

# THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SHŌGITAI: A SOCIAL DRAMA

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## PROLOGUE

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 was not universally acclaimed. Like other revolutions, it encountered stiff resistance from groups that identified themselves with the old order. This paper will describe one episode of such resistance: the "social drama" of the Shōgitai. I use Victor Turner's phrase with some reservations. It refers to instances of social conflict that perhaps are best described as such. But Turner does provide a structure of analysis—based on drama and its metaphors—that highlights the dynamics of conflict in a society. According to Turner, the notion of social drama is a device for analyzing episodes that manifest social conflict:

At its simplest, the drama consists of a four-stage model, proceeding from breach of some relationship regarded as crucial in the relevant social group, . . . through a phase of rapidly mounting crisis . . . to the application of legal or ritual means of redress or conciliation between the conflicting parties which compose the action set. The final stage is either the public and symbolic expression of reconciliation or else of irremediable schism.<sup>1</sup>

Although Turner's model of conflict resolution offers little that is new to historians, his approach is nonetheless useful for the insights it offers

I am indebted to Professors Conrad Totman and Tetsuo Najita for the suggestions they provided in the organization and content of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 78-79.

into the motives that underlie conflict. Turner argues that, in crisis situations, individuals are guided not so much by self- or rational interest as by deeply entrenched "root paradigms," which shape the form, timing, and style of their behavior.<sup>2</sup> Action becomes a "social drama."

Actors who are thus guided produce in their interaction behavior and generate social events which are non-random, but, on the contrary, structured to a degree that may in some cultures provoke the notion of fate or destiny to account for the experienced regulation of human social affairs. Greek tragedy and Icelandic saga are genres that recognize this implicit paradigmatic control of human affairs in public areas, where behavior which appears to be freely chosen resolves at length into a total pattern.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper I will borrow from Turner's methodology to examine the rise and fall of the Shōgitai. In particular, I will attempt to clarify the principles of action that impelled the supporters of the Tokugawa regime in its last hour.

The drama begins with the imperial restoration of 9/12/67.<sup>4</sup> Troops from Satsuma, Chōshū, Tosa, and Hizen seized the Kyoto palace and declared an end to the old regime. On 2/1/68, the former shogun, Yoshinobu, advised that a contest of arms would return the imperial court to Tokugawa control, and ordered some 10,000 troops to advance along the road to Kyoto. Although superior in numbers, the Tokugawa forces lost major battles at Toba and Fushimi. Their defeat destroyed any hope for a restoration of the Tokugawa bakufu.

Yoshinobu fled to Edo, and by the end of 1/68 had decided on a policy of submission. Many of his retainers, however, chose to resist. The Shōgitai and other squads of spirited young men roamed the streets of Edo and harassed the occupying troops. Ōtori Keisuke led divisions of decamped Tokugawa troops in guerrilla activities throughout the Kantō region. Enomoto Takeaki threatened the imperial forces with Tokugawa sea power. Fukuchi Gen'ichirō and other pro-Tokugawa journalists issued pamphlets and other propaganda sheets lambasting the imperial position. Katsu Kaishū attempted to wrest concessions from the imperial command through a series of negotiations.<sup>5</sup> In these ways, To-

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Dates appearing in this chapter correspond to the Japanese calendar, and are given in order of day/month/year. The Western calendar year is used in place of the Japanese *nengō*. Intercalary months are preceded by the letter "i."

<sup>5</sup> For details on Katsu Kaishū's negotiations with the imperial command, see M. W. Steele, "Katsu Kaishū and the Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1976.

kugawa loyalists contended with Satsuma and Chōshū forces for the possession of political power.

Within Edo the most militant group of anti-imperial Tokugawa loyalists was the Shōgitai. Three to four thousand young men, responding to an inherited tradition of loyalty and revenge, felt compelled to resist the imperial forces and erase the stigma that had been attached to the Tokugawa family at the time of Toba-Fushimi: the label "enemy of the court" (*chōteki*). They lacked money, manpower, firearms, and national symbols, and stood little chance in a protracted struggle with the superior Satsuma and Chōshū forces. Nonetheless, they were strong enough to cause the imperial side grave concern, and to help shape the eventual outcome of the Meiji Restoration.<sup>6</sup>

#### ACT ONE: DEFIANCE

On 12/2/68, the former shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, in an attempt to demonstrate an attitude of sincere submission to the new imperial government, voluntarily entered domiciliary confinement at Daiji-in within the Kan'eiji complex atop Ueno Hill. That same day, seventeen of Yoshinobu's personal retainers, led by Honda Toshiaburō, met at the Myōgaya teahouse in Zōshigaya. These seventeen men formed the core of the most vocal group of Tokugawa loyalists, the Shōgitai. Honda had brought them together to protest the collapse of Tokugawa authority. "The present dangerous situation," he declared, "has been brought about by the machinations of a gang of wicked traitors [Satsuma and Chōshū]. This is something I gnash my teeth at and cannot endure. When a lord is disgraced it is time for his retainers to die."<sup>7</sup> It is at this point the drama begins. Honda's declaration initiated a stage of confrontation, or in Turner's words, marked a "breach of regular, norm-governed social relations."

