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# The Restoration Movement in Chōshū

ALBERT CRAIG

UNTIL recent times, and to a certain extent, even at the present, most historians have spoken of the movements which led to the Meiji Restoration as lower samurai movements. It is my aim in this article to show that they were not. First, negatively, I hope to show by a consideration of what is meant by the term "lower samurai" and by the application of this to the Chōshū scene that the early Restoration movement or *sonnō jōi* (Honor the Emperor, Expel the Barbarian) movement<sup>1</sup> cannot be described as a lower samurai movement. Second, positively, I will attempt an alternate characterization in terms of the different groups participating in this movement in Chōshū from its inception in 1858 until its culmination in the Chōshū Civil War in 1865.

The first reason why the *sonnō jōi* movement should not be termed a "lower samurai movement" is that the phrase "lower samurai movement" is so ambiguous and so vague as to be more of a hindrance than a help in characterizing the groups which were active on the eve of the Meiji Restoration. Definitions of what is meant by "lower samurai" vary from writer to writer. Some will define it in such a manner that ninety to ninety-five per cent of the military class are lower samurai; others define it such that only about fifty per cent of the samurai class are called lower samurai. Such widely variant characterizations result from the great number of different criteria used in these definitions. Some writers define "lower samurai" in terms of the gradations of feudal rank; others have said that those samurai who did not have the right to an audience with their daimyo were lower samurai. Max Weber held that samurai without fiefs were lower samurai;<sup>2</sup> still other historians have defined "lower samurai" in terms of arbitrary income brackets. As an example of the latter, one historian has suggested that all samurai with fiefs or stipends of less than one hundred *ko*ku were lower samurai, those with fiefs or stipends ranging from one hundred to two hundred and fifty *ko*ku were middle samurai, and those with more than two hundred and fifty *ko*ku, upper samurai.<sup>3</sup>

However varied the above criteria may be, each contains a certain truth concerning the status of samurai during the Tokugawa period. In the appropriate context, each can be used as a working definition, and as such, each has certain advantages and certain disadvantages. Unfortunately, however, many writers blithely use "lower samurai" without bothering to define the term at all. This is inexcusable: where a

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<sup>1</sup> It is well to distinguish between *sonnō* and *jōi* as ideas and *sonnō jōi* as the name of a movement. Both *sonnō* and, to a lesser extent *jōi*, continued down to, and even after 1868. The *sonnō jōi* movement, on the other hand, ended early in 1865; or, alternatively, one might say in 1865 it underwent a metamorphosis emerging as the *tōbaku* (Overthrow the Bakufu) movement.

<sup>2</sup> Shimmi Kikiji, *Kakyū shizoku no kenkyū* [*A Study of Lower Samurai*] (Tokyo, 1953), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Tanaka Akira, "Chōshū-han no Tempō kaikaku" ["The Tempō Reform in Chōshū"], *Historia*, No. 18 (1957), pp. 28-29.

variety of definitions makes “lower samurai” vague, a lack of definition reduces the term to an absurdity. Consequently, one finds writers lumping together men of diverse rank and status (Saigō, Ōkubo, Kido, Takasugi, Itō, Yamagata, Ōkuma, Gotō, Itagaki, etc.) as if all were equal or almost equal in station.

Further, what is more significant for the purpose of this article is that even when “lower samurai” is rigorously defined, it is still impossible to apply it to the *sonnō jōi* movement in such a way that it becomes valid to call the movement a lower samurai movement. This can be illustrated by an application to the Chōshū *sonnō jōi* movement of the two most common, and perhaps most valid, definitions of “lower samurai.”

The first definition distinguishes between *shi*<sup>a</sup> (alternately *shizoku*<sup>b</sup> or *shibun*<sup>c</sup> or *shikaku*<sup>d</sup>) and *sotsu*<sup>e</sup> (alternately *keihai*<sup>f</sup> or *keisotsu*<sup>g</sup>).<sup>4</sup> That is to say, it distinguishes between samurai and soldier, or, since “samurai” is used in English to denote the entire military class, between knight and soldier.<sup>5</sup> By this definition, “lower samurai” is defined as *sotsu* or soldier. In terms of the realities of Tokugawa society, this is one of the best possible definitions. Throughout the Tokugawa period the distinction

