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## *Crisis in the Tokugawa System*

The bakufu's difficulty in coping with the culture of the townsmen was indicative of the much larger problem that officials were having in dealing with the new social and economic conditions that the development of cities and commerce had created. It is useful to think of the Genroku Period as a kind of divide. On the one side, prior to it, the Tokugawa system was becoming established; its political, social, and economic institutions were being systematized. The samurai elite was adjusting to its new role as an administrative bureaucracy and to its new life in the castle towns. Population surged, city life sprang up, land under cultivation was greatly extended, and a new sedentary life-style took hold.

On the other side of the divide, the years after Genroku to which we must now turn our attention, faults were beginning to appear in the political system. "Since the Genroku period," lamented one scholar in the 1730s, "... the life of the country has deteriorated."<sup>1</sup> Contradictions emerged between the ideological premises that underlay the system and the reality of the way it was in fact operating. There is always a gap between the ideals of a social system and its actual behavior, but after Genroku the gap in Japan was too wide to be overlooked. Behind the facade of political stability, immense social and economic developments occurred that gradually transformed the system. In many different areas these developments created strains. Let us examine them rather arbitrarily under the headings of economic, social, and ideological problems.

### *Economic Problems*

The fundamental problem creating strains within the Tokugawa political system was the transformation of its economic basis and consequent undermining of the premises upon which the system had been

founded. The soaring expenditures of the bakufu and of the individual daimyo tended more and more to exceed their income, which was largely drawn from the land tax levied on the peasants. Expenditures of the lord grew continuously, partly because, with the urban growth, government became more complex. Then, too, it was sometimes less efficient. Laxity and corruption were not uncommon. Social functions associated with government became increasingly elaborate and expensive, and gift giving grew to immense proportions.

The alternate attendance system continued enormously expensive for the daimyo. By the latter part of the Tokugawa Period, the typical lord was devoting a substantial portion of his normal expenditures to costs connected with the system. In addition, not infrequently were emergency or extraordinary outlays required to rebuild mansions after fires, to entertain the shogun, or to cover the costs of marriages, funerals, and other ceremonies in Edo. The steady stream of sumptuary laws, which sought to restrict ostentation in food and dress, indicate that extravagance and conspicuous consumption were a way of life among the upper classes.

Government frequently was unable to generate the added revenues necessary to defray its soaring expenses. Some daimyo succeeded in developing additional sources of income, principally through development of new cash crops that were run as han monopolies, but for the most part they continued to be largely dependent on the land tax and on rice production, which accounted for a shrinking portion of the total economy. Daimyo were often at a disadvantage when they converted their rice income into money at Osaka. There, they were at the mercy of the astute merchant financiers and the vagaries of the rice market. It was possible, of course, that a good harvest, together with capable and honest administration, could increase the coffers of the shogun or the daimyo. In general, however, much more frequently revenues fell short because of bad luck or bad management, and expenditures rose because of extravagance, corruption, and the increased complexity of government.

A negative reason for the financial troubles of government was the overall failure to develop adequate methods for taxing the growing sectors of the economy. For example, the Tokugawa Period saw a great increase in agricultural productivity, which should have allowed the lord to increase the land tax. Yet research seems to indicate that land, from about 1700 on, ceased to be surveyed periodically and thus there was often no adequate accounting of increased productivity. Toward the end of the Tokugawa Period, therefore, in some areas taxes were based on assessments that were a century or more out of date. Why land surveys were neglected is difficult to say, but undoubtedly bureaucratic inertia and consideration of the massive administrative effort required to survey an entire domain were partly responsible.

Still another factor may have been fear of resistance from the peasants. One scholar who has made a careful study of this issue in the Kaga domain concludes, "To tax villages effectively daimyo needed a loyal, knowledgeable, and independent core of officials who had frequent contact with agriculture and the villages under their control. Yet samurai urbanization sacrificed precisely this intimacy and cost daimyo the ability to capitalize on improved crop yields."<sup>2</sup> Whatever the reasons, growing wealth in the agricultural sector was generally not taxed in any systematic way.