The league quickly attracted interest. A second meeting on 17/2 produced thirty Tokugawa loyalists. Sixty-seven met four days later. At this meeting a pact was drawn up to which all affixed their names in blood:

Now, at this time when the very existence of the Tokugawa family is at stake, it is the way of the retainer to exert himself in loyalty and patriotism. During the past three hundred years, fighting spirit has

<sup>6</sup> Basic information and documents concerning the Shōgitai may be found in: Yamazaki Arinobu, *Shōgitai senshi* (Tokyo, 1911); Ōmura Masujirō Sensei Denki Kankōkai, ed., *Ōmura Masujirō* (Tokyo, 1944); Ōyama Kashiwā, *Boshin eki senshi*, 1 (Tokyo, 1968); Mori Rintarō (Ōgai), *Yoshihisa Shinnō jikō* (Tokyo, 1908).

<sup>7</sup> Yamazaki, *Shōgitai senshi*, p. 47.

declined to the point where loyalty and patriotism are mere words. . . . To serve the spirits of our ancestors we must not let our words contradict our actions. We must devote our lives to erasing the insult to our lord, exterminate the Satsuma rebels, and, by so doing, serve loyally the court above and succor the masses below.<sup>8</sup>

A fourth meeting, at Asakusa Honganji on 23/2, gave formal organization to the league. Shibuzawa Sei'ichirō was elected its commander-in-chief, Amano Hachirō, subcommander, and Honda Toshiaburō Sunaga Denzō, and Tomokado Gorō, captains. At the same meeting a new pledge was drawn up, again signed in blood, declaring it the duty of Tokugawa retainers to protest the innocence of their lord in his attempts to free the court of wicked advisers.<sup>9</sup> It was also at this point that the name Shōgitai (League to Demonstrate Righteousness) was adopted. The former title, Sonnō Kyōjun Yūshi-kai (Spirited Men's League for Respecting the Emperor), was deemed inappropriate, as the league dropped all pretense of imperial loyalism and justified its actions purely in terms of loyalty to the Tokugawa family.

Shōgitai members were not representative of the samurai elite, but rather of what Tetsuo Najita has termed "the voices on the margins and fringes." They were largely low-ranking Tokugawa retainers and pro-Tokugawa deserters from domains that had fallen into imperial hands. Although it was largely a samurai undertaking, some commoners, Buddhist priests, and disaffected nobility also joined. In fact, several Shōgitai leaders were of plebeian origins and had tenuous connections with the Tokugawa family. Shibuzawa Sei'ichirō and Sunaga Denzō came from wealthy farming households. Amano Hachirō was the second son of a village headman. He had studied martial arts in Edo and traveled throughout Japan before taking up the Tokugawa cause. Other leaders, such as Honda Toshiaburō and the seven thousand *koku hatamoto* Ikeda Nagashige, were established Tokugawa retainers. High rank, however, was the exception; Ikeda was a figurehead.

Young men joined the Shōgitai out of a sense of loyalty to the Tokugawa family. To many there was little consideration of utility or even of conscious choice. Perhaps in some cases loyalty was a convenient mask to cover more materialistic interests. The end of Tokugawa rule threatened the loss of feudal stipends for Tokugawa retainers. In seeking to restore Tokugawa family fortunes, low-ranking retainers undoubtedly had the preservation of their own status in mind. But on the whole members in the Shōgitai were motivated by duty rather than choice. They felt compelled to act out the requirements of a long-standing tra-

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-52.

dition of loyal and righteous action. The samurai morality, which had been expounded by writers such as Yamaga Sokō and Yamamoto Tsunetomo (author of *Hagakure*) and dramatized by the revenge of the forty-seven loyal retainers of Akō, had become for many samurai, trapped in the humdrum of a bureaucratic society, a paradigm defining their existence. The *bushidō* myth ("even when I die I will return to life seven times to guard my lord's house") had even more poignancy in the crisis-ridden Bakumatsu period when the existing order was threatened. Thus many Tokugawa retainers responded to news of the imperial restoration with a heightened sense of loyalty to their own lord, the former shogun.

Members of the Shōgitai and similar squads were a rough and ready lot, similar to the pro-Kyoto *shishi* described in Thomas Huber's paper in this volume. They were young men (average age twenty-four)<sup>10</sup> who reacted to the anomie of their times with a reckless yet stubborn dedication. Unlike the members of the Tenchūgumi, however, their cause was the restitution, not the destruction, of Tokugawa family rule: "We seek to destroy Satsuma, the wicked advisor to the throne, and clear Yoshinobu of the false charge [enemy of the court]." They, too, had no vision of reform, justifying their actions simply by protesting uncompromising loyalty to the Tokugawa family. As one nineteen-year-old Tokugawa retainer who joined the Shōgitai put it,

I was born into a family that has served the Tokugawa family since the days of Mikawa and, although my stipend is not much, my vocation is to serve my lord. The debt (*on*) I owe my lord is great. . . . When a lord is disgraced, his vassals must die. It is my duty to offer my life in an attempt to clear my lord's name and restore the Tokugawa family fortunes.<sup>11</sup>

Ancient regimes do not tumble without protest, and in Japan, as elsewhere, such protest was rationalized in a hyperbolic rendition of traditional values.