<sup>4</sup>It should be noted that there is a difference between *shi* and *sotsu* when they are used as general terms roughly equivalent in their denotation to *shikaku* and *keihai*, and *shi* (or *shizoku*) and *sotsu* (or *sotsuzoku*)<sup>1</sup> as names given to administrative categories after the Meiji Restoration. *Shizoku* as an administrative category was first established in 1869 (Meiji 2.6). It was set up as a new national class beneath the *kazoku*<sup>m</sup> (nobles and former daimyo) and above the commoners at the same time that the daimyo gave up their fiefs and vassals to the Emperor (*hanseki hōkan*). Six months later the Meiji government set up the distinction between *shizoku* and *sotsu*; originally this was to apply only to the former retainers of the Shogun. Actually, however, this distinction was picked up and used by almost all of the *han*. In fact, in most cases, the *han* went on to make many finer distinctions within these two major categories, mirroring the many fine distinctions of rank of the Tokugawa period. As a consequence, in 1870 (Meiji 3.9), the government issued an order legitimizing the *han*'s usage of these two categories but prohibiting the various finer distinctions. The difficulty with this order was that the decision as to who should be placed in the *shizoku* and who in the *sotsu*, was left to the various *han*. As a result, groups that in one *han* were made *shizoku* were in another, made *sotsu*. Some, for example, put the stratum of *kachi* in the *shizoku* and others put them in the class of *sotsu*. Some such as Mita-*han* said that samurai living outside of the castle town (*chishi*<sup>o</sup>, literally, “country samurai”) should be *sotsu*; others such as Takamatsu-*han* said they should be *shizoku*. Some *han* included *baishin* among the *sotsu*, while others made up an entirely new category, *baisotsu*<sup>p</sup>, for the rear vassals. (See Shimmi, pp. 1–8.) Because of these many irregularities, an order was issued by the Meiji government in 1872 (Meiji 5.1) abolishing the category of *sotsu*. The *han* were instructed to include all *sotsu* who had been hereditary retainers in the class of *shizoku* and to register all others, such as commoners who had been permitted to wear swords and to bear a name, single generation samurai, peasant officials, and the like, as commoners (*heimin*). This immediately gave rise to protests from those newly registered as commoners and a “Restore Rank Movement” (*fukuzoku undō*<sup>q</sup>) began which continued until 1887. Moreover, the older distinctions were unofficially continued: the old class or *shi* applied the pejorative “upstart *shizoku*” (*nari agari shizoku*) to those newly elevated from the *sotsu* to the *shizoku*, in much the same way that the former nobles of the Court (*kuge kazoku*<sup>r</sup>) looked down on the newly ennobled daimyo as “upstart nobles” (*shin kazoku*<sup>s</sup>, literally, “new nobles”). Consequently, it must be kept in mind that *shi* or *shikaku* in the Tokugawa sense is not strictly the same as *shi* or *shizoku* in the 1869–72 administrative sense, and that *sotsu* or *keihai* in the Tokugawa sense is not exactly the same as *sotsu* or *sotsuzoku* in the early Meiji sense. Yet, in spite of the lack of perfect congruence, the Meiji administrative categories were obviously intended to mirror the Tokugawa classes and were substantially the same except for borderline cases, and therefore I felt justified in treating them together under one definition.

<sup>5</sup>In English the use of “samurai” is both broader and narrower than in Japanese: broader in that it designates the entire *bushi* class and not just its upper levels, and narrower in that it fails to include Court or temple samurai who were not *bushi*.

between *shi* and *sotsu* (or between *shikaku* and *keihai*) was the fundamental cleavage within the military class. In Chōshū, for example, there were seventeen ranks or strata within the class of *shi* or knights, and twenty-three of *sotsu* or soldiers.<sup>6</sup> Within each of these two divisions there was a certain limited measure of mobility; between them there was almost none.

This distinction, moreover, was not limited to Chōshū alone but it was fundamental in most of the *han* in Japan. Shimazu Hisamitsu of Satsuma, for example, criticized the early Meiji conscription law saying that it “lowered *shi* making *sotsu* of them.”<sup>7</sup> A contemporary Japanese scholar, Shimmi Kikiji, in his work on the “lower samurai” of Owari-*han* writes that “in the period of the military houses there was a strict status distinction between *shi* and *sotsu*,” and he limited his study to an investigation of the latter.<sup>8</sup>

In Chōshū at the beginning of the Bakumatsu period in 1853 there were about 11,000 samurai; this is, of course, the number of samurai families and not the number of individuals within the samurai class. Of these 11,000 samurai about 5,600 were direct vassals and the remaining 5,400 were *baishin*<sup>9</sup> or rear vassals.<sup>9</sup> Of the direct vassals, about fifty-two per cent were *shi* and forty-eight per cent, *sotsu*. Comparably exact figures are unavailable for the class of rear vassals but known examples suggest that the proportion of *shi* to *sotsu* was roughly the same among rear vassals as among direct vassals.<sup>10</sup> That the distinction between *shi* and *sotsu* was even more fundamental than the one between direct and rear vassal can be seen by the fact that while a direct vassal *shi* was higher in social status than a rear vassal *shi*, a rear vassal *shi* was higher than a direct vassal *sotsu*.<sup>11</sup>