Nor was commerce, the most rapidly expanding part of the economy, taxed in a uniform, consistent manner. There were piecemeal attempts, but perhaps the lack of bookkeeping methods and of bureaucratic determination deterred government from more systematic means. Instead it relied, for example, on granting monopolistic privileges to merchant guilds in return for fees. Another type of commercial taxation, if it can properly be called such, was the exaction from wealthy merchants and farmers of forced "loans," which were generally not repaid. In the latter part of the period both the bakufu and the domains had frequent recourse to this method of raising revenues.

### *Social Problems*

As a result of the increasing economic troubles in which government found itself, it was frequently unable to meet its most important financial commitment: the paying of warrior stipends. Often the lord solved his financial problems by passing them on to his retainers. By the end of the eighteenth century cutting warrior stipends, sometimes by as much as 50 percent, was common.

Such a solution may have temporarily eased the daimyo's economic problems, but it only added to increasing unrest in the society he had to govern. By the end of the Tokugawa Period, as a result of their diminished income, perhaps the majority of samurai lived in honorable but austere circumstances. Of course samurai income varied greatly between domains. For instance, a Tosa samurai traveling to Satsuma in late Tokugawa discovered that stipends considered low in his native Tosa would seem generous in Satsuma. It is clear, however, that nearly everywhere the number of "upper" samurai, living in comfortable circumstances, was small compared to the mass of samurai who lived in straitened circumstances. The well-being of the upper strata of the peasant and merchant class was often superior to that of the ordinary samurai. And this anomaly put a great strain on warrior loyalty; it was humiliating and contributed to deteriorating morale.

Like the daimyo and the bakufu, the samurai had to take steps to alleviate his financial difficulty. Many of his measures were makeshift

and often they were degrading, sorely wounding warrior pride. Hard-pressed for money, some samurai adopted merchant boys into their family or married their children to the children of their merchant creditors. Another recourse was to pawn the family armor. Poorer samurai practiced infanticide to reduce their economic liabilities. A large number of the poorer samurai families eked out their inadequate stipends through cottage industries, such as the making of straw sandals. Occasionally, by the nineteenth century, some impoverished samurai simply abandoned their feudal duties, giving up their diminished stipends in return for a better living as commoners.

We ought not to think of the samurai as uniformly mired in poverty. Not only was there a great deal of differentiation within the class as a whole and considerable regional variation, it is also true that much of what is referred to as the increasing "poverty" of the samurai was relative. In the case of some members of the warrior class whose income remained stable, their discontent sprang from unfulfilled wants, rising expectations, and a feeling of being deprived of the fruits of a growing economy. In other words, for such warriors there was an element of psychological poverty involved: they felt themselves deprived because they were unable to buy commodities that members of other classes could afford.

We find a perfect example of growing prosperity among commoners in the upper levels of the farming class. The *gōnō* (wealthy peasants) were an anomalous group within the Tokugawa class structure. Officially, of course, they were peasants and lived in the village, but by the late Tokugawa Period they were set off from other commoners by their wealth and power in the countryside. Not only were they often village headmen and holders of much land, but they were also engaged in a variety of rural commercial enterprises, such as money lending, sake brewing, textile dyeing, or silk and cotton weaving. Their investments in land and rural industries enabled them to support a life-style quite in contrast to their official status. Through contributions to their daimyo's treasury many gained the right to wear swords, bear surnames, and send their sons to the domain academy—all privileges ordinarily reserved for the warrior. The social distance between this group and the samurai was thus rapidly narrowing, and the feelings of many aggrieved warriors at such signs of institutional disintegration and moral decay were summed up by one angry contemporary:

Now the most lamentable abuse of the present day among the peasants is that those who have become wealthy forget their status and live luxuriously like city aristocrats. . . . They build [homes] with the most handsome and wonderful gates, porches, beams, alcoves, ornamental shelves, and libraries. . . . They themselves wear

fine clothes and imitate the ceremonial style of warriors on all such occasions as weddings, celebrations, and masses for the dead.<sup>3</sup>

Class relations were becoming diffuse and difficult to accommodate within the rigid class structure established at the outset of the Tokugawa Period. The spectacle of growing wealth within the commoner classes was doubtless evidence to warriors of institutional disintegration and of moral decay. Respect for rank and the traditional virtues of frugality, industry, and modesty seemed jeopardized. On the other hand, in the biographies of able and wealthy commoners at the end of the Tokugawa Period, plenty of resentment and frustration exists over the fact that the Tokugawa system set strict limits on their social advancement. One finds this particularly among the wealthy peasants.