The restoration of imperial rule and defeat of Tokugawa forces at Toba-Fushimi by "a gang of wicked traitors" triggered the onset of what Turner calls a "primary process." Resistance to the superior Satsuma and Chōshū troops was both impossible and inevitable. To be sure, some Tokugawa retainers were apathetic, but many were forced, even against their personal preferences, to offer their lives in loyal service to their lord. Resistance acquired, to use Turner's words, "a strange

<sup>10</sup> Derived from thirty-three known ages as listed in various sections of Yamazaki; see especially pp. 155-159.

<sup>11</sup> Marumo Toshitsune, "Shōgitai sensō jitsurekishō," *Kyubakufu*, 1:7 (1897), 22-23 (original manuscript, 1868).

processual inevitability overriding questions of interest, expediency, or even morality."<sup>12</sup>

Immediately after the Shōgitai was formed, Tokugawa officials ordered the leaders of the Shōgitai to appear at Edo Castle and explain the nature of the new league. They were afraid that careless acts of violence would injure Yoshinobu's position. Katsu Kaishū, in particular, was engineering a plan of peaceful submission that he hoped would result in imperial pardon and a generous settlement. Shibuzawa Sei'ichirō assured the officials that the Shōgitai was not a gang of ruffians, but a group of men sincerely dedicated to assisting the Tokugawa family. The officials agreed to recognize the Shōgitai, and confirmed Shibuzawa as its head. Beginning on 26/2, members of the Shōgitai, carrying lanterns imprinted with a large red *shō* (demonstrate) or *gi* (righteousness), began to patrol the streets of Edo as an official peacekeeping force.<sup>13</sup> The aim of Tokugawa officials was both to help the Edo city commissioners maintain law and order in an increasingly volatile situation and to contain the activities of the largest force of free-floating anti-imperial activists.<sup>14</sup> The Shōgitai was also given the responsibility of guarding Tokugawa Yoshinobu.<sup>15</sup> For this purpose its headquarters were moved from Asakusa Honganji to Kan'eiji in Ueno.

At the same time that the Shōgitai was preparing to defend the Tokugawa family, leaders of the new government in Kyoto were planning to destroy it. On 11/2, the imperial army left Kyoto with a commission to chastise "the enemies of the court." Encountering no resistance, the main division advanced speedily along the Tōkaidō. By 5/3, it had reached Sunpu. There it paused to plan the siege of Edo Castle. As news of the impending attack reached Edo, membership of the Shōgitai grew. By the middle of 3/68, more than three hundred Tokugawa loyalists had gathered under the Shōgitai banner.

From the outset, however, internal dissensions troubled the Shōgitai. Perhaps acting on suggestions from Edo Castle, Shibuzawa planned to remove the league to Nikkō. Arguing that Edo was too crowded to serve as an advantageous battleground, he solicited contributions from rich merchants to finance the move. Amano Hachirō opposed this plan and maintained that the Shōgitai should remain in Edo to protect the city from imperial attack. He felt that Shōgitai leaders should be given

<sup>12</sup> Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, p. 122.

<sup>13</sup> Yamazaki, *Shōgitai senshi*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>14</sup> This strategy was used again on 3/1 when Katsu Kaishū dispatched Kondō Isami and the Shinsengumi, renamed the Chinbutai (Pacifying Squad), into the Musashi and Kōshū districts to quell peasant unrest, thus removing potential prowar elements from Edo.

<sup>15</sup> For evidence of the Shōgitai's official status, see *Zoku Tokugawa jikki 5 Kokushi taikai*, 52 (Tokyo, 1976 reprint), pp. 402-403.

high office and placed in charge of dealing with the Satsuma and Chōshū traitors.<sup>16</sup> He was suspicious of Shibuzawa's dealings with Tokugawa officials who planned to surrender the castle peacefully. Shibuzawa was able temporarily to control Amano's faction and limit the Shōgitai to peaceful activities. If hostilities were to occur, Shibuzawa did not want to endanger the safety of the one million residents of Edo. Ironically, Shōgitai patrols contributed to the orderly atmosphere that greeted the imperial occupation of Edo following 15/3/68.

#### ACT TWO: CRISIS

After the surrender of Edo Castle on 11/4, several related factors contributed to escalate the breach between Tokugawa resistance groups and the imperial occupying forces, producing a situation of "mounting crisis." First, on the day the official surrender ceremony was held, some two thousand troops deserted the Tokugawa side. Unable to bear the humiliation of surrender, they decamped and "formed themselves into bodies of guerrillas and harassed the troops of the Mikado throughout the country around Yedo."<sup>17</sup> Shibuzawa Sei'ichirō wanted the Shōgitai to join the deserters. On 11/4 he led those who would follow him out of Edo, organized the Shinbugun, and engaged in guerrilla activities in the Musashino district before joining Tokugawa holdouts in Hakodate. The core of the Shōgitai, however, refused to decamp from Edo. Under the militant leadership of Amano Hachirō, the Shōgitai became the largest armed group of Tokugawa supporters in Edo and the most visible symbol of resistance to imperial rule. At the same time, the size of the Shōgitai grew rapidly, reaching one thousand members by the middle of 4/68.

