borne a son, the child could then be installed as future shogun, and in this hope Tsunayoshi had delayed the painful decision of naming a successor who was not his direct descendant. Now Tsuruhime's death left him with no alternative but to hand back the shogunate to the line of his brothers.

It was this task of installing Tsunayoshi's nephew, the future Ienobu, in the Western citadel (nishi no maru) as heir that brought Yoshiyasu unparalleled shogunal praise and a domain few fudai daimyo could boast of. The sources do not specify what these preparations were, but the fact they were kept secret from the Senior Councillors (roju) and even the Three Related Houses (gosanke) indicates that they were most probably of some political importance. While the nature of Yoshiyasu's preparations for the announcement of the shogunal heir remain unclear, the praise he received for them is well documented. The shogun's words were recorded for posterity in a special document, but Matsukage niki also reports the situation in detail:

After the ceremonies were completed the shogun retired to his private chambers and in very good humour he summoned his lordship to his presence and thereupon said: "During recent years there has been a great amount of business and you have devoted yourself most diligently to it. We have gladly and without anxiety entrusted everything completely to you. It would hardly be the first time that we are now saying how

106. TV, 43:535, 13D 4M Genroku 17. The year was later renamed Hōei 1 to break the chain of misfortune.
delighted we are with your performance. Furthermore, the fact that on this occasion, when it was a question of deciding on our successor, you alone daily carried the burden of all public and private aspects and executed all matters great and small to our entire satisfaction, gives us exceedingly great pleasure. Words are not sufficient to express our gratitude. One hesitates to speak of oneself in such terms, however, for the person who is charged with the government of the whole country there is, to our mind, nothing of greater importance than the decision we have just taken. From the time of our initial secret decision you have handled all matters, completely freeing us from anxiety. We are quite unable to even express one hundredth part of the gratitude we feel. Thus we are enfeoffing you now with the domain of Kai. This domain belonged to the Lord Chūnagon108 and it should not be bestowed on an outsider. However, your distant ancestors and their descendants lived in that province, and since you have performed services far above the ordinary, the dictates of our heart command that your rewards be also above the ordinary." Speaking thus, the shogun took a document from his sleeve and bestowed it upon his lordship. Overwhelmed by this honour his lordship did not know whether he was awake or dreaming. You can imagine his awe as he slowly received the document in his hands.109

The domain bestowed upon Yoshiyasu had an official value of just over 150,000 koku, but the actual yield well exceeded 200,000 koku,110 giving him one of the largest fudai holdings in the country.

5. FINAL YEARS IN OFFICE

With the year Hōei 2 (1705) Yoshiyasu's official career entered its last phase. As the most influential man in the country next to the shogun he had attained a position which could not be surpassed. The rewards for his services - his domains - were similarly reaching ultimate limits. Yoshiyasu's ambitions had been fulfilled and the pressures of high-powered government business no longer provided the challenge they

108. Ienobu.
110. TJ, 43:559, 21D Hōei 1.
had in the past. Enthusiasm for work turned into weariness. The shogun, too, was growing older and suffering from spells of illness. After the proclamation of Ienobu as his successor, his interest in national affairs declined markedly. The subdued atmosphere surrounding the shogun and his Grand Chamberlain turned into gloom when several members of their family and circle of friends died in rapid succession.

In the fourth month of Hōei 2 (1705) Someko, the mother of Yoshiyasu's eldest son, a woman to whom he was deeply attached, fell ill. The innumerable prayers and offerings on her behalf at first seemed to have restored her to health. The priests had already been richly rewarded for their efforts, when some weeks later her illness worsened and she died. Yoshiyasu was desolate. Even years later, Machiko recalled, his grief over the loss of Someko was unabated.

Next, Kii Tsunanori, the husband of the shogun's deceased daughter, unexpectedly passed away.

Shortly afterwards the poet Kitamura Kigin died. As Yoshiyasu's teacher, Kigin had frequently visited the Yanagisawa mansion and a warm friendship had developed between the two men. Poetry had assumed special importance for Yoshiyasu during the past years and much of his leisure had been spent in perfecting his skills in this art, so that his own verse might rival in elegance and beauty those composed by the courtiers of Kyoto. The death of Kigin, the man who initiated him into the secret teachings of the art of poetry, was therefore a most painful event for Yoshiyasu.

111. E.g. MK, p.263.
112. MK, pp.244-46, 268.
In the sixth month of that same year the shogun's beloved mother, Keishō-in, fell ill. Yoshiyasu, standing high in her favour, was permitted to visit her several times during her sickness. Already in her eighties, she had not the strength to recover and soon died. The shogun was broken-hearted and Yoshiyasu had lost one of his staunchest supporters.115

At the end of this same tragic year, smallpox appeared and robbed Yoshiyasu of his adopted daughter Etsuko.116

Only weeks after Keishō-in's death Yoshiyasu petitioned the shogun for partial retirement. The great stream of suppliants daily lining Yoshiyasu's route to the castle no longer held any fascination for him and he found it increasingly painful that the pressure of official engagements did not even permit him the leisure to have his hair dressed three times daily, as was appropriate for a man of his standing. Makino Terusada, his son-in-law, had worked as his assistant for a number of years and in Yoshiyasu's eyes was ready to relieve him from some of his official responsibilities. Finally the right moment arrived for Yoshiyasu to voice his request to the shogun diplomatcially:

In the early days of autumn when it was still rather warm the shogun sent for his lordship and said: "How terribly hot the weather still is! It is especially hard to bear when one is busy. Whatever you do, do not exhaust yourself. Leave the routine work to others." When the shogun had said this his lordship thought he would take the chance to submit his own wishes on the matter. "I gratefully received such benign orders on past occasions. How could I presume to be lax in my service? I have not the slightest intention of sparing myself any pains. Over the years my duties have not been in any way excessively taxing. However, just recently for some reason I have been

115. MK, pp.248-49.
116. MK, p.252.
feeling out of sorts. When I think how easily mistakes can happen, I apply myself even more diligently to my work. But still, with so much to be done, inevitably there are many tasks I cannot handle and so I have been thinking it might be better if, with your august permission, I were to devote all my attention to just one task."

This picture of a man worn out and tired of government service is convincingly drawn. Tsunayoshi, too, was persuaded and consented to Yoshiyasu's requests. From that time on, Matsudaira Terusada was permitted to take over from Yoshiyasu the handling of certain official documents and correspondence.117

Yoshiyasu's desire to disengage himself from the exertions of public life became similarly apparent when he repeatedly found excuses to postpone a visit by Ienobu, the shogunal successor, to the Yanagisawa mansion. Ienobu had heard how pleasant his uncle, Tsunayoshi, found such visits and was now eager to call on Yoshiyasu himself. Finally Ienobu's requests could be ignored no longer. Elaborate preparations were made for the event because - Machiko noted - Yoshiyasu did not want people to think that Ienobu was less welcome than the shogun. Ienobu's passion for brilliant display was well known and the storehouses of the Yanagisawa mansion were emptied for this special day. As was the custom on Tsunayoshi's visits, scholarly debates and no performances took place and finally Ienobu himself performed on the stage. Before leaving the shogun-to-be was presented with all objets d'art decorating the residence on this occasion, a gesture much appreciated, but thoroughly exhausting the resources of the Yanagisawa family.118 Historians,

117. MK, pp.251-52. For details of Yoshiyasu's partial resignation, see Chapter III, section 9.
118. MK, pp.255-57.
curiously, make much of Tsunayoshi's love for luxury and devotion to no, yet rarely mention that the sixth shogun was even more partial to such pleasures.

The year Hōei 4 (1707) marked Yoshiyasu's fiftieth birthday. Congratulations and presents were elaborate to suit the occasion. What was unusual for even a minister of great influence in the bakufu at Edo were the numerous congratulations from the Kyoto aristocracy. The attention Yoshiyasu received testified to his success in establishing close ties with the imperial family and entourage, ties which only recently had been further strengthened by his adoption of the daughter of a high-ranking noble.119

From his domain of Kai old men over the age of seventy had been invited to pay their respects to Yoshiyasu on this occasion. Machiko recalled how they came in great numbers, all in all about 3,000 people, she reckoned. Frequently they were too frail to make the journey by themselves and were supported by their grand- and great-grandchildren. For their efforts they were rewarded with generous gifts of rice.

In this year of his fiftieth anniversary (1707), Yoshiyasu received his last great honour from Tsunayoshi. Both he and his eldest son were granted permission to display the halberd (nagīnata) in their processions. Machiko recalled:

Verily indeed, his lordship and his son the Gentleman-in-waiting (jijū gimi), were permitted to display the halberd.120 Since this is restricted as a mark of the most noble houses, it is rarely seen nowadays, even amongst the highest

119. MK, pp.264-66. For details of adoption see Chapter V, Section 2, ii.
120. MK only states that permission was granted for the display of uchi-mono, a generic term for weapons including the halberd. Other sources specify that it was the halberd. See Chapter 3, Section 9.
personages. Thus his lordship firmly declined to accept the honour. But since the august orders had already been issued, this honour was impossible to refuse and he had to accept. You must understand that his extraordinary position of authority was unparalleled.121

Rakushidō nenroku sheds further light on this episode. Yoshiyasu suggested that only his son Yoshisato should be accorded such an unusual honour, but the shogun replied that people would consider this very strange indeed. He, the shogun himself, was not the eldest son, yet the blood of Nitta122 was flowing in his veins. The thread of continuous rule was thin and narrow, but it was unbroken. Although Yoshiyasu could not trace his ancestry back to Takeda Shingen through firstborn sons, he was, all the same, a blood relative, and consequently there was no reason to refuse the honour of displaying the halberd.123 Yoshiyasu's career had reached a stage where he felt that as the son of a bannerman (hatamoto) he could accept no further advancement. His own son he saw as better qualified for such rare privileges, being born, after all, into a daimyo mansion.

The next year (1708) was the last before Tsunayoshi's death and the second month saw the shogun's final visit to Yoshiyasu's mansion.124

Before the shogun died and both the Yanagisawa family and the shogun's wives were to retreat from the centre of the stage, Machiko had a chance to appear in the limelight. The occasion was the pregnancy of Ienobu's concubine, Sume, a distant relative of Machiko's.125 Machiko

121. MK, p.271.
122. The Tokugawa family claimed descent from Nitta Yoshishige (1135-1202).
124. MK, p.275.
125. MK, p.278. For details of the relationship see Ason jikki, Vol.60, 18D 7M Hōei 5.
was granted the great honour of being invited to tie Sume's maternity belt (yuhada obi), an event requiring celebration and an elaborate exchange of gifts. But perhaps of even greater significance for Machiko was that on this occasion presents from the shogun's wife (tai no ue) arrived, with an acknowledgement that Machiko was in fact related to her as a younger cousin.126 During the two decades Machiko had been in Edo, she had never received a gift from the shogunal consort, nor been recognised as her relative.

Her attendants wrote to me about her in detail. In spite of this, it would never do for someone as lowly as myself to speak to a lady as high above me as the clouds that course the skies. The fact that all the same she bears me in mind is truly a rare honour Machiko noted in her diary.127 Yoshiyasu and his family had finally become acceptable in even the highest social circles of the country.

"As the autumn winds became chilly, an illness called measles appeared in Japan."128 Yoshiyasu's eldest son, Yoshisato fell ill, but recovered. So did his youngest son Rokurō. Yoshiyasu himself became unwell and could not attend at the castle. By the twelfth month, however, he had recovered sufficiently to supervise the arrangements for the birth of Ienobu's son. But just when the baby was expected any day, Ienobu contracted measles. Next his wife (tai) went down with the same illness. Neither case was serious, but the stream of visitors to their sickbed threw the castle into confusion and did little to stop the

126. Machiko wrote that her father's wife was tai no ue's aunt. The expression "father's wife" must presumably refer to her stepmother.
128. MK, p.289.
spread of the illness. Finally, before the year had ended, a healthy son was born to Ienobu. 129

The illness, however, continued to spread. One of the shogun's concubines contracted measles, and shortly afterwards he himself succumbed to this illness. Tsunayoshi had frequently been unwell during the previous months, and his renewed indisposition did not cause any alarm. Even when on the second day of the new year he showed the first signs of measles, his entourage took it calmly, for the illness had passed lightly in most cases. It was not considered serious enough to inform his subjects of their ruler's illness, and when the customary procession of well-wishers arrived for the New Year ceremonies, Ienobu simply took the shogun's place during the performance of the formal rites appropriate on this occasion.

Only Yoshiyasu was deeply concerned. He was constantly at Tsunayoshi's side and grudgingly obeyed his command to now and again retire to rest. He faithfully noted down the words of the shogun and in times of doubt advised him. 130

At one stage the crisis seemed to have passed. On the ninth day of the new year the ritual marking the end of illness, the bathing in sake (onsakayu) was performed. There were celebrations and innumerable presents, and Yoshiyasu eventually returned home to rest, assured by messengers from the castle that the shogun was comfortable after a good meal.

By daybreak, however, the situation had drastically changed. By the time Yoshiyasu reached the castle, the shogun's attendants were in great agitation. Yoshiyasu limited himself to only a few words with the

129. NK, p.279.
greatly weakened shogun and then quietly withdrew. Anguished calls for the doctor prompted him to rush back to the shogun's bedside. His desperate efforts to get his lord to swallow his medicine were in vain. By the time Ienobu arrived, Tsunayoshi had already breathed his last.\textsuperscript{131}

The country was totally unprepared for the shogun's death. At first there was widespread disbelief.

As people were not properly informed of what had happened, rumours soon emerged and people were saying: "How strange! This is impossible to believe! Some fool is making up such stories to alarm people."\textsuperscript{132}

With this shroud of mystery hanging over the shogun's death at the very time of the event, it is not surprising that later fanciful stories attempting to explain Tsunayoshi's sudden end, often found believing ears. The rumour that the shogun's wife, determined to save the country from the rule of his "bastard" child, put a forceful end to the shogunal plans by stabbing first her husband and then herself, has already been mentioned.\textsuperscript{133} This rumoured death fitted in well with the picture traditional historians drew of Tsunayoshi. The ruler, who is frequently seen as the worst of the fifteen Tokugawa shogun and accused of debauchery, disregard for the welfare of his subjects, and even madness,\textsuperscript{134} is very differently described in \textit{Matsukage niki}.

If I am to put it into words, he bestowed upon us a blessed reign, committing not a single error in the

\textsuperscript{131} MK, pp.280-82.
\textsuperscript{132} MK, p.282.
\textsuperscript{133} See Section 2 of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{134} E.g. Irizawa Tatsukichi, "Tokugawa Tsunayoshi no seishin jōtai ni tsuite," \textit{Kokka igakkai zasshi}, 189:7 (1903), who suggests that the fifth shogun suffered from "Zoophilomanie."
thirty years of his far-reaching government of this country of Japan. Even on mornings of fog and deep snow he would rise early and with the people as his first concern never neglected to see that they suffered neither hunger nor cold. In the dark of the night he did not sleep either, but untiringly devoting himself to the study of government, he went over volume after volume of the writings of the ancient sages. And all that to care and provide for this country of ours!135

Machiko described how under Tsunayoshi the country was so well governed that even the farmers ceased their disputes over the boundaries of fields and taxes were willingly paid, drawing parallels with the famous reign of King Wen of Chou of ancient China.136

Thus moss grew over the drum of complaints137 and grass spread over the prisons. Even the little birds nesting amongst the weeds were touched by his benevolence. His mind was constantly active and if just one thread of the common fabric of society went awry, he did not ignore it. On one hand, he valued the martial arts and urged the myriad samurai families138 to respect the traditions of their houses; on the other, he promoted literary learning and there were many brilliant and excellent scholars.139 Really, when one thinks back, it appears to be a dream.

Finally Machiko likens Tsunayoshi to the Yellow Emperor riding around the heavens on his fabulous dragon. Yet, alas, unlike the Chinese sage king, Tsunayoshi did not even drop his arrow as a keepsake for his devoted subjects.140

135. Lit. country where black-headed people are gathered.
137. Drum of ancient China, hit when complaints were made.
138. Lit. the samurai of the eighty families.
139. "Katsura no eda toridori ni tama hirofu yama no hikarimi" referring to History of Chin, Chapter 22, 3B.
140. MK, pp.285-86.
The picture drawn in Matsukage nikki of Tsunayoshi bears so little resemblance to the image commonly presented by historians that it is hard to imagine that both are describing the same ruler. Naturally, in Machiko's case hagiographical tendencies must be taken into account, but even then, the discrepancies are altogether too great to be ignored.

Yoshiyasu's reputation suffered a similar fate. Writers who do not believe that the shogun was murdered because of his plans for Yoshišato, still frequently assert that after Tsunayoshi's death, Yoshiyasu was driven out by Ienobu. But documentary evidence does not support this story.

6. QUEST FOR RETIREMENT

Even as Ienobu was stepping back from the body of the late shogun, Yoshiyasu approached him about his future. Rakushido nenroku does not disclose the discussion that took place on this occasion, noting that the record was kept elsewhere. Similarly the entry for the next day merely states that Ienobu had decided in the kindest fashion on Yoshiyasu's petition of the previous day, and that the latter had expressed his gratitude accordingly. Again it is stated that details were recorded elsewhere.

Matsukage nikki, however, supplies the missing information. The diary notes only briefly that Yoshiyasu asked Ienobu about his future, but then gives the new shogun's answer in detail.

The next day his lordship also went to the castle. When he called upon the shogun of the Western citadel, he found him in his personal apartments. The shogun

142. MK, p.282.
summoned his lordship into his presence and spoke to him at length: "Once again I hear that you are earnestly desiring to take religious orders. That is quite understandable. However, because you rendered such distinguished services to my predecessor, I had hoped that you would put your talents at my disposal also. Your services will not be forgotten, and as long as I live your sons will under no circumstances suffer even the slightest neglect. Since over the years you have attained to considerable importance in government affairs and as there is nobody who can compare with you, people naturally would expect that you would assist the present shogun also. Of course, now that your lord is no longer among us, it is understandable that you would want to spend all your time in devotions for the repose of his soul. However, if you could bring yourself to consider my suggestion and put your talents at my disposal for the next few months, how could your late lord possibly consider this to be disrespectful to his memory? If under the present circumstances you were to shave your head, the rumour that something was perhaps amiss between us would quickly be circulated by unkind people. In addition it would be very difficult if in future we were to try to consult you on important issues. Don't do anything just yet, and even if you feel unable to serve us, wait for a little while." His eyes filled with tears as he spoke and his lordship was so deeply touched that he wept too.143

Yoshiyasu finally submitted to the emotional pleas of the new shogun. In return he asked that he be freed from routine matters and be consulted on important issues only.144 Consequently there was good reason for Rakushidō nenroku to state that Ienobu had answered Yoshiyasu's request "in the kindest fashion" and for Yoshiyasu to express his gratitude.

Ienobu's fears that the question of Yoshiyasu's retirement might lead to rumours about an unsatisfactory relationship between the new shogun and his predecessor's chief minister, quickly materialised. Arai Hakuseki in his Oritaku shiba no ki relates a story, which, he admits,

143. MK, p.283; see also Eibyō, haru and HJ, p.48.
144. MK, p.284.
he did not hear through official channels. Consequently he cannot vouch for its authenticity, but as the person from whom the information came was - in his opinion - not someone who would repeat mere gossip, he was persuaded to write it down for posterity.145

According to Hakuseki's source, Yoshiyasu was given the task of selecting amongst his late lord's closest attendants those who would take religious orders and serve at the funeral. Yoshiyasu petitioned that he himself be included, but he was told that there was no precedent for someone of his rank taking holy orders on the death of a shogun. It was pointed out that at the beginning of Ietsuna's reign, suicide at the death of a ruler was forbidden and that similar practices should not be revived. Ienobu, however, would have no objection if after the funeral Yoshiyasu were to resign his office, let his son succeed him as head of the house, and then enter the priesthood.146

The implication is that Yoshiyasu had wanted to take religious orders without resigning his office. Naturally he would not have wanted to resign before the funeral, for then he could not have attended it in his capacity of Grand Chamberlain and to have occupied the position appropriate for Tsunayoshi's most senior and favourite minister. The story related here by Hakuseki suggests that the new shogun wanted to force Yoshiyasu's resignation by not permitting him to take holy orders until he had renounced his office after the funeral.

Ienobu's fears had not been ungrounded. The rumour Hakuseki had heard obviously implied that something was "amiss" between him and

145. The story is quoted in TJ, 44:6, but without Hakuseki's warning that it was not official. It has not been possible to check the other two sources cited in TJ.
Yoshiyasu. In view of the role Hakuseki later played in Ienobu's government it is difficult to identify him with the "unkind people" Ienobu referred to in his speech to Yoshiyasu. Yet Hakuseki's animosity towards Tsunayoshi, his officials and policies, was undisputed, a fact also demonstrated by his constant petitions to Ienobu to sack Tsunayoshi's Superintendent of Finance (kanjō bugyō) Ogiwara Shigehide. Yet here again, Ienobu was reluctant to get rid of an official valued by his predecessor, and it was not until Ienobu was sick and about to die that he apparently agreed to have Ogiwara Shigehide dismissed. The actual dismissal took place only after Ienobu had died. Ienobu's disagreement with his apparently so trusted advisers like Arai Hakuseki, in matters such as Yoshiyasu's and Ogiwara Shigehide's resignation, is interesting to note and in need of further investigation.

Yoshiyasu's request for retirement and Ienobu's initial refusal is also documented by other material. In Eibyō gojitsuroku Ienobu is quoted as saying that although there were the Senior Councillors (rōjū), his predecessor had had not much faith in them when it came to ruling the country, and his own assistant, Manabe Akifusa, had as yet no experience in such matters. Tokugawa jikki notes that Tsunayoshi's other Grand Chamberlains (soba gōnin) Matsudaira Terusada and Matsudaira Tadashige had been granted permission to retire, but that a similar request from Yoshiyasu had been refused.

The impression conveyed by Matsukage nikki, that after Tsunayoshi's death Yoshiyasu attempted to withdraw from official affairs, is also

147. ibid., p.300, 352; Knox, p.171. See also below Chapter IV, Section 1.
149. TJ, 44:5, 17D 1M Hōei 6.
supported by the diary of the monk Ryūkō. He noted that when two days after the shogun had died Yoshiyasu was approached for directions concerning the funeral ceremonies, the latter replied that this was not his concern and that the Senior Councillor Ōkubo Tadamasu should be consulted.150

Yoshiyasu had agreed to stay in office, but his mind was focused on retirement. In important matters he was still attending to the wishes of the shogun according to their agreement, but secretly he was making preparations for the day when he would completely relinquish his duties. Whenever he met an official of note, Machiko recalled, he would persuasively press the point that he, Yoshiyasu, was becoming too frail for government service.151

With the beginning of the third month the official mourning period ended and Yoshiyasu privately deplored that no special arrangements had been made to extend it.152 His subsequent request to Ienobu to destroy the buildings within his residence which the previous shogun had used on his visits and to return the land on which they stood, subtly indicated that in his eyes his service to the shogunate had come to an end. Ienobu was perhaps not pleased with the hint that he was no longer to visit the Yanagisawa mansion, for it took him nearly two months to reply that Yoshiyasu was to do with the buildings as he pleased, but keep the land for the present. Yoshiyasu, however, was determined to sever his official connections with the new shogun and destroyed the buildings in question,153 making further shogunal visits impossible, unless the considerable expense of erecting new ones was undertaken.

150. Ryūkō sōjō niki, 3:284.
151. MK, p.289-90.
152. MK, p.290.
Ienobu's intention to treat the Yanagisawa family with the friendliness and generosity of his predecessor also became evident when both on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Yoshiyasu's mother and the fiftieth birthday of his wife (kita no kata), shogunal messengers with gifts appeared just as in the days of Tsunayoshi.\textsuperscript{154}

Finally at the end of the fifth month Manabe Akifusa was sent to inform Yoshiyasu that Ienobu had agreed to his resignation, and the third day of the sixth month was chosen as appropriate for the occasion. Ienobu, apparently, had convinced himself that even during the last years under his predecessor, Yoshiyasu had not been required to attend to routine business due to his poor state of health. In the light of this fact Ienobu was now happy to let Yoshiyasu retire and have his eldest son Yoshisato succeed to his domain. In line with Yoshiyasu's request, his second and third sons were given 10,000 koku each from the total of the domain, the rest being transferred to Yoshisato.

After the official ceremonies had been completed Ienobu called Yoshiyasu to his private chambers and spoke to him:

Some time ago you asked permission to retire, but as you are still in the prime of life, we asked you to remain in office for a while. However, as you are ill, and we have learned in detail that you were in fact freed from routine business under our predecessor, we now think it proper that you retire so that you can recuperate. Therefore, do not hesitate to do as you have requested and take life easy. All the same, feel free to come and see us at any time.\textsuperscript{155}

If Ienobu had had any misgivings about Yoshiyasu's persistent refusal to serve him like his predecessor, he knew now that Yoshiyasu's

\textsuperscript{154} MK, p.293; TJ, 44:30, 2D 5M Hōei 6 and 44:32, 5D 5M Hōei 6.
\textsuperscript{155} MK, p.295.
reluctance to stay in government service was not a personal rebuff. His permission for the transfer of Yoshiyasu's large domain to his sons was further proof of his goodwill towards the Yanagisawa family. On his resignation Yoshiyasu had to return his fief to the bakufu and it would have been a good occasion for the new shogun to allot to his heirs a smaller and less strategic domain, but he did not avail himself of this opportunity. Like his father, Yoshisato came to govern the province of Kai, and it was not until ten years after Yoshiyasu's death, under the eighth shogun Yoshimune that the family holdings were transferred to the less significant domain of Koriyama.156

Yoshiyasu retired to his villa at Komagome. Freed from both official influence and commitments he even refused to discuss political affairs with his frequent visitors from the city.157 His warm relationship with Ienobu, however, continued. At New Year he would visit the castle to pay his respects, entering straight into the shogun's private chambers to chat with him there after the public ceremonies had been completed. And just as during the time of his influence he would afterwards be granted permission to visit the apartments of the shogunal wives and daughters.158

Yoshiyasu apparently had shed all political responsibility and retired with the blessing of the reigning shogun, and yet there were signs that the situation was not as peaceful as might appear. Although clad in poetic terms, Machiko's diary gives some indication of the problems facing the Yanagisawa family. She writes that once the bustle of city

156. KCS, 3:257.
157. MK, p.298.
158. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.49.
life had subsided the idea came to her that she, who had known Yoshiyasu so intimately over many years, should record the details of his singularly successful life:

In the lonely nights when I am awoken by the rustling of the pine and the sound of the water, I jot down things just as I remember them on scraps of paper, forgetting the rumours and nasty slander.

These words were written in the shade of the everlasting pine, she continues, alluding to the protection and security the hero of the story has afforded her. Expressing the wish that generations to come might cherish her words, she leaves no doubt that her writing had a purpose; it was to counteract rumours which were circulating at that time.

Were these rumours in any way connected with those of which Ienobu was afraid? The question is difficult to answer, but there are some indications that the problem centered around the possibility that Yoshiyasu and his followers might still exert some political influence. The scholar Hattori Nankaku, for instance, who had followed Yoshiyasu to his seat of retirement, was advised that he should no longer refer to political issues in his poetic writings. Another retainer of the Yanagisawa family, Ogyū Sarai, had been given the task of instructing Ienobu's Pages. Yet on several occasions when entrusted with weightier assignments, they were channelled secretly through Yoshiyasu.

Yoshiyasu, even after his retirement, was a controversial figure and the opposition he still encountered, although he had relinquished all outward signs of political influence, foreshadowed his gradually

159. MK. pp.303-304.
worsening reputation. To gain some idea of how this antagonism arose and who his opponents were, it is essential to examine his rapid rise to power against the background of the established bakufu hierarchy and the prevailing political climate.
CHAPTER III

YOSHIYASU'S PLACE IN THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE
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Yoshiyasu's rise to power under the fifth Tokugawa shogun and his bad reputation can only be understood if seen in the context of the shogun's political ambitions and the measures required to realise them against the background of changing social conditions and an inflexible administrative machinery.

1. THE SHOGUN'S POLITICAL AMBITIONS

The fifth Tokugawa shogun Tsunayoshi was not brought up to rule. On the contrary, tradition has it that his father, the third shogun Iemitsu, early recognised his brilliant intellect and fearing that he might compete with his elder brothers for the shogunate, ordered his fourth son to devote his time solely to the study of the Confucian classics. Thus while Iemitsu's three eldest sons were trained with other young daimyo heirs in the martial arts as was seen fit for a future military ruler, Tsunayoshi spent his early years surrounded by men devoted to the study of the Confucian classics.¹ What the third shogun, of course, did not anticipate, was that the eldest son, the fourth shogun Ietsuna (1641-1680), would die without an heir, preceded already by the deaths of his two brothers Kanematsu (1645-1647) and Tsunashige (1644-

¹. Buya shokudan in Kokushi kenkyû kai, Kokushi sôsho (Tokyo, 1917), ser.2, pp.86-87; TJ, 43:727.
and that consequently Tsunayoshi with a training very unlike that of his predecessors would become the fifth Tokugawa shogun.

Tsunayoshi's upbringing as a Confucian scholar rather than a warrior meant that his image of the ideal ruler differed greatly from that of both previous shogun and the military aristocracy of the day. He saw himself not as a military leader, but strove to become a sage king in the image of Yao and Shun of ancient China.  

The first three shogun, at some time or other during their reign, still had to deal with the military control of the country. The introduction of the system of alternate attendance at Edo (sankin kōtai) under Iemitsu assured the unquestioned loyalty of the daimyo and by the time of the fifth shogun, military security was no longer a problem. Consequently Tsunayoshi could go one step further. The loyalty of the military class was taken for granted; what Tsunayoshi demanded was that their everyday behaviour also conform to his prescribed standards. In his eyes it was the duty of the ruler and the ministers who served him "to correct the spirit of the samurai and the behaviour of the people."

This concept of the ruler's duties ill accorded with the accustomed status of the daimyo. Hitherto they had enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom in the administration of their domains, but Tsunayoshi was not inclined to keep the status quo. He considered it his sacred duty to shoulder the responsibility for the material and spiritual welfare of all his subjects. Consequently, in discharging his duties as ruler of the nation, he saw himself obliged to impose his own values upon the


daimyo so that they in turn might govern their domains in accordance with his ideas.

Tsunayoshi's notion that he and his ministers were directly responsible for every single one of his subjects is well illustrated in the following episode related by his Great Councillor (tairi) Hotta Masatoshi. Masatoshi had been moved by the abject poverty of two children he had seen on the street. Later he reported to Tsunayoshi how he had felt an inner compulsion to give help immediately, but then manfully had rejected this urge, it not being his duty as the shogun's minister to attend to such a trifling matter. Tsunayoshi, however, corrected Masatoshi:

Why should a truly benevolent man ask whether a matter is great or small? Even the smallest object is lit by the rays of the sun and the moon. Actually your mistake was in thinking that it was wrong to agonize over such a small thing.4

Masatoshi, accustomed to the hierarchical order where matters of lesser significance were dealt with by men of lesser status, considered it improper for himself to interfere with the individual concerns of the common people. In Tsunayoshi's eyes, however, the responsibility for the common people did not rest with lower officials, but with the shogun and his highest ministers. It was a view that sanctioned interference in the local administration of the provinces; a view hardly popular with the military aristocracy.

Moreover, the values Tsunayoshi felt committed to impose upon his people greatly differed from those cherished by his predecessors and the contemporary daimyo. By virtue of his unorthodox upbringing, he did not

share the ideological background of previous shogun, and felt impelled to criticise the society over which they had ruled:

The old practices of the warring states period became the way of the samurai and officials; brutality was regarded as valor, high spirits were considered good conduct, and there were many actions which were not benevolent and which violated the fundamental principles of humanity ....

The third shogun Iemitsu had found pleasure in competing with his daimyo in the martial arts, but the fifth shogun delighted in expounding the Confucian classics not just to the military aristocracy, but to all his retainers, down to the lowliest of them. All Tokugawa rulers shared some commitment to the virtues of Confucianism. Tsunayoshi, however, took them more seriously than any of his predecessors and he was not content merely to observe them himself. Like the sage kings of ancient China he wanted to diffuse these virtues amongst the common people. In order to carry out this grand design he required ministers who not only shared his concept of the ruler's duties, but who were also prepared to devote their life to assisting him in achieving this goal. Furthermore, to succeed in persuading the military class to change their behaviour according to his ideas, he needed authority. The personal authority of the shogun, however, had declined markedly during the decades prior to his accession.

2. SHOGUNAL AUTHORITY AND FUDAIF DAIMYO

When Ieyasu established his position as hegemon of the country, the houses which were later to be known as fudai played an important part as his advisers and military allies. Once the country was at peace,

however, he and his successors preferred to pick their advisers from families of less prominent samurai background than the original fudai. Gathering around them men of relatively humble lineage to assist in the still rather informal government of the country, they avoided the danger of a powerful military house gaining overriding influence in the civil administration. Thus the shogun had at their disposal two groups of men: the original fudai - such as the Sakai family - and the newcomers which each ruler picked independently from the lower ranks of his military retainers. Under Ieyasu such newcomers were Honda Masanobu and his son Masazumi; Hidetada relied on Doi Toshikatsu, Nagai Naomasa and Inoue Masanari, while Iemitsu chose men like Hotta Masamori, Matsudaira Nobutsuna, Abe Shigetsugu and Abe Tadaaki to work under his personal direction. The government of the country, still retaining military household flavour, was thus divided into the personal staff of the shogun mainly responsible for internal administration - such as that of the shogunal domains and the direct retainers of the bakufu - and the ministers of old fudai status looking after matters external to the shogunate, such as issues concerning the daimyo. 7

Around the middle of the seventeenth century, with the division of the administration into various fixed offices, the distinction between the two sets of administrators - the original fudai and the newcomers, now also considered as fudai - was lost. 8 With the progressively formal delineation of duties and standardisation of office procedures, a pattern of social status corresponding to each office became established.

A group of the shogun's most senior advisers, working as a body in

8. *ibid.* Tsuji dates this process fairly precisely to the 1630s.
consultation and eventually known as Senior Councillors (rōjū), became the highest organ of government, increasingly replacing the shogun as central authority. Tsuji maintains that it was not so much the person of the at first immature, and later sickly, fourth shogun Ietsuna, which brought about this loss of shogunal power, but simply the gradual development and later ossification of the administrative machinery.⁹

This point is debatable. The fact, however, remains that under the fourth shogun the bakufu became a bureaucracy where offices were strictly stratified according to social status, with the fudai daimyo - both the old and new houses - occupying the leading positions.¹⁰

This administrative stratification was a step towards more centralised government. On the other hand leadership by men with interests divided between their own domains and the central authority, resulted in increased privileges for the daimyo and a consequent weakening of bakufu authority. The policies of the thirty years under Ietsuna all bear the hallmark of this trend.

The shogunate's most effective device for increasing its landholdings - the escheatment of fiefs when the holder died without heir - was lost by officially sanctioning deathbed adoptions. Furthermore the number of domains confiscated for mismanagement dropped conspicuously; even though there were some prominent examples of local disturbances, thus further limiting the growth of bakufu lands. Building and repair projects, which under previous shogun had heavily taxed the purse of the daimyo, also declined in number under Ietsuna, and the decision not to

9. ibid.
rebuild the keep of Edo castle - the symbol of shogunal authority - after the fire of Meireki, was indicative of the daimyo's reluctance to exert themselves for their ruler. On the other hand, shogunal funds were generously distributed to the daimyo and lower samurai to repair the damage their own mansions had suffered during the fire.

Daimyo independence was increased when the bakufu for the first time permitted the issue of local currency. Even the bakufu's most potent weapon in its control of the upper military aristocracy - the system of alternate attendance at Edo (sankin kōtaī) - was somewhat relaxed when the children of senior daimyo vassals no longer had to reside in this city.

When Tsunayoshi succeeded his elder brother, Ietsuna, as the fifth Tokugawa shogun in Empō 8 (1680), he was faced with a situation where for three decades the fudai had been able to cement their position of dominance in government and where some of the most important prerogatives of shogunal authority had been abolished or had fallen into disuse. In addition the Senior Councillors at the top of the administrative hierarchy were led by a man of strong personality and impeccable fudai background: Sakai Tadakiyo. If Tsunayoshi wanted to realise his political aims, he would have to break the power of the fudai and find ministers whose loyalties were not divided between the shogunate and their own domains.

3. CHANGING SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Tsunayoshi's ideas of government were based on the Confucian classics. His choice of strategies, however, was appropriate to

12. Ōishi, Genroku jidai, p.76.
developments which were rapidly changing social conditions in seventeenth-century Japan.