When this first definition is applied to the *sonnō jōi* movement in Chōshū we can immediately see that it was not a lower samurai movement, a movement of *sotsu*. Even excluding the Elders and others of the highest strata of *shi* who were a part of the movement after 1862, we find that a large number of the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals, those in Chōshū associated with the school of Yoshida Shōin, were not lower samurai. Yoshida Shōin himself, Kido Kōin, Takasugi Shinsaku, Kusaka Genzui, Inoue Kaoru, Maebara Issei, Hirozawa Saneomi, and perhaps even Ōmura Masujirō, to mention only a few of the more prominent figures, were all *shi*, all upper samurai.

A second definition of the term “lower samurai,” one which also has considerable merit, is substantially different from the first. This second definition limits the use of the term “upper samurai” to the top two strata, and a part of the third, out of a total of seventeen strata of *shi*. It then discerns an intermediary class of middle samurai consisting of the other part of the third stratum and the next four strata of *shi*; and finally, it lumps together the remaining ten ranks of *shi*, twenty-three ranks of *sotsu*,

<sup>6</sup> Suematsu Kenchō, *Bōchō kaiten shi* [*A History of Chōshū and the Meiji Restoration*] (Tokyo, 1921), I, 36–39.

<sup>7</sup> Shimmi, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Shimmi, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Umetani Noboru, “Meiji ishin ni okeru kiheitai no mondai” [“The Problem of the Kiheitai in the History of the Meiji Restoration”], *jimbun gakuho*, No. 3 (1953), pp. 17–18. Other records have placed the number of families of rear vassals as high as 6,000.

<sup>10</sup> Kimura Motoi of Meiji University has kindly given me figures which he obtained from the *Kerai kyūroku chō* of 1870 showing the breakdown of the retainers (rear vassals) of Masuda Uemon, an Elder of Chōshū. Of a total of 538 retainers, 263 were *shi* and 275 *sotsu*.

<sup>11</sup> *Bōchō kaiten shi*, I, 41.

and the entire body of rear vassals, into one great class of lower samurai. Like the first, this definition is very common: it was used by the Chōshū government in the administrative reform of the first year of Meiji;<sup>12</sup> it was used in the *Bōchō kaiten shi*, the comprehensive history of Bakumatsu Chōshū;<sup>13</sup> and a definition very close to this was implied by Fukuzawa Yukichi when in his autobiography he spoke of himself as a lower samurai,<sup>14</sup> or in his work *Kyūhanjō*, he spoke of those of the rank of *kachi*<sup>15</sup> and below as lower samurai.<sup>16</sup>

Even apart from its widespread use there is almost as much to be said for this second definition as there is for the first. Though the distinction between *shi* and *sotsu* was primary during the Tokugawa period, there were immense differences between the upper and lower strata of *shi*. Socially and economically the upper *shi* and the low-ranking *shi* were almost in two separate worlds: the highest-ranking *shi* in Chōshū had a fief of 16,000 *roku*, larger than that of many daimyo; on the other hand, hundreds of lower *shi* received stipends of less than forty *roku*. Throughout the Tokugawa period and even during the Bakumatsu period, bureaucratic position in the *han* was limited almost exclusively to the top four strata of *shi*. However superior the lower *shi* might have felt towards the *sotsu*, when viewed from the vantage ground of an upper *shi*, his situation was not vastly different from that of the *sotsu*. Sufu Masanosuke, a *shi* of the fourth highest rank and the leader of the activist bureaucratic clique that controlled the Chōshū government from 1858 to 1864, once lamented during a period of crisis in 1864 that he could do nothing since his rank was so low.<sup>16</sup> This statement was made in unusual circumstances; nevertheless, it indicates the great differences in position and power existing even within the top strata of *shi*.

Upon applying this second definition to the Chōshū samurai class, we find that less than one per cent of the samurai are upper samurai; about fourteen per cent are middle samurai, and eighty-five per cent are lower samurai.<sup>17</sup> By this definition al-

<sup>12</sup> Kimura Motoi, "Hagi-han zaichi kashindan ni tsuite" ["Country Vassal Groups in Chōshū"], *SZ*, LXII, No. 8 (1953), 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Bōchō kaiten shi*, I, 35, 47. This second definition is implicit when, for example, the *mukyūdōri* or *kachi* are referred to as lower samurai. This may well reflect the early Meiji use of the term. The *Bōchō kaiten shi* also recognizes the distinction between *shi* and *sotsu* as fundamental throughout the Tokugawa period.