Of course not all peasants were as fortunate as the *gōnō*. Like the other classes, there was great disparity of wealth: large numbers of the peasantry lived at the subsistence level, terribly at the mercy of the vicissitudes of the weather and the market. Famines on a nationwide scale occurred in the 1720s, the 1780s, and the 1830s as a result of unseasonable weather, and not coincidentally waves of peasant uprisings occurred during the 1780s and the 1830s. Such outbreaks were usually directed against the wealthy, the moneylenders, and local officials.

Few aspects of Tokugawa society have been as controversial as the interpretation of these peasant protests. They increased in number through the period: in the seventeenth century they averaged five a year; in the eighteenth century, twelve a year; and from 1800 to 1868, fifteen a year. Moreover, they became larger, more disorderly, and destructive. Many historians discern in these protests "deepening class conflict between lords and peasants";<sup>4</sup> but Stephen Vlastos, studying uprisings in northern Japan, found that "collective action took the form of property smashings and not political action against the ruling class." Conflict was within the peasant class as poor peasants turned their anger not against the samurai or the feudal political structures but against those closest at hand—the wealthy peasants and village leaders, who were also landlords, entrepreneurs, and moneylenders, whom they held responsible for their distress.<sup>5</sup>

These riots were the ultimate protest that peasants could make against unbearable conditions, and though they were often not political in intent they held political meaning, for this form of protest was a specter that any lord might fear in pondering the possibility of increasing the land tax. Nor were the uprisings simply blind outbursts. Often they had very specific goals, such as the remission of certain taxes, the removal of a particular official, or the correction of some local abuse.

The peasant disturbances of the 1830s culminated in a series of

incidents that followed an abortive uprising in Osaka in 1837 led by Ōshio Heihachirō. Ōshio was a minor bakufu official who accused his superiors of callous disregard for the suffering of common people and plotted an uprising that he hoped would spark other attacks against the established order. Although fires raged for two days through the merchant section of the city, the rebellion was easily quelled by bakufu forces. News of the uprising, however, encouraged others in surrounding provinces.

Such indications of social strain and discontent have led many historians to write of the "decay of feudalism" and to stress in their descriptions the breakdown of the Tokugawa system. This is of course valid. But one should also stress growth—a society growing and changing so markedly that it could no longer be contained within the institutional bounds established by Tokugawa Ieyasu at the beginning of the period.

### *Ideological Problems*

Social discontent within the samurai class was exacerbated by ideological problems that grew out of conflict between the theory and practice of the Tokugawa system. One such problem concerned the appointment of officials in the bakufu and han bureaucracies, which according to widely held principles should have been based on merit. In actual practice, however, after the early Tokugawa Period appointments were made mainly on the basis of social rank. With occasional exceptions the most important offices went to the higher-ranking samurai, and frustration over this situation among young, lower-ranking warriors became one of the greatest forces for change by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The historian Sir George Sansom, in fact, wrote that among all the causes of the anti-Tokugawa movement that led to the downfall of the bakufu, the most powerful was the ambition of young samurai. As the status system gradually hardened, official appointment came to be determined largely by hereditary succession and social rank. By the end of the Genroku Period, the vested interests were entrenched.

Among able, lively, lower-ranking young samurai grew a restless dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the system. They felt unjustly cut off from positions of power and respect; they favored more freedom of movement within the hierarchy; and they opposed hereditary restraints upon such mobility. Many writers who urged that the appointment and promotion of officials be based upon merit alone argued that because of environmental factors ability was to be found especially among lower warriors. They said that hardship and adversity made for intelligence and character, while the wealth and ease of

upper-level warriors made for foolishness and corruption. Blaming the hereditary principle for the failures of government, they sometimes wrote thinly veiled attacks upon the daimyo, who, they implied, were pompous and weak. Despite the implications of these writings, they were not intended as a revolutionary attack on the system. The discontented young warriors were dissatisfied not so much with the system of social hierarchy itself as with their own position in it.