By about the middle of the seventeenth century a chain of interrelated events had brought about a marked rise in living standards that was not confined to the samurai sector of the community. The peace that had followed the establishment of the Tokugawa hegemony had permitted farmers to cultivate their plots undisturbed by either invading armies or military conscription. Methods of cultivation were improved and new fertilizers, implements and plant strains increased yields per acre, while the irrigation of new lands further heightened productivity.\(^\text{14}\) Possibly for the first time the Japanese rice farmer was successful in producing and retaining some surplus over and above the bare level of subsistence after tax levies had been met.\(^\text{15}\)

This surplus in turn permitted some sections of the community to specialise in the cultivation of cash crops other than rice, such as tea, cotton, tobacco, hemp and mulberry and some to experiment with the cultivation of new strains of rice. Commerce increased rapidly to handle the growing quantities of saleable commodities. Improving systems of communications, both by land and by sea, especially after the daimyo and their retinues were committed to regular attendance at Edo, further aided this development. While the growth of the cities in this period was made possible by improved crop production and communications, the growing demand for foodstuffs and other consumer goods by these new urban centres in turn accelerated agricultural production and encouraged


\(^{15}\) Ōishi, *Genroku jidai*, pp.43-52.
rural handicrafts, bringing about a rapid development of the money economy.16

Farmers, especially those in the vicinity of the growing cities, profited not only from the higher prices they could obtain for their produce as a result of this demand, but also frequently added to their income by engaging in trade.17 The most spectacular rise in living standards, however, took place amongst the merchant communities of the big cities. The unprecedented abundance of both cash and goods created a society that found lasting expression in the writings of the novelist Ihara Saikaku. Elaborating on the new-found wealth of the merchant community, he assured his readers that "there is an abundance of gold and silver in the world, and it would be a pity indeed if a merchant were unable to lay hands on at least a bit of it."18 The demand for goods, he maintained, was so great that no trader ever had to throw away unsold merchandise; even the need for millstones, a commodity lasting for several generations, could not be satisfied.19

The samurai profited comparatively little from the new-found wealth of the common people. Yamamura in his study of samurai income concluded that tax rates in daimyo fiefs as well as the domains of the bakufu and its bannerman, did not rise at an equal pace with increases in agricultural productivity.20 Samurai expenditure, on the other hand, increased 

17. E.g. Yamamura, pp.131-32, Sansom, 3:120.
19. *ibid.*
20. Yamamura, pp.40, 202 fn.27.
at all levels. With the rising standard of living enjoyed by the commoners, the lower samurai especially found it more and more difficult to demonstrate their superior social standing by a greater display of affluence.\textsuperscript{21} When the wives of merchants indulged in extravagances to which "in olden times even the ladies of the mightiest lord were strangers"\textsuperscript{22} it was increasingly difficult for the military class to compete with this on their generally fixed incomes. The punishment of two of the richest merchants for excessive display of luxury, as well as the numerous sumptuary laws regulating the clothing, food and housing of the townspeople, were indicative of the malaise the samurai experienced at such threatening competition in social display from the lower sections of the community.\textsuperscript{23} Although the bakufu attempted to alleviate the increasing financial insolvency of the samurai by various devices, such as exhortations to frugality, increasing stipends and making loans, it appears that the relative financial position of the lower samurai, at any rate, gradually decreased in relation to that of the commoners, finally reaching a point where those with the lowest income became "indistinguishable from most of the merchants, artisans and even peasants."\textsuperscript{24}

The daimyo were able to finance their growing budget expenditure \textit{vis à vis} their relatively stable income by exacting loans from the merchant community. Frequently these loans were not repaid for "when a daimyo cannot settle his accounts, there is nothing the merchant can do

\textsuperscript{21} Yamamura, p.41.
\textsuperscript{22} Stubbs and Takatsuka, \textit{This Scheming World}, p.20.
\textsuperscript{24} Yamamura, pp.42, 118, 132.
about it," a fact which led to the ruin of many a merchant house. Thus the upper military aristocracy could still alleviate their decreasing financial liquidity by virtue of their social status. All the same, the daimyo, too, had lost some of their former lustre. They were still an essential element of society, but no longer played the vital role they did under Ieyasu, when often the peace and wellbeing of the whole nation depended upon their individual behaviour. The battle of Osaka in 1615, which confirmed Ieyasu as hegemon of Japan, had been their final hour of glory as warriors. Just over twenty years later, when the armies fighting for the government took inordinately long to quell the Christian revolts at Shimabara, samurai prowess had already suffered through years without military challenge. Their major skill - the martial arts - became progressively redundant and their declining importance as warriors was compensated by their increasing involvement in the administration of the country.

As military leaders in unstable times the upper military aristocracy had been fundamental to Tokugawa supremacy. As administrators during the years of peace they were less essential, especially when a man of strong personality, such as Tsunayoshi, occupied the position of shogun. Their traditional samurai training, moreover, was no longer adequate in the face of new political problems arising from changing social conditions. At a time when conflicts between the government and the people were no longer amenable to military solutions, the system by which military status rather than administrative training and ability dictated a man's position in the hierarchy of the bakufu was inappropriate. In addition, the fudai, intent upon preserving their position at

the top of the official hierarchy, were opposed to change in the still essentially military character of the administration. For Tsunayoshi, consequently, the fudai daimyo impeded the administration of the country both by their inadequate performance as senior administrators and their attempts to thwart any movements for change.

At the same time, changes in the administration to enable it to cope with the challenges posed by the new social order were gaining in urgency. Such issues as the unprecedented wealth in the hands of commoners required the revision of political strategies. Further, the great accumulation of people in the rapidly growing urban centres, where natural disasters, bandits and not least of all the wrath of the common people could create havoc on a scale never experienced before, provided a new area of concern for the government. The essential daily supply of foodstuffs for the great cities was also controlled by commoners, placing the bakufu with its dependence upon the latter in an increasingly vulnerable position. Moreover, research seems to indicate that the farmers held more political power than has conventionally been believed, enabling them to take a strong stand in their struggle with government and samurai, for the surplus produced during the period.26

On his accession in Eiho 8 (1680) Tsunayoshi was faced with a complex situation. Rapidly changing socio-economic conditions required reform of the administration and adjustment of samurai and especially fudai privileges. Under his predecessor the latter had come to dominate the central administration, claiming not only that this position was rightfully theirs by virtue of their ancestry, but also maintaining that

it was their sacred duty to watch over Ieyasu's heirs and uphold the system he had bequeathed. Tsunayoshi was not free to break openly with tradition. His own claim to authority also rested upon the tradition set by his great-grandfather Ieyasu, a tradition which his father had felt the need to strengthen by increasing its aura of sanctity with the building of the mausoleum at Nikkō. If Tsunayoshi were openly to attack the fudai's position of strength, he would simultaneously be weakening his own legitimisation to rule over them. 27

Tsunayoshi attempted to solve this dilemma in two ways. First he re-established shogunal authority with the same means the first three shogun had employed. Secondly, when he came to problems for which he could find no solution in the reigns of his predecessors—such as those posed by the changing social conditions—he justified reform by basing himself on the classics of ancient China.

4. CENTRALISATION OF POWER BY TRADITIONAL MEANS

Tsunayoshi used some of the same means to centralise shogunal authority as his predecessors had done. The most important of these was the employment of new men in new offices to erode the influence of established officials. Thirty years of fudai rule, in which shogunal authority had considerably weakened, however, had the effect that these same policies were not as easily accepted as they had been under Tsunayoshi's predecessors.

Both the second shogun Hidetada and the third Iemitsu spent their first years as rulers under the watchful eyes of their fathers, but one of the first steps they took after their predecessors had died, was to

27. For legitimisation to rule by tradition, see WG, p.130.
dismiss their late father's powerful advisers and replace them with their own men.

When Tsunayoshi dismissed Sakai Tadakiyo in Empō 8 (1680), ostensibly because of ill health, he did no more than follow the example of his father and grandfather. The difference was that neither Ieyasu's nor Hidetada's men had reached a position of influence comparable to that of Tadakiyo. Known as geba shōgun from the location of his official residence, he, with the backing of the Senior Councillors, effectively ruled the country for the sickly Ietsuna. As Great Councillor (tairō) from Kambun 6 (1666), he had during fourteen years so well established his position that his simple dismissal by Tsunayoshi caused a sensation. The story that he was forced into retirement because he plotted against Tsunayoshi's accession could not be verified even by the contemporary writer Toda Mosui, and was probably no more than popular rationalisation of an apparently incredible event. An indication that no great crime was committed by Tadakiyo is perhaps the fact that his son Tadataka was later appointed as one of Tsunayoshi's Superintendents of Temples and Shrines (jisha bugyō) and that Tadataka's daughter received the shogunal command to become the wife of Yoshiyasu's eldest son Yoshisato.

Ieyasu, Hidetada and Iemitsu all brought to the forefront their own men of relatively modest samurai origins. The origins of Hidetada's Doi Toshikatsu, for instance, were so obscure that his genealogy was said to have been lost. And just as under Iemitsu the men who came to power

29. Tadakiyo's residence was situated at the Ōtemon entrance of the castle where a sign with the word geba signalled the visitor to dismount.
30. Gotōdaiki, pp.2-4; Tsuji, Kyōhō kaikaku no kenkyū, pp.43-44.
were his attendants during childhood, Tsunayoshi promoted those who had served him faithfully since his early days as Lord of Tatebayashi. 32 Apart from the fact that under his predecessors no newcomer had reached the wealth and perhaps the influence of a Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, Tsunayoshi's government by so-called favourites was nothing new. Neither was the creation of official positions or widening the scope of old ones to furnish these men with powers over the established set of senior ministers. It was Hidetada who formalised the office of Senior Councillor (rōjū) in Genna 9 (1623) to appoint Abe Masatsugu to it, 33 while Iemitsu's favourites, the Committee of Six (rokunin shū) became the Junior Councillors (wakadoshiyori) of later times. 34

Much the same happened with the position of Grand Chamberlain (sobayōnin). The office of Chamberlain (sobashū), as personal attendant to the shogun without political duties, had come into existence under Ietsuna. 35 It was to this position that Tsunayoshi appointed his long-time retainer, tutor and confidant, Makino Narisada, shortly after he became shogun. 36 Just over one month later a shogunal directive stipulated that daimyo were no longer to use the Senior Councillors as intermediaries, thus requiring them to approach the shogun via the Chamberlains. 37 It was to be the beginning of a process which transferred much

33. The Senior Councillors were first called shukuro and only later rōjū. Takayanagi Mitsunaga, Takeuchi Rizō, Kadokawa Nihon shi jiten (Tokyo, 1969), p.905.
34. Totman, p.207.
35. Ryūsei bunin in Tōkyō daigaku shiryō hensanjo, Dai Nihon kinsei shiryō (Tokyo, 1963), 1:95.
36. TV, 42:363, 9D 7M Empō 8; for Tsunayoshi's relationship with Makino Narisada, see Engelbert Kaempfer, The History of Japan together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam, 1609-1692 (Glasgow, 1906), 3:84.
37. TV, 42:379, 30D urū 8M Empō 8.
of the Senior Councillor's traditional authority to Tsunayoshi's personal staff. At the end of Empō 8 (1680), eight months after he had become shogun, Tsunayoshi promoted his favourite Senior Councillor, Hotta Masatoshi, to Grand Councillor. At the same time Makino Narisada was given wider influence by setting him apart from the rest of the shogun's attendants and according him greater prestige with the title Grand Chamberlain (sobayōnin). Narisada, we are told, became the "eyes and ears" of Masatoshi.

When Masatoshi was assassinated close to the shogunal chambers in Jōkyō 1 (1684), Tsunayoshi used the occasion to remove the offices of the Senior Councillors to a more distant part of the castle and to decree that all communication with him had to go via the Grand Chamberlains. Ostensibly designed as a security measure, it had, however, the effect that only information and advice approved by the Grand Chamberlains reached the shogun's ears; they had come to replace the Senior Councillors as the shogun's closest advisers.

The office of Grand Chamberlain was unpopular with the fudai, for it considerably limited the influence of their representatives in the central government, the Senior Councillors. Previous shogun might well have employed their own men, who devotedly served them, but since then three decades had passed and the families of these very same men had reached positions of strength where such subservient behaviour towards

38. For the question of whether Hotta Masatoshi should be seen as a representative of the fudai or one of Tsunayoshi's new men, see Section 6 of this chapter.
the shogun was considered inappropriate and unnecessary. Thus when men like Makino Narisada and Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu were accused of currying favour with the shogun, and in their absolute obedience to the ruler were compared to the eunuchs of China, they behaved no differently than a Doi Toshikatsu or Hotta Masamori had done a generation previously. Now, however, the fudai had established themselves in a position where they no longer silently had to tolerate the competition of newcomers and accordingly they made their protest heard.

A more indirect means Tsunayoshi initially used to weaken the rigid administrative hierarchy over which the fudai presided, was to raise the permanent salaries of some of the lower officials. A decree of Tenna 2 (1682) directed that the families of officials, whose salaries were supplemented because their stipend was lower than the office they had been appointed to, should continue to receive the additional allowances, even after termination of their appointment. This had the effect that chosen families of lower origin could slowly increase their stipends and then in turn be eligible for higher office; a device to make the gradual promotion of lower officials possible, without seemingly violating the established order.

Tsunayoshi has frequently been accused of extreme severity and even hostility against the fudai because of the great number of domains he confiscated. Here again his treatment of the fudai, and the rest of the daimyo, was severe only when compared with that of his immediate predecessor, or with that of his successors, but not when judged against that of the first three shogun. The yearly average of land confiscated under Tsunayoshi was twice as high as the amount confiscated by the

42. TJ, 42:445, 21D 4M Tenna 2. See also above Chapter II, Section 2.
fourth or the sixth shogun. However, it only amounted to approximately one sixth of the annual average confiscated by the first three shogun. 43

Another method previous shogun had employed to increase their personal authority was to patronise both Confucian scholars and the Buddhist clergy. There were several advantages. Neither scholars nor clergy generally had a vested interest in the welfare of the military class, and the shogun could assume that their advice would not be coloured by personal considerations when it concerned issues dealing with the samurai. They did not expect to be rewarded with personal fiefs and consequently were unlikely to attempt to compete with the shogun for authority together with other powerful daimyo. Furthermore the shogun's emphasis upon Confucianism and Buddhism placed his daimyo in a position where they, too, had to submit themselves to the instruction of clergy and scholars, and as accomplished Confucian gentlemen, or devout Buddhists, they were more likely to accept the shogunate's leadership than if their fierce samurai ambitions had not been tempered by such doctrines. Finally, there was the important issue of the Tokugawa's legitimisation as hegemon of Japan, and Ieyasu's enthusiasm for Confucianism is generally attributed to the fact that this doctrine furnished him with justification for the subordination of his fellow daimyo. 44

43. Kitajima, *Edo jidai*, p.482. It is difficult to assess the relationship between confiscation of tozama and fudai lands, as the fudai, due to their service in the bakufu, were in a position where they were much more likely to offend the shogun. Tsuji has attempted to compare punishment of the two groups of daimyo and has suggested that the fudai were treated somewhat more harshly by Tsunayoshi (*Kyōhō kaikaku no kenkyū*, pp.46-50). All the same, the fudai would have fared better under Tsunayoshi than under the first three shogun.

Japan's history, however, had shown that especially the Buddhist clergy, somewhat like the daimyo, could become powerful enough to pose a threat to the authority of the ruler and consequently Ieyasu was careful not to be dominated by the adherents of one doctrine only. He let Confucian scholars like Hayashi Razan compete for his favours with the Buddhist clergy and then, moreover, pitted the Zen monk Süden against the Tendai priest Tenkai.

Tsunayoshi used this means to increase his personal authority to an even greater extent than the first Tokugawa shogun had done. By virtue of his upbringing he had an even closer affinity with Confucianism and it is not surprising that he should have surrounded himself with scholars of the Chinese classics in his quest for independence from the military aristocracy. By decreeing that Confucian scholars no longer had to undergo tonsure like Buddhist monks, he put them on a footing more equal to that of his samurai advisers, and with the establishment of the Confucian temple and school at Yushima he reinforced their position as teachers of the military class. In addition, Tsunayoshi's own position was enhanced by the importance he attached to Confucianism, for he could make much of his superior knowledge of the classics rather than have to admit his inferiority to the daimyo in the martial arts.

Like the first shogun, Tsunayoshi was careful to balance his encouragement of Confucianism with the patronage of Buddhism. The building of the Confucian hall at Yushima was matched by the erection of Buddhist temples and Confucian debates were generally followed by a Buddhist dialogue (mondo). Confucian scholars and Buddhist priests were encouraged

by Tsunayoshi to challenge each other in public debate, making it essential for each party to study the concepts of the other. Scholars and clergy were not permitted any complacency, but had to sharpen their arguments to stand up to the fierce criticism of their opponents. Seniority and prestige counted for little in these debates and an unknown scholar like Ogyū Sorai could quickly rise to distinction by virtue of his superior intellectual abilities. 47

A ruler who encouraged his clergy to be challenged in such a way can hardly be termed a religious fanatic, and yet Tsunayoshi is accused of being one. Religious devotion - a trait greatly praised in rulers of early times - was severely criticised in the case of the fifth shogun. The criticism, however, must be seen not as directed towards Tsunayoshi's personal religious beliefs but towards his use of the Buddhist clergy as confidants and advisers. In the case of Ienobu's proclamation as shogunal successor, for instance, the monk Ryūkō was secretly told of this decision of national importance days before the Senior Councillors or the Three Related Houses were informed. 48 The intense hatred of the daimyo for monks like Ryūkō and their criticism of Tsunayoshi's religious devoutness indicated the extent to which the fudai daimyo considered the Buddhist clergy a threat to their privileged position as the shogun's advisers.

Further evidence that Tsunayoshi saw Buddhism and Confucianism as tools of government is furnished by a letter he addressed to Yoshiyasu on this subject:

47. See above Chapter II, section 3.
The Way of the Buddha and the Way of Confucius are based on compassion and require charity. They resemble the two wheels of a carriage and both should be deeply revered. However, those who study the Way of Buddha are affected by the teachings of the sutras. In their desire to master the Way of the Buddha they part with their lords, send away their parents, leave their homes and live in seclusion. Thus the Five Relationships tend to be violated. We ought to be very much afraid of this. Those who study the Way of Confucius are affected by the sayings of the classics. At ceremonies it is common to use the meat of animals as food. They do not think it detestable to take the life of living creatures. Thus everybody will adopt the customs of the barbarians and neglect benevolence. We ought to be very much afraid of this too. In the study of Confucianism and Buddhism, people must not lose sight of the notions on which these teachings are based.

No blind fanaticism can be detected in this letter. Both doctrines are critically evaluated for their effects upon society; a pragmatic approach which would have done honour to Ieyasu.

The shogun's letter indicates that he would have been disinclined to choose as his closest adviser either a Buddhist priest, or a Confucian scholar. The man in whom Tsunayoshi was likely to put his total trust would have to believe in the same even-handed approach to the two doctrines as Tsunayoshi himself, like the man to whom this letter was addressed, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu.

Tsunayoshi inherited from his grandfather the policy of using Buddhism and Confucianism as a subtle weapon against domination by the upper military aristocracy by choosing some of his advisers from amongst the clergy and scholars. New in Tsunayoshi's letter, however, is the fact

49. The Five Relationships of Confucianism between father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older and younger brother, and between friends.

that the two doctrines are not merely examined for their usefulness to the samurai only, but for their effect on society at large, because the observance of Buddhist practices, at any rate, affected all levels of society. For this much more universal approach to government which resulted in an emphasis upon the common man as subject of the shogunate unprecedented in the military rule of the Tokugawa, Tsunayoshi could find no example in the reigns of his forefathers; here he had to seek a new source of legitimisation.

5. THE USE OF TRADITION TO JUSTIFY CHANGE

Changing socio-economic conditions required the fifth Tokugawa shogun to give greater attention than his predecessors to the non-samurai sector of the community. Yet even when authority was concentrated in the hands of the shogun, he was not free to innovate policies in keeping with the new conditions. His own position as ruler was based on the sanctions of tradition, and he could ill afford to attack his own source of legitimisation.

To overcome this dilemma, Tsunayoshi by-passed the tradition of his recent ancestors and justified change by citing the sages of ancient China. For a man with a deep admiration of the Chinese classical tradition, this was not necessarily a cynical move to deceive his contemporaries, but most probably a way to justify in his own eyes, just as much as theirs, untried methods, investing them with greater efficacy by association with the sacred writings of the past. Moreover, in the absence of any other political theories which might provide guidelines for dealing with this new situation the experience of an agrarian-based and, according to the classics, absolutist state of pre-historic China was appropriate to Tsunayoshi's purpose.
Only four months after his accession in Emp8 8 (1680) Tsunayoshi issued a detailed order to his Intendants (daikan) of his domain couched in thoroughly Confucian terms:

The people (tami) are the foundation of the state. All Intendants must bear well in mind the hardships of the people and rule them so that they do not suffer from hunger and cold.

When the rule of the country is slack, the people take to luxury, and when they take to luxury they are liable to become lax in their work. There must be no luxury in the clothing, food and housing of the people.

Because there is a great distance between the people and their superiors, they do not trust them. For the same reason superiors also frequently do not trust their inferiors. In all matters you must be diligent so that there is no lack of trust between superiors and inferiors.

All Intendants must always behave prudently, be frugal, be acquainted with the details of farming and be diligent to deal properly with such matters as tax collection. It is essential that they perform these matters themselves and do not leave everything to their Assistants (tedai). Then it will be impossible for these Assistants, down to the last man, to act for their own benefit.

Not only Intendants but also the Assistants are strictly ordered not to use the people of the intendancy for private purpose nor to borrow from them nor lend them rice or money ...

The pronouncement that the people are the foundation of the state had already been made in similar terms by Ieyasu. However, the


latter's order instructed the Intendants to ensure that the boundaries of farmers' fields were clearly marked and that the farmers retained barely enough rice for consumption and be charged with corvée to the extent that they retained just enough energy to produce good crops. For Ieyasu the farmers were the machinery to produce revenue, to whom sustenance need only be given to a degree necessary for maximum production.

Tsunayoshi, too, insisted on frugality, but there was a difference. His injunction against luxury does not imply that the farmers must survive at the very barest level of existence, as Ieyasu had stipulated. Significant also is Tsunayoshi's exhortation that the Intendants themselves must set an example to the people in the practice of frugality, an attack on their hitherto privileged style of living. 54

The lofty status the Intendants claimed for themselves similarly came under attack with Tsunayoshi's injunction that they should not impose great social distance between themselves and the people they governed. On the contrary, the Intendants were to be familiar with the daily work of the farmers and win their trust by exemplary behaviour. They were to act as officials and not as feudal lords enriching themselves at the expense of their subjects. 55

Since appointments of Intendants had been made under Ieyasu, the office had frequently tended to become hereditary. They in fact did occupy a position akin to that of a local feudal lord, ruling their district with a minimum of interference from the domain government. After the collection of tax rice, Intendants retained part of it as salary and expenses and often were slow in forwarding the remainder to the domain

55. Tj, 42:369, 16D 8M Empō 8, notes an order which accuses the intendants even more directly of enriching themselves.
government. Profits could be obtained by various schemes, such as by making high-interest loans on the tax rice while it was awaiting shipment to Edo or by declaring that bad harvests had resulted in lower tax yields for the government. The districts, supposedly under direct control of the shogun, were exhibiting characteristics of economic feudalism. Efforts to stop the Intendants from enriching themselves at the expense of the government had been made in the past, but Tsunayoshi's aims went further. He not merely attempted to curb their undue profits, but to turn these would-be local magnates back into officials at the service of the government. During the next decades over half of all Intendants would be sentenced to death or suspended from office for mismanagement of the offices that had been entrusted to them. The remainder would be transferred to new districts, effectively cutting them off from an environment where ties of tradition had supported their assumed position of power. Alien to the area to which they were dispatched, they henceforth had to execute their duties depending solely on the authority the bakufu vested in them.

Also in the central administration officials with more than military training and a perfunctory knowledge of their duties were required to direct the shogun's new policies. Tsunayoshi, consequently, took the unprecedented step of making one of his Senior Councillors, Hotta Masatoshi, solely responsible for the administration of farmers, replacing the traditional system where duties were shared in monthly rotation.

among several men of this rank. This unheard of measure could well be justified in the name of tradition, for it had come to Tsunayoshi's ears that the farmers in his domains were suffering. His personal order to Masatoshi to govern the people with benevolence, was in line with the behaviour attributed to the sages kings by the Chinese classics.

Another unprecedented step, which could similarly be justified by his concern for the people, was the replacement upon his accession of the Superintendents of Temples and Shrines, Edo City Magistrates and Superintendents of Finance, with men of his personal choice. To further underline his deep interest in the performance of their duties, he took the unusual step of making their appointments in person. In addition, Inspectors (metsuke) and Inspectors General (ōmetsuke) were personally selected and appointed by the shogun to ensure due execution of his policies.

As a model Confucian ruler, it was Tsunayoshi's sacred duty to amend any faults in the behaviour of his officials. Hotta Masatoshi in his own record noted that after three years of Tsunayoshi's rule many evil habits had been successfully eliminated. Officials, for instance, had been stopped from illegally selling their official residences and uselessly frequenting the homes of important ministers. Moreover, a number of powerful aristocrats and officials had successfully been taught to stop obstructing the policies and teachings of the government.

59. TJ, 42:368, 5D 8M Empō 8.
60. TJ, 42:368, 7D 8M Empō 8; e.g. The Works of Mencius, Book 4, Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, etc.
61. TJ, 42:366, 26D 7M Empō 8; Ōishi, Genroku jidai, p.86.
63. Yōgenroku, p.34.
Neither was indulgence in luxury permitted to the shogun's officials and a stop was put to such unnecessary expenditure as incurred by the use of pleasure boats, frequent performances of the tea ceremony and everyday feasting. Although historians claim the opposite, Tsunayoshi—according to Hotta Masatoshi, at any rate—was a model of frugality. The mother of his son felt impelled to pull out the golden threads of the child's clothing, forcing her reluctant entourage to wear similarly plain garments, while the shogun himself, embarrassed his ministers by refusing to change his worn and soiled robes. 64

Tsunayoshi's early initiatives for the strict control of the samurai, especially in their capacity as officials, foreshadowed a trend that was to continue throughout the three decades of his reign. It could all be justified in the name of benevolent government as advocated by the classics, but it entailed some unfortunate consequences especially for the upper military aristocracy. Not only the Intendants of the shogunal domains, but also the daimyo were punished and had their fiefs confiscated for mismanagement and inappropriate treatment of the farmers. Benevolence towards the people was often incompatible with benevolence towards the military aristocracy; even the leisure villas at the outskirts of Edo were demolished by shogunal command so that the plots might be returned to the farmers for cultivation. 65 On a more personal level the daimyo were trailed by shogunal spies in the hope that exposure and punishment of their vices—such as their visits to the disreputable Yoshiwara quarter 66—might turn them into worthy models for the people.

64. ibid.
65. Gotōdaiki, p.11, ID 7M Tenna 2.
Tsunayoshi's early reforms of the administration, the so-called Tenna reforms, are generally seen as a measure aimed at increasing shogunal revenue. The financial aspect, no doubt, was important, but does not, for instance, explain the different attitude towards the farmers between the first and fifth shogun. An explanation must be sought in the socio-economic changes that had taken place since the beginning of the sixteenth century. The non-samurai section of the community had gained in importance and in the interest of efficient government, account had to be taken of this fact. The fifth shogun, conditioned by an upbringing outside the traditional military ethos, was able to perceive the changes that had taken place in society more clearly than his predecessors or the contemporary military aristocracy.

Tsunayoshi's emphasis on the welfare of the people then, was neither hypocrisy nor messianic fervour to improve the lot of the underprivileged. It was the natural response of a man with his education to the conditions of the times. To carry out his policies, he required men with a Weltanschauung similar to his own, free from self-interest that might lead them to oppose change.

6. FUDAI DAIMYO IN TSUNAYOSHI'S EARLY GOVERNMENT

During the first four years of Tsunayoshi's reign, Hotta Masatoshi served as the shogun's right-hand man. The question of whether Masatoshi was a forerunner of the Chamberlains, acting under the personal direction of the shogun, or served as an independent administrator similar to Sakai Tadakiyo, is a debated one and indicates how little historians know about his political activities.67

Traditionally Masatoshi is seen as a model minister, whose uncompromising sense of righteousness and duty did not stop short of admonishing the shogun. Under his stern but just administration the country prospered, but - historians frequently suggest - his demands for frugality and high moral conduct were eventually resented by the pleasure-loving shogun.68 This image of Masatoshi is based on Tokugawa jikki which dismisses any rumours of Masatoshi's wilful and self-indulgent behaviour as well as aspirations to gain power beyond his station, and praises him at length as a most able administrator.69

The response Masatoshi's assassination evoked in the contemporary writer, Toda Mosui, however, is very different. His diary elaborates in some detail on Masatoshi's debauched lifestyle, which, the scholar claims, reached excesses unheard of in previous reigns. The description of his wild affairs with every pretty girl in sight resembles the behaviour later attributed to Tsunayoshi. Worse than Masatoshi's immoral conduct was, according to Toda Mosui, the fact that his arrogance, political intrigues, and extensive preparations to fortify his villa - ostensibly against fire - led people to suspect that he was planning to dispose of the shogun and rule the country as the Hōjō had done in Kamakura times. His influence, however, had reached a point where even the shogun was under his sway, making any complaints and warnings about him useless and dangerous. The only way to deliver the country from this tyrant was to kill him and then commit suicide, even though some might condemn such an act as treachery. Masatoshi's assassin was - in Toda Mosui's eyes - a man of unparalleled loyalty to the shogun.70

69. TJ, 42:521.
70. Gotōdaiki, pp.29-32.
In his own writing Masatoshi describes his relationship with the shogun in terms very different from both of the above accounts. In his Yōgenroku, which he started to compose one year before his death, Tsunayoshi takes the place of the sage king and Masatoshi is the humble official always willing to learn from the wise judgement of his lord. Contrary to the traditional image, it is Tsunayoshi here who cautions Masatoshi against becoming attached to useless and frivolous objects. Also the Tenna reforms, which are generally attributed to Masatoshi's initiative, were based on the express wish of the shogun to improve the lot of the common people, and Masatoshi, according to his own testimony, was merely the official who carried out orders. 71

It is difficult to reconcile these widely diverging images of Masatoshi. However, both Tokugawa jikki and Gotōdaiki agree that he was short tempered and arrogant and that during his four years in office under Tsunayoshi, he had advanced to a position of considerable power. Even if Masatoshi had not been assassinated, in the long run these characteristics would not have made him the ideal man to administer the shogun's new policies.

Also the Senior Councillors soon proved unsuitable for Tsunayoshi's designs. Amongst the four Senior Councillors three had been chosen and appointed by Tsunayoshi himself. But although they had some personal commitment to the shogun, it became evident that with their traditional samurai upbringing they were totally unable to follow his thoughts and grasp the intentions behind his commands. On the contrary, they obstructed his plans, for they saw it as their duty to correct the shogun in what they considered unreasonable behaviour.

71. Yōgenroku, e.g. pp.29-32.
An example is Tsunayoshi's order for the registration of dogs in Jōkyō 4 (1687). It was issued to reduce the large number of abandoned animals, but the final proclamation as it reached the people contained the rather amazing concession that if a dog could not be found, undue trouble to locate it need not be taken, and instead any other stray animal could be presented for registration. The reason for this strange directive became apparent ten days later when the following proclamation was made:

The recent order dealing with dogs is re-issued because of a misunderstanding by the Senior Councillors. Rumour has it that the colour of fur and other details of each pet dog are well recorded, but that if a dog cannot be found any odd dog is brought along to make up numbers. The order was issued because it is the shogun's august wish that people become compassionate, but instead, falsehood is practised. Henceforth, if a pet dog cannot be found, thorough inquiries must be made to locate it. If there is cruelty towards dogs, the Deputy Magistrate (shihai) must be informed. Stray dogs are not to be treated unkindly and must be returned as soon as the owner is known.72

Tsunayoshi was not inclined to tolerate the Senior Councillors' interference and punished them by temporary dismissal. In the meantime their traditional ceremonial function of visiting the grave of the shogun's predecessor was taken over by the Grand Chamberlain Makino Narisada.73 Their replacement by the Grand Chamberlain on this occasion was ominous of future developments.

Hotta Masatoshi had spoken of powerful aristocrats and officials who had attempted to obstruct the policies and teachings of the

73. TV, 42:595, 24D 2M Jōkyō 4.
government. He claimed that by the third year of Tsunayoshi's reign they had amended their ways, but the above episode suggests otherwise. It could also be possible that Masatoshi, himself a fudai daimyo and Senior Councillor before being promoted, had been able to curb the criticism of his colleagues and that now, three years after his death, the conflict between shogun and fudai broke out with renewed force. The incident of the faulty dog order is singular in its public admission of differences between the shogun and his Senior Councillors. More detailed information of this conflict is lacking, but one may assume that there must have been many skirmishes before the Senior Councillors' insubordination to the shogunal wishes was made public to the whole nation. For there could be no doubt in the minds of contemporaries that their "misunderstanding" was in fact insubordination when it was followed by their temporary dismissal.

The Senior Councillors, it appears, had few qualities to recommend them as administrators. Yoshiyasu's retainer maintained that they were unable to speak up independently and act individually and that for this reason Tsunayoshi had to look for someone more qualified to direct the government of the country. Tsunayoshi, he wrote, considered them vague and hopeless in government affairs. Both Arai Hakuseki and Ogyū Sorai at times alluded to their lack of education and ignorance, marking perhaps the only point of agreement between the two rival scholars.

The judgements of men seeking office themselves might well have been biased, but various incidents confirm that there was some truth in these statements. The debates preceding the monetary reform are an example

74. Yōgenryoku, p.34 and above.
75. Eibyō, haru; HJ, pp.48, 63.
of how the process of decision-making passed into the hands of lower but more skilled officials due to the ignorance of the Senior Councillors. At a time when the financial problems of the bakufu could be solved no longer with reference to precedents, the Senior Councillors were unable to suggest a solution. Their ignorance of government finance forced them to accept the advice of Superintendent of Finance (kanjō bugyō) Ogiwara Shigehide, without even having the knowledge to question the issue. Even Shigehide's enemies had to admit that he was hardworking and highly skilled, qualities which the Senior Councillors seemed to be lacking.

In Tsunayoshi's government men like Ogiwara Shigehide posed a constant threat to the less skilled traditional officials. Even earlier in his career he had been given wide powers by the shogun to inspect the workings of the finance ministry, and as a consequence three Superintendents of Finance (kanjō gashira) and their assistant (sashizoe/sashizoi) had been dismissed and Shigehide promoted accordingly.

The Superintendents of Finance were an essential part of Tsunayoshi's government and so every attempt was made to replace them with men of ability. With the Senior Councillors the case was different. When the shogun was a minor or incapacitated they were of great importance as leaders of the bakufu, but under a determined and energetic ruler like Tsunayoshi they were less essential. Moreover, one of their main functions - the administration of the daimyo - was decreasing in importance.

76. See above Chapter IV, Section 1.
77. Ori taku shiba no ki, p.305.
78. From Genroku onwards, kanjō gashira were known as kanjō bugyō.
79. TJ, 42:610, 10D 9M Jōkyō 4 and Gotōdaiki, p.58 of the same date.
Tsunayoshi's choice of Senior Councillors was greatly restricted by the stipulation that only descendants of established fudai were eligible to hold this rank. Consequently while Tsunayoshi replaced other officials who displeased him, he ignored the Senior Councillors. Their influence and some of their duties gradually passed into the hands of the shogun's new men, at times occupying offices such as Ogiwara Shigehide, but mostly serving the shogun under the title of Grand Chamberlain.

7. THE SHOGUN'S NEW MEN: THE CHAMBERLAINS

Hotta Masatoshi's assassination in Jōkyō 4 (1684) opened the door to influence by the Grand Chamberlains. The Senior Councillors were unable to supply a suitable candidate to replace Masatoshi and the removal of their office away from the shogunal chambers forced them to rely on the Grand Chamberlains for all communication with Tsunayoshi. A year later Toda Mosui noted in his diary:

On the twenty-first, Matsudaira Iga no Kami entered the shogun's inner chambers having been commanded to observe and learn the duties of Makino [Narisada] Bingo no Kami. He is neither a Junior Councillor (wakadoshiyori) nor a Chamberlain (sobashū). The three men Makino Bingo no Kami, Matsudaira Iga no Kami and Kitami Wakasa no Kami serve the shogun in a manner unheard of in previous reigns. They are below the Senior Councillors, but above the Junior Councillors. The authority of Makino Bingo no Kami, however, is greater than that of a Senior Councillor.80

Mosui's entry leaves no doubt about the unheard-of role Tsunayoshi's new men played in the government. A foreign visitor, the German doctor Kaempfer, confirmed Narisada's important position, describing him as the shogun's "chief favourite and the only person whom he absolutely confides

in." In addition, unlike Hotta Masatoshi, he had the advantage of being "in no way given to ambition." 81

Narisada to all intents and purposes was the right man to administer the shogun's unconventional policies, but to find men suitable to "observe and learn his duties" and to provide the infrastructure to his demanding office, proved to be a difficult task.

Tsunayoshi's chamberlains are traditionally seen as the shogun's homosexual partners, or at least his favourites, appointed and dismissed at his whim. The office, consequently, is pictured as one where talent in flattering and amusing the shogun rather than political expertise were considered essential. Homosexual relationships Tsunayoshi might have had, but it is doubtful whether they determined the employment of those who were to assist him in the government of the country. Some scrutiny of the office of Grand Chamberlain as well as the background of those who were entrusted with its duties, reveals the exacting nature of this office and the arduous path men had to tread before they could consider themselves eligible for appointment.