<sup>14</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, trans. Kiyooka Eiichi (Tokyo, 1948), p. 19. "Children of lower samurai families like ours were obliged to use a respectful manner of address in speaking to the children of high samurai families. . . ."

<sup>15</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Kyūhanjō*, trans. Carmen Blacker, *MN*, IX (1953), p. 311. Fukuzawa's distinction between *kyūnin*, those with fiefs, and *kachi*, which often refers specifically to those who march in the cortege of their daimyo, but here used in its more general sense as foot soldier, is clearly not the same as our distinction between *shi* and *sotsu*. And yet Fukuzawa refers to it as the fundamental cleavage in the samurai class in *Nakatsu-han*. Therefore, it may be that this should be taken as an illustration of the diversity of samurai class structure during the Tokugawa period. Certainly most *han* would consider Fukuzawa, a member of the *nakakoshō* as a *shi* and not as a *sotsu*. When we consider that Fukuzawa's description of Nakatsu samurai class structure excluded *baishin*, then the *kyūnin* class may really have comprised only one-sixth or fourteen per cent of the total class, about the same as the middle and upper samurai in Chōshū by our second definition. It is to be hoped that someone will analyze Fukuzawa's *Kyūhanjō* in relation to more universal terms which must appear in the documents of *Nakatsu-han*.

<sup>16</sup> *Bōchō kaiten shi*, VI, 57-58.

<sup>17</sup> By this definition only the highest two and a part of the third stratum of *shi* were upper samurai. The top two strata contained the eight *karō* families. The third stratum of *shi*, the so-called *yorigumi*,

most any large movement of samurai would of necessity be a lower samurai movement unless it were made up from the ranks of those already in power. The *sonnō jōi* movement is no exception: by this definition it can indeed be called a lower samurai movement but to call it that is to say very little about it. Given this definition what now become important are the finer distinctions within the larger class of lower samurai. Which of the subgroups within the class of lower samurai were active in the movement and why, or what type of person within which subgroup was the most active, and so on. Moreover, even by this inclusive definition which designates eighty-five per cent of Chōshū's military class as lower samurai, many of the most important *sonnō jōi* leaders, men such as Kido Kōin, Takasugi Shinsaku, Inoue Kaoru, Sufu Masanosuke, etc., were still either middle or upper samurai.

Thus, neither of these two most common definitions of "lower samurai" can be satisfactorily applied to the *sonnō jōi* movement. By the first, it is false to call it a lower samurai movement; by the second, it is closer to the truth but the truth is no longer meaningful.

Perhaps even more dangerous than the ambiguity inherent in the common use of the term "lower samurai" is the fact that the term implies, or at least suggests, certain assumptions concerning the motivations of those who participated in the movement that are not true. "Lower samurai movement" suggests a single class united by common economic and political frustrations and moved by a common resentment against the Tokugawa system under which they lived. It suggests an impoverished military class suffering from both the demands of their *han* government and the demands of a new and rising commercial economy to which their traditional way of life could not adjust; a class of samurai who, by participating in the *sonnō jōi* movement, were somehow striking out at their feudal fetters; samurai who, finding no outlet for their ambitions within the existing society, were willing to turn tradition upside down to create a new order. This is a very seductive picture and one not completely untrue; yet, it is a distortion.

First, the *sonnō jōi* movement in Chōshū was not the work of a single group with a single set of motivations; it was supported by at least three distinct groups within the *han* and its nature was as complex as that of these different groups. Second, economically, it is not clear that the conditions of the Chōshū samurai were any worse in the Bakumatsu period than they had been fifty or one hundred years earlier. Reforms had been carried out during the 1840's and 1850's, the debts of the samurai had been reduced or taken over by the *han*, and the amount "borrowed" from the stipend of the samurai to supplement the Chōshū budget had been curtailed. Moreover, the rising price of rice during the Bakumatsu period made their fixed income worth considerably more than at an earlier period. Until these changes are studied in relation to the prices of other goods and services, one cannot simply assume that their condition was steadily deteriorating. Third, even if the conditions of the samurai can be shown to have grown worse during the Bakumatsu period—and it is very unlikely that this was the case in Chōshū—one may not infer automatically that they had become disenchanted with the old society. Rather, there are many indications that the vast majority of those participating in the movements of the Bakumatsu period were in-

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had sixty-two members with incomes ranging from 5,000 to 250 *hoku*. Of these 62 families, only those with fiefs greater than 1,000 *hoku* were rated as upper samurai by this definition.



tent on recreating the virtues of the old society and not on creating a new order. Even commoners joining the movement seem to have done so to obtain the coveted status of the military class rather than from an anti-feudal position. Finally, the strength and nature of the *sonnō jōi* movement varied, or appeared to vary from area to area. In Saga or Mito or Tosa, the movement seemed to transcend *han* borders: the loyalty of the “loyalist” samurai appeared to pass from a local to a national focus. On the other hand, in Chōshū, and possibly Satsuma, the loyalty of certain *sonnō* factions to the Emperor was inextricably linked with their loyalty to the daimyo.