The educational system was partly responsible for the surfacing of this problem, for it tended to call attention to ability. With the spread of domain schools from the middle of the Tokugawa Period on, it became harder to conceal the wide discrepancies between talent demonstrated in the classroom and official appointment based upon hereditary rank.

Other aspects of Tokugawa ideology also manifested contradictions between theory and practice. Loyalty, for example, was the basic virtue upon which samurai training and discipline were organized, but the conditions upon which this key value was based had been utterly transformed during the course of the Tokugawa Period. A profound change in the nature of loyalty and in the relationship between vassal and lord had taken place. During the Warring States Period and the early years of Tokugawa rule, loyalty had two important characteristics.

1. *Loyalty was conditional.* It was based on a bilateral relationship between the lord and his vassal; the lord absolutely depended upon the loyalty of his samurai followers in order to maintain his position and his territory. Without it, his fief would quickly be lost to a neighboring lord. On the other hand, the vassals received in return for their allegiance a fief or a stipend. The relationship was, therefore, vital and mutually dependent, and it was conditional upon both sides fulfilling their functions. When a lord gave signs of weakness, it was not uncommon for vassals to desert him and join a neighboring lord who might better protect and reward them. There were many cases of treachery, of vassals overthrowing their lord. Loyalty was therefore a real, live value—to observe or renounce.

2. *Loyalty was also personal.* Because power was private, there was no higher authority (neither government nor law) that could enforce the relationship. "The lord," writes Craig, "had no court of appeal beyond his own strength should a vassal be disloyal."<sup>6</sup> Loyalty in the Warring States Period was often, Thomas Smith adds, "an intimate, intensely emotional relationship, based in no small part on the personal qualities of the lord, a relationship which existed between men who had fought side by side, grieved together at the loss of comrades, whose safety and families' safety depended on their keeping the faith."<sup>7</sup>

During the Tokugawa Period the lord-vassal relation underwent a silent but profound change.

1. *Loyalty became unconditional.* It was now based on a unilateral relationship; it lost its mutual dependency. With warfare ended, the lord no longer needed to worry about the loyalty of his vassals, for his position was guaranteed by the shogunate and it was virtually impossible for the vassals to leave or overthrow him. The loyalty of the vassal, in other words, was no longer conditional upon the lord's effectiveness as a leader, upon his ability to compensate and protect his retainers. The samurai, under the Tokugawa system, could do no other than give unquestioning obedience to his daimyo—even if his stipend were sharply reduced by his financially troubled lord (a measure no lord would have dared resort to in the Warring States Period).

2. *Loyalty became impersonal.* The relationship between lord and vassal became distant and formal, drained of much of its emotional content by the new circumstances. No longer their leader in war, the lord had less contact with his retainers. Owing to the alternate attendance system, many daimyo were born and raised in Edo and spent a great part of their mature life there. For long periods out of personal touch with conditions in the home fief, such a lord came to be looked on as an administrative head, sometimes little more than a titular leader.

Because their position was hereditary under the Tokugawa and no longer depended on their personal abilities, the lords often lacked qualities of leadership. The inability of government to deal with domestic and external problems called attention to this problem, and the daimyo came in for increasing criticism by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The daimyo, one contemporary writer observed scornfully, "were brought up by women, where no sound of the outside world penetrated and not even officials or retainers dared enter; therefore they knew nothing of men and affairs. Whatever nonsense they spoke was praised as wisdom, every action treated as a miracle of grace and dexterity. If they played chess or any other game, their companions contrived that they won, then threw up their hands, exclaiming 'My, how clever the lord is!'"<sup>8</sup> Although not typical, criticism of the daimyo as weak, foolish, self-indulgent, or incompetent was expressed with increased frequency as the crisis in the Tokugawa system deepened.