One problem encountered in mapping out the career of Tsunayoshi's personal staff is the discrepancy of information supplied by various sources. With other positions also differences about such matters as length of service and reason for termination exist, but nowhere are the variations as marked as with these positions, an indication, perhaps, of the fluidity and experimental character of the offices Tsunayoshi used to surround himself with men of talent.

A case in hand is the appointment of Makino Narisada. According to two records Narisada was first appointed as the shogun's Chamberlain

(sobashū) and only one year later was given the title Grand Chamberlain (sobayōnin), while a third one notes him as becoming Grand Chamberlain soon after Tsunayoshi's proclamation as shogun.

Similarly, there is some difference of opinion as to whether Makino Narisada was the first Grand Chamberlain or not. There is no doubt that he was the first man to receive this title, but Arai Hakuseki maintained that the first Grand Chamberlain was in fact Hotta Masamori, who had risen from Page (koshō) to Senior Councillor, finally expressing his personal devotion to the third shogun by following him in death (junshi). Scholars such as Tsuji Tatsuya argue that Hakuseki's theory was no more than an attempt to furnish the much criticised office of Grand Chamberlain with a respectable past. Throughout his life Hakuseki was opposed to Tsunayoshi and his officials and it would have been painful for him to admit that his mentor, Manabe Akifusa was occupying his position of influence due to the groundwork Tsunayoshi and his personal staff had laid. Tsuji points out that the term kinju shūtonin - generally believed to denote the forerunners of the Chamberlains - had been used for all officials in direct contact with the shogun before the bakufu was structured along more rigid lines. Once the system of separate official positions had been established the kinju shūtonin filled offices such as those of Senior and Junior Councillor. Consequently they were not the forerunners of the Grand Chamberlains, but those of various other offices.

82. TJ, 42:363, 9D 7M Empō 8 and 42:432, 11D 12M Tenna 1; KCS, 6:277.
84. Oritaku shiba no ki, p.424-25.
85. Tsuji, Kyōhō kaikaku, pp.60-61 fn.1.
The argument whether the office of Grand Chamberlain was in existence under a different name previously or not is a theoretical one. Like Tsunayoshi the first three shogun all had their personal advisers and favourite ministers. Due to the still fluid structure of the bakufu, they encountered no problems in creating new offices for their new men, and in this sense the kinju shuttōnin as well as the original Senior and Junior Councillors were all forerunners of Tsunayoshi's Grand Chamberlains. These offices, however, had become the preserve of the families for whom they had been created, families who had now become "established" and strong enough to oppose both the admission of newcomers to their high offices and the creation of new ones. Tsunayoshi, consequently, had to be more cautious than his predecessors in introducing his new men into the bakufu hierarchy; skilfully he used an office already in existence to eventually by-pass the unbending structure of officialdom.

The office of Chamberlain (sobashū) of which Toda Mosui spoke with familiarity had been created some thirty years before under the fourth shogun. Tsunayoshi used this office, which apparently had not yet assumed the rigidity of other bakufu appointments, in two ways. Firstly, he upgraded it. With widened duties and powers it gave rise to the office of Grand Chamberlain, the official base of operation for the shogun's right-hand men. Secondly, it served as a sorting-ground for men in whom the shogun saw some talent. Especially during the initial decades of Tsunayoshi's reign, it was here that officials had to prove themselves before being considered for promotion to Grand Chamberlain.

Also under the fourth shogun successful performance in the position of Chamberlain had led to higher appointment. Of the first twelve

86. See above Section 4 of this chapter.
appointees, four men resigned and one was put under house arrest. The remainder, however, all proceeded to relatively important positions, including one appointee as Kyoto Deputy (Kyōto shoshidai) and three promotions to Junior Councillor.\(^{87}\)

What differed under Tsunayoshi was the background of those men who were initially appointed Chamberlains. In Ietsuna's case they had with one exception held positions in the shogunal entourage such as Senior Page (koshō gumi gashira) or performed various guard duties (goshoin ban gashira, Ōban gashira). Under Tsunayoshi the majority of appointees came from a much wider background of offices outside the shogunal entourage ranging from Inspector General (ōmetsuke) to Superintendent of Finance (kanjō bugyō). This change of background in appointees reflected Tsunayoshi's much wider interests in the government of the country. His Chamberlains were all men with specialised experience in various fields of bakufu administration, well qualified to put their technical know-how at the disposal of the shogun.

Another difference between the appointees of the fourth and those of the fifth shogun was that a much smaller percentage of the latter were to proceed to higher office. In Ietsuna's case eighty-three percent of all Chamberlains were promoted, while in Tsunayoshi's case it was only forty-two percent of those who had served in this office. Of the nineteen men who had been appointed as Chamberlain during the initial decade of Tsunayoshi's reign, nine were either dismissed or resigned, two died and only four men were promoted to the post of Grand Chamberlain. Three others became Junior Councillors and one man was

\(^{87}\) The information on the promotion and background of Chamberlains and Grand Chamberlains has been taken from Ryūei bunin, 1:96-99 and 1:22-24, respectively.
promoted to Master of Shogunal Ceremony (sōshaban).

In Genroku 2 (1689) Tsunayoshi created the office of Personal Adviser (okuzume) and from that time onwards it was largely here that future Grand Chamberlains had to prove themselves. Relatively little is known of this position, which was abolished at Tsunayoshi's death. Its functions are described as "answering the shogun's questions" and it appears that initially they largely overlapped with those of the Chamberlains. Ryūei bunin gives only sparse information on the termination of service and future career of occupants of this office, but the turnover of men appears to have been similar to that of the Chamberlains. At times, sources such as Tokugawa jikki and Kansei chōshū shokafu do not differentiate between the two offices, indicating the close connection that existed between them.

A third office on which Tsunayoshi initially drew for his Grand Chamberlains was that of Junior Councillor (wakadoshiyori). This office, like that of Senior Councillor, was by tradition limited to men of fudai status, but here Tsunayoshi did not observe the restriction rigidly, with some appointees even of tozama status. The office was less prestigious than that of Senior Councillor and also the fact that it did not directly concern itself with the affairs of the daimyo, and therefore was not involved in the power struggle between the latter and the shogun, might have been the reason for this greater flexibility. Nearly half of Tsunayoshi's Junior Councillors had proved themselves under the shogun's watchful eye as either Chamberlain (sobashū) or Personal Adviser (okuzume), while another third had served successfully in the position of Superintendent of Temples and Shrines (jishabugyō). 89

88. Ryūei bunin, 1:65-68.
89. Ryūei bunin, 1:26-27.
An analysis of the careers of Junior Councillors demonstrates the close connection of what one might term "traditional" bakufu offices versus those created for Tsunayoshi's new men. It disproves the general assumption that the shogun's entourage consisted of professional lightweights, while those staffing the traditional positions were altogether different, hard-working and sober men, trying to cope with the shogun's erratic policies.

The three above-mentioned offices - those of Chamberlain (sōbashū), Personal Adviser (okuzume) and Junior Councillor (wakadoshiyori) - account for the background of all but one of Tsunayoshi's fourteen Grand Chamberlains. It was an élite the shogun had personally chosen: all men who had proved themselves both in senior offices in the bakufu and under the shogun's own supervision. Yet, in the majority of cases the career of Tsunayoshi's Grand Chamberlains was short-lived. In several instances the reason for termination of appointment cannot be traced, making it difficult to define a pattern. Conspicuous, however, is the fact that a relatively large number of resignations are due to ill health. Omitting those cases where the reason for termination is unknown or where it occurred at the end of Tsunayoshi's reign after his death, six out of ten resignations were made on account of illness. Of the rest, three were terminated due to "unsuitability" which at least in one case was on account of insufficient devotion to duties. Only one man was sacked and his domain confiscated for going against the shogun's will.90

Traditionally resignation due to poor health was a way of politely shedding uncomfortable duties, but not so under Tsunayoshi. The point

90. See table of Tsunayoshi's Grand Chamberlains.
is well made by the case of two men who were appointed as Tsunayoshi's Pages (koshō), but feigning illness declined to serve, fearing that they would soon displease the shogun. The shogun's displeasure, however, they incurred all the same when investigations revealed the true state of their health. 91

It is unlikely that after this incident anybody serving in Tsunayoshi's proximity would have attempted to resign with a similar false excuse. Unless, therefore, one makes the rather absurd assumption that the shogun preferred men of delicate health as his officials, the high percentage of resignations due to illness can only suggest that the duties of Grand Chamberlain were so demanding that few people had the stamina to withstand the pace of work. Those who did not totally exert themselves were presumably considered "unsuitable."

Tsunayoshi's own devotion to work is reflected in the pages of Matsukage nikki. His interest in government affairs apparently dominated his life, driving him to rise early "even on mornings of fog and deep snow" and to work until late into the night. 92 It is easy to dismiss such statements as hagiography, but they do accord well with the facts furnished by the careers of his Grand Chamberlains. Even the aging Makino Narisada was not spared. Being twelve years the shogun's senior he could not keep up with the pace of work demanded from him and in his later years in office was progressively hampered by bouts of illness. Finally, in his sixtieth year, after a particularly bad spell of ill health, he petitioned the shogun to retire. But his petition was

91. Gotōdaiki, p.52, 18D 5M Genroku 1, p.64, date not specified. Gotōdaiki records the appointments as sobashū while TJ as koshō. TJ, 43:13, 18D 5M Genroku 1. See also Ōishi, Genroku jidai, p.19.
92. MK, p.285 and above Chapter II, Section 5.
refused and it took another two years until the ailing Narisada was permitted to resign. Rare was the official who had both the devotion and stamina to satisfy the shogun's relentless demands. Out of Tsunayoshi's fourteen Grand Chamberlains, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was the only man who could successfully bear the heavy load of work over many years.

8. YOSHIYASU'S POLITICAL CAREER

Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu's career did not conform to the pattern of Tsunayoshi's other Grand Chamberlains. Unlike his colleagues he did not gather experience in one of the three offices qualifying other officials for appointment. Yet the reason was not that his career advanced so rapidly as to prevent him from receiving the training of other appointees. On the contrary, promotion in terms of bakufu hierarchy was markedly slow in Yoshiyasu's case.

After five years of service as Page (koshō) at the Tatebayashi residence, Yoshiyasu became a bakufu official on Tsunayoshi's accession to the shogunate. His new rank was that of Attendant (konando), one of the lowest official positions in the shogunal entourage. His rank was now below that of Page (koshō), and his new office was only a promotion in the sense that he was serving the shogun and not merely a relative of the ruler, as he had done previously. Eight years later, in Genroku 1 (1688), before Yoshiyasu was finally promoted to Grand Chamberlain, his position was still that of Attendant, albeit a senior one (konando jōza).

Ryūei bunin records that from Jōkyō 1 (1684) onwards Yoshiyasu was performing additional duties as jikkin, or what might be termed "aide" in English. The appointment apparently was a semi-official one, for it

93. T7, 43:244-45, 29D 11M Genroku 8.
finds no mention in otherwise detailed records such as Rakushidō nenroku or Tokugawa jikki.

The office of jikkin had been in use since Ieyasu, but appointments had been few, the position apparently being reserved for men in whom the shogun placed his special trust. It was commonly held concurrently with other duties and all those who had held this position had had higher ranks than Yoshiyasu. 94

It is somewhat of a mystery why Yoshiyasu during the first thirteen years he served Tsunayoshi - eight of which were spent at Edo castle - never proceeded beyond the rank of Attendant, especially in light of the fact that previously officials performing duties as jikkin all had held more senior ranks. As Attendant Yoshiyasu was merely one of around hundred men serving in a variety of relatively menial jobs such as dressing the shogun's hair and serving his food. 95 Maybe Tsunayoshi wanted to keep him close at his side as his disciple sharing his interest in the Confucian classics, or perhaps he did have a homosexual relationship with Yoshiyasu, or both. One could even suspect that initially the shogun did not consider him clever enough to deal with the intricacies of government business in competition with the experienced officials employed as Chamberlains (sobashū). Eibyō gojitsuroku, citing Yoshiyasu's account of his appointment as Grand Chamberlain, makes much of the intellectual abilities of his colleagues:

When Nambu Tōtōmi no Kami and I were appointed together the order of seniority was first Tōtōmi no Kami and then myself. When we offered our expressions of gratitude for this appointment in the shogunal chambers, Tōtōmi no Kami stood up to proceed

95. Sasama, Edo bakufu yakushoku, p.368.
first, according to the order of seating. However, the shogun commanded "Dewa first" and I proceeded first and offered my gratitude. From then on we sat in this new order. Although Tōtōmi no Kami was exceedingly bright, after some time he did not measure up to the shogun's expectations and was dismissed. The Master of Court Ceremony (kōke) Hatakeyama Mimbú no Taifu was ordered to serve at the shogun's side, but again, he was old anyway and soon suspended from office. Kitami Wakasa no Kami and Saitō Hida no Kami were both employed before me at the shogun's side and although both were of outstanding intelligence, they disobeyed the shogun's commands. Hida no Kami was suspended from office in disgrace and Wakasa no Kami was ordered under house arrest in the care of Matsudaira Etchū no Kami Sadashige, lord of Kuwana castle. It is the shogun's intention that men, whether of high or low rank, will not succeed unless they apply themselves with sincerity to their work.

Yoshiyasu took up his appointment of Grand Chamberlain together with Nambu Naomasa who had successfully served as Tsunayoshi's Chamberlain and was thus Yoshiyasu's senior. The shogun, however, placed Yoshiyasu ahead of him and one may only guess whether it was on account of Yoshiyasu's long years of service, better performance, or some personal reason. Barely three months after his appointment, Nambu Naomasa was suspended from office. The above passage claims that it was due to disobedience, but other sources state that it was on account of illness. Gotōdaiki specified it as a small boil on Naomasa's hand, adding that he would be permitted to return to his office as soon as the illness was cured. But although Naomasa lived for another ten years he never did

96. Dewa no Kami - Yoshiyasu.
97. Osoba ősetsukerare soraedomo is ambiguous as osoba could be translated either as an abbreviation of osobayōnin or sobashū. Yet later in the text this phrase is also used for Saitō Hida no Kami who only served as koshō and it has therefore been translated literally as "serving at the shogun's side."
98. Bībyō, natsu; HJ, p.102.
return to his office, nor was he appointed to any other post.\textsuperscript{99}

It was, consequently, neither high birth, nor superior intellect, that qualified men for the position of Grand Chamberlain, but untiring devotion to duty. And that Yoshiyasu had. "He diligently worked night and day without a break," "served without a minute's rest," "generally came home only every second night." He was too busy to visit his father's grave and could not afford the time to finish the latter's temple. Even to arrange his daughter's wedding he could not take time off from work. Yoshiyasu's pace never slackened until finally, he too, succumbed and fell sick in the heat of summer.\textsuperscript{100} If Matsukage is given any credence at all, then this constant theme, which is echoed also in other sources,\textsuperscript{101} cannot be ignored. Yoshiyasu, one may assume, was an official whom the shogun never had occasion to reprimand for lack of devotion to his duties.

The picture that emerges of Yoshiyasu is that of a man not particularly brilliant, but ambitious and hard-working. And although he himself was perhaps not overly gifted, he had a talent for recognising superior intellect in others and having them work under his leadership. It can hardly be a coincidence that Yoshiyasu employed not only Ogyû Sorai long before he had produced the works that were to earn him fame, but also scholars like Hosoi Kôtaku (1658-1735) and Hattori Nankaku (1683-1759) who spent their early years in the Yanagisawa mansion.

\textsuperscript{99} TJ, 43:34, 26D 1M Genroku 2; Toda Mosui, Gotôdaiki, p.71, 6D urû 1M Genroku 2; KCS, 4:113. Perhaps Naomasa was found to have syphilis - the same ideogram being used for "boil" and that illness - and that therefore he was not employed again. The statement that "he did not measure up to the shogun's expectations" could presumably mean that he was frequenting the forbidden Yoshiwara quarters, rather than attending to his work.

\textsuperscript{100} MK, pp.121, 125, 126, 132-33, 136, 162, 172.

\textsuperscript{101} E.g. Menroku, Vol.7, 26D 3M Genroku 4.
Other men employed by Yoshiyasu are not as well remembered by posterity, but in their day must have been just as remarkable scholars, such as the mathematician Kaneko Gonshichi, who besides Shibukawa Shunkai was the only man in Japan able to calculate the new calendar adopted by Tsunayoshi in Jōkyō 1 (1684). 102

Taking his cue from the fifth shogun, Yoshiyasu followed the policy of promoting men according to talent and not status. His behaviour was in contrast to that of other newcomers who - although originally of humble status themselves - attempted to engage for their entourage men boasting of an illustrious ancestry. 103

Nor did Yoshiyasu fall for the temptation of publicly taking advantage of his new status or permitting his retainers the boisterous behaviour the servants of other powerful men would frequently adopt. 104 As a newcomer, elevated far above the rank he would traditionally be permitted to attain, he was well aware of the vulnerability of his position and one may well believe Machiko when she wrote:

... My lord did not boast. He was very reticent. No matter how much power he held in his hands, his constant and profound concern was only that he not err in the discharge of the affairs of state. Therefore he thought it most inappropriate if his retainers were excessively boastful like Yan Ying's stupid charioteer. 105 "Under no circumstances are you to take advantage of your

102. Nenroku, Vol. 50, 3D 11M Genroku 10. The Senmyō calendar which had been in use for over 800 years showed considerable discrepancy with the natural seasons. Shibukawa Shunkai calculated the appropriate adjustments and his calendar was known as Jōkyō calendar. See also Shively "Tokugawa Tsunayoshi," p. 121.
103. Eibyo, natsu; HJ, p. 84.
104. Ibid.
105. Yan Ying, Jap: Anei, was prime minister during the Spring and Autumn period in China. His charioteer, proud of his master's position, handled his horses with such exuberance that his wife requested a divorce.
influence, ridicule people or behave impolitely. It should be repugnant to you to think that merely because you are a member of an influential house you can always behave as you please," he frequently cautioned his retainers. Consequently everybody was convinced that there could be no better man to whom the well-being of the people might be entrusted.106

Yoshiyasu had to be more careful than other men in establishing his position. He lacked a powerful network of relatives to back him, should he in any way incur the shogun's displeasure. On the contrary, he had constantly to be heedful that those jealous of his powerful position would find no reason to accuse him. Consequently when two guards of his residence were rumoured to have accepted bribes, he promptly suspended them from duty and despatched them to his castle at Kawagoe.107

Other members of his household, however, proved to be more of an asset. Not just Ogyū Sarai, but also less scholarly retainers found favour in the shogun's eyes. Frequently they were requested to attend Tsunayoshi at Edo castle108 and on his visits to the Yanagisawa mansion they were also accorded honours and gifts far in excess of their status. On one occasion a senior retainer was particularly singled out with praise for the speedy construction of new buildings in the Yanagisawa compound and in recognition was awarded the shogun's aoi crest. Traditionally this honour had been reserved for members of the shogunal family, and there had, apparently, been no precedent of a lower official being bestowed with the crest.109 Such unusual favours could not go unnoticed and - Machiko wrote - men soon considered it more advantageous

106. MK, pp.215-16.
108. E.g. Nenroku, Vol.4, 1D 10M Genroku 2; Vol.6, 10D and 29D 7M Genroku 3.
to be personally known by Yoshiyasu than to be attached to the entourage of the most mighty daimyo. 110

Step by step Yoshiyasu succeeded in placing some of his own loyal retainers in bakufu positions, and even when a rather distant relative in straightened circumstances appealed to him for help, he soon secured him a place in the administration. 111

Also in his office as Grand Chamberlain Yoshiyasu carefully established a following.

Except for Makino Narisada the careers of his colleagues had been short-lived 112 and he had little to fear from their competition. Moreover, after Yoshiyasu had acted for several years as Grand Chamberlain, Narisada himself was starting to suffer from ill health and was keen to resign his duties. With the shogun's extremely critical assessment of his Grand Chamberlains, Yoshiyasu, consequently, had to worry less about rivals than how to himself find an assistant so that he would be able to execute his increasingly heavy duties to the shogun's satisfaction.

In Genroku 6 (1693), the year of Narisada's unsuccessful request for resignation, he found a suitable assistant in Matsudaira Terusada, his own son-in-law. 113

Unlike Yoshiyasu, Matsudaira Terusada was no newcomer. His grandfather, Matsudaira Nobutsuna had stood high in favour with the third shogun and together with men like Hotta Masamori, Abe Shigetsugu and Abe Tadaaki he had played a vital role in the government of the country. 114

110. MK, p.218.
112. See table of Tsunayoshi's Grand Chamberlains.
113. TJ, 43:161, 7D 1M Genroku 6.
114. KCS, 4:401-406; Bolitho, Treasures, pp.162-63.
Terusada had started his career as Tsunayoshi's Page (koshō) and was eventually promoted to Chamberlain (sobashū). He distinguished himself in this office by supervising to the shogun's entire satisfaction the construction of the Confucian temple at Yushima. In Genroku 4 (1691) he had been granted permission to inherit his uncle's fief and apparently resigned his position as Chamberlain for this reason. It was at the end of this same year that he had received the shogunal command to wed Yoshiyasu's adopted daughter and barely two years after this event had been promoted to Grand Chamberlain to assist Yoshiyasu.

Makino Narisada was reluctantly to remain in office for another two years after Terusada's appointment, but there could be no doubt that Yoshiyasu and his son-in-law were poised to move up in the ladder of responsibilities as soon as Narisada retired.

Tsunayoshi continued to appoint Grand Chamberlains but for various reasons none of them remained in office for very long. Finally, another of Yoshiyasu's sons-in-law joined his team. He was Kuroda Naokuni with whom - Machiko noted - "the shogun had been friendly for some years." Like Yoshiyasu, Naokuni had started his career as the shogun's Attendant (konando), but had then been promoted to Page (koshō). His betrothal to one of Yoshiyasu's adopted daughters had been announced soon after Terusada's betrothal, and although it took some time until the marriage finally took place, he became part of the Yanagisawa household and from then on officially attended as son-in-law during the shogun's visits. Apparently Naokuni was never officially promoted to either the position

115. KCS, 5:4-6; Ryōei bunin, 1:97.
117. See table of Tsunayoshi's Grand Chamberlains.
of Grand Chamberlain or Chamberlain, for he is not noted as such in the official records. Gotōdaiki, however, states that he received the shogunal command "to observe and learn the duties" of Grand Chamberlain Matsudaira Terusada, an order usually indicating promotion to that office. It is difficult to know why Naokuni's appointment was not otherwise recorded and one may only assume that his assistance to Yoshiyasu was of a more personal nature and therefore not noted in official documents.

The position of Yoshiyasu's son-in-law, however, was not invariably a guarantee of success. Yamana Yasutoyo had also served as Tsunayoshi's Page and at the same time as Kuroda Naokuni been promised to yet another one of Yoshiyasu's adopted daughters. Previously he had already displeased the shogun - apparently with his refusal to be adopted by Makino Narisada - and put under house arrest in the Yanagisawa mansion. Either the matter had not been very serious, or Yoshiyasu's pleading had been extremely effective, for only two days later he was already pardoned. Subsequent increases in stipend and the order to become Yoshiyasu's son-in-law would indicate that he had been completely rehabilitated, but three years after his promise of marriage he displeased the shogun again, this time for not devoting himself sufficiently to his duties. For the shogun such lack of enthusiasm was a grave matter. Therefore, perhaps, Yoshiyasu considered it wiser not to intervene this time and the engagement between Yasutoyo and his adopted daughter was broken off.

Yoshiyasu, one might conclude, was in no position to patronise men who

119. Gotōdaiki, p.178, 12M Genroku 13, day not specified.
120. ibid., 14D and 16D 4M Genroku 4; TJ, 43:72 same date.
121. TJ, 43:189, 4D 2M Genroku 7.
had fallen out with the shogun; those who wanted to benefit from his influence also had to win the approval of Tsunayoshi.

At the same time as Yoshiyasu was cautiously establishing his own base of power, his political duties widened.

In Genroku 7 (1694) he was assigned for the first time to the Supreme Court (hyōjōsho).\[122] Traditionally members of the shogun's entourage did not attend at the sessions of this highest organ of justice and it was only under Tsunayoshi that Makino Narisada, when still merely Chamberlain, was ordered to do so.\[123] Yoshiyasu was now following in Narisada's footsteps.

The next year was that of Narisada's retirement, making Yoshiyasu indisputably the shogun's most trusted and most senior adviser.

Some months afterwards Yoshiyasu's control of political issues increased further when a shogunal order stipulated that henceforth presents to the Great Interior (Soku), the residence of the shogun's mother, wives and daughters, had to be channelled either through him or his assistant Terusada.\[124] The importance of these ladies has already been pointed out.\[125] From early on Yoshiyasu had taken care to establish good relationships with them, but valuable presents from men antagonistic to him could conceivably sway their opinion. The fact that control of gifts to the shogunal ladies was considered necessary presumably indicates that attempts had been made subtly to influence Tsunayoshi's opinion in this way.

123. Tō, 42:376, 6D urū 8M Empū 8.
124. Kanrosō (manuscript, see Bibliography), Vol.3, 10D 7M Genroku 9; Naitō Chisō, Tokugawa ōgōdaishi (Tokyo, 1893), 6:120.
125. See above Chapter II, Section 2.
With Yoshiyasu's increasing control over all access to the shogun, it became necessary even for some of the most powerful daimyo to petition him for help. Machiko later recalled:

I need hardly say that virtually everyone of every rank, who had a petition to present or grievance to protest, the mighty as well as the lowly, flocked to his gate to seek an audience with him. Even the lords of provinces puffed up with conceit, grand gentlemen of noble descent, had limits to their powers and found themselves in distress when they had personal problems they could not solve. Some would return again and again and ask when his lordship were free. Some would call with introductions from influential friends and some would learn when he would be leaving the house and implore him to grant them even a moment's interview. His lordship was now dealing with hundreds of matters and still, as before, was attending the shogun personally every day. Although he did not want to close his eyes and ears to people's complaints, if he were to follow his own inclinations and take trouble to deal personally with each and every case presented to him there would have been no end to it. Moreover, since it was against his principles to give special treatment to some people, he generally would not see even important men personally. When on rare occasions he could not avoid seeing someone he would behave as if he were presiding over formal court proceedings and his conduct would make people hesitate to voice too personal requests in his presence ....

In Genroku 11 (1698) Yoshiyasu was granted the imperial title of Lesser Commander of the Guards (sakon'e no shōshō), a rank generally reserved for lords of provinces, the great daimyo of whom Machiko had spoken so disparagingly.

Yoshiyasu's increasing dominance - not just in matters of everyday government, but also in the important sphere of solemn ceremonial proceedings - was further emphasised the following year. On the occasion of the shogun's procession to the ancestral temples at Momijiyama in the

126. NK, p.218.
127. See above Chapter II, Section 3.
seventh month of Genroku 12 (1699) Yoshiyasu for the first time was given the honour of acting as the shogunal herald (sendō). This function had previously been carried out by men like Sakai Tadakiyo and Hotta Masatoshi and after their death had been shared by the families of Hoshina and Ii. 128 For one of the shogun's new men, like Yoshiyasu, to take over this solemn and prestigious duty, was an unheard of break with tradition. It demonstrated to the whole country the neglect with which Tsunayoshi treated the old established families.

Yoshiyasu's advancement did not stop here. Two years later the name of Matsudaira was bestowed upon him and his sons, and the shogun's declaration that from now on he considered him like one of his family, must have been painful to other members of the Tokugawa clan. Yoshiyasu - the shogun declared - was a model official, praise no doubt resented by those officials who considered Yoshiyasu's position of influence to be rightfully theirs. 129

A shogunal directive shortly afterwards declared that in future Yoshiyasu was to take his seat in order of seniority with men sharing his rank of Lesser Commander of the Guards; 130 he, the upstart, was to be treated no differently from the families which had established their supremacy for generations.

No other man received such favours from the fifth shogun. Nevertheless, the position of the fudai daimyo as senior administrators of the country was not just threatened by Yoshiyasu alone. Indications that promotion according to talent and not family background was part of

128. E.g. for Sakai Tadakiyo, TJ, 42:15, 17D 4M Kambun 8; for Hotta Masatoshi, 42:469, 8D 1M Tenna 3; for Ii, 42:535, 17D 1M J5kyō 2; for Hoshina, 52:551, 8D 1M J5kyō 2.
129. See above, Chapter III, Section 4.
the shogunal policy could no longer be ignored. On a visit to the Yanagisawa mansion in Genroku 15 (1702) Tsunayoshi found occasion greatly to praise one of Yoshiyasu's retainers for the speedy reconstruction of buildings after fire. Presenting him with a sword the shogun ventured the rhetorical question, "Should we make a difference between low and high ranking when it comes to the way of the officials?" and concluded that "everyone ought to serve like this man." 131

With Yoshiyasu's position increasingly encroaching upon the privileges of the fudai and the shogun's policy indicating that also other men would be promoted without consideration of status, it is not surprising that gradually protest came to be heard.

9. SIGNS OF PROTEST

Signs of protest against shogunal policy are not easy to detect in contemporary sources. The shogun's decisions were infallible and to express doubt about this would have amounted to treason. Open criticism of shogunal decisions, therefore, was a serious breach of loyalty and thus especially unbecoming to the fudai, whose claim to privileges rested on their display of this same virtue. Consequently disagreement with Tsunayoshi's policy of advancing men of talent and permitting a newcomer to usurp a position of influence occupied by the fudai in the past, finds no direct expression in the official sources. That such protest did exist, however, is indicated at times by less official chronicles or subtly suggested by a somewhat puzzling progression of events, inviting historians to draw their own conclusions.

An early indication of protest was the resignation of Tsunayoshi's Great Councillor (tairō) Ii Kamon no Kami Naomori. According to Tokugawa jikki Naomori terminated his duties on account of illness. Toda Mosui, however, noted:

The Great Councillor Ii Kamon no Kami has been granted permission to resign. Apparently he made a submission to the shogun, stating that according to Iemitsu's code the court rank appropriate for a Senior Councillor is Gentleman-in-waiting (jjijū) and the fief should be no more than 100,000 koku. Therefore the appointment last year of Yanagisawa Dewa no Kami to Lesser Commander (shōshō) was against the code. It is rumoured that this is the reason [for the Grand Councillor's resignation]. I heard this from an unreliable source.

Yoshiyasu's stipend at that time did not exceed the limit set for Senior Councillors. Yet his rank did, a breach of tradition all the more serious in view of the fact that as Grand Chamberlain he was officially placed below the Senior Councillors. Toda Mosui's statement, however, is incorrect in so far as Yoshiyasu had not received his new rank the previous year, but already two years ago. During the previous year though, Yoshiyasu - as mentioned above - had been granted the unprecedented privilege of acting as the shogun's herald to Momijiyama, an honour previously enjoyed by the Ii family. For once Ii Naomori as Great Councillor would have been intolerant of a newcomer decorated with the same court rank as himself, but the timing would suggest that Yoshiyasu's encroachment upon the office of herald to the sacred ancestral temples of the Tokugawa family might have been the final impetus for his

134. His last increment had been on 26D 7M Genroku 10, bringing his stipend to a total of 92,030 koku; TJ, 43:303.
protest and resignation. For Naomori, who as Great Councilor ought to have been the most influential man next to the shogun, it was a great loss of face. As his remonstrances with the shogun obviously went unheeded, he saw no alternative but to resign.

Any differences that might have existed between the shogun and his Great Councilor were handled with the utmost discretion. No such differences appear in the official sources and in the years to come Ii Naomori still maintained cordial relations with members of the shogunal family, as the continual exchange of presents appears to indicate. It was perhaps no coincidence that Naomori was re-installed as Great Councilor when the sixth shogun Ienobu lay on his death bed, at the same time when the only man of influence from Tsunayoshi's days, Superintendent of Finance Ogiwara Shigehide, was finally discredited.

With Ii Naomori having left the political arena no protest can be detected when Yoshiyasu was publicly praised by the shogun and rewarded with the name of Matsudaira. In addition Naomori's resignation left Yoshiyasu free to handle "internal and external matters" without interference and to initiate such unorthodox requests to the emperor as the highest court rank for the shogun's mother. This in turn brought further praise and the unusual shogunal concession that he was to select the best rice fields in the fertile kamigata plains. Only Machiko's reference to the "lords puffed up with conceit" gives some indication that with these unusual privileges the seeds of discord had been

135. KCS, 12:299.
136. See above Chapter II, Section 6.
137. MK, 192; Nenroku, Vol.95, 9D 3M Genroku 15, and above Chapter II, Section 4.
firmly planted between Yoshiyasu and the established daimyo.

In the wake of such antagonism, Yoshiyasu apparently was becoming somewhat reluctant to accept further favours from the shogun. Consequently when Tsunayoshi at the end of that year suggested that Yoshiyasu and his son enjoy the honour of sharing the first shogunal cup of sake in the New Year, Yoshiyasu refused. 139

The Genroku era ended with Ienobu's instatement as shogunal successor. Tsunayoshi had consulted with Yoshiyasu alone in making this grave decision of national importance, and Yoshiyasu, in turn, without seeking the opinion of other senior officials, had determined the solemn procedures appropriate for the occasion. The low priority accorded to the traditional holders of power was indicated by the fact that the monk Ryūkō became party to these decisions of state before the Senior Councilors and the Three Related Houses were informed. 140

On this occasion Tsunayoshi's praise of Yoshiyasu's role in "cementing the foundations of the country" culminated in his enfeoffment with estates in Kai and Suruga, part of Ienobu's former domain. As lands of utmost strategic importance for the shogunate they had always been restricted to the Tokugawa clan. Tsunayoshi justified his unprecedented decision to bestow them on an outsider by declaring that in his eyes Yoshiyasu was like a member of his own family. The official value of Yoshiyasu's new domain was recorded as just over 150,000 koku, but the real yield amounted to well over 200,000 koku, bringing it close to the largest fudai domain. 141 Under these circumstances it is not surprising that some signs of protest can be detected.

140. Ryūkō sōjō nikki, 2:290, and above Chapter III, Section 4.
141. TJ, 43:559, 21D 12M Hōei 1.
To begin with, an event related in Eibyō gojitsuroku suggests that the shogun did not altogether have a free hand in making enfeoffments which - like this one - surpassed the accepted norms. The event took place after the announcement of Yoshiyasu's new domain had been made.

The shogun went to call on her ladyship his mother together with the Lady of the Second Citadel. Lord Eikeiji was also in attendance. On this occasion her ladyship the shogun's mother voiced her thoughts saying "Why was Mino no Kami not enfeoffed with the whole province of Kai? During your august reign matters ought to be handled according to your wish." When the shogun heard this he was troubled. Apparently he sat there and laughed. Lord Eikeiji thought the situation to be extremely awkward. I believe his hands trembled and the perspiration ran down him in streams. "There are many occasions on which even the shogun cannot act according to the dictates of his heart," the shogun exclaimed. "Lord Gyōbu no Shōyu and Lord Shikibu no Shōyu were given 20,000 koku in the east of Kai and at that time even the Keepers of Castles heard that there was public protest!"

This animated event finds no mention in other records. Yet this fact need not detract from its credibility. It took place in the apartments of the shogun's mother and except for the privileged Grand Chamberlain, no other officials were present. The shogun would hardly admit so frankly the limits of his power except in the most intimate company, nor presumably would his mother have questioned his decision if a wider

142. San no maru.
143. Ni no maru.
144. Yoshiyasu's posthumous name.
145. Yoshiyasu.
146. Lit. Deputy Vice Minister of Law and Deputy Vice Minister of Ceremonies; imperial titles which did not imply the holding of office. They designate here Yoshiyasu's second and third sons.
147. Gunnai - coloquial name for the eastern part of present-day Yamanashi, formerly Kai.
148. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.46.
audience had been present. Consequently there would have been no one to record this event except for Yoshiyasu who, it appears, later described it to his senior retainer Yabuta Shigemori, the author of Ribyō gojitsuroku. Quite understandably this emotionally charged event, admitting the weakness of the shogunate, did not find a place in the terse, semi-official Rakushidō nenroku. Nearly half a century later, however, when all the participants in this scene had died, it made sense to include the event in a work which tried to correct some of the gossip current at the time. The fact that both Tsunayoshi and Yoshiyasu cut a somewhat awkward figure suggests that it was not invented in an effort to show the hero in a better light. In fact, if the author had been more concerned with appearances, he could have restyled the story in a way Machiko appears to have done. She merely noted the shogun's mother as saying that however large a fief Yoshiyasu had received, it would be insufficient to reward his services. 149 Under her skilled pen the awkward scene was pruned to suit her poetical description of the harmonious world she lived in.

After Yoshiyasu's enfeoffment with Kai the customary congratulations were slow in coming. Again Machiko's peace of mind was not disturbed by this fact. The enfeoffment had taken place on the twenty-first day of the twelfth month and she persuaded herself that just as her own household was engaged in preparations for the New Year, others similarly were too busy to pay the respects appropriate on this felicitous occasion. She argued that it would have taken some time before messengers would have spread the news to distant parts of the country

* H5ei 1 (1704)

149. MK, p.238.
and well-wishers could respond. Machiko could have been right, yet the events that followed suggest the opposite.