The difficulties of definition and assumptions involved in calling the *sonnō jōi* movement a “lower samurai movement” may appear as a verbal quibble. Its significance, however, is much greater. If the movement cannot truthfully or meaningfully be called a lower samurai movement, and if the nature of the movement was not that suggested by the term, then one is forced to seek an alternative characterization. The razing of one construct must lead to the formulation of others.

In Chōshū the *sonnō jōi* movement as it developed from 1858 to 1865 was supported by three major groups each with a different character: the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals, the activist bureaucratic clique, and the auxiliary militia. The differing natures of these three groups can be seen by discussing phase by phase the movement as it emerged in Chōshū.<sup>18</sup>

The first phase of the movement was the incubation period of the *sonnō jōi* ideology and ideologists, centering on the school of Yoshida Shōin. It is this aspect of the movement in Chōshū that has been given the fullest treatment by Western historians. In terms of class origins the backgrounds of Shōin’s students were various: some were high-ranking *shi* such as Takasugi, others *sotsu* such as Itō, and some were the sons of well-to-do peasants (perhaps it is significant that there are no famous names to mention in this last category). In spite of their diverse origins, were these students impelled by a common motivation? Judging from their own remarks, some were attracted by the person of Shōin, some came to imbibe of what in Hagi in 1857 could be thought of as progressive education, others came simply because as *sotsu* or *baishin* they were ineligible to enter the official Chōshū “college,” the Meirinkan. One of Shōin’s former students, recollecting his own motives, wrote: “At the time the reputation of Master Shōin was high and everyone was going to his school; it was the fashion. Besides, I thought that I might be able to find [official] employment if I attended the school.”<sup>19</sup> And yet, however diverse their material motivations may have been, those of Shōin’s students who went on to participate actively in the *sonnō jōi* movement seem to have been singularly devoted to certain key concepts in his teachings. It is this common attachment to doctrine that enables us to refer to them as “*sonnō jōi* intellectuals,” although “*sonnō jōi* moralists” might be a better description if it did not have other connotations as well.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Most of the materials in the second part of this article have been culled from within the depths of the *Bōchō kaiten shi*. I did not feel it necessary to footnote materials that are readily available in standard secondary works.

<sup>19</sup> Yoshida Shōin *zenshū* [The Collected Works of Yoshida Shōin], XII (Tokyo, 1940), 206.

<sup>20</sup> Many extremely important questions still remain concerning the relation between Shōin’s school and the later rise of the Chōshū *sonnō jōi* intellectuals: how many students passed through his school, of these how many later became politically active, how many were inactive, how many who were active were not associated with the school, and so on. The answers to these and other related questions will shed considerable light on the nature of the early movement in Chōshū.

If any of the groups in Chōshū which contributed to the movement can be thought of as possessing a loyalty which transcended the boundaries of the *han* it was undoubtedly this group, yet even this group seems from time to time to have been moved by what can only be called "*han* nationalism." Shōin's disciples, for example, once suggested that they join with like-minded samurai of Echizen, Owari, Mito, and Satsuma to assassinate the Bakufu Tairō, Ii Naosuke. Shōin responded: "It would be a good thing to join with the others to punish the evil Ii; yet if the other *han* are the leaders and ours the follower, would this not be shameful"?<sup>21</sup> Shōin subsequently proposed an alternative assassination by which the Chōshū group could demonstrate their merit and open the way for later joint action in which Chōshū could participate as an equal.

A second instance of the force of *han* nationalism occurred in the spring of 1859 when Takasugi, Kusaka, and others of Shōin's closest disciples broke with their teacher on the grounds that his plots would bring disaster to Chōshū. Rebuffed by *han* officials, Shōin had become increasingly fanatic throughout 1858; at one point he was told by *han* officials "to stop acting like a reckless student."<sup>22</sup> By early 1859 he had determined to sacrifice himself to his cause and began to plot wild and fantastic schemes, acts of terror and peasant uprisings with no hope of success. His students may have broken with him as much from self-preservation as from loyalty to the *han*, yet they spoke only of the latter. In 1859 loyalty to the *han* was functional while loyalty to a national Emperor was a dream cherishable only by extreme idealists.