Second, the Shōgitai won the full support of the twenty-two-year-old imperial prince Rinnōji, the chief abbot of Kan'eiji, following the surrender of Edo Castle. Rinnōji had earlier attempted to negotiate with the imperial forces on behalf of the Tokugawa family, but when the imperial command chose to negotiate with Katsu Kaishū instead, Rinnōji exploded with anger and urged the Shōgitai to initiate hostilities. He compared the contemporary situation to the An Lu-shan rebellion, which caused the fall of the T'ang dynasty, and demanded that the flag of righteousness be raised against the Satsuma traitors.<sup>18</sup>

A third factor encouraged radical sentiment within the Shōgitai. Following the surrender of Edo Castle, the imperial command experienced administrative, financial, and military setbacks. Even with possession of

<sup>16</sup> See Yamazaki, *Shōgitai senshi*, pp. 63-65, for details of their dispute.

<sup>17</sup> Dispatch from Harry S. Parkes to the Foreign Office, June 13, 1868, No. 139.

<sup>18</sup> Yamazaki, *Shōgitai senshi*, pp. 56-57.

the castle, the new government forces were unable to control the city of Edo. On 24/4, the same day that the imperial command established its headquarters within Edo Castle, orders were issued to the former Edo city commissioners to continue their duties as before. Later on 3/14, admitting its own inability to maintain law and order in Edo, the imperial command tried unsuccessfully to appoint Katsu Kaishū and Ōkubo Ichio as the joint governors of Edo. Moreover, expeditions against the decamped Tokugawa troops and maintenance of an occupying army in Edo drained the imperial command's financial reserves. Early in 5/68, Matsudaira Yoshinaga recorded the following report on conditions in Edo:

Things have become truly difficult [for the imperial command]. It does not have even 10,000 *ryō* and the Shōgitai is increasingly violent. It is said that the imperial army cannot go beyond Nihonbashi along the Tōkaidō, that keeping order in the city has been entrusted to former bakufu officials, and that government is carried out under the old laws. The Prince [Supreme Commander Arisugawa] is said to have entered Edo Castle, but there he is a solitary figure with no authority whatsoever.<sup>19</sup>

The military condition of the imperial command also worsened. Peasant uprisings and anti-court guerrilla bands threw the imperial command on the defensive. In Kyoto, rumors circulated that it would require 60,000 to 70,000 troops to bring the guerrillas under control. A report from Utsunomiya on 19/4 warned that it was "difficult to guarantee that what we hold tonight will not be lost tomorrow."<sup>20</sup> Iwakura Tomosada and his brother Tomotsune, the commanders of the Tōkaidō division of the imperial army, wrote back to their father, Iwakura Tomomi,

The Tokugawa retainers publicly advocate submission; secretly, however, they are plotting treason. Rebels have surrounded Edo, and it is quite clear that they are waiting for an opportunity to launch a large-scale assault. The imperial army is powerless to prevent this. I fear that if we relax but for a moment, we will be overcome by the fervor (*kokoro*) of the rebels.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, suspicions regarding the new government's intentions toward the Tokugawa family, particularly toward Yoshinobu, fanned Shōgitai radicalism. The articles of surrender issued on 4/4 made only vague

<sup>19</sup> Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, ed., *Boshin nikki* (Tokyo, 1925), p. 388.

<sup>20</sup> Ōmachi Masami and Hasegawa Shinzō, *Bakumatsu nōmin ikki*, 3 (Tokyo, 1974), p. 167.

<sup>21</sup> Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, ed., *Iwakura Tomomi Kankei monjo*, 3 (Tokyo, 1935), 481.



promises of lenient terms of settlement once the articles had been fulfilled. Following the surrender of Edo Castle, therefore, Tokugawa retainers anxiously awaited details. When they were not immediately forthcoming, suspicion mounted. Among Tokugawa supporters, one daimyo noted in a memorial to the new government,

Should the retainers of the Tokugawa family erroneously think that, in spite of Yoshinobu's submissiveness and his endeavors to keep his retainers quiet, your Majesty will not decree any liberal terms but intends to destroy utterly the family and name of Tokugawa, it may follow that they will become desperate and resolve to fight, like the mouse that bites the cat when hard pressed by her, and oppose the imperial forces in arms.<sup>22</sup>

The Shōgitai responded to imperial difficulties and imperial procrastination with an attitude of increasing contempt. They slipped from Tokugawa control and began freely to harass the occupying troops. As Katsu Kaishū wrote in his diary on 30/4,

Recently the members of the Shōgitai have repeatedly made inflammatory remarks [against the imperial command], and their bands have grown larger. There are nearly four thousand men encamped at [Kan'eiji atop] the eastern ridge. They have murdered some imperial troops, and they take delight in sporadic careless and rash acts.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, Shōgitai membership had swollen following the surrender of the castle. By the middle of 4/68, more than two thousand dissidents were encamped at their bastion atop Ueno Hill. By 5/68, their numbers exceeded three thousand. Organized into a tight military organization composed of some eighteen regular units and sixteen supporting squads, the Shōgitai posed a threat to imperial possession of Edo.<sup>24</sup>

### ACT THREE: DEFEAT

By 5/68, the Shōgitai was no longer a peace-keeping force. As a hostile army of spirited warriors, controlled by neither imperial nor Tokugawa forces, it had thrown Edo into a state of crisis. As Harry Parkes noted,

As the party in Uyeno [the Shōgitai] gained strength their attitude toward the Mikado's supporters became more hostile, and assassina-

<sup>22</sup> *Kōko Shinbun*, No. 8, dated 17/4/68, in Meiji Bunka Kenkyūkai, ed., *Bakumatsu Meiji shinbun zenshū* 4 (Tokyo, 1965 reprint), 35.