Three months after his initial enfeoffment, Yoshiyasu returned his domains in Suruga to the bakufu. Instead he was granted further lands in the province of Kai to an equal value. The reason for this unusual step is carefully explained in a document drafted by Yoshiyasu for his descendants. After the details of Ienobu's instatement as shogunal successor, Yoshiyasu's initial enfeoffment and a verbatim report of the shogun's praise virtually identical to the one recorded in Matsukage nikki, the document continues:

The shogun had several days before especially ordered Honda Hōki no Kami Masanao to make an inventory of Lord Ienobu's old domain. On this day the two cities of Kōfu and Sumpu were cut out and granted to me. Later, on the twelfth day of the third month, in the spring of this year, I was granted the three districts of Yamanashi, Koma and Yatsuhiro and returned the land in Suruga province because it was stony. The favours of our lordship are like those of heaven ....

For Yoshiyasu the shogun's favours might have been like those of heaven, but other men — who considered it their right to have a say in how the shogunal lands were distributed — apparently felt differently about the matter. The explanation that the area around Sumpu castle, Ieyasu's chosen seat of retirement, was too poor to be worth enfeoffment, is difficult to accept. For once, one may assume that the shogun, or at least his officials, would have been well acquainted with

* in Hōei 2 (1705)
150. MK, p.239.
151. See above, Chapter II, Section 4.
152. 21D 12M Hōei 1.
the condition of these lands of deep significance to the Tokugawa regime, especially as the domain had just been surveyed.

Quite apart from this fact, the productivity of Yoshiyasu's original enfeoffment was well above average, the actual yield being about twenty-five percent above the official value. It is possible, of course, that the actual yield of his new domain was even higher. Nevertheless, the prestige of being lord of Sumpu castle would have counted for much and the shogun could simply have added to Yoshiyasu's holdings without going to the length of designating these lands steeped in sacred tradition as "stony." In short, Yoshiyasu's return of Sumpu castle in exchange for lands in the province of Kai sounds very much like sour grapes.

From the viewpoint of the shogun's clan and the traditional families, protest against the conferring of Sumpu castle to a man like Yoshiyasu was understandable. In spite of the shogun's assertions to the contrary, for them he was not a member of the clan. Sumpu, on the other hand, was sacred to the family tradition. Here Ieyasu had spent his childhood as hostage; he had virtually ruled the country from here during the eleven years of his so-called retirement and had finally died there. Moreover, when he first had tried to establish himself in the Kantō these lands had been captured from Takeda Shingen's son Katsuyori154 and returning them now to a declared heir of Shingen might have been regarded as an unfortunate yielding of Tokugawa power to a former enemy.

Finally the controversy about the wording of Yoshiyasu's new patent gives indication of the jealous watch his critics kept. Rakushiō nen-roku notes:

On the twenty-ninth day of the previous month* Hayashi Daigaku Nobuatsu was charged with the wording of the customary patent. Upon reading it the shogun thought that "for service in the government" was the usual wording, but that "for truly loyal service" would be more appropriate. After detailed investigations he decided on the latter wording.155

Arai Hakuseki, however, suggested that the request for the unusual wording of the patent had come from Yoshiyasu himself and that this break with tradition had caused a great deal of resentment.156

Years later, after Tsunayoshi's death when Yoshiyasato had inherited the domain and the patent had to be renewed, the old resentment flared up again. According to Yoshiyasu's retainer the Senior Councillors delayed the matter for two years, employing every tactic within their reach to stall the necessary proceedings, presumably in the hope that Ienobu would tire of pursuing the matter. The shogun, he noted, twice informed his Senior Councillors that he wished to renew the patent, but the latter could reach no agreement on the matter. He then issued the order again and as this time there was no reply, further action seemed difficult to pursue. Finally, Yoshiyasato was advised to send his request directly to the Senior Councillors, for in this case - knowing that the shogun was waiting for the petition - they could no longer ignore the matter.157

One method, then, the Senior Councillors could employ to show their muscle was that of delay. Another avenue open to them was to challenge any new measure on the grounds that it did not conform to traditional

* [4M Hōei 2 (1705)].
156. Oritaku Shiba no ki, p.252. For further details see Morita, p.141.
157. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.49.
etiquette. This tactic was employed when Yoshisato requested that the official value of his domain should be raised to the level of the actual yield, a petition which led to a fierce argument amongst the Senior Councillors.

During the years of Hōei the Senior Councillor Okubo Kaga no Kami Tadamasa told Ichi no Kami the following. "I consider the request for a raise in value most appropriate. However, when this matter was tabled recently in the conference chamber of the Senior Councillors, Lord Abe Bungo no Kami Masataka, without understanding anything about it, said that it would be against the rules of etiquette. When I myself heard that I answered: 'Since the amount yielded by three districts in one province has been conferred by shogunal order there is no problem with that at all.' Thereupon Lord Tsuchiya, Sagami no Kami Masanao said that there would be problems when the fief was changed to a different location and I replied that since a sealed patent exists, the shogun would only order a change of fief if Kai no Kami were to commit a serious crime. A copy of the sealed document was requested from the scribes and read, and since the wording was seen to be as I had said neither Lord Sagami nor anybody else had a word to say. I urged them to carry out further investigations on anything they wished."

This skirmish between the Senior Councillors gives various insights. Okubo Tadamasa's son had married one of Yoshiyasu's daughters and this connection here worked in favour of the Yanagisawa family. Moreover it

158. The text simply states taka age, but unless this is interpreted to mean "raise of the official value to the actual value" as suggested by Sakata and Morita, the passage makes no sense. Morita, p.141.

159. The event must have taken place between Yoshiyasu's resignation in Hōei 6 (1709) and the beginning of Shōtoku (1711).

160. Supervisor of Commerce, the title of Yabuta Shigemori, the writer of this passage.

161. The text of HJ (p.46) differs here from Eibyō (haru) and is misleading.

162. Yoshiyasu's heir Yoshisato.

163. Eibyō, haru; HJ, pp.46-47.
shows that the Senior Councillors, even after Ienobu's express renewal of Yoshisato's patent, were still not reconciled to the fact that this strategic and large domain was to remain in the hands of the Yanagisawa family. Hope apparently still existed that now after Tsunayoshi's death they could try to persuade the sixth shogun to transfer Yoshisato to a less prominent and perhaps smaller fief.

The relationship between the shogun and his Senior Councillors that emerges from the above two incidents is an uneasy one. At times one or perhaps even several members might be won over to the shogun's side, but in general they played a watchdog's role over any initiatives the shogun might take. Their argument that a certain measure was contrary to traditional etiquette was a powerful one. Strong support from other members of the upper military aristocracy could always be expected, for untraditional measures - such as the ones above - generally were detrimental to their hitherto privileged status. The Senior Councillors perhaps did not have the power completely to stop the shogun from carrying out his own wishes, but they did, apparently, have the means to make life extremely difficult for him and the man whose duties it was to transmit and supervise the execution of shogunal orders. When Hakuseki said of Yoshiyasu, "affairs of state were conducted as he wished and all the Senior Councillors did was to relay what he told them" he was most probably correct. Yet the effort Yoshiyasu had to exert to have the Senior Councillors act according to his wishes was - no doubt - considerable.

Yoshiyasu's request for retirement only one month after the Senior Councillors finally had signed the patent of his new domain must be looked at in this light. True, on a personal level the previous months

* which took place after Tsunayoshi's death  ** in Hōei 2 (1705)
164. Oritaku shiba no ki, p.425.
had been tragic ones, when death had robbed him of many people dear to him. But not just friendships had been lost; two weeks prior to his request for resignation one of his staunchest supporters, the shogun's mother, had died. Yoshiyasu's own health was weakening. How much of this was caused by the constant strain of holding his own against hostile officials and daimyo, one cannot tell.

It is revealing that of the three duties Yoshiyasu requested to relinquish on his partial retirement, two dealt directly with the daimyo. To the outsider they appear unobnoxious enough: Yoshiyasu petitioned that he no longer would have to handle correspondence with the daimyo when during their absence from Edo they inquired after the shogun's health. The other request was that he no longer wished to receive gifts from the daimyo when they paid obeisance to the shogun on special occasions.\(^{165}\) Neither of these duties appears to be exceedingly burdensome, yet for Yoshiyasu they obviously were uncomfortable and required great effort. He had achieved his ambitions and - in accordance with Lao-tzu's saying\(^{166}\) - it was time to retire. It appears that Yoshiyasu gradually became afraid of tempting his fortune any further. The difficulties surrounding his enfeoffment of Kai illustrated only too well the antagonism of his opponents. Further provocation of those whose place he had taken in the administration of the country might only be to his own detriment. By avoiding any situations where the daimyo were forced to pay respect to him, he might have hoped to somewhat appease their opposition.

\(^{166}\) See above, Chapter II, Section 4.
Faced with the above situation it is understandable that two years later (1707) when the shogun announced that Yoshiyasu and his eldest son would be granted the rare honour of displaying the halberd in their processions, Yoshiyasu protested. His request that only his son and not he himself should accept this new privilege went unheeded by the shogun. Yoshiyasu's initial refusal is documented both in *Matsukage niki* and *Rakushidō nenroku*, and the verbatim report of the shogun's reply to Yoshiyasu's petition in the latter work lends credibility to the event. Nearly two decades later, however, Arai Hakuseki's disciple, Muro Kyūsō maintained that Yoshiyasu himself had requested the honour of displaying the halberd. The passage continues:

'The representation was made to the shogun saying "Since the halberd is so prestigious that even amongst the related houses and the various daimyo there are a number of people who have not been granted it, this request ought to be unacceptable." This was not heeded by the shogun and, Mino no Kami received permission to display the halberd as he had requested.'

Muro Kyūsō leaves no doubt that the military aristocracy had become vocal in their protest over Yoshiyasu's continued promotions. He was now receiving favours exceeding those granted to even the most senior daimyo and it is not difficult to see where the version originated that Yoshiyasu was pushing for such honours rather than that they were freely given by the shogun. It was more acceptable for the daimyo to believe that the shogun was acting under the evil influence of his Grand Chamberlain than to admit that he might have been genuinely convinced that

167. See above, Chapter II, Section 5.
168. Yoshiyasu.
Yoshiyasu was more deserving than they. In addition, at the time of Muro Kyūsō's writing, it was easier to blame a former official than the dead ruler himself for such unacceptable behaviour.

The assumption that at this stage of his life Yoshiyasu was eager to relinquish the struggle with his political opponents to finally enjoy the fruits of his labours is also suggested by his behaviour on Tsunayoshi's death. Here again some controversy exists about the true state of events. Rumours, such as those quoted by Arai Hakuseki, had it that the new shōgun was making every effort to rid himself of his predecessor's favourite, while other, more substantial evidence points to the contrary.\(^{170}\) If one may believe Eibyō gojitsuuroku, Ienobu's main objective of having Yoshiyasu continue his duties was to give Manabe Akifusa time to learn the ropes as Grand Chamberlain.\(^{171}\) Yoshiyasu's immediate retirement would have permitted the Senior Councillors to regain the ground they had lost under Tsunayoshi and make it a very much harder task for Ienobu to install his personal adviser as de facto leader of the government. With this in mind, the gossip surrounding Yoshiyasu's retirement, which Ienobu correctly anticipated, makes sense. If the Senior Councillors wanted to win wider support for Yoshiyasu's early retirement, then it was in their interest to spread the rumour that "something was perhaps amiss" between the new shōgun and Yoshiyasu. Hearing that Yoshiyasu had fallen from grace and lost his influence, men would cease to support him; a situation from which the Senior Councillors would profit.

Yoshiyasu, on the other hand, had little to gain from continuing to serve under Ienobu. Firstly, as he himself argued, he might be

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170. See above. Chapter II, Section 6.
171. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.43.
criticised for disloyalty to his previous master. Secondly, his battle with traditional officials in the government was likely to grow in fierceness, his opponents being well aware that his ties with Ienobu were much weaker than those with Tsunayoshi. He was running the risk of being discredited in the new shogun's eyes and finally of losing the material benefits and status he had gained through his life's work.

Contrary to traditional opinion, it appears to have been Ienobu who pressed for Yoshiyasu's continued service. Rather than condemning both his predecessor's policies and the men chosen to execute them, he was eager to take advantage of the gains Tsunayoshi had made at the expense of the traditional holders of authority. Although soon after Tsunayoshi's death Ienobu personally informed the Senior Councillors that henceforth matters would no longer be solely handled by Yoshiyasu and that he, the shogun himself, would take an active interest in government affairs,\(^\text{172}\) it did not indicate that he intended to restore the power of the Senior Councillors nor that he opposed chamberlain government. Yoshiyasu was determined to retire and Ienobu had no choice but to take over the reins himself until Manabe Akifusa had grown into the position Yoshiyasu had achieved in three decades of hard work:

Lord Eikeiji\(^\text{173}\) was in a position equal to Grand Councillor (tairō) and since he attended to business much weightier than the Senior Councillors, the Three Related Houses, Matsudaira Kaga no Kami\(^\text{174}\) and various other daimyo made requests to him.\(^\text{175}\)

\(^{172}\) TJ, 44:5, 14D 1M Hōei 6.
\(^{173}\) Yoshiyasu.
\(^{174}\) Maeda.
\(^{175}\) Eibyō, aki.
Due to his low samurai origin Yoshiyasu could not officially be appointed to the position of Grand Councillor or even Senior Councillor. Yet it was this humble origin which enabled Yoshiyasu to achieve his unique position of influence under the autocratic fifth shogun. Yoshiyasu's loyalties were undivided, and there was no danger that this would change even after he himself was enfeoffed with domains. The higher he, the upstart, was promoted by the shogun, the deeper would be the antagonism of the daimyo, and the growth of this antagonism would in turn spur Yoshiyasu's efforts to increase the authority of the shogunate. However much power the shogun vested in Yoshiyasu, the latter's controversial position did not permit him to abuse it. This made him also in Ienobu's eyes a highly desirable minister.

Previous shogun also had had their advisers from humble samurai background, but a newcomer had never reached a comparable position of influence. Yoshiyasu was a new breed of man, the product of unprecedented changes that were taking place in the government of the country.

10. YOSHIYASU, JAPAN'S FIRST "PROFESSIONAL POLITICIAN?"

Niccolò Macchiavelli advised his prince to choose advisers from amongst men who were unable to develop their own base of power. The prince or sovereign, moreover, ought to honour and enrich his servant, making him in his new-found position and wealth completely dependent upon his master so that - motivated by self-interest - he might vigorously oppose any change. 176 Harold Bolitho in his Treasures Amongst Men suggests that if the Tokugawa had followed such a policy and "kept recruiting their officials from modest backgrounds, rewarded them

176. Niccolò Macchiavelli, The Prince, Chapter 22.
generously, given them domains in the Kantō, close to the centre of Tokugawa influence, and made clear to them that continued tenure of those domains depended upon their participation in Bakufu administrative duties," centralisation of government powers would have been likely. Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu's career - which Bolitho lists as an exception - followed the suggested path. Tsunayoshi to all intents and purposes adopted the policies of Macchiavelli by recruiting men without powerful family connections and rewarding them highly and placing them into a position where their total subsistence depended upon his personal favours.

Max Weber saw this pattern of recruitment as one of the basic requirements for the functioning of the centralised state.

In his Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft he himself poses the question of how the politically dominant authorities assert their control and distinguishes between two fundamental methods. Presupposing that the essentials of political domination are control over both manpower and material goods, he differentiates between the state where the material goods are partly or totally owned by the individuals who administer them and that where the material goods are owned by the central authority and are administered by agents on behalf of it.

The former, his "'staendisch' gegliederter Verband" (association based on estate holders) is not termed feudal, but shares many features with the feudal pattern inasmuch as his Staende (estate holders) are defined as private owners of military and other administrative means, frequently using their position to better their own status and only selectively and not permanently carrying on functions in the central administration. Here the ruler divides his authority with the estate holders,

177. Bolitho, Treasures, p.150.
who independently administer parts of his realm. The ruler's authority depends upon their loyalty and his usefulness to the estate holders in legitimising their own claim to power.

In the second type of state the ruler uses agents solely dependent upon himself - with no outside source of power and no division of interests - to administer material goods totally owned by himself. This form of political domination is seen as characteristic of all types of patriarchal, patrimonial, despotic and modern bureaucratic states. 178

According to Weber the initial impetus towards the development of the modern state arises from the ruler's attempt to strengthen his authority by acquiring for himself the material goods hitherto owned and administered by the estate holders. This process makes it essential for the ruler to rely on the services of what Weber terms Berufspolitiker (professional politicians). He notes:

In the course of political expropriation, which took place in all countries of the world with varying degrees of success, there appeared the first category of professional politicians in the second sense in the service of the sovereign. They were people who did not strive to become rulers themselves, like the charismatic leaders, but took service under political masters. They were at the disposition of the sovereign to fight his cause and the handling of political affairs provided them with material sustenance on the one hand and a psychological raison d'etre on the other.... In the past these professional politicians developed in the service of the sovereign in his fight with the estate holders; they functioned as his most important tool in his struggle for power and political expropriation. 179

Weber's term "professional politician in the second sense" requires some investigation, especially as he does not specify the meaning of "second sense."

178. WG, pp.823-24, 827.
179. WG, pp.826-27.
He uses the word "politician" as a generic term, describing both the man who lives for politics in the idealistic sense, in the past often furnishing his own means of support, and the man who lives off politics in the material sense, such as the bureaucrat (Beamter). The specification in the above-cited passage that the "professional politician in the second sense" is not interested in acquiring political power for himself, but prepared to serve and moreover considers this service as the basis of his livelihood, brings the meaning close to that of bureaucrat. Weber's definition of bureaucrat, however, is a strict one. It excludes, for instance, the early American civil servant, whose career was terminated with each change of presidency. Nevertheless, in a different passage he concedes that such men could be called political bureaucrats (politische Beamte). The men the sovereign recruited to aid him in his power struggle against the estate holders, no doubt similarly did not enjoy such security of service after the ruler's abdication or death and it appears justified to see Weber's "first category of professional politician in the second sense" as early political bureaucrats.

With the appearance of the professional politicians and the consequent development of the bureaucratic machinery, the stage is set for the "leading politician." Weber sees him as a world-wide phenomenon. In the Near East he is the grand vizier,shouldering the responsibility for the sultan's government. In Europe he is the early diplomat, a man mostly of classical education who, inspired by the writings of Machiavelli, discussed politics as an art in the select company of his

180. WG, p.830.
181. WG, pp.830-32.
colleagues. In the Far East the Chinese statesman with classical training of the final period of division is cited as an example.\textsuperscript{182}

Analysing the background of these politicians, Weber comes to the conclusion that universally they were drawn from outside the estate-holding class. In India, Buddhist China, Lamaistic Mongolia, and also Japan, he considers the clergy an important element. Their education qualified them for political service and they usually had no ambitions to establish their descendants as rival political power. A second group were the literati to whom, however, Weber only assigns a significant role in the context of the scholar-officials of China. Further categories comprise the impoverished aristocracy, the gentry particularly of the English model and the jurist, in his pure form solely a European phenomenon.\textsuperscript{183}

Does Weber's model have any significance for the period under review? Did the newcomers under Tsunayoshi share any similarities with Weber's "professional politicians" and can Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu be considered Japan's version of the "leading politician"?

The fifth Tokugawa shogun also employed men outside the estate holding class - men not of daimyo status - in his quest for centralised authority. There was the clergy, as Weber mentioned, but also his literati find some equivalent in Tsunayoshi's Confucian scholars. With the importance the shogun attached to the Chinese classics, their function as advisers gained in importance. In case of conflict, precedents cited in the Confucian writings served as guiding principle, and the scholars, by virtue of their intimate knowledge of the classics, thus even assumed

\textsuperscript{182} WG, p.831; the period referred to is presumably that of the Northern and Southern Dynasty (nan-pei ch'ao).

\textsuperscript{183} WG, p.826-27.
some legal function. The difference between occidental and Japanese law does not permit a comparison between the Confucian scholar and Weber's jurist, but the fact remains that both types of men were valuable to the ruler due to their ability to expertly argue a case that required judgement.

The impoverished aristocracy - which in Japan occupied a very different place due to the peculiar state of dual sovereignty of emperor and shogun - found no place in the government of the fifth shogun. Nor was there a group which could profitably be compared to Weber's gentry. In Tokugawa Japan their place as men of some education but often slender means was taken by the bannerman (hatamoto), the samurai directly employed by the bakufu. Although strictly speaking some of them received their income like the daimyo, directly from landholdings, they did not share in the interests of the latter. Any loss of authority and decline in prosperity by the shogunate, signified deterioration of their living standards. Their fortunes were irrevocably tied to the central government.

The bannermen's background of dependence upon the ruler made them most eligible for the position of professional politician as described above. In line with Weber's theory, it was amongst this section of the samurai that Tsunayoshi was most successful in finding men suitable and willing to assist him in his struggle for central authority.

Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was of bannerman origin. His upbringing had conditioned him to serve and not to rule. From an early age he was aware of his dependence upon the favours of his master, and all his actions were shaped by this fact. His total energies were devoted to

184. See below, Chapter IV, Section 3.
understanding his master's thought and perceiving his every wish, even before it was uttered. His upbringing in the shogun's household together with his somewhat reticent and serious nature and his great capacity for hard work, singled him out amongst his colleagues and eventually placed him in a leading position. However, even after Yoshiyasu reached great power, he remained content to serve the shogun and did not aspire to rule himself. His continued dependence upon the shogun was guaranteed by his humble origins and the animosity his promotion to high office had caused amongst the daimyo. He was ideally suited and acted well in the role of Tsunayoshi's "leading politician."

Already before Yoshiyasu came to dominate the administration of the country the policies of the fifth shogun gave clear indication of the trend towards autocratic government. The so-called Tenna reforms, discussed above,185 are an example of the shogun's efforts to centralise authority and also well demonstrate how - in line with Weber's theory - the bureaucratisation of the government was an inevitable by-product of this process. To prevent the local Intendants from controlling and enriching themselves by the collection of tax, the shogun for the first time, ordered one of his senior ministers to specialise and be solely responsible for the collection of tax, paid in the form of rice, and the people who produced it. This was a break with tradition and a diversion from the traditional Chinese model on which Japan's bureaucracy had been based. Following the Confucian thought that specialisation was not becoming to the superior gentleman,186 it had been assumed in the past that general training in the classics and the practice of virtue were sufficient

185. See above, Section 5.
186. *Confucian Analects*, Book 2, Chapter 12; WG, p.610; *Economy and Society*, 3:1049.
for a senior minister to meet the challenges of government. It is indicative of Tsunayoshi's pragmatic approach to the classics that he did not adhere to this principle, but instead made the rational decision that specialisation was essential for the efficient operation of a central government. It is this early form of specialisation and this trend towards rational decision-making which distinguishes the developments in the bureaucracy of this period from what Weber calls the "patrimonial" bureaucracy of traditional China.

In accordance with Weber's theory, Tsunayoshi's early attempts to centralise authority gave impetus to the development of a bureaucracy showing early signs of specialisation and rationalisation. In Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu he eventually found a man who was well qualified to act as his "leading politician." It now remains to be seen whether - in line with Weber's theory - Yoshiyasu and the new officials with specialised experience in the bureaucracy became the shogun's most important tool to gain power and succeed in political expropriation. To deal with this issue it is necessary to look at the major political policies and events of Tsunayoshi's so-called chamberlain government.
CHAPTER IV

THE POLICIES OF CHAMBERLAIN GOVERNMENT
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Traditionally the policies of the three decades under the fifth Tokugawa shogun are seen in two distinct periods: the beneficial government of Hotta Masatoshi, and the evil and corrupt administration of the Grand Chamberlains. This view implies that the responsibility for the policies of the latter period must rest at least partially on Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu's shoulders. A reappraisal of Yoshiyasu must therefore deal with two questions. Firstly, one must ask whether the much criticised policies of Tsunayoshi's later reign would have been put into practice if Yoshiyasu had not headed the administration during this period. If this question is answered in the negative, one must, secondly, look at these policies and consider whether they were in fact as evil and arbitrary as commonly asserted.

The part Yoshiyasu played in Tsunayoshi's government is controversial. For historians writing during the Tokugawa period it was natural to lay the blame for the policies they so strongly criticised on the Grand Chamberlain rather than on the shogun himself, an ancestor of the present ruler and descendant of the great Ieyasu. When after the Meiji Restoration writers were no longer obliged to keep the memory of the fifteen Tokugawa shogun sacred, some came to doubt whether this view was justified, a question which might have inspired Sakata to commence on the thirty years research for his monumental Kai shōshō ason jikki. Sometimes historians argue that Yoshiyasu had no chance to win against the
headstrong and eccentric shogun and had no choice but to acquiesce if he wanted to keep his job; at least one writer suggests that he had no political power whatsoever. ¹ Nevertheless, in spite of these suggestions the general view still prevails that Yoshiyasu must bear at least partial blame for Tsunayoshi's later government.

The sources furnish comparatively little evidence about the exact part Yoshiyasu played in policy making. What can be ascertained, though, is that the basic political trends were already present in Tsunayoshi's early years. Not only do the policies of that period spell out this fact, but also a work such as Hotta Masatoshi's Yōgenroku makes it clear that such unorthodox tendencies as discarding the precedents set by previous shogun, harsh censorship of lax officials and daimyo, and some commitment to improve society were basic to the shogun's political thinking before the Grand Chamberlain came to power.² In fact the very reason that Yoshiyasu came to head the administration of the country was that he was willing to follow unconditionally the shogun's directives. In Tsunayoshi's own words, Yoshiyasu conducted the government as if he, the shogun, had given the orders himself.³

Yoshiyasu, consequently, cannot be regarded as the initiator of the political measures that characterised the latter half of Tsunayoshi's reign. One must question, however, whether Tsunayoshi would have been able to put his unorthodox ideas into practice, if it had not been for a man like Yoshiyasu to administer them. In the previous chapter it has been shown that traditional officials were unwilling to execute the shogun's orders and that amongst the newcomers few men were able to meet

2. See above Chapter III, Section 5.
3. See above Chapter II, section 4.
Tsunayoshi's exacting standards. Yoshiyasu not only had an unusual capacity for hard work, able to satisfy the shogun's demands, but was also finely attuned to his thoughts as his attendant and disciple for many years. His commitment to the shogunate was a total one and Tsunayoshi's efforts to centralise authority found his ready support. Looking at the policies of Tsunayoshi's later reign, therefore, the hypothesis will be examined that Yoshiyasu was responsible for the political measures inasmuch as he was the essential tool for their execution.

The second question to be answered is whether the traditional assumption that the policies of so-called chamberlain government were the manifestations of an evil and arbitrary administration.

The fundamental contradictions inherent in the literature covering the period have already been mentioned. While on one hand Tsunayoshi's government apparently brought great suffering to the people, the Genroku period - stretching over the central part of his reign - has always been known as a "golden age." Saikaku's novels spell out clearly the euphoric mood amongst the common people created by an economic boom unprecedented in Japanese history. The economic historian Ōishi Shinzaburō confirmed by his study of village documents that, although condemned for misgovernment, the Genroku period was one of upward development and economic expansion. Severe criticism of Tsunayoshi's reign also stands in stark contrast to the observations of a foreigner, who, writing back in his native country, had no reason to praise the shogunate. The German physician Kaempfer maintained not only that Tsunayoshi was "a Prince of great prudence and conduct," but also that he was "eminent for

4. See above Chapter I, Section 1 and Chapter III, Section 3.
5. Ōishi, Genroku jidai, pp.2-3.
his singular clemency and mildness, though a strict maintainer of the
Laws of the Country. Bred up in the Philosophy of Confutius, he governs
the Empire, as the state of the Country and the good of his people re-
quire. Happy and flourishing is the condition of his subjects under his
reign."6 And yet Kaempfer was in no way ignorant of the everyday life
of the common people. His detailed descriptions of customs, beliefs and
laws as well as his reports of conversations with commoners, can leave
no doubt that his judgement of Tsunayoshi was not based merely on the
propaganda of high Japanese officials.

The three most controversial issues of Tsunayoshi's later govern-
ment were the monetary reform, the Laws of Compassion and the judgement
of the Forty-seven rōnin incident. Generally they are seen as unconnec-
ted events resulting from the shogun's immoral behaviour: his spend-
thrift habits, fanatical love of animals and low regard for samurai
values. Viewed from another angle, however, these three policies cover
the fundamental issues involved in the establishment of central author-
ity. In Weber's terms the monetary reform was the expropriation of
financial means, while both the Laws of Compassion and the judgement of
the Forty-seven rōnin represent different aspects of the expropriation
of authority traditionally held by the samurai and especially the daimyo.
With all three measures the military aristocracy stood to lose and their
severe criticism of the policies might well have been motivated by this
fact.

This chapter, therefore, will examine the three major political
issues of Tsunayoshi's later government in the context of the hypothesis
that these issues typified the struggle for authority between the shogun

and the military aristocracy and that Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu acted as the essential tool to make the execution of these policies possible.

1. THE MONETARY REFORM

The monetary reform vies only with the Laws of Compassion for the distinction of being the worst law in Tokugawa history. Yet examining in some detail the background of this controversial measure it is at first difficult to understand why it caused such singular outrage amongst contemporary writers and later historians alike. Especially in view of the fact that the major debasement of coinage took place under the sixth shogun and that this financial stratagem was repeated some ten times during the remaining part of the Tokugawa period, it is not easy to appreciate why the fifth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, are even today so harshly censured by historians for adopting this policy to solve the government's monetary crisis.

The official reasons for the debasement of the coinage were announced in an order of the eighth month of Genroku 8 (1695). The public was told that the minting of new coins had become necessary because the official imprint on the old coins had worn off with age and that, due to the decreasing output of mines, available bullion was insufficient to mint enough new coins to meet the increasing need for currency.

Although not the whole story, these were certainly valid reasons. The original coinage minted in Ieyasu's time had been in circulation for

7. E.g. Naitō, Tokugawa jūgodaishi, 6:106.
8. Itō, Nihon kinsei-shi, 2:134; Sakudō Yōtarō, Kinsei Nihon kaheishi (Tokyo, 1958), p.120.
nearly one hundred years and it is plausible that with its high purity the official imprint had worn off. In addition there could be no dispute about an acute shortage of coinage in circulation. Expanding trade patterns, especially in the Genroku period, had brought the use of coinage to the remoter parts of the country. An increasing population and growing urban centres further accentuated the need for legal tender. Moreover, factors such as the excessive export of coinage and the destruction of both bullion and coins stored in Edo castle during the great fire of Meireki had considerably reduced the amount of legal tender available. Such deficits had previously been met by minting new coins at the old standard from the bullion produced by government mines. Yet the decreasing output of the mines had made bullion so scarce that minting houses were out of business and petitioning the government to remint the old coinage to guarantee them their livelihood. The government had already made attempts to remedy this shortage in bullion by restricting foreign trade to a barter basis, thus preventing any further outflow of precious metals. All the same such measures did not suffice and in the face of insufficient bullion and an increasing demand for legal tender the debasement of the coinage became an essential financial measure. However, the fact which made the matter urgent was not so much the lack of currency throughout the country in general, but the

10. The purity of the gold coins was 84.29 and those of the silver coins eighty percent. Oishi, Genroku jidai, p.159.

11. Honjō Bijirō, Kinsei no Nihon (Tokyo, 1954), p.41; Sakudō, p.95; Oishi, Genroku jidai, p.159.


financial plight of the shogunal purse in particular. Sakata in his Kai
shōshō ason jikki writes:

The shogun had informed his Senior Councillors, such as Ōkubo [Tadatomo] Kaga no Kami, of his desire to
make a pilgrimage to Nikkō. When they received this
order they were in serious difficulties. Especially
Tadatomo - though officer in charge of government fi-
nance - had no idea of restricting expenditure to the
amount of income. Since he had neither calculated the
income nor restricted expenditure, a heavy deficit had
been accumulating year after year. At that time the
government's yearly receipts amounted to approximately
4,000,000 odd koku. Besides that, the income in cur-
rency came to 760,000 or 770,000 ryō. At any rate, a
deficit could not be prevented. The shogunal order to
prepare the pilgrimage was received at a time when the
government treasury had reached a state of poverty and
was in severe financial difficulties. It was impossible
to conceal the situation. Tadatomo remonstrated with the
shogun: "How can we suddenly produce 100,000 ryō for the
unnecessary expense of a pilgrimage to Nikkō in the mid-
dle of these difficulties, where due to the present heavy
expenditure and lack of funds the reserves of previous
reigns are nearly exhausted? In brief, your retainers
can do no more than tender their apologies for being so
careless."

It is impossible to determine on which documentation Sakata - who
had access to the Yanagisawa archives in early Meiji - bases this
account. At any rate, the tenacious relationship of interdependence be-
tween Tsunayoshi and his Senior Councillors described in this scene ac-
cords well with other examples of the Senior Councillor's behaviour.15

It does not support, however, the traditional image of the spendthrift,
completely autocratic shogun who, unlike his virtuous predecessors,
squandered away the riches of the empire with his love for luxury, thea-
trical performances and vast projects of temple building.16 It is

15. See above Chapter III, Section 9.
16. E.g. as described by Honjō, Kinsei no nihon, p.52.
doubtful whether the fifth shogun ever had the legendary vast sums to waste.

Previous shogun had escaped Tsunayoshi's financial predicament by making use of the enormous amounts of gold and silver stored in Ieyasu's time. The spoils of successful wars, profits from overseas trade and the expanding output of government mines had made it possible for the founder of the Tokugawa line to cement his political ambitions for his descendants with huge reserves of bullion.17 These reserves permitted the third shogun, Iemitsu, to finance such grandiose projects as the mausoleum at Nikkō, eleven shogunal pilgrimages to the new sanctuary and his legendary parade to Kyoto with 300,000 men on which occasion he also distributed 10,000 kan of silver to the citizens of Edo and Kyoto.18 Iemitsu, accustomed to affluence, obviously did not recognise the need to hand down some of the riches stored by Ieyasu to his descendants.

In the reign of the fourth shogun the great fire of Meireki taxed government resources still further. Reserves stored at Osaka and Sumpu had to be drawn upon to meet the enormous expense of rebuilding the castle and providing loans and cash payments to daimyo and lower samurai as well as to the citizens of Edo for reconstruction.19

Not even in years where no special events required additional outlay did the government's income balance its expenses. By Hōei 4 (1706) the yearly deficit amounted to above 200,000 ryō.20 Tsunayoshi's so-called extravagances were minor compared with the expenditure of his father Iemitsu. Yet, however much he might have reduced his own

18. ibid., p.230; 1 kan = 8.72 lb.
19. ibid., pp. 620-23.
expenditure, government outlay could not be balanced by the income from shogunal tax rice and other various small levies. Once the gold and silver mines and Ieyasu's reserves had dried up, the bakufu was unable to follow the traditional pattern of financing the administration of the whole country from the proceeds of its own domain.

Ieyasu, as primus inter pares, expected to cover his proportionately greater share of administration by his proportionately larger domain. Funds other than taxes had made it possible to adhere to this principle for nearly one hundred years in spite of a growing administrative machinery. At the point where these additional funds were exhausted, the bakufu was forced to match the changing conditions of national government with changes in its financial policy. Sakata describes in detail Tsunayoshi's plight at the point of time where tradition could no longer supply the answers to problems posed by rapidly changing circumstances. The Senior Councillors with their traditional, non-specialised training were unable to cope with this unprecedented problem. "They were silent as if dumb." It was left to a man of much lower office but years of experience in government finance to work out a solution to this dilemma. Ogiwara Shigehide, at that time still Comptroller of Finance (kanjō gimmiyaku), finally spoke up in the company of his seniors and argued that the government had no choice but to melt down the gold and silver coinage. By alloying it the government would be able to increase the coinage and not only solve its own financial problems, but also remedy the shortage of coinage in circulation. Apparently Shigehide's suggestion won unanimous approval. The decision

21. See Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.63.
22. Ogiwara Shigehide was promoted to Superintendent of Finance in Genroku 9, one year after this event.
to remint was formally adopted by the Senior Councillors and submitted to the shogun.\(^{23}\) As a result the gold coins of Keichō (Keichō koban) which had contained 84.29 percent of gold were reduced to 57.37 percent, while in the silver coins the proportion of silver was decreased from eighty percent to sixty-four percent. Finally in Hōei 5 (1708) the copper coins were debased by minting the large tōjū sen.\(^{24}\)

The debasement of the coinage resulted in considerable profits for the government covering the deficit occurring each year. But the accumulated profits were again soon exhausted. According to Ogiwara Shige-hide this was not due to Tsunayoshi's spendthrift habits, but to a chain of natural disasters at the opening of the eighteenth century. Shige-hide explained the situation to the sixth shogun, Ienobu, when the latter was faced with the decision of whether to further debase the coinage:

> In the reign of the previous shogun [Tsunayoshi] the yearly expenditure had been twice the income. With national finances having already taken a downward turn, gold and silver coins were reminted from the ninth month of Genroku 8 (1695). From then on, the yearly public profit amounted to a total of approximately 5,000,000 ryō. This always covered the deficit. In the winter of Genroku 16 (1703), the damage caused by the great earthquake had to be repaired and the profits accumulated over the years were immediately exhausted. After that, government finances again showed a deficit. They were in the same state as before and therefore in the seventh month of Hōei 3 (1706) the silver coinage was again reminted. In spite of that the yearly deficit could not be covered and in the following spring a proposal of Tsushima no Kami Shigetomi\(^{25}\) was adopted and the tōjū daisen issued.