The second phase of Chōshū's *sonnō jōi* movement began in 1861 after the execution of Yoshida Shōin and the assassination of the Bakufu Tairō Ii. This second phase was a sort of transitional phase linking the intellectual *sonnō jōi*-ism of 1858 and 1859 with the bureaucratic *sonnō jōi*-ism of 1862. By 1861 the activist bureaucratic clique, the dominant clique within the *han* bureaucracy, had decided that Chōshū should embark on a policy of mediation between the Bakufu and the Court. The specific policy on which it hoped to mediate was heavily weighted in favor of the Bakufu. Consequently, it was attacked from two sides within Chōshū: on the one hand the conservative bureaucratic clique (the *Zōkurontō* referred to by E. Herbert Norman)<sup>23</sup> argued that any involvement in national politics was dangerous to the *han*; on the other hand the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals contended that it was not in accord with the pro-Emperor traditions of Chōshū. The activist bureaucratic clique was little affected by these criticisms and continued with its negotiations between the Court and the Bakufu.

The third phase of the Chōshū *sonnō jōi* movement began in 1862 when Satsuma, by adopting a position slightly more favorable to the Court than that of Chōshū, was able to supplant Chōshū as mediator between the Bakufu and the Court. This was a crucial point in the development of the Chōshū *sonnō jōi* movement. At this point the activist bureaucratic clique in charge of the Chōshū government adopted the pro-Court *sonnō jōi* position of the loyalist intellectuals. It did this not because of any intrinsic merits the doctrine might possess, not because the activist bureaucrats were convinced of its truth (since barely a year before they had been advocating an almost opposite policy), not because of the agitation of the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals to whom

<sup>21</sup> Naramoto Tatsuya, *Yoshida Shōin* (Tokyo, 1955), p. 132.

<sup>22</sup> *Bōchō kaiten shi*, II, 263.

<sup>23</sup> E. Herbert Norman, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* (New York, 1948), pp. 64–66.



they had been almost indifferent, but solely as a means to regain the lead in national politics that Chōshū had lost to Satsuma. This proved effective. The Court which had dropped Chōshū's mediation in favor of that of Satsuma now dropped Satsuma and once again took up with Chōshū.

Who were these activist bureaucrats responsible for throwing Chōshū's weight behind the *sonnō jōi* movement? They were samurai from the fourth highest rank of *shi* with fiefs or stipends averaging about one hundred *ko*ku.<sup>24</sup> Since only 661 of Chōshū's 11,000 samurai had income of one hundred *ko*ku or more, this placed them roughly in the upper six per cent of the Chōshū samurai class.<sup>25</sup> It cannot be over-emphasized that it was the military power of Chōshū controlled by this activist clique of bureaucrats which enabled the *sonnō jōi* movement to grow as it did in Kyoto in 1862 and 1863. Had they not been backed by Chōshū, the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals would have been scattered as chaff before the wind by any of the powerful *han* advocating more moderate policies.

It should also be mentioned that the adoption of the *sonnō jōi* policy by the Chōshū government did not mean the inclusion of the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals in the government. For the most part, the relationship between these intellectuals and the activist bureaucrats was essentially symbiotic: the bureaucrats used the intellectuals for their contacts with the samurai of other *han* and the intellectuals used the official Chōshū position in Kyoto as a shield behind which they could spread their ideas and forward the position of the Court. The only exception to the separation of the two groups was the appointment of Kido Kōin to a fairly important position in the *han* government. While his appointment may have been facilitated by the new *sonnō jōi* policy of Chōshū it must be stressed that Kido rose through the usual channels of bureaucratic advancement and that he was a high-ranking samurai with a stipend of one hundred and fifty *ko*ku, a stipend higher than the average of one hundred *ko*ku of the activist bureaucrats.

The fourth phase of the *sonnō jōi* movement, a period of decline, began in the summer of 1863 when two profound changes took place in the forces and fortunes of the movement. The first was the formation in Chōshū of an auxiliary militia; the second was the expulsion of Chōshū and the *sonnō jōi* forces from Kyoto. The auxiliary militia or *shotai*<sup>26</sup> were formed in response to a bombardment of Shimonoseki by foreign warships. They were formed by the orders of the activist bureaucrats, organized by Takasugi Shinsaku (a samurai with a stipend or fief of two hundred *ko*ku) who was given official position at this time, and, for the most part, led by the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals. The composition of these auxiliary militia was mixed: part samurai and part commoner in varying proportions. The most famous if not the largest of the *shotai*, the *Kiheitai*, contained more samurai than commoners. Several others whose composition have been analyzed contained about seventy per cent commoners and thirty per cent samurai.<sup>26</sup> A few of the smaller units may have contained an even larger percentage of commoners but they were not peasant militia by any means. The samurai component was made up mostly of rear vassals, *ashigaru*<sup>27</sup>, and

<sup>24</sup> Tanaka Akira, "Tōbakuha no keisei katei" ["The Process of Formation of the Anti-Tokugawa Party"], *Rekishigaku kenkyū*, No. 205 (March 1957), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Bōchō kaiten shi*, I, 42.