In these circumstances one can discern among warriors a longing for a more satisfying form of loyalty. For however much it was bereft of its former emotional significance, loyalty was still a primary value. Every samurai boy internalized it as he grew up. Yet it was scarcely fulfilling to give loyalty to one whose abilities and character were less than peerless or who appeared to be a distant unconcerned leader. In fact what seems to have occurred was that loyalty as a value remained strong but, as the lord became a more remote figure, it was directed more and more toward the han itself—a kind of "han nationalism," as Craig has called it. Or, to put it another way, loyalty was now given to

the lord less because he was an admired individual leader than because he was a symbol of the han.

This transformation in the nature of loyalty helped to prepare the way for modern nationalism. Because loyalty was no longer closely tied to an individual but was rather directed toward the governmental unit with which warriors identified (i.e., their han), when Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived and created the foreign crisis that threatened the nation, consciousness of belonging to Japan was heightened. Loyalty was rather quickly shifted from the han to the nation. Signs of growing national consciousness were, in fact, everywhere on the literary scene in the late Tokugawa Period. An awakened interest in the national tradition was apparent in the curriculum of many domain schools, which encouraged knowledge of Japan's past as a useful addition to Confucian studies.

### *Alternative Visions*

The late Tokugawa Period was increasingly a world out of joint. It was pervaded by a sense of malaise, disarray, and failed expectations.<sup>9</sup> As the effectiveness of time-honored institutions eroded, their underlying concepts of authority and legitimacy lost the capacity to command unquestioning acceptance. As we have seen, institutions were undermined not simply by decay and decline. Life was becoming increasingly complex and diverse in ways that made the Tokugawa system less viable and satisfying. "The explosion of new forms of knowledge in late Tokugawa Japan was increasingly difficult to assimilate to the categories of the existing political system."<sup>10</sup> The sense of a unified and intact realm weakened, and one can discern a longing for a new basis of social solidarity and a restoration of order.

We may say that Japan experienced a cultural crisis in the last decades of Tokugawa rule that gave rise to alternative visions of order at all levels of society. New concepts of governance, new sources of moral values, and new religions appeared and offered solutions to the troubles of the time.

National learning or nativism (*kokugaku*) was one of the most important new visions to arise at this time. It began in the eighteenth century as a literary movement devoted to the study of Japan's ancient classics written prior to China's enormous cultural influence. Nativist scholars wanted to sort out what in Japanese culture was uniquely Japanese from what had been imported to understand better the distinctiveness of Japanese values and aesthetics. The key figure was Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), a brilliant and complex thinker whom the literary historian Donald Keene regards as perhaps the greatest scholar Japan has produced. His most celebrated work was a

study of the *Kojiki*, Japan's earliest historical work, which he considered

an investigation into the Way of ancient Japan. The *Kojiki* was not only a sacred text, but contained the most reliable information on how the Japanese behaved before being infected with Chinese ideas. . . . The purely Japanese virtues—worship of the [Shintō] gods and of their descendant, the emperor—were contrasted with the superficial, meretricious reasoning of the Chinese and of Japanese infatuated with Chinese thought.<sup>11</sup>

Motoori rejected the secular rationalism of Confucian philosophy and sought a pristine Japanese spirit in ancient poetry and in purely Japanese prose works such as *The Tale of Genji*. He and other nativist scholars believed that the introduction of Confucianism into Japan had corrupted the pure and spontaneous spirituality the people had possessed when worshipping Japan's own Shintō deities. He encouraged greater understanding of Japan's cultural essence:

I suggest that one first cleanse oneself of any defiled notions one may have acquired from reading Chinese texts, and then, holding fast to one's pristine Japanese heart, study our ancient texts well. If one does this, one will automatically learn about the Way that should be adopted and practiced. To know these things is to adopt and practice the Way of the Gods.<sup>12</sup>

Embedded in the literary studies of the nativist scholars was a religious dimension with profound political implications. Though still latent, these implications could be subversive of the Tokugawa system because nativism drew attention to the imperial institution and its mythical, divine origins and dismissed the secular Confucian rationalism that was an important part of the Tokugawa ideology. As one of Motoori's poems asserted:

How vain it is  
For the men of China  
To discuss the reason of things  
When they know not the reason  
Of the miraculous.<sup>13</sup>

Nativism could provide the basis for a Japanese religion focused on the Emperor, who was descended from the greatest deity of antiquity, the sun goddess Amaterasu. It was left for Motoori's followers, especially Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843), to draw out the political implications of a national faith. Under their influence, it spread to the countryside where the religious dimension of nativist teachings had great appeal. Hirata's focus on the Shintō god of procreation was welcomed

by the upper peasantry because it invested agrarian life with spiritual meaning. Moreover, the notion that they were subjects of the divine Emperor with an obligation to serve him gave them a new sense of the importance of their social standing.

Another new stream of thought that posed a challenge to the Tokugawa establishment was the Mito School. Like nativism it bespoke an increasing national consciousness in the late Tokugawa decades. In the coastal domain of Mito, north of Edo, a massive scholarly project devoted to the study of Japanese history, conducted for generations, called attention to the central timeless role of the imperial institution "as the embodiment, mystic or symbolic, of Japanese society and nationhood."<sup>14</sup> According to the Mito writers, all elements of the nation, each in its appropriate role in the hierarchy, were responsible for fulfilling their moral obligations to the Emperor. When disorder occurred in Chinese society, Confucian theory held that the Emperor had lost his Mandate of Heaven and could be removed. But in Japan the Emperor was divine, "one with Heaven," and therefore could never be overthrown. Instead, the Mito School stressed, it was the bakufu and the domains that must show reverence and uphold their mandate to rule by protecting the population from hardship. Just as nativism had given rise to a national faith, so the Mito School with its emphasis on the Emperor's divine nature gave government a religious basis and "signified the inseparability of worship, ceremony and governance."<sup>15</sup>

The nativist and Mito schools of thought implied clear challenges to the bakufu ideology and harbored potentially dangerous implications for the bakufu, especially if the bakufu was unable to gain control of the problems it faced. Even more striking evidence of the crisis of values, however, was the emergence of new religions with large followings among the common people of the cities and villages. The late Tokugawa Period proved to be one of the great seedtimes of Japanese popular religion. Historically, new religious cults tend to appear at times when unusual anxiety and economic hardship undermine long-accepted beliefs. Among the lower classes of the late Tokugawa Period numerous new sects sprang up with eclectic but basically Shintō teachings. The best known of these new religions was Tenrikyō (Teachings of Heavenly Truth), founded in 1838 by a peasant woman from a village near Nara. Like so many of the new sects, it promised salvation, peace, faith healing, and the comforting embrace of a new community of believers.

This new religious zeal, which represented a search for divine assistance and relief and for new forms of community, was not intended to have a political purpose. Nevertheless, as a leading authority on this phenomenon writes, "the new popular religions offered an ideal . . . that transcended the authority of the contemporary feudal

system."<sup>16</sup> These became years of popular yearning for world renewal (*yonaoshi*) expressed not only in the new faiths but also in mass pilgrimages to religious sites such as the sun goddess's Grand Shrine at Ise in central Japan.

As these alternative visions of governance and values began to appear, the bakufu's problems clearly were not limited to social and economic issues but were also found in the erosion of the ideological foundations of Tokugawa rule. The Tokugawa class system and the justification of the hierarchy of bakufu, lords, and samurai to rule society had been based on faith in a natural order, based on cosmic principles derived from the teachings of the sages. But in light of the ineffectiveness of samurai government, a suspicion that the Tokugawa order, far from being sanctioned by changeless principles rooted in nature, might actually be an anachronism crept into the works of some of the most thoughtful and creative intellectuals of the late Tokugawa Period. It gave rise to what Tetsuo Najita calls "the moral crisis of the Tokugawa aristocracy."<sup>17</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century a new stream of political thought concerned with the economic problems of government emerged. These writings implied that the survival of the Tokugawa system must depend on its effectiveness in solving the problems it faced and protecting the livelihood of the people. The writers, some of them from the merchant class, departed from abstract notions of ethics as the basis of governing and, instead, formulated new principles based on an economic view of politics. These political economists, as we may call them, discussed the failings of political leaders in dealing with matters of money, trade, and credit. "Economic knowledge, they asserted, was fundamental to politics, the art of 'ordering and saving the people'; for this reason, merchants and other commoners . . . ought to take part in the process of governance itself."<sup>18</sup> The revolutionary potential of such thoughts is obvious. As one of these political economists, Honda Toshiaki, wrote in 1798: "Whose fault is it that the people starve and good fields turn to waste? These evils cannot be blamed on laziness or disloyalty [in the people] but are owing to the crimes of the rulers. When I think of this I forget myself and breathe 'Heaven's punishment comes too slowly!'"<sup>19</sup>