<sup>23</sup> Katsube Mitake, ed., *Katsu Kaishū zenshū*, 19 (Tokyo, 1973), 67.

<sup>24</sup> For details concerning the military organization and troop strength of the Shōgitai and its supporting squads, see Yamazaki, *Shōgitai senshi*, pp. 73-101 and Ōyama, *Boshin eki senshi*, pp. 341-351.

tions of the latter were of frequent occurrence. It was evident therefore that they must be speedily dislodged if the mastery of the city was to remain in the hands of the Mikado's government.<sup>25</sup>

Harry Parkes was not the only one to realize the necessity of "repressive action." Already in 4/68, Etō Shinpei, a Hizen retainer employed by the new government to gather information in Edo, reported to Iwakura Tomomi in Kyoto that the imperial command was experiencing difficulties in maintaining order in Edo. He criticized the conciliatory attitude it had adopted toward the "defeated" Tokugawa family and warned of the potential danger of the Shōgitai: "Now, if we do not renew our military spirit and proceed to sweep away the Shōgitai, imperial authority will fall to the ground."<sup>26</sup> Iwakura decided to send a military advisor to Edo in order to stiffen the posture of the imperial command. Ōmura Masujirō, a Chōshū retainer and expert military tactician, was the logical candidate for this position. He had consistently argued for a stronger military stance against the Tokugawa family. On 27/4, Ōmura was appointed military advisor and ordered to depart for Edo.

Ōmura arrived in Edo six days later, on 4/i4. He attempted to redirect the policies of the imperial command, but encountered difficulties. The staff officers of the imperial command, Saigō Takamori and Kaieda Takeji, were conducting a series of negotiations with Katsu Kaishū and other Tokugawa officials concerning the transfer of power to the new regime. They realized the limitations of imperial military capability and the extent of resistance both in Edo and in the Kantō district. Moreover, they were sympathetic to Katsu's argument that war in Edo should be avoided at all costs, as it would "cost the lives of countless innocent people." Unable to agree with the weak-kneed attitude of the imperial command, Ōmura prepared to return to Kyoto. Before his departure, an imperial envoy, Sanjō Sanetomi, arrived on 24/i4 with news that money and reinforcements would be sent from Kyoto.<sup>27</sup> Etō Shinpei, moreover, supplied Ōmura with fresh tactical arguments. On 1/5, he submitted an ambitious nineteen-point memorial outlining the means by which Edo might be established as the capital of a centralized polity. The first and most important point, he argued, was the subjugation of the Shōgitai.<sup>28</sup>

Sanjō's arrival helped Ōmura to revive a more aggressive attitude in

<sup>25</sup> Harry S. Parkes to Foreign Office, June 27, 1868, No. 151.

<sup>26</sup> Matono Hansuke, *Etō Nanpaku*, 1 (Tokyo, 1914), 318.

<sup>27</sup> For details on the dispute between Kaieda and Ōmura, see Kaieda's autobiography, Kaieda Nobuyoshi, *Jitsureki shiden* (Tokyo, 1913), Section 8, pp. 30-35. See also Ishii Takashi, *Ishin no nairan* (Tokyo, 1974), p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, 1:325-328.

the imperial command. The change was reflected in a series of reforms designed to transform Edo from "enemy territory" into the seat of a national imperial government. On 1/5, the Tokugawa family was relieved of the responsibility of policing Edo, and for the first time the imperial command assumed these duties itself.<sup>29</sup> On 6/5, the imperial command ordered all public notice boards set up by the Tokugawa government to be removed and replaced by those of the new government.<sup>30</sup> Finally, on 11/5, the government of Edo was reorganized as a metropolitan district (*fu*), administered separately from the military command. Ōmura Masujirō was appointed its governor.