\(^{23}\) Ason jikki, Vol.19, 11D 8M Genroku 8.

\(^{24}\) Ōishi, Genroku jidai, p.150. The tōjū sen was a large coin representing the value of ten individual sen, but containing much less copper.

\(^{25}\) Inagaki Shigetomi, Junior Councillor.
(It is said that Ōmi no Kami did not approve of this daisen.)

Now, that the situation has to be quickly remedied, there is no other way but to re-mint the coinage.

Shigehide was well aware that his efforts to solve the government's unprecedented financial crisis with unprecedented measures was regarded with deep suspicion by many of the shogun's traditionally-minded officials. He tried to justify himself:

Apparently people have been saying all sorts of things in private. Yet if we had not taken these measures, how, for instance, would we have been able to give relief in the case of an unforeseen disaster like that in the winter of Genroku 16 (1703)? In this way we can meet the needs of the times and when in future years the harvest is plenty and government finances show a surplus, it will be very easy to restore the coinage to its old state.

Also under the sixth shogun, Shigehide's proposal to debase the coinage found approval with officials; approval not given because it was felt that changing conditions justified "breaking the laws of the forefathers," but simply because no one present had the technical knowledge to discuss any of the finer points, let alone to suggest an alternative solution. Only the shogun, apparently, objected strongly. "Who knows, if in the first place the coinage had not been reminted, there might not have been one natural disaster after another?" he questioned, and voiced the fear that continued debasement of the coinage was tantamount to inviting further calamities on the heads of the hapless population and might even lead to the end of the illustrious Tokugawa line.

27. Oritaku shiba no ki, p.233.
28. ibid., p.234.
29. ibid., pp.234-35.
It is debatable whether the sixth shogun really had such apprehensions or whether Hakuseki later considered it his duty to add this passage so as to demonstrate that the sixth shogun was opposed to further debasement of the coinage. At any rate, such argument could not longer stop the rational decision that further devaluation was essential to save the government's finances. And although Hakuseki would have post-erity believe that it happened without Ienobu's knowledge, it is more likely that the shogun - if he did not approve - simply turned a blind eye to the devaluation, which not only provided funds for the running of the country, but also for the construction of splendid new shogunal quarters. Three times Ienobu rejected Hakuseki's pleas to remove Shigehide, pointing out that there was no one else qualified to run the financial affairs of the country. Only when Ienobu was approaching death, after several months of incapacitating illness, did Hakuseki finally succeed in having Shigehide sacked and the reminting stopped. The official order to repeal the reminting was drafted by Hakuseki himself more than a year after Ienobu's death. By then Ogiwara Shigehide too, was no longer alive, having died a mysterious death. Only at this point did Hakuseki manage to have him, his fiercest opponent, denounced as a criminal, guilty of one of the greatest crimes: that of violating the laws of the forefathers.

As a last service to his master, Hakuseki strove to convince the world that the base act of rec coinage had never been sanctioned by the

30. *Oritaku shiba no ki*, pp.300, 305.
32. *ibid.*, p.361; *TJ*, 44:378-79, 15D 5M Shōtoku 4. See also *Oritaku shiba no ki*, p.319-20, for rumours that Hakuseki was responsible for stopping the minting.
sixth shogun, but was carried out by Ogiwara Shigehide in secret. Previously he had already decided that Ienobu's shame in dancing no5 was not to go down in history. Now he similarly saw to it that the shame of recoinage did not rest with his dead master and that its repeal was seen as Ienobu's last wish. His efforts were successful. Historians even today maintain that the sixth shogun, while enjoying the profits of the monetary reform and repeatedly rejecting Hakuseki's proposals for sacking Ogiwara Shigehide, was not aware that the coinage was reminted.

Why was the monetary reform a political measure which earned the fifth shogun the harshest criticism and provoked a man like Hakuseki to such desperate attempts to deny the sixth shogun's knowledge of it?

When the eighth shogun, Yoshimune - who contrary to Tsunayoshi has been greatly praised for his wise government - encountered financial difficulties, he attempted to solve this crisis by asking for special contributions from the daimyo. Like any government's efforts to obtain funds, it was not a popular measure, but neither did it attract the criticism of being immoral, a crime. Yoshimune's measures conformed to the old feudal pattern where a lord had the right to call for assistance from his vassals. The daimyo's contributions to the shogunal purse were not voluntary. The fact, however, that the matter was only concluded after ample discussion with all concerned, and that the shogun himself made concessions to make up for the levy, shows that here the daimyo had some control over financial arrangements. 36

34. See above Chapter I, Section 3.
35. See Oritaku shiba no ki, pp.226–27, and next section where Hakuseki claims that this procedure had been adopted with the repeal of the Laws of Compassion.
36. The contribution was called agemai and was levied in Kyōhō 7 (1722). It called for 100 koku for each 10,000 koku of a daimyo's revenue.
The debasement of the coinage was no more than a similar demand upon the shogun's subjects to contribute to national finance. The way this contribution was levied, however, made it compulsory, not negotiable. Any decision of how much to contribute was firmly taken out of the hands of the daimyo. It was in fact a first claim to the right of taxation. In some way akin to modern tax, it was in the first instance a charge proportionate to the individual's monetary wealth. It was revolutionary because it implied that people regardless whether they lived in the shogunal domain or in a han were all directly the subjects of the shogun upon whose wealth he could draw, should the need arise. The daimyo, traditionally the intermediary between the people and the ruler, had been cut out. As never before in Tokugawa history, they were given to understand that matters of currency and national finance were being handled by the central government without their interference.

"Producing currency is a matter for the state. It would not make the slightest difference if rubbish were substituted for currency." 38

In return the period of residence required under the sankin kōtai system was shortened by half. Daimyo whose presence was required at Edo, only had to pay one-third of the above amount. Itō, Nihon kinseishi, 2:122-23.

37. No thorough study has as yet been done on how the debasement affected the financial position of the various strata of society. The often-made claim that people and samurai alike suffered because of the resulting rise in prices is based on works like those of Arai Hakuseki which suffer from the bias with which their authors regarded the debasement. Prices of rice rose much quicker than those of other consumer goods, giving both samurai and farmers higher incomes without greatly increased expenditure. A complicating factor in determining the economic effects of the debasement is also the chain of natural disasters occurring at the end of the Genroku period, destroying several harvests. In spite of these occurrences, however, peasants and samurai alike were financially in a better position during the years of Genroku and Bōei than during the years of Kyōhō (1716-1736) when the price of rice fell, reducing their income significantly (see Yamamura, p.43).

38. Sannō gaiki, p.11.
These words appear in *Sanno gaiki* as those spoken by Ogiwara Shigehide. The work was written to mock Tsunayoshi's government and also this quotation must be regarded as fictitious. The author was attempting to show to what absurd extremes Tsunayoshi's financial policy could have led. Absurd though these financial policies were to a man living in the early eighteenth century, the statement attributed to Ogiwara Shigehide more or less accurately describes the situation today, indicating how Tsunayoshi’s financial policies foreshadowed later developments.

The measures Yoshimune adopted to solve his financial problems had, on the contrary, feudal characteristics. Maruyama Masao wrote on this subject:

One of the major characteristics of a feudal society is the preservation of the ordered unity of the total structure by linking together in layers closed, self-contained social spheres.... Politically, this takes the form of the principle of indirect control. The economic basis for the politics corresponding to this indirect control is distributed separately inside each social layer. What we have here is a typical case of what Max Weber called a combination of *der personliche* [sic] Verwaltungsstab (personal administrative staff) and *das sachliche Verwaltungsmittel* (material administrative means).

Maruyama explains further:

Thus the basic principle here is that the head of each closed social sphere defrays his own political expenses. The spirit of this practice is seen in Shogun Yoshimune's pronouncement, issued to the daimyo when, unable to pay his housemen's stipends, he was compelled to ask them for rice contributions (*agemai*), which said: "This request is made regardless of shame."39

It is curious that Maruyama does not here take the next logical step of identifying Tsunayoshi's financial policies - which were the opposite of Yoshimune's - with the contrasting situation in Weber's model. The situation where the ruler, without any shame, attempts to gain control of the financial means of his vassals and has them administered by his own staff, resulting in a separation between administrator and administrative means. 40

Yoshimune kept to feudal etiquette in his attempts to balance the government's deficit. By admitting shame in asking the daimyo for their contributions he further weakened his position as feudal overlord; for there was no question that in the latter position he traditionally had the right of asking his vassals for contributions, although in the past such tribute was commonly paid in the form of labour or raw materials rather than money. 41 Yoshimune placed himself in a position of primus inter pares with the daimyo, implying by his "shameful" request that the shogunate, like the daimyo, ought to be able to defray its own expenses.

Tsunayoshi, on the contrary, saw himself as the absolute ruler of the whole country. He was the central authority who had the right to receive contributions not just from the shogunal domains, but from every one of his subjects. It is not surprising then, that the daimyo objected strongly to this interference in their hitherto "closed social sphere." All the more so as other policies accompanying the monetary reform further emphasised this political trend.

Under the fourth shogun Ietsuna, a number of domains had been given permission to issue their own paper currency and by the time Tsunayoshi

40. See above, Chapter III, Section 10.
41. E.g. under Iemitsu there were "massive daimyo levies." Totman, p.77.
succeeded as shogun, fifteen han were producing their own money. A lesser number of permits was still issued during the first years of Tsunayoshi's rule, but by Hœi 2 (1704) the matter came under investigation and no further permits were issued. The han were forced to use the new coinage, and the daimyo had to relinquish one of their privileges. For they, apparently, even earlier than the bakufu, had had the idea of boosting their ailing finances by issuing more currency than the bullion in their possession. This became evident in Hœi 1 (1704) when at the confiscation of Akō han of Forty-seven rōnin fame, the local authorities lacked the bullion to exchange the paper money issued.

It was not until Kyōhō 15 (1730) under the eighth shogun that permissions for the issue of han satsu were again given by the bakufu. After the revaluation, that had taken place during the early years of Kyōhō to restore the currency to its original purity, the country was faced with an acute shortage of coinage in circulation. By permitting the han to issue their own paper money, Yoshimune hoped to remedy this situation. The paper money of the han - not possessing its worth in bullion - was akin to Tsunayoshi's debased coinage. Sannō gaiki had mocked the issue of "rubbish" as legal tender, but in this case the daimyo rather than the central government, stood to profit, and no criticism was heard.

Deprived by Tsunayoshi of their privilege of issuing their own tender, the daimyo were not even permitted the freedom to stipulate whether

42. Nihon ginkō chōsa kyoku, Hansatsu gaiyō (Tokyo, 1964), pp.21, 23-4; Taya, p.184.
44. Kitajima, Edo bakufu no kenryoku kōzō, p.624.
on sale of their tax rice they were to receive credit in silver or gold units. Orders that both silver and gold were to be accepted were issued on a national scale and neither individual daimyo nor the area under their jurisdiction could claim exemption from these laws.\textsuperscript{45} Bakufu interference was again felt when an attempt was made to fix officially the exchange rate between gold, silver and copper coins.\textsuperscript{46}

The decline of daimyo influence in matters of finance further became apparent with orders like that of Genroku 11 (1698), which stipulated that any difficulties encountered in enforcing the official monetary policies, either in shogunal or daimyo domains, should be reported to Ogiwara Shigehide.\textsuperscript{47} And while the new laws were strictly policed by one of the new men of lowly origin, another of the so-called upstarts was enfeoffed with a domain which by virtue of its tradition was exempted from the rules of centralisation and permitted to continue minting its own currency: in Hōei 4 (1707) Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was authorised by the shogun to mint gold coins in his domain of Kai.\textsuperscript{48}

The monetary reform and its related policies not only threatened the financial independence of the daimyo, but also, as never before, showed up the weakness of their representatives in the bakufu in relation to the new men. Ogiwara Shigehide's position, first as Comptroller of Finance (kanjō ginmiyaku) and later as Superintendent of Finance (kanjō bugyō) was a lowly one in the hierarchical order of the administration compared with those of the Senior Councillors. Yet when faced

\textsuperscript{45} Tokutomi, Genroku jidai, 17:282-83, 291; NZKS, 2:574, 12M Genroku 14.

\textsuperscript{46} NZKS, 2:573, 11M Genroku 13; 2:581 urō 1M Hōei 5.

\textsuperscript{47} NZKS, 2:571, 1M Genroku 11.

\textsuperscript{48} NZKS, 2:576-80.
with the bakufu's financial crisis, the latter were forced to accept Shigehide's proposals which went against their own interests. It was an example of what Weber terms "domination through knowledge" (Herrschaft kraft Wissen), characteristic also of the modern bureaucracy.49

Historians have argued at length whether Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was responsible for the recoinage under Tsunayoshi which, officially, was carried out under the direction of the Senior Councillor Ōkubo Tada-
tomo.50 Arai Hakuseki noted in Oritaku shiba no ki:

It is said that in the previous reign [Tsunayoshi's] Kaga no Kami Tadatomo administered national expendi-ture. However, as in reality it was entrusted solely to Ōmi no Kami Shigehide, he, in conjunction with Mino no Kami Yoshiyasu and Tsushima no Kami Shigetomi, did the planning and thus Kaga no Kami was unacquainted with the details.51

Sakata in his thorough reappraisal of Yoshiyasu takes issue with Hakuseki's statement that Tsunayoshi's new men, like Yoshiyasu, were re-sponsible for the recoinage. He points out that besides Ōkubo Tadatomo, Abe Masatake, also a Senior Councillor, was named General Superintendent (sōbugyō) in charge of the recoinage and that the Junior Councillor, Katō Akihide, was made his deputy. Referring to Hakuseki's above-cited passage, he writes:

The statement that other people took no interest [in the monetary reform] is a lie. Can anyone imagine that the authority of the General Superintendent and his deputy was ignored in favour of that of the diametricaly opposed Grand Chamberlain?52

49. WG, pp.128-29; Economy and Society, 1:225.
50. E.g. Tsuji, Nihon bunka shi, betsuroku, 3, pp.746-47.
Sakata is wrong. The monetary reform was one occasion when the new men - such as Shigehide and Yoshiyasu - could demonstrate *par excellence* the power they had achieved by virtue of their specialised knowledge and total commitment to their duties. Although the upper military aristocracy still occupied what was traditionally regarded as the most senior offices in the bakufu, their influence was on the decline, especially when on a technical issue, such as the monetary reform, the new men co-operated on several levels of the administration.

It is not surprising, then, that the upper military aristocracy in future decades was to look back with loathing at the policies which signified for them perhaps the lowest point of their declining authority under Tsunayoshi, and that furthermore, they would unanimously condemn the men - Ogiwara Shigehide and Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu - whose co-operation had made it possible for the shogunate to place them in this position. In Weber's terms these two officials had become tools in the ruler's efforts of political expropriation. The monetary reform signified expropriation on both the material level and in more abstract terms of political authority.

It is more difficult to explain Arai Hakuseki's violent opposition to these policies which would strengthen the authority of the sixth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain, Manabe Akifusa, with whose fortunes his own career was intrinsically linked. Certainly there would have been the factors of his personal opposition to, and rivalry with, Shigehide and Yoshiyasu, the men who stood for these financial policies and his frustration when Shigehide remained in office after Ienobu became shogun.

Secondly, one must wonder whether Hakuseki's total admiration for samurai values and Tokugawa tradition did not perhaps blind him to the political measures required by the changing social conditions.
Apparently Hakuseki, like Yoshiyasu, was hated by many of the contemporary daimyo. But in spite of this animosity, his reputation, unlike that of Yoshiyasu, remained unscathed. No slanderous documents appeared after he relinquished his position on Yoshimune's accession, and Japanese and Western historians alike have always praised his scholarly accomplishments and political foresight. The question whether his traditional political views were altogether appropriate for the period he lived in and whether his scholarship was indeed so superior to that of his contemporary colleagues, needs careful investigation. With the distorting influence traditional prejudice can exercise upon the writing of history, it would be worthwhile to examine whether Hakuseki's political judgement and scholarly works deserve the high praise they have been accorded, or whether the same forces which blackened Yoshiyasu's name assured Hakuseki's lasting fame, once his position as staunch supporter of traditional samurai values was established.

2. "THE LAWS OF COMPASSION" AND BENEVOLENCE

There is only one policy for which Tsunayoshi and his Grand Chamberlains are even more severely criticised than the monetary reform: that of the so-called Laws of Compassion. Debasing the coinage is one matter and the effects on the economy are open to debate, but - it appears - little can be said in excuse when historians vividly recount how men were executed in the name of benevolence for cruelty to dogs and how prisons overflowed with thousands awaiting trial for similar offences.54

53. E.g. Hakuseki was nicknamed oni, "devil." Muro Kyūsō, Kenzan hisaku, p.412.
54. This claim is made by Hakuseki, Oritaku shiba no ki, p.226.
So strong was the impact of Tsunayoshi's unprecedented orders for the protection of dogs and other animals that he went down in history as the "Dog Shogun" (imu kubō). It is true, Tsunayoshi was born in the Year of the Dog (1646) according to the twelve-year cycle of the Chinese calendar, and so were his two favourite ministers, Makino Narisada (b. 1634) and Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (b. 1658), the former being twelve years his senior and the latter twelve years his junior. However, it was not simply this historical coincidence which earned Tsunayoshi this unflattering nickname and prompted historians to refer irreverently to the ruler and his two Grand Chamberlains as "the three dogs," but the utter moral indignation at the so-called Laws of Compassion promulgated during their government.

A re-examination of the sources reveals that this emotional subject led to a luxurious growth of fabrications.

The story goes that the fifth shogun, on the death of his only son, turned to the Buddhist priesthood for their prayers in his intense desire for an heir. He was encouraged in his religious devotions by his mother, Keishō-in, apparently a fanatically religious, but uneducated woman. Her favourite priest, the Shingon monk, Ryūkō, took advantage of Tsunayoshi's desperate situation and managed to obtain a great amount of favours. When the prayers did not produce the desired result, the crafty, sly monk blamed Tsunayoshi, suggesting that the reason for not being blessed with an heir, was that he, the shogun, had taken many a life in his previous existence. The only way to lift this curse would be to cherish and protect all animals, but especially dogs, as he had been born in the Year of the Dog. Spurred on by his pious mother, the shogun promulgated

a great number of laws for the protection of animals, severely punishing any transgressions, "so that in the end animals became more important than humans." 56

To this day some historians still maintain that the Laws of Compassion resulted from Ryūkō's false counsel, although already in 1917 the scholar Miyazaki Eiga, after a thorough examination of the monk's diary, wrote:

The thing I find most extraordinary is that in the whole of Ryūkō's diary there is not a single entry referring to the Laws of Compassion or laws protecting dogs. It seems to be common for people who describe the relationship between Ryūkō and the bakufu to pay attention to the matter of "compassion," but in Ryūkō's diary there is not a single allusion to this topic. 57

Miyazaki points out that the first of the laws were promulgated some years before Ryūkō came to Edo and had any dealings with the bakufu and that thus the monk could not possibly have been the instigator of these orders.

While there is no mention of compassion towards dogs or other animals in the diary, it does, however, indicate that the monk at times was better informed about matters of state than either the Senior Councillors or the Three Related Houses, such as in the matter of Ienobu's

56. Furuta Ryōichi, "Shōrui awaremi no rei ni tsuite," Nihon rekishi, 20:22 (1949). There is a great amount of literature on this subject such as Shinshi Yoshimoto, "O inu sama," Nihon rekishi, 260 (1970); Takayanagi Mitsunaga, "Shōrui o awaremi," Chūō shidan, 10:6 (1925); Takigawa Masajirō, "Inu ni kansuru ritsuryō no hōsei," Nihon rekishi, 260 (1970); Kusada Tadachika, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi to Genroku jidai (Tokyo, 1975), pp.94-150; Shigeno Yasutugu, "Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (Jōken'in) jiseki," in Shigeno Hakase shigaku rom bun shū (Tokyo, 1939), 3:34-35, etc.

succession.\textsuperscript{58} This shows not only that the diary was of private nature and that any secret discussions with the shogun concerning compassion towards animals was likely to have been recorded, but also that Ryūkō would have earned the deep resentment of traditional officials and senior daimyō for sharing the shogun's confidence in matters to which they were not made party. Non-violence towards all living creatures is a Buddhist concept, and it was natural for the military aristocracy to lay the blame for these much hated laws at the feet of the equally despised Buddhist monk.

The story that Ryūkō was the instigator of the Laws of Compassion and that their promulgation was due to the shogun's misguided religious fervour rather than true compassion is based on Sannō gaiki and Gokoku onna taiheiki,\textsuperscript{59} two works notorious for their spuriousness. More reliable sources - such as Kaempfer's diary - merely indicate that people were aware of the rather obvious connection between the shogun's year of birth and the unaccustomed protection of dogs,\textsuperscript{60} but do not mention that the Laws of Compassion were brought about by Ryūkō's guileful advice to Tsunayoshi.

Historians have frequently been extremely indiscriminating when looking for evidence to substantiate the horrors resulting from these laws. Thus an article in the 1970 edition of Nihon rekishi claims that with Tsunayoshi's consent, over three hundred people were executed daily for offences against dogs. The author makes no comment on the credibility of his source, the eighteenth century Korō chawa.\textsuperscript{61} He also fails

\textsuperscript{58} See above, Chapter III, Section 4.
\textsuperscript{59} Sannō gaiki, p.3; Gokoku onna taiheiki, pp.53-54.
\textsuperscript{60} Kaempfer, History, 1:196-200.
to point out that no mention is made of such horrors in any contemporary source. A keen critic of Tsunayoshi's government, like for instance Arai Hakuseki, would surely not have failed to mention such sensational injustice.

Murdoch's editor, Longford, similarly failed to check his sources in his enthusiasm for describing the evils of Tsunayoshi's reign. He quotes the English translation of Kaempfer's travelogue as "Nobody may, under severe penalties, insult or abuse these dogs, and to kill them is a capital crime, whatever mischief they do." The text cited, however, continues in Kaempfer's History of Japan: "In this case notice of their misdemeanours must be given to their keepers, who are alone empower'd to chastise and to punish them." An exact translation of the original German text would be: "By punishment of death nobody may maltreat or kill them, except for the bailiff, when the dogs themselves have committed a crime and deserve to be killed." Kaempfer's original report that dogs could only be killed under special circumstances differs considerably from Longford's suggestion that they could never be killed. In a somewhat similar vein the translation of Kaempfer's travelogue states that all pet dogs had to be fed and cared for at the expense of local communities, while the German original indicates that only stray dogs were cared for in such a way.

In the face of such uncritical acceptance of the horrors that apparently resulted from Tsunayoshi's Laws of Compassion, it is essential to re-examine the subject.

64. Engelbert Kaempfer, Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan (Stuttgart, 1964), 1:141-42.
65. ibid., and Kaempfer, History, 1:197.
To begin with the so-called Laws of Compassion are not laws in the modern sense of the word. They are a set of orders to officials and the people informing them of the shogun's wishes and explaining his motives, frequently spiced with exhortations to do their best. On various occasions the "laws" do no more than correct, amplify, and explain previous instructions when these had not resulted in the kind of behaviour hoped for by the shogun. Consequently when the nature of these orders is examined, the conclusion of one modern historian, Kimura Motoi, that issuing thirty-six similar "laws" in nine years is sheer madness loses considerable weight.

Secondly, and closely connected with Kimura's statement, is the problem of establishing the actual numbers of the Laws of Compassion and placing them in their context. There are a number of collections of such official orders, but none is complete. Comparing these collections it is frequently difficult to define whether a certain order is merely differently worded or presents an addition not recorded elsewhere. Consequently it is virtually impossible to determine the total number of orders issued by the bakufu on this topic.

Perhaps in an effort to overcome this problem, Kimura, in his examination of the Laws of Compassion, limited himself to those orders recorded in Tokugawa jikki.

The drawback is that this work is a compilation of various sources representing facts which the compiler deemed worthy to record, and not a complete body of official orders. A flaw in Kimura's evaluation of this material is also the fact that he did not compare his "thirty-six laws in nine years" to other orders. If he had, he might have come to the

conclusion that other regulations, ranging from the hire of palanquins to the prevention of fires, required similar or even more frequent repetition.

The eclectic nature of Tokugawa jikki combined with eclectic usage of the material leads to a distortion of facts. Kimura summarises an order of Genroku 6 (1693) as "do not fish, fishing boats are forbidden." The actual order is recorded in Tokugawa jikki as follows:

At a time when the concept of compassion towards all animate creation is supposed to flourish, it is extremely unreasonable to trail hooks behind boats and kill carelessly. A recent inquiry has shown that the number of delinquents would be great. Therefore, to begin with, the City Magistrate (machi bugyō) is instructed to forbid small fishing boats. Henceforth violators must be arrested.

The above order outlines the reasons for this prohibition. Nevertheless, it still leaves the historian puzzled as to how - under these circumstances - the shogun could frequently include fish in his presents to his retainers and why orders fixing the price of fish were issued.

Similarly, orders regulating the brightness of fishing lights are difficult to explain. This puzzle can only be solved when one looks at orders in other sources which limit fishing and the use of fishing boats to professional fishermen (ryōshi). The above-cited order obviously at some stage presupposed this knowledge and could reasonably be interpreted as referring to fishing for pleasure.

To gain some idea of the relative frequency of orders I have analysed the Laws of Compassion in the limited context of Shōhō jiroku.

68. TJ, 43:175, 16D BM Genroku 6.
69. SJ, 1:288-89, No.797.
Compiled in 1778 by an anonymous City Headman (machi nanushi) it contains official orders issued by the City Magistrate (machi bugyō) of Edo to the City Councillors (machiidōshiyori) for proclamation to the people, covering the years 1648-1775.

For the thirty years of Tsunayoshi's reign a total of 624 orders are recorded of which sixty-six mention animals. Some refer to animals in general: sick animals must not be abandoned, animals dying a natural death must be buried and not sold, hunters only may shoot animals, etc. Other orders concern certain species in particular, stipulating, for instance, that live or barbecued water lizards are not to be sold, snakes not be used for medicine, and that bears, wild boars and wolves are to be shot only when attacking, and otherwise to be driven away.

The majority of regulations concern those animals most closely connected with everyday life: dogs, horses, birds and fish. Some orders treat several animals together and others dwell at length on one species, making it difficult to determine the relative frequency with which, for instance, dogs are mentioned. Some attempt has been made all the same:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Number of orders</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concerning mainly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
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The above table shows that there were significantly more orders concerning dogs than any other animal. It does not necessarily imply, however, that the dog was the animal most dear to the heart of the shogun. In a system where orders were repeated when not adequately observed, it may simply demonstrate that the enforcement of the regulations concerning the protection of dogs was fraught with special problems.

Already in Jōkyō 3 (1686), only twelve months after the first order concerning dogs had been issued, it became evident that the shogun's plan to teach benevolence to his people by forcing them to care for animals would be difficult to realise. On the contrary, the shogun's unprecedented directives appear to have had just the opposite effect, as the order quoted below indicates:

... Although previously there have been detailed instructions, now, when a masterless dog comes along, people do not feed it. Further, we have heard that people no longer exchange dogs with each other. It looks as if people have misunderstood what has been ordered concerning compassion towards living beings. It is vital that the intention to be compassionate towards living beings permeates everything...73

In the next year (1687) it became apparent that the problems of re-educating the people in the way Tsunayoshi had envisaged would be compounded by a lack of cooperation and understanding on the part of his ministers. The Senior Councillors' so-called "misunderstanding" of the shogun's directives was an indication of this fact.74 They obviously could see no point in Tsunayoshi's efforts to change the traditional values of society and they would not lend him the support their position required of them.

73. 5J, 1:250, No.704.
74. See above Chapter III, Section 6.
More junior officials were similarly reluctant to execute the shogun's orders. There being no precedent of shogunal directives to teach "benevolence" to the people, they were at a loss of how to handle the situation. With local officials being uncertain about the new policy, enforcement of the laws was often arbitrary, and the people, whom the officials were supposed to instruct, were left in even greater uncertainty.

This situation made it necessary for the Edo City Magistrate (Edo machi bugyō) to pass on the following lengthy proclamation to his subordinates:

We have issued orders concerning compassion towards living beings, but you have not understood them well and are acting in a way which apparently makes the exchange of live animals awkward. Generally when a healthy dog comes along you have it fed, but when a sick dog appears, it is not fed at all. Both the above ways of acting are due to misunderstandings. The shogun issued these orders because he wished feelings of benevolence to arise in people. To all appearances you have made people follow the orders, but deep down in their hearts there is very little trace of compassion, and this is bad. We have heard that according to some people if there is someone really compassionate towards living beings in the end he is likely to be considered a nuisance by the local officials. You must observe the instructions issued from time to time and administer them so that feelings of charity arise in people's hearts...75

For the next eight years only three orders make any mention of dogs. Nevertheless, they indicate that the shogun's wishes on this matter were still not treated with the appropriate diligence and seriousness.76

The shogunate finally had to recognise that the orders regulating the treatment of dogs had failed to achieve their purpose. Quite to the
contrary, people now did not feed dogs at all, fearing that they might be made responsible for the daily upkeep of the animal, have to care for its young, nurse it in sickness and finally be charged with the odious task of burying it. The result was that more and more hungry dogs were roaming the streets, especially in Edo, eventually attacking people in their desperate search for food. In addition, as dogs could not be killed unless they committed a serious "crime," they multiplied freely, making it increasingly difficult to feed them.

In the face of this situation the shogunate devised a measure which for ever after was to provoke the strongest criticism in even the most kindly disposed historian: the public dog pounds. While certain daimyo were selected to construct the dog pounds, a tax calculated on house-frontage was levied from the city people to pay for the upkeep of the dogs. It is true - and historians frequently neglect to mention this fact - that the levy was suspended in years when earthquakes and fires created considerable hardship to the inhabitants of Edo. All the same, the dogs had to be fed, and by Genroku 10 (1697) there were 40,000 of them being cared for in the public pounds. Nine orders pertain to matters connected with these pounds, making the number of orders dealing with dogs considerably higher than those regulating the protection of other animals.

Did Tsunayoshi have a predilection for dogs and consider them more important than human beings - as historians frequently imply - or was he motivated merely by the concept of non-violence as inherent in the Buddhist teachings?

There is no evidence, neither in primary nor secondary sources, suggesting that the fifth shogun cared for dogs as pets, in the way, for instance, that George III of England did. If dogs were permitted within the shogunal chambers and accorded special treatment, critics which made much of Tsunayoshi's other weaknesses would surely not have failed to elaborate on this point. Unlike the case of George III, nothing is known of officials designated to care for shogunal dogs, nor are there any other regulations indicating that this animal was kept as a pet for the shogun in Edo castle. It is unlikely, therefore, that Tsunayoshi had any personal sympathies for dogs, except for his recognition of the fact that he was born in the Year of the Dog.

A brief examination of orders dealing with other animals shows that it was the plight of the horse, and not that of the dog, which first caught Tsunayoshi's attention. Barely four months after his accession in Empō 8 (1680) it was ordered that the practice of cutting the horse's sinews - to make their gait more sprightly - should be discontinued. It appears that at the same time the traditional cutting of the horse's tail muscles was abolished in the shogun's stables and eventually an order was issued instructing the townspeople to similarly abstain from this practice. Several orders were required to stop people from abandoning sick and dead horses and overloading them. Yet with the horse being a much more valued, and much less numerous animal than the dog, the problem of determining ownership and feeding did not arise.

82. SJ, 1:256, No.720; 1:261, No.731; 1:353, No.986, etc.
Compassion towards fish and birds — both animals being part of the Japanese diet — required different regulations. It was forbidden to sell live fish and birds and fishing and hunting was limited to professional fishermen and hunters only.

The kite eagle, a bird of prey, presented an altogether different challenge to Tsunayoshi's policy of non-violence. Obviously it would neither do to kill it nor let it carry on in its uncompassionate ways. Officials and the people were therefore instructed to prevent the bird from nesting and breeding, a less expensive solution than that required for dogs.

Amongst all domestic animals the dog — of rather limited use in an urban environment such as Edo — apparently had been treated worst and was most difficult to protect. Already under Tsunayoshi's predecessor, Ietsuna, there had been instances where the bakufu had felt it necessary to mete out severe punishment for killing dogs, a fact that finds no mention by historians.

Tsunayoshi, one may conclude, had no particular personal affection for dogs and out of necessity showed proportionately similar concern for the compassionate treatment of other animals. Consequently one must examine whether the Laws of Compassion — in accordance with the shogun's own statements — arose from his desire to turn the world into a less violent one.

The topic of the shogun's desire for non-violence finds frequent and relatively elaborate treatment in his orders. An example is the

83. SJ, 1:254, No.716; 1:255, No.717, 718; 1:272, No.753, etc.
85. SJ, 1:300, No.815; 1:301, No.819; 1:303-304, No.826, etc.
86. E.g. O shioki saiyou cho, Vol.1 in Kinsei hosei shiryō sōsho, pp.284, 285, Nos.668, 669, 670, 671, etc.
following directive issued to his officials in Genroku 7 (1694):

You should keep in mind that [the laws of] compassion for living things are only due to the mercy of the shogun. But beyond this mercy, the shogun has more profound intention. Even if he were not to issue orders concerning compassion, you officials should have in mind that people should become benevolent and that their intentions should become gentle. You should tell this to those under your command and those in your units, and you should pass it on so that it will be known by everyone down to the servants.87

Tsunayoshi's professed motive for issuing the Laws of Compassion is credible, for the theme of benevolence and compassion is a recurring one.88 He did not limit the practice of these virtues to the treatment of animals. While Japanese historians have always made much of Tsunayoshi's concern for dogs in particular, they have frequently failed to elaborate on the fact that the same care was shown towards men, especially those at the lower end of the social scale, unable to protect themselves. Already in 1920 Kurita Mototsugu published a study of these orders,89 and the neglect with which this side of Tsunayoshi's character is treated in Japanese history books, is indicative of the bias which even today exists against this ruler.

Tsunayoshi, for instance, issued new orders for the protection of minors. Previously the bakufu had already prohibited abandonment of children, but now, for the first time, provisions for their upkeep was made when the parents did not have the means.90 To effectively

88. See above Chapter III, Section 5.
89. Kurita, "Inu kubō ron."
counteract the widespread practice of infanticide, it was ordered that pregnant women and children under the age of seven be registered.\footnote{SJ, 1:281, No.776.} Beggars and outcasts were provided with food and shelter.\footnote{NEKS, 4:202-203, 1216-19.} In an unprecedented fashion the shogun even turned his attention to the inmates of prisons and to improve their wretched state he ordered the erection of better ventilated buildings, provisions for five monthly baths and additional sets of clothing in the cold months.\footnote{Gotōke reijō, p.194, No.338; TJ, 43:15, 19D 6M Genroku 1.} Several declarations of general pardons expressed the shogun's mercy, such as in Genroku 13 (1690) when in two months altogether 267 offenders were released.\footnote{TJ, 43:402, 20D 4M; p.404, 8D 5M; p.407, 20D 5M.} Street gangs engaging in robbery and murder - a threat to the common people rather than the well-armed samurai - were severely punished and effectively eliminated.\footnote{TJ, 42:586, 27D 9M Jōkyō 3.} Sick travellers, who in the past had commonly been turned out on the street when they could no longer afford their board or when their illness was deemed infectious, also now enjoyed the protection of the state. It was ordered that they must be given proper care and if they died, provisions were made for the appropriate funeral arrangements.\footnote{SJ, 1:245, No.698.}

This unprecedented concern for the welfare of the most vulnerable sections of the community led Kurita to conclude that Tsunayoshi was not the most cruel of the Tokugawa rulers, as commonly asserted, but that he was the shogun who cared for human life most seriously.\footnote{Kurita, "Inu kubō ron," p.13.}
Tsunayoshi's concern for the benevolent behaviour of his people was neither limited to nor started with the infamous orders protecting animals. Already during the early years of his government, he had been preoccupied with the behaviour of his people, and he had instructed his officials that when pronouncing judgements and issuing orders to pay closer attention to the effects upon the behaviour of society rather than to the purely legal aspects. 98

The Laws of Compassion were simply a further development of this. Their purpose, initially, was to improve the behaviour of the people. Offences were looked upon not from the aspect of how much wrong an individual had committed, but how the morals of society would suffer if people saw that such uncompassionate acts were tolerated. Thus when a man was severely punished for killing a dog, the sentence imposed upon him was not merely in retribution for the crime he had committed, but designed to deter other people from contemplating such an act.

The Laws of Compassion originated from Tsunayoshi's desire to improve society. Very soon, however, their enforcement also became a test of shogunal authority, and it is at this stage that the shogunate had no choice but to pursue the matter to the point of absurdity.