<sup>26</sup> Tanaka Akira, "Chōshū-han kaikakuha no kiban" ["Foundation of Reformers in the Chōshū Clan"], *Shichō*, No. 51 (1954), pp. 12-13.

the like, but they also contained a leaven of upper samurai, that is to say, *shi* as well. The commoner component was even more heterogeneous: peasants, hunters, merchants, priests, and even professional wrestlers were present in their ranks. In almost every case the commoners seem to have been motivated by a desire for the symbols and status of the samurai. These auxiliary militia were the third force supporting the *sonnō jōi* movement in Chōshū.

The second profound change in the fortunes of the movement was the expulsion of Chōshū and the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals from Kyoto by a Satsuma-Aizu *coup d'état* in the summer of 1863. By this coup Satsuma once again regained the leadership in national politics which she had lost a year earlier; Chōshū and the *sonnō jōi* movement were once again relegated to the periphery of national politics. In reaction to this each of the three groups in Chōshū that had supported the *sonnō jōi* policies felt the need for a new and determined action to regain Chōshū's former position. The activist bureaucratic clique needed national position to justify their own past policies and to maintain themselves in office (they were criticized more and more by the conservative clique for having exposed the *han* to the dangers of national politics). The auxiliary militia wanted a chance to prove their mettle as warriors. And the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals wished to restore both Chōshū and the Court to their rightful position in national affairs. Since the national struggle was no longer one of words or policies, it was decided to launch a counter-coup. This was attempted in the summer of 1864 but it failed and Chōshū was declared the "Enemy of the Court" for having tried to storm the Imperial Palace. The First Chōshū Expedition was proclaimed, orders were sent out by the Bakufu for the mobilization of the troops of the various *han*, and by the late fall of 1864 Chōshū was surrounded by a Bakufu army awaiting the order to attack.

This led to the fifth and final phase of the *sonnō jōi* movement in Chōshū. The threat posed by the imminent attack of the poised Bakufu army led to the dissolution of the *sonnō jōi* coalition first formed in 1862, and in a sense the dissolution of this coalition marked the end of the *sonnō jōi* movement. One partner to the coalition, the activist bureaucratic clique, lost control of the *han* government which came into the hands of the conservative bureaucratic clique. The conservative clique then charged their opposition with the responsibility for the 1864 attack in Kyoto and executed seventeen of the activist clique (among them three Elders who were perhaps not members of any clique in a strict sense but who had led the attack on Kyoto). The conservative clique then ordered the auxiliary militia to disband: a few did but most of them merely withdrew to isolated spots in the *han* to await further action. If the *sonnō jōi* movement shorn of its governmental support can be thought to have continued at all it was in the militia. The third group, the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals, having no status in the official hierarchy of the *han*, were considered too insignificant to be punished along with the active bureaucrats and most of them withdrew with the militia. Only Kido and Takasugi who had held official position as well as having been disciples of Yoshida Shōin were forced to remain outside the *han*.

Satisfied with these measures and confident that Chōshū under the conservative government was neutralized and would no longer aspire to a role in national politics, the Bakufu army withdrew. This was the signal for an uprising by the militia. It marked the beginning of the Chōshū Civil War. It was perhaps the most crucial moment in Chōshū Bakumatsu history. It marked the point at which the *sonnō jōi*

movement became the *tōbaku* (overthrow the Bakufu) movement. It marked a new distribution of forces within the *han*.

It also marked a battle between two extremes. No longer restrained by the rational calculations of the activist bureaucratic clique, undaunted by the prospects of a second Bakufu expedition against Chōshū, the militia led by the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals set out to unseat the conservative government. The conservative government also represented an extreme of a sort. It was relatively unpopular and had long been out of power. It could command the allegiance of only a part of the regular *han* army. The nature of the Civil War is not yet completely clear but it seems to have been fought between units of the auxiliary militia and small sections of the regular *han* army. But a large number of important military groups such as rear vassals, a good number of the regular *han* army, and most peasant militia, remained neutral. Had these neutral groups supported the conservatives, the uprising of the militia would undoubtedly have been crushed. As it was the militia was victorious.