On 1/5, formal debate concerning the subjugation of the Shōgitai opened within the imperial command. Saigō and Kaieda argued that the imperial army was ill-prepared to launch an attack. It was outnumbered: the Shōgitai had over three thousand members, whereas commitments to the Kantō and Tōhoku fronts plus the recall of many *han* troops had reduced the imperial forces in Edo to a mere two thousand men. The Shōgitai, furthermore, had the advantage of position. Imperial troops would have to advance up Ueno Hill to attack Kan'eiji. Nevertheless, Ōmura and Etō maintained that victory was possible and that the current troop strength was sufficient.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, they argued that control of Edo was the key to control of the entire nation: "Since Edo is the center of the nation, it should become established as the permanent national capital in the future. Therefore it is necessary to attack the Shōgitai as soon as possible."<sup>32</sup>

Three factors enabled Ōmura to prevail. First, attempts at conciliation failed. On 3/5, Sanjō reported to Iwakura that efforts at mediation with Rinnōji, the ranking Shōgitai leader, had proven fruitless. He requested that troop reinforcements be sent immediately, as promised. Tokugawa efforts to pacify the Shōgitai also failed. Katsu Kaishū sent a messenger to Rinnōji to plead for forbearance, only to be rebuffed as a "traitor to the Tokugawa family": "Although today's affairs are carried out in the name of the court, in actuality they are the designs of Satsuma and Chōshū. How can you simply wash away and forget in one day the blessings we have received from the Tokugawa family generation after generation?"<sup>33</sup>

Second, Ōmura received unexpected support for his plan to attack the Shōgitai. On 5/5, Ōkuma Shigenobu, a Hizen retainer and ranking

<sup>29</sup> Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryōhensanjo, ed., *Fukko-ki*, 5 (Tokyo, 1929), 27. See also *machifure* in Tōkyō-to, ed., *Bannin seidō* (Tokyo, 1973), p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Tōkyō-to, ed., *Tōkyō-shi shikō: shigai-hen*, 49 (Tokyo, 1959), p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> For their argument, see *Ōmura Masujirō*, pp. 694-697.

<sup>32</sup> Matono, *Etō Nanpaku*, 1:329.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in *Ōmura Masujirō*, pp. 694-697.

official of the new government's bureau of foreign affairs, arrived in Edo with 250,000 *ryō* in gold. He was empowered to negotiate the purchase of an ironclad warship, the *Stonewall*, which the bakufu had ordered from America. The warship arrived in Yokosuka after civil war had broken out, and, in accordance with American neutrality, was not turned over to Tokugawa forces. Ōkuma criticized the "state of anarchy" (*museifu no jōtai*) that he found in Edo: "On sea, the former bakufu's warships can obstruct all traffic, and, on land, outside of Nishinomaru, gangs of ruffians are free to come and go. The city is ungoverned. The police are powerless; law and order is absent. . . . This state of anarchy in Edo will eventually cause relations with foreign countries to sour."<sup>34</sup> He concluded that the imperial command should "immediately attack those gangs of ruffians who roam the streets of Edo." On 7/5, he met with American authorities in Yokohama, and, having failed to purchase the *Stonewall*, he returned to Edo and offered the money to Ōmura for use against the Shōgitai. Ōkuma also managed to send nearly one thousand Hizen troops from Yokosuka to Edo to strengthen the position of the imperial command.

Finally, heightened Shōgitai terrorism forced the imperial command to admit the need for strong counter measures. Angered at the removal of Tokugawa public notice boards, the Shōgitai carried out forays against Hizen and Satsuma troops on 7/5. This made even Saigō agree to hostilities in Edo. On 9/5, Sanjō reported to Iwakura that war was unavoidable. On 11/5, the same day that Ōmura was appointed governor of Tokyo-fu, the imperial command decided to attack the Shōgitai at their stronghold in Kan'eiji.

The attack was scheduled for 15/5. On the day before, the imperial command informed the Tokugawa family that it had become necessary to use force against "those contumacious retainers" who had disregarded Yoshinobu's desire that they "submit to the gracious and merciful will of the imperial court."<sup>35</sup> The Tokugawa family was advised to remove all ancestral tablets and other treasures from Kan'eiji. Leaflets were circulated throughout Edo to warn the townspeople of the impending attack:

For some time past the bands who have broken loose have assembled at the temple of Ueno, frequently assassinating the soldiers of the government, plundering the people of their property in the name of the government forces, and committing acts of increasing violence. They are rebels against the state. . . . They have plundered the property of the innocent populace, and there is no act of violence which

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 690-691.

<sup>35</sup> *Fukko-ki*, 5:417-419.

they have not committed. As these acts tend to plunge the population into the depths of misery, it has been found unavoidable to use force against them.<sup>36</sup>

At dawn of 15/5, cannon fire echoed throughout Edo. Ten hours of harsh combat ensued. Early reports of Shōgitai victories did not disconcert Ōmura. Confident of the success of his war plans, he gazed intently in the direction of Ueno from a tower within Edo Castle. By nightfall, he was proven correct. Superior strategy and weapons had won the battle. Kan'eiji lay in ashes, the northeastern section of Edo was in flames, and the Shōgitai had fled, leaving over two hundred of their comrades dead, some by suicide.<sup>37</sup>

Although victory "left the Mikado's troops in undisturbed possession of Yedo," as Harry Parkes reported to the British Foreign Office,<sup>38</sup> it was not unanimously acclaimed. A pro-Tokugawa newspaper, *Soyofuku kaze*, ended its report of the defeat with the following lament:

Ah! How sad and deplorable is this day! The most sacred spot in all of the Kantō has been, in but an instant, reduced to flames. Fleeing from the disaster, the aged, the young, and the womenfolk of the city wander aimlessly on the roads, filling them with cries of pity. It would seem that the workings of heaven know no right or wrong.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, a sense of joy and relief spread through the imperial camp. Iwakura's sons, who had earlier grieved over the helplessness of the imperial army in subduing the rebel bands, wrote to their father on 1/6, after the victory over the Shōgitai, in a different vein:

Everyone has had a number of worries over reports of a kind of insecurity [we have been experiencing] here, but now things have truly quieted down. It is quite a relief. On the fifteenth of last month, [the imperial army] subjugated a horde of 10,000 rebels who had been creating disturbances throughout Edo and who were encamped at a big temple in Ueno. Since then, things have become truly quiet.<sup>40</sup>

Sanjō Sanetomi also wrote back to Iwakura describing the victory in glowing terms. It was an occasion of "great joy for the nation." Although it had been hard fought and there were many casualties, it had

<sup>36</sup> *Tōkyō-shi shikō: shigai-hen*, 49:55-56.

<sup>37</sup> For details concerning the actual battle, see Yamazaki, *Shōgitai senshi*, pp. 137-141; Ōyama, *Boshin eki senshi*, pp. 340-379; Ishin Shiryōhensanjimukyoku, ed., *Ishin-shi*, 6 (Tokyo, 1941), 218-227; *Tōkyō-shi shikō: shigai-hen*, 49:55-71; Tōkyō-to, ed., *Tōkyō-shi shikō: hensai-hen*, 5 (Tokyo, 1958), 955-972.

<sup>38</sup> Harry S. Parkes to Foreign Office, July 10, 1868, No. 169.

<sup>39</sup> *Soyofuku kaze*, No. 7, n.d., in *Bakumatsu Meiji shinbun zenshū*, 3:408.

<sup>40</sup> *Iwakura Tomomi kankei monjo*, 4:9.

contributed greatly to “the imperial fortune.”<sup>41</sup> Iwakura, relieved at the news of the victory, thanked Sanjō for his efforts:

After reading your letter of 15/5 and the [*Kōjō*] *nisshin* [both informing me of the plans to attack the Shōgitai], I worried day and night over the results of the campaign. By the 29th, when still there was no news from either the army or the navy, I truly could not eat or sleep in peace. All I did was worry. Finally, when I received your report on the 29th, it was like feeling reborn.<sup>42</sup>

Iwakura’s feeling of rebirth was justified. The victory over the Shōgitai represented a major advance in the security of the new government. First, Edo became the possession of the new government. On 19/5, it was absorbed into the new government’s administrative network as a military garrison (*chindai*) and placed under the control of the Bureau of Domestic Affairs in Kyoto. The last Tokugawa offices still in nominal operation, the Edo City Office (*machi bugyōsho*), the Temple and Shrine Office (*jisha bugyōsho*), and the Finance Office (*kanjōsho*), were abolished. In their place, Boards of Municipal Government, of Shrines and Temples, and of Civil Affairs were established, placing appointees of the new government in charge of Edo.<sup>43</sup>

Second, on 24/5, the imperial command finally issued the entire terms of settlement. Until that time, the Tokugawa family had only been informed of the item of succession: headship had been transferred to Tayasu Kamenosuke, a five-year-old boy. The other more crucial terms, fief and revenue, had not been announced for fear of resistance. Katsu Kaishū had been working to negotiate a settlement that would have left the Tokugawa family in Edo with a substantial income of 2,000,000 *koku*. Victory over the Shōgitai, however, enabled the new government to order the Tokugawa family to move to a 700,000 *koku* domain in the province of Suruga.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, the battle of Ueno Hill was a turning point in the military fortunes of the new imperial army. With Edo firmly under control, Ōmura Masujirō was ready to “press forward into the northeast” to quell resisters who remained in the Tōhoku region.<sup>45</sup> By the end of 5/68, Ōtori Keisuke’s guerrillas had been routed, and relative peace had been restored to the Kantō district. The “northern confederacy” of Tōhoku *han* surrendered to the imperial banner in the middle of 10/68. Enomoto Takeaki held out the longest. On 19/8, he led some two thou-

<sup>41</sup> Ōmura Masujirō, pp. 711-712.

<sup>42</sup> Iwakura Tomomi *kankai monjo*, 4:9.

<sup>43</sup> *Fukko-ki*, 5:475-482.

<sup>44</sup> *Fukko-ki*, 5:643-647.

<sup>45</sup> Ōmura Masujirō, p. 720.

sand men and eight warships to Hakodate. Enomoto's "republic," however, stood little chance of success. On 18/6/69, he was forced to admit defeat, giving the new government undisputed possession of the nation.

#### EPILOGUE

The rise and fall of the Shōgitai has been presented as a social drama, following Victor Turner's scenario of breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration. This "dramatistic" approach can be used with profit to place the role of conflict in society on the center stage of historical analysis. In particular, the social drama of the Shōgitai highlights the role of conflict during the Meiji Restoration. Most Japanese accepted the imperial restoration and the collapse of Tokugawa political authority with resignation. But a significant minority of Tokugawa supporters saw no alternative to resistance activities in Edo and its hinterland. Uncompromising loyalty to the Tokugawa family and refusal to decamp from Edo made the Shōgitai the most visible form of resistance to imperial rule. Their actions by no means matched the scale of the Vendée during the French Revolution, but the Shōgitai drama is a reminder that the restoration of imperial rule was not bloodless.