First evidence of this battle for authority is furnished by the Senior Councillors' faulty transmission of the shogun's order concerning the registration of dogs. When their so-called "misunderstanding" of his instructions indicated their lack of support in this matter, Tsunayoshi did not capitulate. On the contrary, he punished them. From that time on the enforcement of the Laws of Compassion turned into a conflict

98 Yogenroku, p. 32.
between the shogun's personal will and that of traditional officialdom. Eibyō gojitsuuroku states plainly:

When someone disobeys the Laws of Compassion, regardless whether they are of high or low birth, it is equal to harbouring revolt in their hearts against the shogun's orders.99

Amongst the officialdom the Laws of Compassion separated the sheep from the goats; a man's attitude towards them indicated whether he was willing to serve the shogun in total obedience or whether he would limit his loyalty to measures of which he himself approved.

Further, the Laws of Compassion demonstrated the shogun's authority. Their promulgation was an unprecedented interference with the samurai's conduct and their enforcement showed that the shogun had the power to impose his personal moral standards upon all his subjects, including the samurai. Previously the latter had been accorded relatively great freedom in the treatment of their inferiors. Now they, just as the common man in the street, were bound by laws governing not only their conduct towards other men, but even towards animals.

The Laws of Compassion meant that - in theory at least - anybody, even a common man, could accuse a daimyo of lacking compassion towards some inferior living being. In practice, it appears, no daimyo was ever accused of this crime, but instances of daimyo retainers being severely punished for such behaviour were not rare.100

In fact, when historians point their finger accusingly at cases where a man was condemned to death for cruelty towards an animal, it is frequently a member of the samurai class who received such extreme

99. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.53.
100. E.g. Gotōdaiki, p.52.
punishment. One example is that of the shogunal veterinarian in charge of horses (hakuraku) who, in Genroku 15 (1702), was ordered to commit ceremonial suicide (seppuku) for harming a dog. A man in his position would have been fully aware of the shogunal policy towards animals, which had been in existence for nearly two decades, and his violation must be regarded as an act of disobedience. "People both of high and low standing must practise benevolence and love" stated the proclamation announcing the veterinarian's sentence, stressing once again that the shogunal orders applied without differentiation to all the shogun's subjects.

Historians frequently justify their complete condemnation of the Laws of Compassion by the fact that they led to a situation where animals were considered more important than men. The great preoccupation with the punishment of samurai for offences against animals, makes one wonder, however, whether it is not principally the enforcement of the orders upon the military class that is being so strongly objected to. Naturally historians can only cite what their sources provide and in the context of the Genroku period the capital punishment of a commoner would not have been as noteworthy as that of a samurai. But this is the important point. The life of a commoner had never counted for much and consequently one would not expect great protest when it was taken in punishment for disobeying the shogun's commands.

How very little a commoner's life counted for is demonstrated by Arai Hakuseki's recollections of his own youth. Without any shame or

101. SJ, 1:357, No.994; TJ, 43:487, 15D 10M Genroku 15. See also Gotō-daiki, p.51 and TJ, 42:594, 4D 2M Jōkyō 4 for the case of the Head of the Shogunal Kitchens (daidokoro gashira) who was banished for drowning two cats in a well of the main citadel (honmaru).
regret this scholar, who was so quick to condemn others, recounts how on one occasion, to save his military honour, he was about to cut down the commoners guarding him under house arrest. Such violence had been part of the military ethos and not been severely punished in the past.

Under Tsunayoshi the samurai to some extent lost the freedom to subject society to the dictates of their military honour, for now they had to expect capital punishment for killing commoners. The common man could also forfeit his life for violating the Laws of Compassion, but on the other hand he was not as likely to meet this fate for getting in the way of a samurai; he both lost and gained by the unprecedented orders. The samurai, on the other hand, lost on both accounts: the obligation to practise compassion towards men and animals severely curbed his traditional freedom.

The position of the daimyo towards the Laws of Compassion is not altogether clear. The story of how Mito Mitsukuni presented Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu with a blanket of dog skins "to keep him warm in his old age," seems to indicate the defiance of the mightiest of them. The fact remains, however, that it is merely an anecdote and that in Mitsukuni's own domain "new" orders were proclaimed concerning hunting in Jōkyō 4 (1687). The source does not state the contents of these "new" orders, but their timing coinciding with the period when the shogunate's orders for the protection of animals increased in frequency, seems significant. Furthermore, in Genroku 6 (1693) the Mito domain

103. Knox, p.110.
104. E.g. Iz, 43:305, 13D 8M Genroku 10.
105. Ikeda Kōen, Tokugawa jidaishi (Tokyo, 1927), pp.50-51.
106. Ibaraki kenshi hensan iinkai, Ibaraki ken shiryō, Kinsei seiji hen (Mito, 1957), 1:477.
returned its hunting grounds to the bakufu "because Lord Jōken [Tsunayoshi] greatly dislikes the taking of life," indicating that they did not wish to ignore the shogun's wishes.

The Laws of Compassion were promulgated for the whole country and even if they were not as strictly enforced in domains outside Tsunayoshi's direct control, they still infringed upon the independence the daimyo had traditionally enjoyed in the management of their domains.

More than that, however, the Laws of Compassion were a massive onslaught against the military tradition which provided not just the daimyo but the whole of the military class with their raison d'etre. The shogunate went beyond merely criticising the samurai's "valor" as "brutality" and their so-called "good conduct" as "high spirits." With the Laws of Compassion it attempted to coerce them into abandoning the values which in their fathers' and grandfathers' days had been instrumental in securing their privileged position. A society which had operated on the principle of the survival of and domination by the fittest was now asked to turn its attention to the care of orphans, beggars, prison inmates and even sick and starving animals. A proud samurai might in the course of his official duties have to concern himself with food and shelter for the outcasts of society. Those who had enjoyed the honour of caring for the shogunal hawks now had to preoccupy themselves with the welfare of stray dogs, not to mention the junior officials who were jeered at by the crowds when chasing dogs for the public dog pounds.

107. *ibid.*, 1:482.
In Genroku 3 (1690) the shogunate decreed:

... In the use of both civil and military elements lies the established and true way of government. From now on more attention must be paid to the civil element...110

Tsunayoshi did not deny the military aspect of his government. To do so would have rocked the very foundations of the shogunate. The civil element, however, he saw of increasing importance, a view well justified by the developments which had taken place since the beginning of the Tokugawa regime. Demographic changes which had turned a village into perhaps the largest city in the world in the space of a century required new rules and methods to cope with the unprecedented urbanisation. New modes of behaviour were essential when large numbers of people lived at close quarters and care for the sick and the dead was imperative, even from a sanitary point of view.

The shogunate's attack on military values, then, was not arbitrary. It arose from Tsunayoshi's deep convictions, shaped by both his training and the changes that had taken place in society. Nevertheless it meant that the military, which had dominated the country, were increasingly forced to serve their government in a civil capacity. Slowly soldiers who carried out civil functions turned into civil servants with military background.

With the enforcement of the Laws of Compassion having such far-reaching implications, it is small wonder that they could not be revoked when their ineffectiveness became obvious. By the time dogs had multiplied to the extent that they threatened the inhabitants of Edo, there was no other solution but to keep them in pounds. And though the numbers

110. TJ, 43:84, 21D 9M Genroku 3.
of animals kept at the citizens' and the government's expense reached absurd numbers, when the shogunate had insisted so vehemently on their protection, it could hardly permit them to be exterminated.

At the end of Kembyō jitsuroku Yoshiyasu explains how this problematical situation developed without any fault of the shogun's:

The policy of the Laws of Compassion initially arose solely out of the shogun's desire to admonish even the slightest lack of benevolence and to perfect the spirit of the common people. It was not supposed to be such a severe law, but - possibly because Yoshiyasu, Terusada and others failed to administer it correctly - when it came down to the rank and file there were, I believe, many instances completely against the shogun's intentions.111

The eighth shogun, Yoshimune, later corrected this passage, maintaining that the Laws of Compassion were based on Tsunayoshi's deep convictions and that his Grand Chamberlains could not be blamed.112 This view is also adopted by some historians,113 but on the evidence of the words that follow, one must doubt whether either the shogun, or his Grand Chamberlains, are to be held solely responsible.

When I think back reverently, I remember how I, Yoshiyasu, received the shogun's great favours and was entrusted with duties of great importance. Although I worked diligently day and night and illustrious virtue was promulgated throughout the country, there was obstruction on all levels, and it was impossible to succeed. Without correcting old evils, new evils arose. During the thirty years of governing the people, the shogun wanted to make the world like that of Yao and Shun. The intentions of his early government were not rewarded. Now, who is to bear the blame for this? "There was a lord worthy to be called a lord, but he

111. Kembyō jitsuroku, Vol.30 (corrected in MS to Vol.34). Also quoted by Tokutomi, Genroku jidai, 17:240.
112. TJ, 43:752.
had no ministers worthy of that name" the ancients lamented. Indeed, though the country is different, the saying remains the same114

The Laws of Compassion certainly arose from Tsunayoshi's personal desire to improve society. This fact Yoshiyasu stated clearly. But the method of translating the shogun's lofty ideals into reality might well have been left to his officials. Yoshiyasu, according to the shogun's own words, was conducting private and official affairs single-handedly.115 If he could be entrusted with an important matter of state such as Ienobu's succession, one might reasonably assume that he also had a free hand in administering the Laws of Compassion. It seems likely, therefore, that the construction of the infamous dog pounds was based, if not on Yoshiyasu's decision, at least upon his suggestion. Similarly the degree of punishment for offences against the orders might not have been decided by the shogun himself, but left at Yoshiyasu's discretion, with the shogun's aim of perfecting the morals of his people as his guiding principle.

If one looks at the second passage cited above, this view seems justified and if one keeps in mind that it is a continuation of the first-cited passage and consequently is likely to still refer to the Laws of Compassion, all other statements also fall into place.

The administration of the Laws of Compassion might well be called "duties of great importance." Yoshiyasu's assertion that virtue was promulgated throughout the country is suitably reflected in the many orders exhorting people to practise compassion. On the other hand, the wording

115. See above, Chapter 2, Section 4.
of the Laws of Compassion can leave no doubt that cooperation on all levels of officialdom was greatly lacking. The shogun's aim of teaching his people to act compassionately was not achieved, but instead it brought to light another serious defect in his subjects, namely that of not unequivocally accepting the shogun's authority. Tsunayoshi, to all appearances, seems to have been striving for the idealistic world of Yao and Shun and one cannot question that his intentions failed. Finally, it appears as if Yoshiyasu again takes the blame on his own shoulders; the Chinese saying which he also finds appropriate for Japan, could imply that his own talents as minister did not do justice to those of his lord. However, previously he had clearly pin-pointed the failure of the Laws of Compassion to the opposition from the officialdom, and when he now states that the ministers failed their lord, he leaves it open for the reader to conclude which ministers - he or the traditional officials - had not lived up to their duties.

If one accepts this interpretation of Yoshiyasu's own testimony, the so-called repeal of the Laws of Compassion takes on new meaning.

Hakuseki's description of the event is the most detailed and best known version and has commonly been accepted as correct. Yet he introduced the story with the words "according to what some people say," and consequently his account could well have been mere gossip, circulating amongst people like Hakuseki, not well disposed towards Yoshiyasu.

Hakuseki's story goes that Tsunayoshi's funeral had been postponed not because of continuing rain, as officially announced, but for altogether different reasons. Apparently Tsunayoshi had once expressed the following wish in the presence of Ienobu and his own closest retainers:

During recent years I have cared much for living beings and although it is a foolish matter I wish
that, in this regard only, the practices of my reign should be continued even after an hundred years as an act of filial piety. You, who serve me, should heed this well.

Hakuseki's story continues that after Tsunayoshi's death, Ienobu wanted to stop the suffering caused by the strict enforcement of the Laws of Compassion, but was faced with the problem that in his own government he could not go against the express wish of his predecessor. Consequently he decided that the repeal of the Laws of Compassion must appear as if arranged by the previous shogun. Yoshiyasu, apparently, realising that his future lay in Ienobu's hands, was eager to please the latter and protesting that from the very beginning he had not agreed with the Laws of Compassion, praised Ienobu's plan as "the height of filial piety."

The sixth shogun - Hakuseki relates - approached Tsunayoshi's coffin and spoke:

> Orders primarily made by you should not be changed by my orders for many years to come. Yet since it concerns the people of this country, I feel that you would forgive me.

According to Hakuseki, those who had originally received Tsunayoshi's order to uphold the Laws of Compassion were then also called in front of the coffin and asked to repeal them. As the funeral rites had not taken place, it was thought that people would regard the new order as the late shogun's last wish.  

Other sources give a different picture of the event. According to Rakushidō nenroku, Ienobu instructed both Manabe Akifusa and Yoshiyasu to relay to the Senior Councillors that the Laws of Compassion should be

observed in future in the same way as they were under his predecessor, but that punishments should be lightened.117 There was nothing secret about this matter, for only one day later an order was issued to the Superintendents of Finance, Superintendents of Temple and Shrines, and the Edo City Magistrates, to this effect. The order stated clearly that Ienobu intended to continue with the Laws of Compassion according to the intentions of his predecessor, but as he had heard that they had caused great problems for the people, officials henceforth were to take pains to adjust punishments and administer them in such a fashion that they did not cause suffering. People were not to be indicted wrongly. The order continues to justify Ienobu's decision, stating that it was up to each shogun to increase or decrease punishments, according to his own considerations.118

Just as in the above-cited passages from Kembyō jitsuroku, Ienobu's order indicates that officials did not discharge their duties correctly with regard to the Laws of Compassion. The question of falsely-made accusations, moreover, had already been dealt with in Tsunayoshi's orders.

Ienobu, consequently, did not repeal the Laws of Compassion in principle, but attempted to correct the excesses that had developed from the way they had been implemented. The blame for their faulty administration he laid at least partly on the shoulders of the lower officialdom. There was no need for Ienobu to apologise in front of Tsunayoshi's coffin, for he stated openly that he had a right to make such changes.

118. NZKS, 8:909, 21D 1M Hōei 6.
Similarly Hakuseki's story that Yoshiyasu, motivated by self-interest, asserted that he had disliked the Laws of Compassion from the start, must be considered as slander. Evidence to the contrary is furnished by Yoshiyasu's own testimony, where he clearly distinguished between the praiseworthy origins of the orders and the evil that arose from their execution. In fact, he might have welcomed this occasion to correct excesses without any detriment to shogunal authority, for it could be claimed that it was natural for a new ruler to make such adjustments.

If Ienobu's order for changes in the administration of the Laws was issued before Tsunayoshi's burial to comply with the Confucian saying "change not your father's ways for three years," as some historians suggest, it is likely that this procedure was adopted to observe in theory the proper rites, rather than to convince the public that it was Tsunayoshi's last wish.

The Laws of Compassion as a severely oppressive measure was the result of the shogun's battle for authority. With his policy of compassion Tsunayoshi tried to institute changes from which the samurai both in their capacity as officials, and as individuals, had nothing to gain, but much to lose. The opposition to the Laws turned their enforcement into an issue of shogunal supremacy. The part Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu played in this conflict was an important one. In the face of opposition at all levels of the officialdom, Tsunayoshi would not have been able to wage this battle had it not been for the practical support of men like Yoshiyasu who totally identified themselves with the shogun's aims.

120. E.g. Murdoch, A History of Japan, 3:216.
3. THE JUDGEMENT OF THE FORTY-SEVEN RŌNIN

The Laws of Compassion are generally not seen as related to the incident of the Forty-seven rōnin. On the contrary, while the former are condemned as the most scandalous policy in Japanese history, the latter incident is praised as one of its most glorious episodes.

This tendency to classify events subjectively according to their moral implications has obscured the fact that both issues were merely different manifestations of the same basic conflict; the conflict, namely, between traditional military modes of behaviour and the new political demands of the centralised state. The only difference between the two situations was that while the shogunate stood to benefit from an end to military aggressiveness, it could ill afford the neglect of military virtues. With the Laws of Compassion, Tsunayoshi never wavered in forcing the samurai to abandon their war-like ways. When it came to the punishment of the rōnin, however, the limitations of his government became apparent. The origin of his authority was of feudal character, and if he were to permit the samurai to abandon such moral precepts as unconditional loyalty, the very foundation of his own power would be endangered.

The question of whether the Forty-seven rōnin were to be praised as loyal samurai or condemned for violating the laws of the country was, therefore, one of the most difficult political decisions Tsunayoshi and his ministers were faced with, an issue which decades and even centuries later philosophers never tired of debating.

The story of how a group of retainers of Asano Naganori, lord of Akō domain, revenged their lord by killing the Master of Court Ceremonies 121. There were actually only forty-six rōnin who surrendered themselves to the authorities.
(kōke), Kira Yoshinaka, is so well known that only the details relevant to the judgement need be touched upon. 122

The incident which provoked the rōnin to take justice into their own hands took place in Genroku 14 (1701) in an audience chamber of Edo castle. Asano Naganori, while waiting for the imperial messenger whom he was to entertain, suddenly drew his sword and attacked Kira Yoshinaka in retribution for the latter's insulting behaviour on a previous occasion. The bakufu acted swiftly, and that same day Asano was condemned to disembowel himself. 123 His crime had been not so much that of wounding Kira, but of drawing his sword and desecrating the shogunal chambers by spilling blood at, moreover, a very important moment when the imperial messenger was expected. 124

From a letter to the bakufu written by Ōishi Kuranosuke Yoshio, the leader of the faithful retainers, it becomes apparent that they did not object to their master's punishment, but to the fact that Kira Yoshinaka went free. Their lord's death was meaningless when the purpose for which he had died - namely that of killing Kira - had not been achieved. Ōishi pointed out in his memorial that by traditional law, both samurai engaged in a quarrel were to be punished. 125 The bakufu, however, took notice neither of this protest, nor of the retainer's petition that Asano Naganori's younger brother be permitted to inherit the fief.

The attack of Asano's retainers on Kira's mansion nearly two years later (1702) consequently must be viewed from two aspects. Firstly, it

122. A comprehensive description of the event is contained in TJ, 43: 492-4, 15D 12M Genroku 15. For a modern version see Kuwata, Toku-gawa Tsunayoshi to Genroku jidai, pp.195-257.
was motivated by the rōnin's desire to fulfil their dead lord's last wish of killing his adversary. Secondly, it was aimed at correcting the bakufu's judgement, which in their eyes had been unjust in sparing Kira. Thus technically Asano's retainers were not only guilty of violating the general laws of the country by their act of attacking Kira, but of going against the express ruling of the bakufu.

In the rōnin's favour stood the fact that Tsunayoshi himself had laid great emphasis on the virtue of loyalty. In an attempt to impress upon his subjects the importance of this Confucian concept, he had gone to the extent of ordering the erection of public notices, which exhorted his subjects to practise loyalty and filial piety. Therefore, just as Tsunayoshi in the case of the Laws of Compassion could not consent to have the animals killed whose protection he had ordered, he could hardly totally condemn the exemplary loyal behaviour of the rōnin.

The full details of the debate that ensued in bakufu circles are no longer extant. Yet the very fact that in the case of Asano the sentence of disembowelment had been handed down within hours and that now no such swift judgement was forthcoming, indicates that there was no ready solution to the problem.

Kai shōshō ason jikki notes that the Senior Councillors were divided amongst themselves between condemning the faithful retainers and praising their display of loyalty. The author does not say on which sources he bases this statement, but it is a credible proposition, for after several days had elapsed since the incident occurred, an extraordinary meeting of the Supreme Court (hyōjōsho) was convened with the express purpose of tendering its opinion on this matter to the Senior

Councillors. It appears that on this occasion neither Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu nor the Senior Councillors took part in the deliberations. The views expressed at the end of the meeting were represented as those of altogether fourteen men holding positions of either Superintendent of Temples and Shrines, Edo City Magistrate, Superintendent of Finance or Inspector General. The absence of more senior officials could be explained by the fact that these men were already deeply divided on the issue and that now the genuine opinion of the Superintendents, Magistrates and Inspectors was sought.

The committee of the Supreme Court, however, either could not agree on a judgement or did not want to commit itself on this delicate issue. The fourteen members were unanimous in condemning Kira's adopted son and retainers for not making greater efforts in saving their lord. Yet when it came to the crucial point of judging the behaviour of the rōnin, they both condemned the secret attack on Kira's mansion and praised their loyal behaviour. Finally they suggested that judgement be postponed, a proposal readily accepted by the bakufu, especially in view of the fact that the elaborate New Year's rites and celebrations were about to begin.

The opinion of the Head of the Confucian School, Hayashi Nobuatsu, was also sought. For him Confucian virtues constituted the ideal way of government and the practical demands of the centralised state counted for little. As long as loyalty such as that displayed by the rōnin prevailed, the government had nothing to fear, he contended. Nobuatsu suggested that if the rōnin could not be set free immediately for violating the laws of the bakufu, they should be kept under house arrest until an

127. Asan jikki, Vol.30, 23D 12M Genroku 15; also reprinted in Iio, pp.266-68.
occasion to pardon them arose. 128

When Nobuatsu spoke of loyalty he obviously referred to loyalty towards one's lord and not towards the state, for Asano's retainers had been disobedient to the bakufu in order to discharge their duties towards their lord. The scholar's view confirmed the priorities of feudal society, where in hierarchical order a man's responsibilities were primarily to his superior. It was a view which Tsunayoshi could not share.

Some works maintain that the shogun sympathised greatly with the rōnin and was seeking a way to acquit them without giving the appearance that the bakufu condoned their disobedience to the original judgement. 129 Apparently in the secret hope of obtaining a pardon for them, he asked the imperial abbot, Kōben Shinnō, for a judgement. The latter, however, remained silent.

If Tsunayoshi had really wanted to let the rōnin off lightly, he would have followed the advice given by Hayashi Nobuatsu. A judgement along these lines could be justified by a precedent in Ietsuna's reign. Here the quarrel between two samurai had also resulted in punishment by disembowelment for one of the parties. On that occasion it had been the dead man's son who similarly revenged his father by attacking his foe's mansion in the dead of the night. The Grand Councillor, Ii Naosumi, whose task it had been to pronounce a judgement, had decided on a compromise much in favour of the loyal son. The latter was exiled as punishment for the night attack, but the fact that the sentence was only pronounced to do formal justice to the laws of the bakufu became apparent

128. Nobuatsu's original verdict is quoted by Iio, p.269. After the sentence had been pronounced he wrote another commentary on the incident, this time justifying the bakufu's judgement.
129. E.g. TJ, 43:750.
when six years later the loyal son was pardoned and even found employ-
ment with the Grand Councillor's family.130

Tsunayoshi, consequently, had the opportunity to let the rōnin off
lightly and eventually pardon them, but he did not choose to do so. The
judgement he adopted was, like that pronounced by Ii Naomu, also a
compromise, but unlike Naomu's verdict, it well reflected the gravity
with which the shogunate viewed the rōnin's transgression against the
laws of the state. Asano's retainers were to die. To do justice to
their display of loyalty, they were permitted to disembowel themselves.
It was not a great concession. The rōnin were of samurai status, and it
was the practice that samurai committing such offences as the result of
a quarrel, were punished in this way.131 Had they been ordered to die
as common criminals, it would have implied that they were not even
worthy to be called warriors. In view of the shogun's great emphasis on
loyalty, such a pronouncement would hardly have been feasible. The
judgement, therefore, made relatively little of the rōnin's exemplary
display of loyalty towards their lord and clearly placed the demands of
the central government above traditional virtues.

Controversy exists on how this decision was reached. Yanagisawa ke
hizō jikki describes how Yoshiyasu consulted in secret two of his Confu-
cian scholars - Shimura Sanzaemon and Ogyū Sorai - about the implications
of this incident. The former could only confirm that no precedent of
such an event could be found in the classics, but Sorai was ready to ela-
borate on the subject. He criticised the Supreme Court for preoccupying
itself with the details of the case forgetting the overall issue, and

131. For instance, Asano had received just this punishment. For another
example, see TJ, 43:305, 13D 8M Genroku 10.
then continued to interpret the case in the context of the shogunate's policies:

Since at the present time those on high consider loyalty and filial piety the first virtues of government, it would be lacking in compassion to judge this case in which the plotters acted in accordance with these virtues, as a case of burglary. If cases in which people have loyalty and filial piety in mind and act accordingly, are considered as burglary, how then shall cases be judged which are committed with disloyal and un-filial intentions. Therefore, leaving Chinese matters aside, if the decision orders that seppuku be carried out on the basis of precedents of our present rule it would also be in accordance with the wishes of those plotters, and how would it not set an example for the world?

Apparently Yoshiyasu was exceedingly pleased with this opinion. The next morning he appeared earlier than usual in front of the shogun to inform him of the wise judgement pronounced by his retainer and the shogun accepted it happily. \[132\]

Further evidence that the judgement of the Forty-seven rōnin came from Sorai is, apparently, furnished by Sorai giritsu sho, a document found in the possession of the Hosokawa family. It is a more detailed exposition of the reasons behind the judgement, and here the argument already foreshadows Sorai's thoughts in his mature works.

Gi \([i,\text{righteousness})\] is the way to uphold one's personal integrity. Law is the standard of measurement for the entire society. Rei \([li,\text{rites or etiquette})\] is used to control the heart, while gi is used to control events. The fact that the forty-six samurai avenged the wrong done their lord shows that they possessed the sense of honour of the samurai. They followed the path of integrity. Their action was righteous. But this aspect of the situation concerns only them and is a private matter.... If

132. HJ, p.64, translated by Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, pp.48-49.
private considerations are allowed to undermine public considerations, it will be impossible to uphold the law of the land.133

Nevertheless, there are several aspects which cast doubt upon the fact that Sorai was the author of the famous judgement. Firstly, it has always disturbed historians that no mention of the scholar's part appears in Sorai's own writings.134 For instance when Sorai received Yoshiyasu's praise for correctly judging the case of a peasant who had abandoned his aged mother, the event was recorded in detail.135 Consequently, if Sorai had won the shogun's admiration for finding a solution where his senior ministers had failed, the matter surely would have found mention in a later work.

Secondly, the preamble to the above-quoted comment from Yanagisawa hizō jikki states that the Supreme Court had condemned the rōnin to die as common criminals. Although this argument had formed part of the deliberations, it had not been the final judgement, and it appears that here Yanagisawa hizō jikki is wrong. Even weightier is the fact that this passage does not appear in Eibyō gojitsuroku on which the rest of Yanagisawa hizō jikki is based.136

Another difficulty concerns the authenticity of Sorai giritsu sho. The scholar Tahara Tsuguo questions how Sorai's deliberations for the bakufu could have come into the possession of the Hosokawa family. Moreover, as the document is not dated, he suggests that it could easily have been written as part of the debate which was to continue for decades

133. Maruyama, Intellectual History, p.74. The italics are those of Maruyama. The passage is also translated in Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, p.49.
134. Ibid., p.50.
135. See below, Chapter V, Section 3.
136. See above, Chapter I, Section 3.
and even centuries and in which especially Sorai's disciple, Dazai Shun-dai, had great interest.\textsuperscript{137} After the judgement had been made public, Hayashi Nobuatsu similarly philosophised about the reasons behind the decision,\textsuperscript{138} and since this later statement did not reflect his original views, it appears likely that it was written as a justification of the bakufu's verdict.

So far no evidence has come to light to decide the argument unequivocally, and in the face of this lack of evidence some historical speculation may be permitted.

Sorai later became famous, while the reputation of Yoshiyasu increasingly deteriorated. Thus works composed by Yoshiyasu, with which Sorai, as a member of the Yanagisawa mansion, assisted, were later attributed to the famous philosopher rather than to the worthless upstart Chamberlain.\textsuperscript{139} The suggestion that Sorai suddenly came up with the perfect judgement in the case of the Forty-seven rōnin must, therefore, be treated with some suspicion.

\textit{Yanagisawa hizō jikki} states that Yoshiyasu had a secret consultation with his Confucian scholars about the incident. This is quite likely. As Grand Chamberlain, Yoshiyasu would hardly have found the time to search the classics for a precedent. Yet whatever advice Sorai might have given to Yoshiyasu in this confidential meeting, the final judgement did not contain any new and original thought, but was no more than an exact application of the shogunate's stated policies. These policies enjoyed the complete support of and were executed by Yoshiyasu, and in the case of the Forty-seven rōnin he would naturally have sought

\textsuperscript{137} Tahara, pp. 68-69.
\textsuperscript{138} Reprinted in Maruyama, \textit{Intellectual History}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{139} See above, Chapter I, Section 3, and below, Chapter V, Section 3.
a solution within this framework. If Sorai indeed formulated the judgement, he did in fact do no more than any bureaucrat does today, namely the technical work of accurately applying the government's policy to a question handed to him by his superiors.

The process that can be reconstructed is a relatively simple one. Yoshiyasu asked his personal staff to look into the technical side of the problem and they came up with a solution which he, as head of Tsunayoshi's government, considered to correctly reflect the shogun's political aims. It was a compromise Tsunayoshi could accept. The reason why previous advice had been rejected was simply that it did not reflect the shogunate's policies. Sorai might have formulated the judgement, but it would be incorrect to state that he influenced the judgement as Lidin tentatively suggests. The shogun, therefore, did not find it necessary to praise Sorai in particular - for he had not made any significant contribution - nor did the scholar later consider the part he had played an important one.

Sorai, having had discussions with Yoshiyasu about the political implications of the rōnin incident, was later well qualified to write a detailed exposition of the argument for the Hosokawa family. This house had kept Ôishi and a number of the other rōnin under arrest and ties of sympathy had formed between the prisoners and their guardians. The fact that the Hosokawa house asked for a more detailed explanation of the judgement, therefore, is not surprising, nor is the fact that Yoshiyasu did not write such a document himself, but charged Sorai with this duty.

140. Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, p.50.
Consequently the judgement of the Forty-seven rōnin, although it might have benefited from Sorai's work, is more likely to have been based on Yoshiyasu's proposal. He in turn, did no more than implement the shogun's policies; he was the tool to carry out Tsunayoshi's political aims.

The monetary reform, the Laws of Compassion and the judgement of the Forty-seven rōnin are the best known political issues of Tsunayoshi's government. There were other policies, less significant and not as well documented which, nevertheless, reflect the same political trend. Most conspicuous of these are perhaps the many instances of daimyo punishment, either for their own misbehaviour or that of their vassals,142 as well as Tsunayoshi's strict supervision of his officials, as on the occasion when he sat in audience on several trials of commoners for petty offences, staged for this purpose at the Yanagisawa mansion.143

Common to all these policies is the fact that in some way or other they attacked the traditionally privileged position of the samurai and especially that of the daimyo. True to Weber's model they represented indeed expropriation of both material goods and authority. The fierce criticism of Tsunayoshi's policies was a testimony of their effectiveness.

The part Yoshiyasu played in the execution of these policies was an important one. Although from case to case the extent to which he directly participated in their administration differs, one may say with some certainty that Tsunayoshi would not have been able to put into practice such unorthodox policies if his government had not been headed by a man

142. See Oda Akinobu, On'eiroku haizetsuroku, Vol.6 in Nihon shiryō sensho (Tokyo, 1971); Bolitho, Treasures, pp.178-79.
like Yoshiyasu. Consequently the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this chapter, namely that the three major political issues of Tsunayoshi's later government typified the struggle for authority between the shogun and the military aristocracy and that Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu acted as the essential tool to make the execution of these policies possible, may be confirmed.

If the above conclusion is correct, one would expect that Yoshiyasu's controversial position as the shogun's tool in his battle for authority would already have affected his reputation during his lifetime. Next, therefore, this aspect of Yoshiyasu's life has to be examined.
CHAPTER V

THE REPUTATION OF THE MAN AND THE PERIOD
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THE REPUTATION OF THE MAN AND THE PERIOD

The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones;
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

Mark Antony's lament at Caesar's death is more appropriate for Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu than the Roman statesman. Caesar has become one of the great heroes of the past, but Yoshiyasu is still depicted as the villain par excellence in most Japanese history books. Yet Yoshiyasu's fate could have been worse. It is commonplace in history that "upstarts" rapidly come to fall at the death of their patron. Yoshiyasu, on the contrary, even after Tsunayoshi's death, lived out his natural life-span in the comforts of his chosen seat of retirement, and his sons inherited his large and politically significant domain. Only ten years after Yoshiyasu's death in Kyōhō 9 (1724) was his son transferred to a strategically less important domain in Kōriyama, but the size of his fief remained unaltered. Over one hundred and fifty years later, when Tokugawa rule came to its end, the Yanagisawa family was still the second largest fudai daimyo in the country.

In the first part of this chapter it is suggested that Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was acutely aware of the politically dangerous path he trod and the bad reputation it earned him. Consequently much of his effort during his lifetime was directed to ensure that testimony of his

1. KCS, 3:257.
achievements would remain and that his own fortunes, and those of his descendants, would continue even after the death of the fifth shogun.

The second part of this chapter turns to the reputation of the period. The suggestion is made that Ogyū Sorai's writings represent the theoretical framework of the actual policies of Tsunayoshi's government and that the discrepancy between the praise Sorai earned and the criticism the policies encountered, is indicative of the bias with which this period has been viewed. Finally Kurita Mototsugu's evaluation of the period is discussed and his theory of change from militarism (budan shugi) to civil government (bunji/bunchi shugi) is contrasted and compared with a classification according to the Weberian model.

1. YOSHIYASU'S AWARENESS OF HIS REPUTATION

Rarely in Japanese history has there remained any record of the personal feelings and reflections of those who were instrumental in shaping the nation's political development. Yet in Yoshiyasu's case the diary of his concubine provides such insights. It is primarily from this work, Matsukage nikki, that Yoshiyasu's great concern for his reputation becomes apparent. Indeed the very existence of Matsukage nikki must be attributed to the Yanagisawa family's acute awareness of, and extraordinary sensitivity to the image they had in other people's eyes.

The writings of Yoshiyasu's concubine must naturally be expected to show bias in favour of the man to whose life the diary was devoted. Therefore, if one looks for criticism of Yoshiyasu and flaws in his character - such as his extreme anxiety about his reputation - one must expect to find only the tip of the iceberg.

Consequently public censure and defamation of Yoshiyasu must have reached considerable proportions for Machiko to frankly admit that she
was writing the diary in the face of "rumours and nasty slander." Nor was the opposition and criticism lightly dismissed as a passing phase. Though subtly clad in poetic analogies, Machiko's wish that her clumsy writing might not obscure the brilliance of her subject, and that future generations might cherish her words, leaves little doubt that the Yana-gisawa family considered the slander in circulation as something they would have to weather for generations to come.

As Yoshiyasu's life unfolds in the pages of Matsukage niki, it becomes apparent how his reputation increasingly became a source of anxiety with the advancement of his career. In the early years, the Yana-gisawa family was still keen to boast about the shogunal favours they received. After describing how Yoshiyasu once again had been honoured with presents by Tsunayoshi, Machiko proudly wrote: "Our home has also recently been enlarged by four or five additional villas. Certainly, our prosperity is plain for all to see!" Already at this time, in Gen-roku 2 (1689), she noted that the shogunal favours granted to Yoshiyasu were unprecedented and that "people talked about it with much agitation." Yet she conveys the feeling that then the family enjoyed being in the limelight and her report of such gossip does not harbour the acrimony of later years.

All the same, even at this early stage of his career, Yoshiyasu was not insensitive to his public image. For instance, when part of his domain suffered from a particularly bad harvest, he generously freed his farmers from paying tax for the season. It was not altogether unusual for a domain lord to make similar concessions and it might be cynical to

2. *MK*, pp.303-304. See also above Chapter II, Section 6.
attribute such behaviour to Yoshiyasu's desire to earn public praise. Nevertheless, the importance Machiko accorded to the expressions of gratitude from the farmers and the care with which she noted how everyone highly praised Yoshiyasu's generous measure, indicate that the effects this gesture had on Yoshiyasu's reputation were self-consciously observed by the family. 4

When in Genroku 7 (1694) Yoshiyasu became lord of Kawagoe castle and an increasingly large domain, he took pains to administer his fief as a model daimyo. With the cooperation of the village heads he started an extensive programme of land reclamation and placed it under the supervision of his senior retainers. Roads, paddies, gardens and the location of houses were all planned in greatest detail and the poor and unemployed settled in these new model villages. The settlers were furnished with spiritual guidance by being provided with their own temple, for which a plot central to the three new villages was reserved. 5 From a letter to one of his retainers, it becomes apparent that Yoshiyasu could not easily afford such temple building, for he found it difficult even to purchase the material for the shrine of his late father. 6 All the same, the new temple for the settlers was adorned with all the appropriate statues and symbols, and a priest from Edo was invited to become the resident founder. 7

One cannot say whether it was concern for his reputation that motivated Yoshiyasu to exert himself to such an extent on behalf of a domain

which in all likelihood he would sooner or later exchange for another. The fact remains, however, that the local histories of this area are some of the few works which have consistently provided a favourable image of Yoshiyasu.

By the turn of the century it was plain to see that Yoshiyasu's career was unprecedented in terms of Tokugawa history. His increasing concern about his public image reflected his unusual position. When he received the name of Matsudaira from the shogun he marked this occasion with a public gesture of generosity of his own; proceeding to his temple to thank the gods for his good fortune, he bought all the goods of the stalls lining the road. Here one cannot confirm that this generosity was motivated by the desire to win applause, but there can be no doubt that in the next year, Genroku 15 (1702), his fear of unfavourable public opinion was a very real one.