Was the Civil War in any sense a struggle between upper and lower samurai? The nature and composition of the militia and *sonnō jōi* intellectuals (now *tōbaku* intellectuals) have already been discussed; how do they compare with the conservative clique or bureaucrats and their military support? As measured in terms of rank and stipend, the conservative clique was of almost exactly the same status as the former activist clique. That is to say, the average stipend or fief of its members was about one hundred *hoku*, placing them in the upper six per cent of the Chōshū military class.<sup>27</sup> Their military support was various: some samurai from high-ranking families of the castle town of Hagi, some samurai who resented the inclusion of commoners in the militia, and some who fought solely because the conservative government could issue orders in the name of the daimyo. Since the fighting took place between extremes, and since most of the activist clique—the high-ranking *sonnō jōi* supporters—had been executed, in a certain sense one can say that a class differential existed in the Civil War that had not existed earlier. However, one must remember that several of the Elders, the highest-ranking samurai of all, still favored the pro-Court forces while the conservatives used peasant troops to the extent that they could muster them. Even at this late stage, the common image of anti-feudal lower samurai (or lower samurai and peasants) fighting against a feudal aristocracy is a distortion of historical fact.

In conclusion, it seems clear that the usual uncritical and undefined use of “lower samurai” has thrown more shadow than light on the study of Bakumatsu history. Therefore, it must be abandoned except when rigorously defined, and when so defined it can no longer be used to characterize the political movements of the period.

In place of the class concept of “lower samurai” we have substituted a characterization in terms of three groups: the activist bureaucrats, the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals, and the auxiliary militia. This is a more detailed analysis than the above, but it is also a different kind of analysis and we must be careful not to impute to these three groups the inflexible character which hitherto has all too often been attributed to the class of “lower samurai.” First, it should be made clear that none of the above groups were monoliths with a single set of class or group determinants. On the contrary, each had many facets and further research must explain which facet, or which combination of facets, was crucial at which times. There was also a great deal of variation within any

<sup>27</sup> Tanaka Akira, “Tōbakuha no keisei katei,” p. 4.

one group. The activist bureaucrats split over the question of whether or not to adopt the *sonnō jōi* policy in 1864. Both bureaucrats and intellectuals split over the question of the 1864 Kyoto counter-coup. Moreover, both in personnel and policies these groups were fluid, changing considerably over a period of time. The *sonnō jōi* intellectuals who repudiated Yoshida Shōin in 1858 were quite different from those who began the *han* civil war in 1865.

We must also emphasize that the actions of any group are not explicable in terms of the group alone (in contrast to the class concept of lower samurai with its fixed set of built-in motivations). The identity of the activist bureaucrats as bureaucrats, for example, is only one among many, and it becomes significant for the *sonnō jōi* movement primarily at those points where it articulates with their identities as samurai of Chōshū, inhabitants of Japan, and so on. They exist within the structured field of Chōshū and it is chiefly the nature of this field and not the nature of the group that differentiates them from roughly comparable bureaucratic cliques in other *han*.

To illustrate concretely the sense in which the success or failure of any group is due largely to the configuration of forces within which it is set, let us take the case of the Chōshū *sonnō jōi* intellectuals. The ultimate triumph of this group in Chōshū does not mean that the group itself was stronger than similar groups in other *han*. Rather it was an indirect consequence of a decision by a traditional bureaucratic clique of upper-ranking samurai to launch Chōshū into the uncertain waters of national politics. This led to Chōshū's competition with Satsuma which in turn led to the adoption of the *sonnō jōi* policy as the official policy of Chōshū. In time the national struggle over policy led to military struggles from which the pro-Court forces eventually emerged victorious. This victory, however, was based on the total strength of the *han* and not solely on the *sonnō jōi* intellectuals.

Finally, although this article has been limited to a consideration of merely one phase of an extremely complex question, the process indicated above suggests at least one possible line of inquiry into the problem of why certain *han* emerged to play important roles in the Restoration while others did not. If in any given *han* one can show the nature of its bureaucratic cliques, their position within the power structure of the *han*, and the factors influencing policy decisions in that *han*, then the position of the *han* in national politics will be understood. And this may further explain why the *sonnō jōi* group in that particular *han* did or did not become important. Only by comparing the experiences of those *han* remaining inactive with those which were active will we be able to explain definitively the successes of the latter.

a 士	f 輕華	k 足輕	p 倍卒	u 家來給祿帳
b 士族	g 輕卒	l 卒族	q 復族運動	v 無給通
c 士分	h 倍臣	m 華族	r 成り上り士族	w 給人
d 士格	i 徒士	n 版籍奉還	s 公卿華族	x 中小姓
e 卒	j 諸隊	o 地士	t 新華族	y 寄組