Moreover, Turner's approach helps to generalize the predicament of the Shōgitai. The crises of the 1860s drew responses from all who were politically conscious. Some were forced to redefine the normative basis of loyalty and leadership. Conrad Totman's paper in this volume has detailed the efforts of Tokugawa leaders to transform the bakufu from a feudal to a centralized regime capable of coping with the problems of governance imposed on Japan after 1853. His bureaucrats responded to the crisis of their age by abandoning the old order and seeking a new one. Others, such as the members of the Shōgitai, sought to rejuvenate the ideological underpinnings of the Tokugawa system. The collapse of the bakufu only strengthened their sense of personal loyalty to Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the last shogun. Members of the Shōgitai were angry young men who were willing to stake their lives on proving the innocence of their lord and the validity of the Tokugawa order. Resistance became a desperate attempt to restore meaning in a world that had lost coherence. In this sense, the *sonnō-jōi* activists described in Thomas Huber's paper had much in common with the Shōgitai. They too were young men confounded by the crisis of their age. They too found solace in total surrender to a grand cause. They had their own "social drama" to perform. Members of the Tenchūgumi and the Shōgitai alike were faithful to the requirements of a tradition of uncompromising loyalty and unequivocal action.

Turner's mode of analysis is particularly useful in isolating the mo-

tives of conflict. He argues that conflict does not arise only over questions of interest—"choices of means and ends and social affiliation." Instead, Turner stresses loyalty and obligation:

Conflict seems to bring fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence. People have to take sides in terms of deeply entrenched moral imperatives and constraints, often against their own personal preferences. Choice is overborne by duty.<sup>46</sup>

Young Tokugawa retainers who joined the Shōgitai and similar resistance squads felt they had no other alternative. They rationalized their actions in terms of loyalty and duty and not in terms of victory or defeat. Consciously or unconsciously, they adopted the role of "loyal retainer" and acted out the requirements of this "root paradigm." The Battle of Ueno Hill was in this sense inevitable. Katsu Kaishū and other Tokugawa officials attempted to negotiate a peaceful settlement. They failed not so much because of the intransigence of the imperial forces as because of the strength of the Tokugawa tradition of righteous resistance.

One final consideration is the legacy of Tokugawa resistance. The members of the Shōgitai failed to resuscitate the Tokugawa order. Yet, like the drama of the Forbidden Gate earlier in 1864, the Battle of Ueno Hill had consequences far beyond the defeat of a few thousand dissidents. Victor Turner's study of the abortive Hidalgo Insurrection of 1810 has shown that even movements and revolutions that fail can restructure the political field and leave deposits having potent effects in the future. "It was a failure for Hidalgo the man, but a success in establishing a new myth containing a new set of paradigms, goals, and incentives for Mexican struggle."<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the actions of the Shōgitai in opposing the new imperial regime have left a legacy of loyal resistance that has continued both to inspire and horrify modern Japan. Popular novelists and kabuki playwrights have repeatedly championed their cause. On the one hand, Ueno Hill can be seen as the symbolic birthplace of modern political opposition movements. Using different strategies, the People's Rights Movement of the 1870s and 1880s and the popular parties of the 1890s also attacked the machinations of Satsuma and Chōshū and their arbitrary control over the imperial state. On the other hand, Shōgitai members have been immortalized as exemplars of righteous resistance against overwhelming forces, and have helped to perpetuate the Chūshingura tradition into modern Japan. In this sense,

<sup>46</sup> Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.



Shōgitai resistance can be seen as the archetype of Saigō Takamori's revolt in 1877 and the young officers' insurrection on February 26, 1936.

Apart from this psychohistorical legacy, Tokugawa resistance produced extensive social and political change that threatened the success of the new regime. The difficulties experienced by the imperial forces in pacifying Edo and the Kantō region made many domains that had initially sided with the new regime question their decision.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the strength of Tokugawa resistance disturbed the faith of foreign powers in the new government.<sup>49</sup> This is not to say that a Shōgitai victory could have restored the Tokugawa family fortunes. Tokugawa authority had crumbled; it was economically and politically bankrupt. But sustained political disorder was an alternative to the success of the imperial regime. So was colonization. The prospect of a lengthy civil war, which would "paralyze our commerce," as one British representative put it, was not attractive.<sup>50</sup> These considerations underscore the importance of the Battle of Ueno Hill as a moment of historic crisis. Victory gave the imperial command the ability to regain the momentum that it had lost. Only after this short but hard-fought battle can one conclude that Tokugawa forces were no longer contenders for power and that the imperial will was to prevail.

<sup>48</sup> See Kojima Shigeo, *Kantō fudai han no kenkyū* (Tokyo), for details.

<sup>49</sup> Haraguchi Kiyoshi, *Boshin sensō* (Tokyo, 1963), pp. 191-196.

<sup>50</sup> A. B. Mitford to Harry S. Parkes, Osaka, July 19, 1868. Dispatch from Harry S. Parkes to Foreign Office, No. 188, encl.