In the fire that nearly razed his whole compound to the ground his personal temple also fell to the flames. It had housed a particularly beautiful statue of the god Bishamon. Disasters, such as these, were commonly interpreted as punishment from the gods. Yoshiyasu, however, managed to turn this awkward situation to his advantage. From a remote temple he was able to obtain a statue of the god Bishamon which could not be distinguished from the one destroyed in the fire. The public was convinced that in some strange and wonderful way the statue had moved itself to escape the fire, a miracle which could only indicate that Yoshiyasu was particularly favoured by the gods. Machiko, in her turn, saw it as a blessing and a marvel that nobody doubted this divine intervention.

One of Yoshiyasu's great fears was that people would think him ostentatious. His strict instructions to the members of his household never to boast have already been mentioned.\(^\text{10}\) He believed that from the behaviour of the retainers that of their lord could be deduced and consequently never ceased to exhort them to humility; going to the extent of warning them to keep modestly to one side when proceeding on a wide road.\(^\text{11}\)

Even the growing fame of his retreat at Komagome made him anxious. He was extremely worried that people would think him shallow for devoting time to create the beautiful gardens and for taking so much pride in earthly possessions. Thus when the Imperial Abbot, Kōden Shinnō, first expressed the wish to visit the gardens, Yoshiyasu was hesitant, being nervous about the publicity it would attract. Finally his desire to have his artistic efforts judged and recognised by a member of the imperial family outweighed the fear of gossip and the visit was arranged.\(^\text{12}\)

This was not the only occasion when Yoshiyasu was torn between the thirst for recognition and the anxiety of being criticised for pretensions beyond his station. When the shogun's only child, Tsuruhime (Princess Crane), came to pay a visit to Komagome that same year (1703), he presented her with an incense burner in the shape of a crane of plated silver, but gold inside.\(^\text{13}\) It was a suitable compromise for a man who neither wanted to appear neither mean nor ostentatious.

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10. See above Chapter III, Section 8.
11. Eibyō, natsu; HJ, p.84.
13. MK, p.207.
The thought of public disapproval constantly haunted him. When it came to the wedding of his eldest son, he thought that people might consider him pretentious were he to arrange an elaborate celebration. If, on the contrary, he were to entertain frugally, it might give rise to the rumour that he was not generously inclined towards his heir.\(^{14}\)

In a similar fashion Yoshiyasu was greatly honoured to receive the shogun's favour, but at the same time apprehensive of the jealousy it created amongst officials and daimyo. When at the end of Genroku 15 (1702) Tsunayoshi ordered Yoshiyasu and his eldest son to share the shogunal sake cup during the forthcoming New Year celebrations, Yoshiyasu refused on his own behalf.\(^{15}\) The reason for suggesting that his son be accorded honours which he himself felt unfit to accept is spelled out five years later when he attempted to refuse the concession of displaying the halberd: his son was born heir to a daimyo, while he himself was no more than the child of a lowly bannerman.\(^{16}\)

Yoshiyasu's humble origin provided the upper military aristocracy with a traditionally valid reason to criticise his rapid promotions. Consequently he made every effort to correct this flaw in his public image. Like most daimyo he found it appropriate to trace back his ancestry to the famous Seiwa Genji. Already in Genroku 14 (1701) he saw occasion to emphasise this fact and the relationship with the shogunal family it implied by restoring a small shrine in Kyoto dedicated to Rokuson ô (Minamoto Tsunetomo, 917-961), their common ancestor.\(^{17}\)

16. See above, Chapter III, Section 9.
In addition Yoshiyasu put great emphasis on his alleged relationship with a famous warrior of the more recent past, namely Takeda Shingen. Already before Yoshiyasu was enfeoffed with Kai, Shingen's former domain, he ostensibly took care of an impoverished grandson of the warrior as his relative. Once Yoshiyasu became lord of Shingen's homelands, he spared no effort to play the role of his legitimate heir. Not only was Shingen's death anniversary commemorated with elaborate celebrations, but Yoshiyasu even went to the extent of paying monetary compensation (kōden) to the families who had lost someone in Shingen's battles well over a hundred years previously. Generous donations to temples and shrines further established his position as lord of this area and greatly endeared him to the local people. Later, on Yoshiyasu's fiftieth birthday, his wife (kita no kata) arranged for the most long-lived subjects of his domain - those aged seventy years and more - to come and pay their respects to him. According to Machiko there were over three thousand congratulants from Kai, who were all richly rewarded for their attendance. As Shingen's supposed heir he even demonstrated his filial piety by petitioning the emperor for a posthumous rank to be awarded to the warrior. The court, however, refused, stating that there was no precedent to justify this act.

The fifth shogun supported Yoshiyasu in his efforts to establish himself as an equal to the upper military aristocracy. When he bestowed the name of Matsudaira - that of his own clan - upon Yoshiyasu and his sons, he emphasised the symbolic meaning of this gesture by publicly

18. See above, Chapter III, Section 8.
20. ibid.
stating that he considered the Yanagisawa family as part of his own.  
Later the patent of Kai pointed out emphatically that by tradition these strategic lands were to be held only by the shogun's kin, and that they were now bestowed upon the Yanagisawa family because they were considered to be his relatives. Yoshiyasu's descent from Takeda Shingen was stressed by the statement that the lands of his ancestors were now returned to him.

The shogun's and Yoshiyasu's efforts to legitimise the latter's claim to an illustrious ancestry - and consequently to imply that he was as qualified for high office as the fudai - gives some indication of the criticism surrounding his unprecedented rise to influence; criticism which neither Yoshiyasu nor the shogun apparently could afford to ignore.

During Yoshiyasu's last years in office even the most private event in the Yanagisawa family was judged in terms of the effect it had on public opinion. Machiko was pleased to see that the birth of Yoshiyasu's youngest child won him the admiration of the public. People thought it was rare for a man to be blessed with so many children and attributed it to a saintly life in his previous existence. Again, for Machiko the most important aspect of the promotions granted to her sons was the effect they had upon the opinion of the country. Her emphatic statement that the prosperity of the Yanagisawa mansion "was the subject of common talk" and the topic of every "wise man" further reflects her concern over the family's reputation.  

22. See above, Chapter II, Section 4.
25. MK, pp.274-75.
26. MK, p.263.
compelled to admit that some people were thinking less favourably of Yoshiyasu and condemns them as "mountains without ears," the reason for her concern becomes clear; Machiko's subtle remarks can leave no doubt that there were people whose ears and eyes were closed to Yoshiyasu's efforts at being a model minister.

Looking retrospectively at Yoshiyasu's life it is easy to assume that his career, assured of the shogun's patronage, was built on a solid foundation. Yet evidence suggests that, on the contrary, some of his contemporaries regarded his position at the top of the political hierarchy as rather frail. When in Hōei 2 (1705) the shogun agreed to Yoshiyasu's partial retirement, rumours immediately circulated that he had fallen out of favour. Only when it was made public that the shogun's order was in response to Yoshiyasu's own request, did the gossip stop. Officials, in fact, were rather pleased about Yoshiyasu's partial retirement and praised him for making the request, Machiko noted.

Perhaps Yoshiyasu's relationship with Tsunayoshi was solid enough to preclude sudden dismissal for displeasing him. Yet the shogun, in spite of his efforts, was not an autocratic ruler. If the daimyo had been able to lay serious charges against Yoshiyasu, Tsunayoshi might have been forced to withdraw his favours. Yoshiyasu's reluctance to deal with the daimyo and receive their gifts seems to point towards this direction. Especially the question of gifts was a sensitive issue and could soon lead to a charge of bribery. Yoshiyasu, apparently, was prudent enough not to fall for this temptation of high office, for even a sharp critic like Hakuseki could not accuse him of such a crime.

27. *MK*, p.270.
29. See above, Chapter III, Section 9.
After Tsunayoshi's death the debate with the new shogun over Yoshiyasu's retirement brings up a number of arguments, but in the final analysis again hinges on the question of public opinion. Ienobu argued that if Yoshiyasu were to retire "unkind people" would spread the rumour that there was some discord between them. Yoshiyasu, in turn, feared that people might consider him disloyal to his previous master if he now were to remain in service. Both Ienobu and Yoshiyasu were painfully aware of an opposition that would seize every chance to discredit Yoshiyasu and bring about a rift between the shogun and the man who so effectively worked on his behalf.

Even when Yoshiyasu finally was permitted to retire and handed over the headship of his house to his son, his anxiety did not cease. He cautioned his retainers that many houses had come to ruin because the elder advisers had lacked the devotion to admonish the errors of their lord. His retainers were asked to sign a solemn pledge that they would never fail to serve and counsel his heir. In a formal ceremony the document was burned, the ashes mixed with water and ceremoniously imbibed by Yoshiyasu.

2. MEASURES TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION

Yoshiyasu was deeply aware of the dangers inherent in his controversial position and the uncertainty it cast upon the future of his house. With this fact in mind his efforts to gain recognition in fields outside his political career, his association with the imperial court, as well as the important marriage alliances he arranged, must be viewed

30. See above, Chapter II, Section 6.
31. Eibyō, haru; HJ, pp.63-64.
at least partially as measures to consolidate his position and improve
his reputation. One need not doubt that, for instance, his love of
poetry was genuine. But one may question whether he would have thrown
himself into such activities with the same feverish intensity if the
need to achieve and to impress both his contemporaries and later genera-
tions had not constantly stood in front of his eyes.

i. The Imperial Court and Poetry

Significant in the context of Yoshiyasu's standing and reputation
was his relationship with the imperial court. It had begun early in his
life when he chose Machiko, the daughter of Ōgimachi Dainagon, as his
concubine. She not only brought to his house the refined lifestyle of
the Kyoto aristocracy - which he, as the son of a lowly bannerman, was
lacking - but also, first through her father and later through her elder
brother, provided him with a direct link to the imperial family.

Yoshiyasu's relationship with the court worked to the advantage of
both parties. He used this connection to obtain for the shogun's mother
the coveted first imperial court rank, earning for himself the praise
and deep-felt gratitude of the shogunal family. In return the imperial
messengers to Edo had their requests expedited with the help of Yoshi-

32. See above, Chapter II, Section 2.
33. See above, Chapter II, Section 4.
34. E.g. MK, pp.218-21, 258.
35. MK, p.277.
One project especially was to win Yoshiyasu not only the gratitude of the imperial family at the time, but also the praise of future emperors: the so-called restoration of the imperial tombs. Machiko described the sad state of the tombs in poetic terms:

As the customs of the land declined and roads changed their course, nobody truly knew with certainty the location of the ancient imperial tombs. The fences of yesteryear had broken down and were covered with weeds; the traces of the herdboys were only too evident. What once was adorned by jewels now glistened with dewdrops; bit by bit they fell to ruin. Where the outlines remained the lowly peasants did not even know what was the proper thing to do and slowly the tombs decayed. When his lordship heard of this he considered it most improper and sad and pondered how he could restore them. He petitioned the shogunate that officials in the various provinces be instructed to investigate any remains from the past, and where such ruins could be located, restore them to their former splendour and have the people worship them solemnly. After this order was issued, reports of scholarly investigations eventually arrived from various places. His lordship personally checked all of them in detail and gave the necessary directions. Since orders had also been sent to the governor of Kyoto, court officials heard of the matter and eventually it came to the ears of the emperor.37

If, indeed, Yoshiyasu anticipated that his exertions on behalf of the imperial house might earn him the recognition of later generations, then here his expectations were to be fully met. Over two hundred years later the Taishō emperor rewarded Yoshiyasu posthumously with court honours for his work, and even today archaeologists owe their successful excavation of the imperial tombs to the survey made in the Genroku period. Without Yoshiyasu's record of the tombs' location and the

36. Naturally this did not entail the opening of the tombs and restoration of the inside. The work done was confined to tidying-up the environs, marking and fencing.

37. MK, p.171. See also Nenroku, Vol.63, 28D 4M Genroku 12.
marking of the sites he ordered, the historical evidence contained in
them might have been lost for ever.

The restoration of the tombs not only raised Yoshiyasu's image in
the eyes of the court, but also elicited the praise of other contempo-
raries. The philosopher, Hosoi Shinsuke, who had been instrumental in
drawing Yoshiyasu's attention to the sad state of the tombs, was deeply
impressed with his wise and foresighted attitude. In the face of the
slander surrounding Yoshiyasu's career, an extant letter of Shinsuke is
valuable as a testimony of praise from outside the Yanagisawa family.

The significance of caring for the remains of the past might not
have been equally appreciated by Yoshiyasu's other contemporaries. To
them more impressive was, no doubt, the recognition he enjoyed as a poet.
Yoishiyasu's love of poetry only becomes apparent during the latter half
of his life. Once his interest had been aroused, however, he strove to
excel in the art. By Genroku 14 (1701) poetry meetings were held at the
Yanagisawa mansion under the direction of the eminent poet Kitamura
Kigin. Kigin, in the employ of the shogun, consented to become Yoshi-
yasu's private teacher and was not disappointed by his student. In Gen-
roku 15 (1702) he presented Yoshiyasu with a manuscript of the secret
tradition of the Kokin waka shū, an indication that his student had mas-
tered the subject to his entire satisfaction. In the same year the
emperor showed his recognition of Yoshiyasu's talent when he sent him a
manuscript of the Three Imperial Anthologies, carefully copied out by
the highest-ranking court nobles. As a mark of distinction it contained

38. Letter of Hosoi Shinsuke quoted in Morita, p.159.
a preface of the emperor's own composition. 41

It is likely that the Yanagisawa family well recognised that poetry was a means to immortalise their name. In the gardens at Komagome, Yoshiyasu had built miniature replicas of Tamano shima and Wakanoura, two places sacred to the tradition of poetry. Dwelling on the beauty of this scene, Machiko added a prayer to the goddess of poetry. The verse implored the goddess to protect the family and the poems that her generation would leave behind when they died. 42 Machiko does not say who composed this verse or whether it was openly intoned at the time. All the same, the prayer indicates only too well, that the frail position of the family was never far from the minds of its members; it leaves little doubt that poetry was well recognised as an art that might enhance the ailing reputation of the house in the future.

In Genroku 16 (1703) Yoshiyasu was given to understand that the retired emperor would gladly judge a collection of his poetry, and he composed one hundred verses for this purpose. Machiko proudly noted that even amongst the important nobility it was considered a rare honour if the retired emperor consented to look at just one or two verses. 43 A month had barely passed when high praise of Yoshiyasu's poetry was received from Kyoto; it was accompanied by a detailed list as to which court nobles should be thanked with gifts for acting as go-betweens. 44

Even as these presents were hastily forwarded, Yoshiyasu was embarking on a more ambitious project; this time he hoped to submit one

41. *MK*, p.201.
42. *MK*, p.200.
43. *MK*, p.212.
thousand verses for imperial judgement. And as if such effort would not suffice for the glory of his family, Yoshiyasu exhorted his eldest son to similarly present one thousand poems to the court. After suitable encouragement had been received from Kyoto, both collections were ceremoniously despatched, naturally accompanied by an appropriately rich collection of gifts. In reply there was abundant praise of this unparalleled devotion to poetry by a father and his son. The poems were to be preserved in the imperial archives and would be handed down to future generations. As a sign of great recognition, and imperial fan and hat cord arrived at Edo. Machiko commented: "It is an honour unheard of in this world that a man from the distant Eastern provinces receives such attention from the imperial heights."

Machiko was frequently present when Yoshiyasu was composing verse and carefully noted what he had to say about the art. In the end she also was persuaded to compose one thousand poems for judgement at court. Her brother acted as go-between and the retired emperor conveyed his praise by having fifty of her verses copied by his courtiers.

In these times of financial stringency for the imperial house, the presents accompanying each set of poetry were greatly welcomed by the court. Often they included bales of silk and finely lacquered household ware, objects which were an integral part of court life, but difficult to afford. Yoshiyasu, in turn, was honoured with precious tokens such as scented leaves and handpainted fans, but of far greater value to him.

45. MK, p.215.
46. MK, pp.222, 227.
47. MK, p.227.
49. MK, pp.225-26, 259.
was the promise that his works were securely stored for posterity in the imperial archives. Not only his verses were assured such distinguished treatment. His collected correspondence with Zen priests was given lustre and secured for posterity by the addition of an imperial preface. Yoshiyasu's letter of gratitude to the court ended with the revealing words: "Now, at long last the documents will be transmitted in this world and not perish... What a blessing!" They well expressed Yoshiyasu's hope that his close association with the court would preserve his achievements and enhance his reputation with future generations.

ii. Alliances through Adoption and Marriage

Yoshiyasu's efforts to profit from the lustre and formal prestige the Kyoto nobility still had, did not limit itself to the exchange of poetry, documents and gifts. Machiko, for instance, observed that without any prompting on her part Yoshiyasu found a suitable husband for her sister amongst his friends at Edo. Even closer ties were created when Yoshiyasu adopted Ikuhime, the daughter of the Kyoto noble Nomiya Saisai. The girl's mother was a sister of Tsunayoshi's favourite concubine Oden, and she was also related to Takehime, who was to become the shogun's adopted daughter. Consequently the adoption of Ikuhime not only won Yoshiyasu the attention of the noble relatives of his new daughter, but also secured him access to the shogun's favourite and

50. MK, p.258.
51. MK, p.268.
52. MK, p.258.
53. ibid. See also Takayanagi Kaneyoshi, Shiryō Tokugawa fujinden (Tokyo, 1967), p.304.
54. ibid., p.305; TJ, 43:704, 25D 7M Hōei 5.
55. MK, pp.263-65.
most influential concubine as well as to one of the shogunal daughters.

Yoshiyasu's association with the court, therefore, promised more than the prestige of the - in itself - rather powerless imperial family. Not just Tsunayoshi's, but also Ienobu's wife and concubines, were of noble Kyoto descent, and the ease with which Yoshiyasu received the rarely granted permission to visit the Grand Interior (ō oku) even in Ienobu's time was likely to have been due to the intricate ties of relationship linking him with the shogunal ladies.

Yoshiyasu was foresighted enough not merely to build up his connections with the court and the shogun's immediate entourage. The necessity for finding allies amongst that stratum of society which harboured his worst enemies did not escape him.

The marriage of one of Yoshiyasu's adopted daughters, a relative of his wife's, to his assistant, the Grand Chamberlain, Matsudaira Terusada, has already been mentioned. Later the adoption of Yoshiyasu's own daughter by Terusada further strengthened these family ties. Terusada relinquished his office of Grand Chamberlain on Tsunayoshi's death. Under the eighth shogun Yoshimune he again rose to prominence and in Kyōhō 15 (1730) even advanced to the position of Senior Councillor. It was a useful connection for the Yanagisawa family.

Mention has also been made above of the marriage of Yoshiyasu's heir, Yoshisato, to the granddaughter of Sakai Tadakiyo. Yoshiisato's

56. Eibyō, haru; HJ, p.49.
57. See above, Chapter III, Section 8; MK, p.136.
58. MK, p.275.
60. See above, Chapter III, Section 4.
father-in-law, Sakai Tadataka, was well-liked by Ienobu and frequently formed part of his entourage, providing ready access to the shogunate even after Yoshiyasu had relinquished his offices.

Another strategic move was the marriage of Yoshiyasu's adopted daughter, Ikuhime, to the son of the Senior Councillor, Ōkubo Tadamasu.\(^61\) The usefulness of this connection was demonstrated in the discussion between the Senior Councillors about Yoshisato's domain of Kai.\(^62\) Later Tadamasu's grandson was betrothed to Yoshiyasu's granddaughter, thus further tightening the connection between the Yanagisawa family and the powerful house of Ōkubo.\(^63\)

Yoshiyasu's effort to link his family with that of another Senior Councillor was less successful. One of his daughters was promised as secondary wife to the heir of the Senior Councillor, Tsuchiya Masanao, but the groom died before arrangements had been completed.\(^64\)

Several of Yoshiyasu's daughters were betrothed to members of Tsunayoshi's entourage, such as Naitō Masamori, who later, under Yoshimune, held the position of Master of Shogunal Ceremony.\(^65\) In Genroku 4 (1691) Tsunayoshi ordered two of his favourite Pages (koshū), Kuroda Naokuni and Yamana Yasutoyo, to marry daughters of Yoshiyasu. Three years later Yasutoyo fell out of favour and the alliance was broken off,\(^66\) but Naokuni, although he had to resign his office on Tsunayoshi's death, came back in favour under Yoshimune and eventually held the position of Senior

\(^{61}\) MK, p.267.
\(^{62}\) See above, Chapter III, Section 9.
\(^{63}\) KCS, 11:386.
\(^{64}\) KCS, 2:191, 3:257.
\(^{65}\) KCS, 13:193.
\(^{66}\) See above, Chapter III, Section 8.
Councillor to the heir apparent. 67

Yoshiyasu himself had five sons who reached the age of manhood, but none of them entered an official career. While in power, Yoshiyasu would have had ample opportunity to establish at least his eldest son in a government position. He wisely refrained from doing so, adopting the much more subtle device of sponsoring his sons-in-law. The success of this strategy cannot be doubted. Yoshimune would have hesitated to employ a Yanagisawa in high position, but some of his sons-in-law succeeded in obtaining influential appointments. It is ironical that under the eighth shogun, Yoshiyasu's closest associate and son-in-law, Matsudaira Terusada, should join the ranks of the Senior Councillors. The former Grand Chamberlain, who had assisted Yoshiyasu in the administration of Tsunayoshi's much criticised policies, had become respectable enough to occupy an important post in the government of the much-praised Yoshimune.

As generations passed the Yanagisawa family, in a similar vein, joined the ranks of the established houses. So intimately were they related to many of them that no one dared to deprive Yoshiyasu's heirs of their domain and reduce the family to its original status of bannerman.

iii. Buddhism

Of all Yoshiyasu's activities it appears that his involvement in Buddhism most closely accorded to his genuine personal interests. Unlike his fascination with poetry, his efforts to seek instruction in Buddhism were already apparent when he was still serving in Tsunayoshi's Tatebayashi mansion as Page, and when the question of his reputation had not yet become an issue. 68

67. KCS, 2:95.
68. See above, Chapter II, Section 1.
Yoshiyasu favoured the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism. The priest whom he had first sought out to obtain spiritual guidance had belonged to this sect, and the Obaku patriarchs, who later were to frequent his house, represented a branch of Rinzai Buddhism. Zen accords little importance to the written word and it is therefore astonishing to note Yoshiyasu's great concern for preserving documentary evidence of his devotion. Most sermons and religious debates held at his house were not only recorded, but also annotated with phonetic script, so that even the uninitiated might understand them. In Genroku 8 (1695) he ordered that his correspondence with the Patriarch Kōsen should be collected and preserved as it was getting "worm-eaten and discoloured." His great joy at later obtaining an imperial preface for his collected correspondence with religious dignitaries has already been mentioned. His letter of gratitude to the court unmistakably showed that he attached great importance to the fact that testimony of his religious devotion would be preserved for posterity.

Yoshiyasu's efforts had not been in vain. Over 250 years later the documents headed by the imperial preface were published. The fact that they are now occasionally read even beyond the shores of Japan, must surely more than fulfil any expectations he might have had.

Another aspect of Yoshiyasu's deep interest in religion was the part he played in the restoration and construction of temples and shrines. The shogun had ordered that Yoshiyasu alone be responsible for authorising the repair of places of worship, with the result that a

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70. Ibid., Vol.32, 29D 7M Genroku 6.
71. The documents were published by the temple Eikeiji in 1973 as Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu Kō san zen roku.
great number of supplicants thronged to his door.\textsuperscript{72} The daimyo, who frequently had to furnish materials and manpower for such projects, would not have appreciated Yoshiyasu's interest in restoring temples and shrines, but in the eyes of religious dignitaries Yoshiyasu's image profited.

The sect which gained most from Yoshiyasu's patronage was the originally Chinese order of Ōbaku. Ingen, the first patriarch of this sect in Japan, had arrived from China during the reign of the previous shogun. But even now the order greatly relied on the assistance of the bakufu to establish itself in Japan, and the hospitable reception it enjoyed from an influential man like Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was invaluable. Yoshiyasu, in turn, was honoured by the expressions of gratitude and high praise contained in the letters of the Ōbaku patriarchs, letters which provided worthy testimony for posterity. But also in other ways the reputation of the Yanagisawa mansion profited from this contact with China. Yoshiyasu's Confucian scholars had the rare privilege of conversing with native speakers of Chinese, and no other family could boast of retainers with a similar knowledge of this language.

iv. Confucian Learning

The knowledge of Chinese was instrumental in determining a Confucian scholar's standing. Yet at a time when the Japanese were not free to travel, the acquisition of such knowledge was not easy. The scholars of the Yanagisawa mansion, consequently, profited greatly from the direct contact with the Ōbaku patriarchs and less senior monks of Chinese origin, who frequently visited Yoshiyasu.

\textsuperscript{72} MK, p.152.
Ogyū Sorai, for instance, who was deeply critical of Buddhism, nevertheless kept up his relationship with the Ōbaku monks even after he left the Yanagisawa mansion, and counted some as his very good friends. This intellectual exchange with the Chinese-born monks showed its results. Under the eighth shogun, Yoshimune, Sorai apparently was the only scholar in the country able to punctuate and explain the edicts of the first Ching emperor which the shogun was eager to have his officials read. It seems that neither the Head of the Confucian school, Hayashi Hōkō, nor the scholar Muro Kyūsō, who was at the height of his influence and fame, had been able to satisfy Yoshimune in this respect, and Sorai's ability to complete the project earned him the admiration of his contemporaries.

Well aware of Sorai's talents Yoshiyasu had arranged that even after the scholar had left his mansion he was to continue to receive his stipend. He was still a retainer of the Yanagisawa family, and when Sorai became famous his contemporaries, at any rate, were unlikely to forget his connection with that family.

While Sorai excelled in classical Chinese, other retainers impressed their contemporaries with their knowledge of the spoken language. Sorai wrote:

I have known various people who were proficient in colloquial Chinese (kago): Seki (Ishiwara) Teian, An (Kuraoka) Sozan, and Okajima Kanzan, who served together with me in the Yanagisawa house; they were so exceptional and rare that people applauded and beat the table every time they listened to them.

73. Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, pp.116-19.
74. ibid., pp.59-61.
75. Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, p.119.
Apparently Yoshiyasu was not a Confucian at heart. Nevertheless, he was versed in the Chinese classics and gathered around him as his retainers some of the most promising scholars of the time. With Tsunayoshi's devotion to the classics it must have been obvious to Yoshiyasu and even to his father when he was still a child - that he would not succeed in the service of this particular master unless he had acquired a thorough grasp of Confucian learning. Early in his life Yoshiyasu's studies earned him the distinction of becoming Tsunayoshi's disciple, and later as Grand Chamberlain, he profited from being able to spice his advice and decisions with arguments from the classics. In addition, the Confucian scholars he selected - often brilliant young men with unconventional ideas - made the shogun's visits to his mansion especially attractive.

Confucianism, therefore, was genuinely a part of Yoshiyasu's career as Grand Chamberlain to the fifth Tokugawa shogun. Nevertheless, here also one must question whether Yoshiyasu would have striven with the same intensity to excel in the patronage of Confucianism if he had not constantly been painfully aware of the fact that he, as upstart chamberlain, had to greatly surpass his contemporaries before he would earn any praise. As the son of a bannerman, traditional officials would consider him unfit to serve as the shogun's closest adviser and head of the government, and his knowledge and patronage of Confucianism proved to the world that when it came to "learning" he could compete with the best of his rivals of more noble birth.

In spite of Yoshiyasu's efforts, he was not altogether successful in transmitting to later generations the extent of his own scholarly

76. Ogyū Sorai, Seidan, Vol.9 in Nihon keizai taiten, pp.33-34.
activities. In general, historians have belittled both Yoshiyasu's and Tsunayoshi's interest in the Chinese classics as either fanatical or hypocritical. Ogyū Sorai, on the other hand, the man who gained his political experience and perfected his knowledge of Chinese in the Yanagisawa mansion, has been heralded as the first political thinker of Japan. Some thought must therefore be given to the relationship between the success of Sorai's political writings and his experience in the Yanagisawa mansion.

3. YANAGISAWA YOSHIYASU AND OGYŪ SORAI

The question of analysing Ogyū Sorai's political thought in the context of the policies of the fifth Tokugawa shogun is a topic which would merit in itself a full-length thesis. Here the discussion must limit itself to some general observations and rely heavily on the work done by scholars such as Lidin, Maruyama, McEwan and Najita.

Nevertheless, any reappraisal of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu cannot ignore the issue. The similarities between the policies which Yoshiyasu administered and the political theories which Sorai expounded are - even after superficial examination - too striking to be ignored. I can only explain the fact that no other writer has explored this connection by the bias with which historians have generally viewed the government of the fifth shogun and his Grand Chamberlain and which has blinded them to the link between the harshly censured policies of Tsunayoshi and the greatly praised thought of Ogyū Sorai.

Najita has argued that the conceptualisation of political thought is to be regarded "as a social phenomenon and not simply as the

handiwork of genius and miraculous invention." Later he states:

"Ideology is a system of legitimization that gives organized expressions of society as a hierarchal structure. Ideology gives to seemingly disparate phenomena and activities a coherence, meaning and a sense of form."

It is argued here that Ogyū Sorai's political writings are the "organised expression" giving legitimation to the society Tsunayoshi tried to create, and that his theoretical framework expresses the underlying thought behind the seemingly disparate policies of Tsunayoshi's government.

This does not mean that the political theories which have hitherto been ascribed to Sorai originated with the fifth shogun. Tsunayoshi did no more than respond to changing social conditions with policies dictated by his own educational background. His background cannot be divorced from the intellectual trends current at the time, and although there is no evidence that he was interested in or even familiar with the works of a Kumazawa Banzan or Itō Jinsai, he nevertheless was subject to the same stimuli which prompted these philosophers to interpret the classics in new ways. Unlike these philosophers, Tsunayoshi's own position depended on the strength of the shogunate and the continued support of the military class, and consequently the solutions he formulated in response to the changing conditions were less radical and in many ways very different from those, for instance, of Kumazawa Banzan. Both, however, saw the need for talented men of lower origin to replace the

traditional officials,\textsuperscript{80} for increased education,\textsuperscript{81} and some adjustment in the customs and behaviour of the samurai.\textsuperscript{82} In short, changes in the administration of the country had become necessary, and men who were not blinded by self-interest, like the upper military aristocracy, readily perceived this fact.

Ogyū Sorai was not immune to the intellectual reorientation that was taking place. On the contrary, he had been brought up in the countryside far removed from the stifling indoctrination of the official Hayashi school. Not being cast in the mould of the samurai-orientated intellectuals of Edo, he was free to observe socio-economic changes and in his own fashion grapple with the challenge the new conditions posed to Confucian learning. He stood at the periphery of the peculiar brand of Neo-Confucianism adjusted to the demands of Ieyasu's military regime which for over half a century had furnished a narrow but stable intellectual background to the privileged military aristocracy, but which now increasingly could no longer cope with the new problems posed by changing realities. Sorai wrote:

\begin{quote}
... I escaped the influence of the manners of the gentlemen of the capital and at the same time I
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}

81. \textit{ibid.}, p.337. Tsunayoshi established the Confucian school at Yushima.

82. \textit{ibid.}, p.314. Both Banzan and Tsunayoshi saw the need to occupy the samurai with activities outside the military field, and to reduce the great social distance between them and the common people. See Tsunayoshi's order to the Intendants, Chapter III, Section 5. But while Banzan considered farming an appropriate activity, Tsunayoshi envisaged them as "civil servants" caring for the needs of the people and helping to establish an ideal society.
\end{flushright}
became familiar with the outlying provinces and the life of the common people; and when I read my books I grasped thoroughly everything I read - as if I had put their precepts into practice myself. When we returned to Edo after my father was pardoned and I disputed with the scholars and gentlemen of the capital I found that with my poor rustic learning I could often bring forward good arguments and sometimes even prevail in discussion.83

Tsunayoshi had not had the experience of becoming "familiar with the outlying provinces and the life of the common people," but like Sorai, he had an education outside the normal pattern of samurai life. Like him, he had the opportunity and leisure to deeply probe into the meaning of the Confucian classics. As soon as Tsunayoshi succeeded to the shogunate he demonstrated that he was not prepared to blindly follow tradition, but that during the years of his education, removed from everyday samurai life, he had formed his own ideas about society.84 The "rustic" training of Sorai and the unusual education of the fifth shogun, therefore, had common aspects.

It was presumably some affinity between the shogun's and Sorai's approach to the new challenges facing society and government which first led Yoshiyasu to recognise potential in the young scholar teaching outside the Zōjōji temple. Sorai's unconventional approach to classical learning facilitated his understanding of the underlying political philosophy of Tsunayoshi's similarly unconventional policies.85

This advantage of Sorai's over more traditionally trained scholars quickly procured him promotion from the "lowest seat in the

84. Tsunayoshi's individualistic approach to issues small and large is well described in Yōgenroku.
85. See, for instance, above Chapter III, Section 5.
hall\textsuperscript{86} of the Yanagisawa mansion to the position of Confucian scholar. The occasion was a consultation Yoshiyasu had with his retainers about the judgement to be pronounced over a peasant of his domain, who had been so poor that he had first divorced his wife and later abandoned his ailing mother. This man, by the name of Dōnyu, was now charged with un- filial conduct.

Sorai's work, \textit{Seidan}, relates the opinions of Yoshiyasu's scholars. They suggested that the man's conduct be judged in terms of that appropriate for an outcast, because Dōnyu had been so poor that he could not afford a home or wife. For an outcast, his behaviour of taking his mother along with him until he could no longer support her was commendable. As he originally had no intention of abandoning his mother, he should not be charged with this crime.

Apparently Yoshiyasu was dissatisfied with this verdict. \textit{Seidan} states:

He insisted that abandoning parents could not be tolerated whatever the status of the person committing the crime. He therefore said he would consult the Shogun and seek his advice. In those days, the Shogun was a follower of Chu Hsi philosophy and in accordance with its rationalistic approach to things, he was concerned primarily with the examination of the heart [kokoro]. Mino-no-Kami\textsuperscript{87} was a Zen Buddhist and did not ordinarily believe in the reasoning of Confucian scholars. At this point, I expressed my opinion, stating that in times of famine, this sort of incident occurred frequently in other domains too. It could not be called an act of parent abandonment. If it were judged as such and the culprit were punished, it would set a precedent for other domains. I believed that the responsibility for such incidents lay first with the local magistrates and county commissioners. Next the ministers were responsible.

\textsuperscript{86} Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, p.41.

\textsuperscript{87} Yoshiyasu.
And there were still others above them who were responsible. Donyu's crime was very insignificant. Upon hearing this, Mino-no-Kami agreed with what was said for the first time. He sent Donyu back to his village with a stipend to maintain one person so that he could support his mother.88

The version of this incident contained in the work of Yoshiyasu's retainer, Eibyō gojitsuroku, is - at first glance - irreconcilable with Sorai's statement. The former work maintains that the matter had come to the ears of the shogun before Yoshiyasu discussed the incident with his scholars, and that the shogun had ordered Hayashi Nobuatsu to give a judgement. Nobuatsu was of the opinion that Donyu had committed the crime of "parent abandonment," and should be banished. Yoshiyasu, however, was not satisfied with this judgement of guilt and therefore consulted his scholars. He explained to them that he did not consider Donyu guilty, because he had not intended to abandon his mother. Eibyō gojitsuroku then cites the judgement made by Sorai, which is the same as outlined in Seidan, and similarly records Yoshiyasu's approval of Sorai's opinion.89

What was Yoshiyasu's position in this case? Did he consider Donyu guilty, because Seidan states that Yoshiyasu was not prepared to tolerate "abandoning parents," or did he consider Donyu not guilty as explained in Eibyō gojitsuroku? Must one of the two sources be considered wrong?

The likely answer is that the two sources do not contradict but complement each other in their description of the incident. Yoshiyasu did not consider Donyu guilty - as Eibyō gojitsuroku states - but, on the other hand, he was not prepared to tolerate "abandoning parents" as

88. Seidan, translated in Maruyama, Intellectual History, p.70. (The italics are those of Maruyama.)
89. Eibyō, natsu; HJ, pp.66-67.
socially acceptable behaviour, in line with the words of Seidan. He was, in fact, challenging his retainers to see the problem in terms different from the traditional Confucian concept of filial versus unfilial. Sorai was the only scholar who could meet this challenge, his previous training not having limited him to interpret the classics and see the world in such narrow terms.

Seidan's reference to the shogun's attitude in this case is ambiguous. It seems to imply that Tsunayoshi agreed with the Neo-Confucian views of Hayashi Nobuatsu, but does not precisely state that he agreed with Nobuatsu's judgement. The statement in Seidan could be interpreted to mean that in "those days" Tsunayoshi mainly relied on Nobuatsu, while later he often discarded the latter's opinion in favour of that subscribed to by other scholars like Sorai. At any rate, in whatever terms Seidan describes the shogun's philosophical orientation, the fact remains that Sorai's judgement of the case was not the sudden inspiration of genius, but a faithful application of the shogun's stated policies. With his order "the people are the foundation of the state" of Empō 8 (1680), Tsunayoshi had clearly stated that it was the responsibility of the officials to see that the people suffered neither from hunger nor cold. To anyone familiar with this order, as Yoshiyasu presumably was, it must have been obvious that Dōnyu's indictment was the result of behaviour by the officials contrary to this order. Although - to our knowledge - the order had only been issued to the Intendants of the shogunal domains, it seems reasonable to assume that Yoshiyasu with his efforts to act as a model daimyo would have instructed his subordinates in

90. As, for instance, in the judgement of the Forty-seven rōnin.
91. See above, Chapter III, Section 5.
similar terms. Yoshiyasu, consequently, is likely to have made up his mind how the case of Donyu was to be handled before he consulted his scholars, and submitting the case to them stating that he could neither accept "abandoning parents" nor believed Donyu to be guilty was a way of testing their understanding of the shogun's policies.

Sorai's position in the case of Donyu is similar to the role he played in the judgement of the Forty-seven rōnin. In both cases he excelled as a scholar, not because his proposal contained any unheard-of and totally new ideas, but because he, apparently, was the only scholar who understood the shogunate's policies well enough to translate them into a judgement which would satisfy the men - the shogun and his Grand Chamberlain - heading the government. If Sorai's proposals had been based on ideas contrary to Tsunayoshi's and Yoshiyasu's beliefs, it is unlikely that they would have been so readily accepted.

For Maruyama these two judgements reveal "the unique character of Sorai's thought" foreshadowing "the primacy of the political that runs like a leitmotif through Sorai's later thought." Maruyama is right in stating that the principles underlying the two pronouncements were those of Sorai's mature work. Yet they were not unique to him, but reflected the political thought of Tsunayoshi's government.

Sorai is generally depicted as a keen critic of Tsunayoshi's government and several passages, especially in Soidan, seem to support this view. It must be remembered in this context that this document was written as a secret memorial to the eighth shogun, Yoshimune, and that

92. Yoshiyasu had in fact ordered the issue of relief rice as a famine had occurred in his domain. The relief rice had obviously not reached Donyu. Eibyō, natsu; HJ, p.67.
Sorai in his criticism of Yoshimune's government would hardly have been so foolhardy as to openly praise the government of the fifth shogun as superior to that of the eighth. Whenever Sorai criticised Yoshimune's government and wanted to remind the latter of policies practised under Tsunayoshi, he either had to somehow pretend that Yoshimune, in spite of the criticism voiced, was even so a far wiser ruler, or couch his proposals in terms which did not uphold Tsunayoshi as model for Yoshimune to emulate.

When one reads the two passages generally cited to demonstrate Sorai's disapproval of the fifth shogun's government without the preconceived idea that the latter was totally evil, one cannot fail to notice how Sorai carefully outlined Tsunayoshi's practices, without, seemingly, praising them, and then exhorts Yoshimune to do even better.

For example, Sorai states in Seidan that Tsunayoshi greatly loved learning. 94 This resulted in learning becoming fashionable. Since Tsunayoshi, however, placed too much emphasis on lectures, Chinese written language was neglected and, Sorai concludes, Tsunayoshi's efforts were of no avail. This statement might sound damaging enough, but it loses considerably in strength in the light of Sorai's critical view of the situation under Yoshimune:

Since that time on the scholars of the bakufu have become ignorant. 95 Therefore, if we were to have poetry meetings and so forth it would by far outweigh the benefits of Tsunayoshi's lectures.


95. *Mugaku*; McEwan (p.140) translates the word as "neglected their studies," which is not forceful enough.
Moreover, if learning were to become fashionable\textsuperscript{96} to that degree in all daimyo mansions throughout Japan, with the \textit{consequent} recognition of the correct status of scholars, good scholars would be produced and the scholars of the bakufu would, on their own account, devote themselves to learning.\textsuperscript{97}

Sorai criticises Tsunayoshi for his emphasis on lecturing, but at the same time points out that it resulted in learning becoming "fashionable." This term might have a frivolous connotation in English, but the fact that Sorai employs it in a positive sense is demonstrated by the use of the word "fashionable" in his own proposal when he states that "if learning were to become fashionable" bakufu scholars would adopt higher standards. Previously he had also stated: "If men who had acquired some learning were selected for promotion to office in the bakufu administration, learning would become fashionable."\textsuperscript{98}

Under Tsunayoshi learning flourished, a situation Sorai thought highly desirable. Since that time, however, scholars had become ignorant and Sorai leaves no doubt that they were still in that deplorable state at the time of his writing. He suggests, therefore, that poetry meetings be held, which, he states, would be even better than the lectures of Tsunayoshi's period.

One must question whether Sorai's criticism of the fifth shogun's lectures is genuine. Lectures and debates were the medium through which he himself gained recognition under Tsunayoshi; his oral skill was such

\textsuperscript{96} McEwan translates \textit{hayaru} as "fashionable" when he refers to learning becoming fashionable under Tsunayoshi, and as "encouraged" in "if learning were encouraged to the same degree in the households of all daimyo." His translation, consequently, contains a bias against Tsunayoshi not present in the original.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Nihon keizai taiten}, 9:191.

\textsuperscript{98} McEwan, p.138.
that even in his early days he managed to "bring forward good arguments and sometimes even prevail in discussions." 99

The problem Sorai was faced with at the time of writing Seidan was that Confucian lectures were still being given, but the lectures under Yoshimune were very different from those of Tsunayoshi's time, and did not suit him at all. In Taiheisaku, another secret memorial to Yoshimune, Sorai states plainly: "Lectures on the texts of the classics (kōshaku) are one of the greatest evils of the day" and continues to complain that "now no other form of scholarly study is recognised." 100

Another of his grievances was the treatment of Confucian scholars. "The attitude of those who attend the lectures consists in reverence for the books, rather than confidence in the lecturers," he laments, and thinks it outrageous how some gentlemen make scholars squat outside their room while they themselves listen to the lectures inside. 101

Sorai contrasts this kind of behaviour with that of the sage emperors, who apparently visited the mansions of the scholars from whom they sought advice and did not merely summon them in such an undignified fashion. Is it mere coincidence that Tsunayoshi frequently visited the Yanagisawa mansion to hear the resident scholars debate? During the time of the sage kings "in matters of learning it was improper to enforce the distinctions of status according to rank," 102 Sorai reminded Yoshimune. Again Tsunayoshi had followed well the example of the sage kings, for the scholar himself made much of the honoured treatment accorded to him under the fifth shogun: "... although I was only a

99. ibid., p.1, and also cited above.
100. ibid., p.133.
101. ibid., p.134.
102. ibid., p.135.
baishin retainer, yet I went to the golden castle of court, I ascended the jade steps, I was a guest among great guests..."103 Now, on the contrary, not even bannermen deigned to attend the lectures scholars were ordered to give at the Confucian hall at Yushima. "The audience consists only of a few of the household retainers of these places and some doctors and chōnin. The efforts of the bakufu are wasted in catering for people of this sort."104

Sorai is diplomatic in his criticism of Yoshimune's government. When he states that the bakufu's efforts are wasted, it more likely meant that he considered his own efforts wasted in lecturing to such an uneducated audience. He nostalgically recalls the deferential treatment scholars received in the past and upholds the sage kings as an example for Yoshimune to emulate. Yet his mind, one may assume, was focused on the more recent past, when under the fifth shogun he occupied a privileged position at Edo castle.

It would have been awkward for Sorai to propose to Yoshimune that in future lectures be given, as in Tsunayoshi's time, in front of the shogun and his entourage. At any rate, he might have concluded that Yoshimune had not much interest in such learned presentations. Consequently he proposes that in future poetry meetings be held, hoping, perhaps, that the eighth shogun might show more interest in this lighter side of Chinese learning. Even if Yoshimune showed no interest, poetry meetings, even without the shogun, would at least spell the end of the public lectures Sorai so despised.

103. Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, p.80, also cited in Chapter I, Section 3.
Maruyama cites another passage of Seidan to emphasise Sorai's criticism of Tsunayoshi. His translator, Hane Mikiso, puts it in the following words:

During Shogun Tsunayoshi's regime, the Shogun amused himself by listening to lectures, so that the Confucian scholars neglected all other learning and literature and behaved as if it was their sole duty to lecture on Confucianism. As a result, they have all now become ignorant and useless.105

Is it conventional prejudice against Tsunayoshi which prompted Hane to translate the honorific verb for nasaru, namely asobasu, as "amuse?" Strictly speaking the original simply reads:

Since the fifth shogun was devoted to lecturing, scholars engaged in no other learning and considered lecturing as their duty. Now everyone is ignorant and of no use to the higher authorities.106

The passage is in fact ambiguous, leaving it up to the reader to decide whether the ignorance of scholars was the result of Tsunayoshi's love for lectures or perhaps some other factor, such as the attitude towards scholars of Yoshimune's government. At first glance Sorai apparently criticises lecturing. To improve their oral presentation of the classics, scholars under Tsunayoshi neglected all other forms of Chinese learning, such as, presumably, composition and the punctuation of texts. Still, scholars were not "ignorant" as they were at the time of Sorai's writing.

Sorai's secret memorials to Yoshimune never praise Tsunayoshi's

106. ... kōshaku o moppara ni asobasaretaru yori. Nihon keizai taiten, 9:192.
policies. Yet frequently they criticise the reversal of these same policies; a very diplomatic way of saying the same thing.

Sorai deplores, for instance, that under Yoshimune the Hayashi family only was consulted by the bakufu. 107 The fifth shogun had given recognition to the Hayashi family by building the Confucian hall at Yushima as their official seat. Yet in the intellectual debate of the shogunal court they had only been one of many scholars. Their opinion was not always accepted by the shogun and Sorai might have recalled that in the case of the Forty-seven rōnin the shogun decided on a judgement which reflected Sorai's own way of thinking rather than that of the Hayashi school.

Another criticism of Sorai's concerns the lack of talented men in government affairs. He is emphatic that "in the Way of the Sages the first thing spoken about is the promotion of talent from below." 108 If one recalls that Sorai was the retainer of the very man whose career furnished an unprecedented example of "promotion of talent from below," one cannot doubt that either Sorai or his contemporary readers failed to see the connection between "the Way of the Sages" and the policies of the fifth shogun.

It is one of Sorai's recurrent themes that the military aristocracy were not fit for government service and should be deprived of their status if they neglected their duties. At a time when fewer and fewer domains were confiscated in retribution for offences, Sorai spoke out strongly in favour of the system of "rewards and punishments"; 109 he,

108. McEwan, p.81.
109. ibid., pp.76-81.
of course, omits to mention that it was also a system Tsunayoshi adhered to.

Even Yoshimune's famous suggestion-boxes find no favour in Sorai's eyes. He plainly states:

Some think that if the present rulers are left as they are and good suggestions from the lower orders are put into effect, this fulfils the Sages' injunction to "raise up worthy and talented men." This is useless quibble which slanders the doctrine of the Sages.\(^\text{110}\)

Previous to this statement Sorai had pointed out that if the ruler wanted to be aware of the sufferings of the common people, men from the lower orders should be advanced to high official positions. It was the policy adhered to by Tsunayoshi.

Sorai's concern for the lack of talented men of lower origin in Yoshimune's government can easily be attributed to self-interest. So, no doubt, it partly must. Yet for this very reason it is logical that Sorai would prefer a government like Tsunayoshi's in which his talents were recognised to one like Yoshimune's, in which he rarely had the honour of being invited to Edo castle.

Sorai's advocacy of Tsunayoshi's policies is not limited to such issues in which the scholar himself was subjectively involved, but can also be traced in his more abstract and lofty ideals.

For instance, Sorai singles out the Confucian virtue of benevolence (jin) and devotes the greater part of his work (Bendō) to explain the concept and elaborate on its importance; it is the virtue the sage kings

\(^{110}\) ibid., p.82.
used to bring peace to the world. Tsunayoshi also considered benevolence to be one of the most important concepts in the government of the country. Only a few months after his accession he had ordered Hotta Masatoshi to administer the people with "benevolent government" (jinsei), and the shogun's concern for benevolence in all aspects of his administration is a recurring theme in Yōgenroku, describing the early years of his reign. Later the concept of benevolence was central to the Laws of Compassion, and many an order reminded officials and people that the reason for the unprecedented protection of all living creatures was the shogun's wish that benevolence might grow in the hearts of his subjects.

Tsunayoshi was not a mere dreamer. He was realistic enough to know that perfection was impossible to achieve in this world. When Hotta Masatoshi had questioned him about the improprieties the much revered King Wu of ancient China had committed in order to bring peace to the world, the shogun had answered with the following parable:

We all want everything to be perfect, but it is impossible to achieve. For instance, when we have a small vessel made, we look at it and at first consider it beautiful. Yet when it is completed we realise that it has defects and we are not altogether pleased with it. It is the same with everything we do. The ancients said that in the purest water fish cannot exist. We, who rule the country, should ponder deeply about this matter.

Tsunayoshi's philosophical acceptance of imperfections even in the most well-intended government is reflected in Sorai's theory of political compromise. When the scholar wrote:

111. Olof G. Lidin, Distinguishing the Way [Bendō] (Tokyo, 1970), pp. 36-38, 40-42. Sorai asserts that true benevolence does not limit itself to the love of people but includes all "things and beings."
112. See above Chapter III, Section 5.
113. Yōgenroku, p.38.
There can be no more roundabout method of doing things than to insist that we must set aside all consideration of matters of government until we become Sages...114

he simply reiterated the same principle with which Tsunayoshi had explained the imperfections of the Chinese King Wu. Hotta Masatoshi's criticism of King Wu had referred to the authoritarian measures employed by this ruler and might well have been an allusion to Tsunayoshi's own authoritarian behaviour. In his justification of King Wu's behaviour, Tsunayoshi implied that at times even measures which in themselves are not perfect must be employed in good government.

Sorai, similarly, asserted that in the government of the country it was not the absolute morality of policies that counted, but the relative merit they had in relation to the welfare of the people. In Taiheisaku he went so far as to state:

The ruler of the people must carry out all measures, even if they conflict with just principles and become the object of ridicule, so long as this brings peace to the people.115

Tsunayoshi's attitude towards the Laws of Compassion well demonstrates the practical application of this theory. The actual benefit of the Laws of Compassion can be disputed. The important fact is that Tsunayoshi believed them to be an essential measure in his efforts to bring peace to the world. Consequently, he did not waver when they became "the object of ridicule" nor when - in the punishment of offences - they conflicted "with just principles." In both Tsunayoshi's and Sorai's

115. Maruyama, Intellectual History, p.82.
eyes it was permissible to violate the absolute ideals of morality for political expendiency.

Sorai was well aware of the contradictions inherent in this policy, contradictions for which the fifth shogun was severely criticised. In Bendō he justifies them as follows:

The principle of good government forbids violence, yet people are killed by the wars and the laws of the state. Can this be called benevolence? The essential fact is, however, that it brings peace to the world.116

Political expediency cannot exist side by side with the lofty and pure ideals of absolute morality; as Tsunayoshi put it, well over thirty years before Sorai expressed his ideas in writing, "in the purest water, fish cannot exist." For Tsunayoshi and Sorai the government’s priority was the wellbeing of the people and the concerns of the individual were of secondary importance. The ruler and his ministers, as well as the individual members of society, at times had to sacrifice their personal morality for the common good. This was the principle inherent in Tsunayoshi’s policies such as the Laws of Compassion and the judgement of the Forty-seven rōnin.

Throughout Sorai’s writing there is much in agreement with the political thought underlying the policies of the fifth shogun, though often not expressed in direct terms. When Sorai, for instance, discusses the monetary reform, he does not praise it, but he condemns the reversal of this policy. Moreover, he expresses beliefs which fully justify the debasement of the coinage. Firstly, he maintains that the value of metal contained in the coinage is completely irrelevant to its value.

116. Lidin, Bendō, p.47. (Here I do not follow Lidin’s translation because it makes the text appear more complicated than it is.)
Secondly, he questions why tax is levied from farmers only and not from the rest of the community. It has been argued above that the de-basement of the coinage was akin to a flat tax on the cash assets of every single one of the shogun's subjects. Consequently it partly fulfilled Sorai's demand for a more equal system of taxation. In addition, Sorai condemned the alternative to the monetary reform, namely Yoshimune's measure of humbly asking the daimyo to assist the government in its financial plight. Sorai's criticism of the eighth shogun's low-key approach to the daimyo is indicative of his "absolutist ideas" and some mention must be made here of this important aspect of his thought.

Guided by the classical history of China, Sorai and his contemporaries distinguished between two forms of government: the feudal (hōken) and the centralised (gunken).

The feudal state was divided into vassal territories, with the ruler governing directly only a small portion of the land. The system was a hereditary one; the concept of law was little developed and personal obligations between lord and vassals were of prime importance. A man's position was determined by his status at birth, and only in exceptional cases did he advance beyond it.

In the centralised state, on the contrary, official positions were not hereditary. There were no fiefholders and only small emoluments in the form of salaries were paid for government service. It was a fluid society for even a lowly peasant could advance to the position of chief minister.

117. McEwan, p.100.
118. Chapter IV, Section 1.
120. McEwan (Tōmonsho), pp.21-22.
Sorai saw the government of his times as feudal, but an analysis of his theories leaves no doubt that he favoured centralisation. "Unless the affairs of the entire land can be dealt with as the shogun wishes, the course of government will from time to time be obstructed". Sorai states emphatically and leaves no doubt, that he considered the government of his time, which did not have such powers, as inefficient. In this vein he is critical of Yoshimune's reforms because they lack the characteristics of strong central authority. Sorai's proposals, such as that the size of daimyo fiefs should be limited, rightly brings Maruyama to the conclusion that Sorai's aim was "an 'equalization' of subjects beneath a Tokugawa absolutism." Elsewhere Maruyama explains that Sorai's theories presented not only a frontal attack upon the existing feudal system but also slowly corroded its values from within by breaking up the closed social sphere, essential for the functioning of feudal government, leaving nothing but the empty shell.

The unifying element behind Tsunayoshi's diverse policies was the same striving for absolutism advocated in Sorai's writings. In the strict enforcement of his policies the fifth shogun demonstrated that - like Sorai - he believed unconditional shogunal authority to be essential for successful government. Although Tsunayoshi could not go so far as to limit the size of established fiefs - as suggested by Sorai - his policies, nevertheless, attacked the daimyos' privileged position as domain lords and tried to weaken their authority by formulating laws to be observed throughout the country. With the monetary reform he threatened the domains' economic independence, while the Laws of Compassion enforced

121. Maruyama, Intellectual History, p.133.
122. ibid.
123. ibid, p.243.
the observance of the shogun's moral standards in areas which traditionally had been subject to the daimyo's rulings. Both were instances of what Maruyama would call attacks on the daimyo's closed sphere of government, attacks on the feudal mode of government. So was the judgment of the Forty-seven rōnin. This left no doubt that under Tsunayoshi the bond of loyalty between master and retainer, essential to the feudal order, came second to the demands of the central state. Finally, the promotion of newcomers, like Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, who were totally dependent on the shogun's favours, to carry out the administrative functions of the established military aristocracy, leaves little doubt that it was central authority Tsunayoshi was striving for.

Tsunayoshi legitimised the changes he introduced by taking the sage kings of ancient China as his example. The ideals of their government found expression in the early Chinese classics, which were debated at length in Edo castle or on his visits to the Yanagisawa mansion.

Sorai also discarded the later Confucian texts favoured by the Neo-Confucians and used the early classics to legitimise the philosophical system he presented to the world. He theorised that although the teachings of the ancient sages had eternal validity, with the passage of time discrepancies were bound to occur requiring change. It was a theory which led his later critics to point out that, if taken to its logical conclusion, this would not even guarantee the continued existence of the feudal order. Sorai was fully aware that the government of prehistoric China could not be applied unaltered to the world he lived in. Yet, brought up in the Confucian tradition, he was not able - or did not dare - totally to neglect the Chinese classical tradition and

create his own system of statecraft. The early Confucian classics were vague and diverse enough to furnish support for his novel ideas. When, at times, he could find no sentences to justify his political thought, he attributed the divergence from the classics to the "passage of time" and claimed that appropriate changes were permissible.

The use of tradition to justify change was not devised by Sorai. Tsunayoshi had extensively made use of it to justify changes which went against the tradition of the more recent past.125

Writers have already indicated that Sorai acquired much of his practical scholarship during his service in the Yanagisawa mansion.126 It is suggested here that also the fundamental concepts of his political philosophy were based on his experience in Yoshiyasu's service.

Sorai's political writings appeared after the accession of Yoshimune. It was a time when Yoshiyasu's sons-in-law - some of whom were Sorai's students127 - once again occupied important positions in the government. After the dismissal of Arai Hakuseki, his fierce opponent, Sorai might have hoped that under the new shogun he, too, would again win the trust of the ruler and be consulted in important government affairs. Sorai's great disappointment with Yoshimune's low esteem for scholars found eloquent expression in his secret memorials to the shogunate. In his eyes, Yoshimune's policies compared unfavourably with Tsunayoshi's, but he did not dare to say so openly.

The affinity between Sorai's theories and Tsunayoshi's policies demonstrates that the latter were more than the arbitrary orders of an

125. See above, Chapter III, section 5.
126. E.g. Lidin, Ogyū Sorai, pp.112-15.
127. ibid., pp.102, 129.
eccentric ruler. They were a systematic attempt to establish centralised government. If Sorai is praised for his political thought, then Tsunayoshi's policies must also be given some favourable recognition. Failure to do so demonstrates the bias with which the government of the fifth Tokugawa shogun and his Grand Chamberlain has been viewed.

Yoshiyasu consequently was more than the fawning favourite of the shogun, sacrificing his own integrity to satisfy the whims of his lord. For the sake of good government it was essential for Tsunayoshi to have autocratic powers otherwise "the course of government" would "from time to time be obstructed";\(^{128}\) Yoshiyasu devoted his life to prevent the government from being obstructed. For him total obedience to the shogun's commands was not undignified behaviour, nor was the strict enforcement of his policies harmful to society. The shogun attempted to make the world a better one and Yoshiyasu considered it his sacred duty to exert himself in assisting his master to realise his lofty ideals.\(^{129}\)

4. KURITA AND WEBER

One of the most influential and most interesting reappraisals of the period under discussion was made in the 1920s by the Japanese scholar Kurita Mototsugu. His theory which still today is discussed if not adhered to, sees the period of Tsunayoshi's government as one when militarism (budan shugi) was replaced by civil administration (bunji/bunchi shugi). The essential features of this changeover were, for him, the bakufu's rejection of hostility in favour of friendship and esteem, of oppression in favour of enlightened education, of military force in

128. Maruyama, Intellectual History, p.133, and also cited above.
129. Compare also, Yoshiyasu's testimony in Kembyō jitsuroku cited above Chapter IV, Section 2.
favour of rites and music and the rule of might in favour of the rule of right. 130 On a practical basis this reorientation manifested itself for Kurita in the development of the bakufu's etiquette, in veneration of the imperial court, in a lenient attitude towards daimyo, rōnin and foreign countries, in the education of the people, in the influence of Confucianism upon government as well as in the importance attached to learning and the arts.

Kurita notes that scholars previously had already seen the period of Arai Hakuseki's influence as one when civilising elements, such as rites and literature, took on new importance. But, he points out, the period was also interpreted as a weakening of the bakufu and was unfavourably compared with Yoshimune's reforms, which were believed to have restored the originally strong and sober government of the country.

Kurita opposes this interpretation and maintains that the change from militarism to civil administration was one of the most significant events of the Tokugawa period. He is emphatic that it signified progress and not regression and condemns those as prejudiced who see these changes only in terms of declining military and financial power. Yoshimune's reforms, on the other hand, Kurita regards as destructive, and instrumental in ushering in the Tokugawa's ultimate downfall. He exemplifies this statement with reference to the shogunate's relationship with the imperial court. Under Tsunayoshi and Ienobu ties with the court had been close, but under Yoshimune the trend was reversed, leading, during the second half of the eighteenth century, to the movements which eventually were to topple the shogunate and bring back the emperor to head the nation. 131

130. Kurita, Edo jidai, p.419.
131. ibid., pp.420-22.
Kurita sees the first signs of this change from militarism to civil administration happening under Ietsuna. The bakufu's permission for deathbed adoptions and other daimyo- and rōnin-orientated policies of this period are, for him, early indications of this trend. The consequent change in policies with Tsunayoshi's accession he considers no more than different expressions of the same principle, reflecting the different personalities of the rulers.132

Thus Kurita classifies the changes that were taking place solely in terms of declining militarism and the spread of "civilised behaviour." Inherent in this analysis is the weakness that it does not account for the most prominent policies of Tsunayoshi's government, those for which he has so severely been criticised. Kurita is well aware of this and tries to get round this problem.

He explains the fact that Tsunayoshi's political measures do not always conform to his theory by following the traditional approach and suggesting that these controversial policies were due to the evil character of the shogun and his chamberlains. Though Kurita took the rather revolutionary step of condemning Yoshimune's reforms as regressive, he could not bring himself to include Tsunayoshi's controversial policies as a positive element in his theory. The Laws of Compassion he regards as a manifestation of civil administration, which later degenerated on account of the shogun's superstitions and the flattery of his close officials. The loss of military power and prowess by the military class Kurita sees not as an inevitable result of anti-militarism, but merely as caused by Tsunayoshi's excessive compulsion for peace and compassion; something, moreover, which a man like Arai Hakuseki, apparently likewise

committed to civilian government, managed to correct. The monetary
reform, he concedes, was partly brought about by the bakufu's poor fi-
nances before Tsunayoshi's accession. All the same, Kurita maintains,
to some extent it must be attributed to Tsunayoshi's spendthrift habits.
Finally he explains the discrepancy between the large number of daimyo
fiefs confiscated by the fifth shogun and his principle of "leniency to-
wards daimyo" by pointing out that the amount of land confiscated by
Tsunayoshi was small when compared with that appropriated by the first
three Tokugawa shogun. This was indeed the case, but all the same,
Tsunayoshi's system of strict punishment can hardly be called "leni-
cy.

Historians have criticised Kurita for seeing in Yoshimune's govern-
ment a return to militarism. With some justification they argue that
while not particularly fond of Confucian learning, the eighth shogun did
eourage the study of medicine and foreign books, and showed concern
for civil administration rather than military matters.

Kurita's theory well defines some features of Tsunayoshi's period.
It does not, however, account for the most important policies of his
government and furthermore, relies on a subjective and historically
doetful judgement of the shogun's and his ministers' personality. The
discussion of two issues might throw light on these weak points in his
model.

Firstly, Kurita's own explanations of his theory do not totally
conform to the labels he uses. For instance, in a change from

134. Oishi, Genroku jidai, pp.18-20; and Fujino, Bakuhan taisei shi no
kenkyū, p.418, also criticise this fact.
135. Oishi, Genroku jidai, p.20; Tsuji, Kyōhō kaikaku, p.28.
militarism to civil administration one would expect to hear of declining privileges for the military class, while Kurita, on the contrary, emphasizes leniency towards daimyo and rōnin. On the other hand, except for his reference to education and compassion, he makes little of the increased significance of social considerations, inherent in such a change.

Secondly, Kurita gives some indication of the background to his theory by stating that the change from militarism to civil administration was a universal feature of governments in ancient and modern times, in the East as well as in the West. He published this view in 1927, six years after Max Weber's Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft had come into print. The latter work treated in some detail a theory which at least in name had some similarity with Kurita's model, namely the change from feudal society to bureaucratic state; a theory for which Weber, too, claimed universal validity. The question comes to mind whether Kurita, if not directly influenced by Weber's writing, did not at least indirectly partake of the developments in historical analysis that were taking place in Europe at that time.

In any case, if Kurita wants to claim universal validity for his theory he cannot afford to neglect the issue of centralised versus decentralised authority. He must follow the example of Weber for whom the location of authority was one of the most important issues, and adjust his labels accordingly; for "militarism" does not indicate in whom authority is vested, as "feudalism" does.

It is Kurita's omission to address himself to the subject of authority which brings about the inconsistencies in his theory. If Weber's model is followed, the historian is spared the onerous and dubious task

of judging Tsunayoshi's policies in the light of his controversial personality. Instead the extreme policies of the fifth shogun's government can be explained in terms of the fierceness with which the struggle for authority between central and decentralised elements was fought.

Neither need the difference in political measures between the fourth and the fifth shogun be attributed to the rulers' difference in character, a topic on which there is little reliable information. According to Weber's model they are accounted for by the fact that Ietsuna's government was dominated by men interested in the decentralisation of authority, while under Tsunayoshi, centralisation of authority was of paramount importance. Again, the changed orientation of Yoshimune's government can be attributed to the eighth shogun's willingness to make concessions to daimyo autonomy.

In addition, Weber's model explains the phenomenon of the much hated chamberlain. Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu served as the tool for executing the shogun's policies and to the extent that these measures were opposed by the established military aristocracy, his bad reputation was inevitable. Kurita, too, made some attempt to rehabilitate Yoshiyasu, but without a clear understanding of the unavoidable clash of interests between the shogun and the daimyo, he, in the final analysis, again had to resort to the device of denigrating Yoshiyasu's character. A man who served the shogun with devotion and faithfulness in his design to establish autocratic powers could not help but encounter the antagonism of the daimyo. His behaviour, so much at variance with that of the daimyo, was scoffed at by them as the crawling antics of a flattering sycophant. It is not suggested that Yoshiyasu was devoid of faults, but

137. See Kurita, "Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu ron."
simply that his reputation was due to other factors than his personal character.

In the final stages of his career Yoshiyasu himself became an estate holder, theoretically at least joining the class of men against whom the shogun's policies were directed. Paradoxically it was the upper military aristocracy, his fiercest enemies, who were ultimately responsible for his great material fortunes. Their strong censure of low-born men in high position prompted the shogun to increasingly greater efforts to establish Yoshiyasu as a man of ancient and noble descent. As such he could not justifiably live on a small stipend, but of necessity required a large domain.\(^{138}\) As the acrimony against Yoshiyasu intensified, the shogun responded with continually more extravagant gestures to convince the rest of the country that Yoshiyasu was not an upstart, but like a member of the shogunal family. It was a development which Weber also noted as a universal occurrence in the process of centralisation.\(^{139}\)

During his lifetime Yoshiyasu was fully aware of the animosity his unprecedented rise to power and his execution of the shogun's unpopular policies caused. Consequently he considered it important to win fame in areas outside the controversial arena of politics and to record these achievements for posterity. In addition he attempted to overcome the opposition of the daimyo by making some his allies through intermarriage. In spite of these precautions the slander circulating during Yoshiyasu's lifetime increased after his death and traditional scholars cast him in the mould of the evil counsellor pandering to the vices of his master.

\(^{138}\) Not all men who rose to some influence under Tsunayoshi were so generously rewarded. The Superintendent of Finance, Ogiwara Shige-hide, for instance, never received more than 700 koku, the appropriate salary for his office.

\(^{139}\) *WG*, p.633; *Economy and Society*, 3:1081.
Yet in spite of Yoshiyasu's bad reputation his family succeeded in holding on to the material gains and the status he had acquired for them, something rare for the descendants of an upstart. Furthermore, Yoshiyasu's fastidious concern for the preservation of documentary evidence of his achievements has resulted in enough material on his life to stimulate historians to continuously attempt yet another reappraisal of his career.
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

At the turn of the last century one of Japan's leading politicians defined Japan's bureaucracy as one in which "laws are highly developed, where there is little room for arbitrary decisions by officials, and where at last administration is becoming a specialized technique."¹

Traditional historiography has it that less than three decades previously Japan had emerged from the feudal age and in this short span of time had succeeded in transforming itself into a state with a fully-fledged central bureaucracy, a process which it took Western states often half a millennium to achieve.²

Scholars are increasingly critical of the view that Japan's sudden emergence as a modern nation was due solely to some mystical ability to imitate the West.³ Edwin O. Reischauer, for instance, has suggested that the question of whether Japan's feudal experience resulted in similar characteristics to that of Western Europe and whether such developments aided her in the adoption of Western institutions, was in need of investigation.⁴ George Sansom proposed that many changes of Meiji Japan must be seen as "a natural process of evolution which produced results similar

2. WJ, p.831.
to those which had arisen in the West out of similar circumstances."^5
Other scholars such as Hall, Najita and Silberman,^6 have all in some
form or other concluded that the answer to Japan's sudden transformation
into a modern state must be sought in the developments that took place
during the Tokugawa period.

In line with this argument it is also proposed here that Japan's de-
velopment of a central bureaucracy had its origins in the Tokugawa era.

Bureaucratic institutions in Japan date back as far as the Heian
period. Yet both the Heian bureaucracy and the administration of the
Kamakura bakufu fall, like their Chinese model, under Weber's classifica-
tion of patrimonial bureaucracy; they lacked some of the essential char-
acteristics of the modern bureaucracy, such as the attainment of office
by merit, specialisation of knowledge and rational procedure.^7

When the Tokugawa established their hegemony over the country a cen-
tral bureaucracy again began to develop. By the time of the third shogun
Iemitsu, offices and duties were increasingly defined and separated and
a formally organised system began to grow. Under the fourth shogun this
development stagnated and a rigid system of hereditary qualification for
appointment to office came to dominate the administration.

With the accession of the fifth shogun new demands were made on the
bureaucracy. To ensure greater efficiency in the administration of the
country specialised offices were created for the first time at senior

5. G.B. Sansom, The Western World and Japan (New York, 1950), pp.314-
15.
6. J.W. Hall, "New Look at Tokugawa History" in Studies in the Institu-
tional History of Early Modern Japan, p.61; T. Najita, Japan
of the Meiji State," p.430. Also R. Bendix and G. Roth, Scholarship
7. WG, pp.608-11; Economy and Society, 3:1047-51.
levels of officialdom. The growing need for trained administrators made the system of hereditary qualification increasingly impractical and various means and measures were employed to bypass it.

The fudai daimyo, who occupied the senior offices in the administration, saw their privileges threatened by the changes initiated by the fifth shogun and used their power as officials to obstruct the shogun’s policies. Tsunayoshi attempted to overcome fudai protest and obstruction by creating his own personal staff outside the structure of bakufu hierarchy. The men he selected for his personal staff were mainly samurai of lower origin whose interests were not divided between domain and shogunate. Their advancement totally depended upon the favours of the shogun and consequently they identified with the latter’s aim of increasing central authority. In accordance with Weber’s model, they served the ruler as his most effective tool in his fight for autocratic powers. They were, to all intents and purposes, Japan’s first “professional politicians.”

The changes that took place in the administration of the country in Tsunayoshi’s period foreshadowed the development of Japan’s modern bureaucracy. As unprecedented measures, many of the policies initiated by the fifth shogun were severely criticised and some of them reversed by his successors. On the whole, however, the trend towards specialisation, rationalisation and promotion by talent continued, making it possible for Japan to pride itself on a fully fledged bureaucracy, at the beginning of this century.

The career of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu was the direct outcome of these political developments. By the circumstances of his birth as son of a bannerman in the household of the shogun-to-be, Yoshiyasu was placed in an ideal position to profit from the changes that were taking place.
From childhood on he had the opportunity to become intimately acquainted with the personal preferences and Weltanschauung of the future ruler, but his low samurai origin never permitted him to forget the vast difference in status between himself and his master. He was trained to serve and prepared to work hard in order to better his station, and as such was eminently qualified to succeed under the fifth shogun. After he had demonstrated his ability and loyalty over many years as Attendant, Yoshiyasu was ready to prove his worth as administrator at a point of time when Tsunayoshi had become disillusioned with traditional officialdom and his early confidant, Makino Narisada, was pressing for retirement. Yoshiyasu soon became the shogun's model official and acted as "leading politician."

Yoshiyasu's unprecedented promotion to a position of influence could only have earned him the animosity of the upper military aristocracy. Firstly, he replaced the fudai daimyo in their traditional position as senior administrators and advisers to the shogun. Secondly, he executed policies on behalf of the shogunate which went against the interests of all the upper military aristocracy and threatened their hitherto privileged status.

The protest of Yoshiyasu's powerful enemies found eloquent expression in the many chronicles slandering his reputation. For the upper military aristocracy the shogun's promotion of upstarts to execute his autocratic policies was immoral and despicable, and their hatred and contempt for Yoshiyasu fostered a bizarre image of him in the popular mind as a fawning eunuch, while the policies he directed became the evil machinations of a corrupt government.

Both Ogyū Sorai's philosophical interpretation of the political trend under Tsunayoshi and an application of Weber's theory to this same
period confirm that it was not immorality in the strict sense of the word but the shogun's autocratic ambitions which prompted such extreme criticism. Although writing in very different cultures and in very different ages both men reached a clear understanding of the inevitability of political centralisation and the changes it brings to society; an understanding essential for an appreciation of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu's career.
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<td>27D 8M Gen. 7</td>
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NOTES FOR TABLE:

1. "ibid" applies to entry to the left.
2. * - Apprenticed as Grand Chamberlain.
3. † - Appointed as Grand Chamberlain.
4. "---" indicates that appointment as Grand Chamberlain not listed.
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