### *Movements for Reform in Government*

To deal with the mounting difficulties of government, reform movements were initiated within the shogunate and many of the domains. Generalizing about these movements is exceedingly difficult because the measures taken and the successes achieved varied greatly.

Generally, however, we may distinguish two main strands of re-

formist thinking. The first and dominant one was what we may call the *fundamentalist* approach, whose main purpose was to restore the fundamental or "purer" conditions of the early Tokugawa Period. Idealizing a purely agrarian economy, this approach sought in various ways to suppress or at least restrain the growing power of the merchant class. It stressed retrenchment in government and revival of the moral values of simplicity, austerity, and frugality. It was characterized by heavy reliance on sumptuary edicts, seeking to limit and curtail consumption. Only occasionally did this approach try to increase the income of government, and when it did it tended to be through a time-honored method, such as land reclamation. Some of the more extreme proponents of the fundamentalist school urged return of the samurai to the countryside, relocating them in the villages where they would be away from the corrupting influences of the towns. It was expected not only that the morale of the samurai would thereby be raised, but that the function of the castle town merchants would likewise be weakened.

The other approach to reform may be called the *realist* school because it accepted the growing commercialization of the economy and urged the authorities to adjust to it, not deny it. The realists agreed that the warrior class could not continue to stand aloof from and disdain financial matters. They urged a reorientation in Tokugawa thinking, a recognition that trade could be productive and that government could profit from the commercial segments of the economy. The realist school urged government to encourage the production of capital wealth and to use its political power to establish state enterprises and monopoly organizations. Some of its more extreme proponents urged abandonment of the seclusion policy and revival of foreign trade as a means of bringing wealth to Japan. The latter argument aroused bitter opposition, but the proposals for state-sponsored trade and industry were accepted to an increasing degree by the shogunate and many domain governments.

Some of the reform attempts by the bakufu and the han bureaucracies were a mixture of these two approaches, but most leaned toward fundamentalism and achieved only limited success. As Bolitho writes, "A wholehearted swing to innovation was rare. Much more usual was a blend, sometimes even a contradictory blend, of the novel with the traditional."<sup>20</sup> The bakufu had made several efforts at reform, but the wave of peasant uprisings in the 1830s and Ōshio's spectacular rebellion in Osaka in 1837, which set fires raging through the merchant quarters and brought bakufu troops to subdue the rebels, gave notice that the problems of government were far from solved.

The final effort of the shogunate to deal with these problems, prior to the intervention of the foreigners, came in the reforms of the early 1840s. The leading figure of the bakufu in this period was Mizuno

Tadakuni, who rose in 1841 to leadership in the Council of Elders, the shogunate's controlling administrative organ, and took charge of this last concerted reform program. His reforms leaned toward the fundamentalist approach, relying heavily on sumptuary legislation and, in addition, attempting to disband merchant associations and to stem the flow of immigrants into Edo from the countryside. Such traditionalistic reforms failed, for they treated the symptoms rather than the root causes of bakufu distress.

Japan's economy and society were far too changed and too dynamic to be pressed back into the mold of early Tokugawa institutions. The failure of Mizuno's reform program gave added support to the contention of realist reform thinkers that a comprehensive change in the political structure of the country was necessary, so that institutions might be adjusted to the changed conditions of the society and economy.

### Notes

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2. Philip C. Brown, "Practical Constraints on Early Tokugawa Land Taxation: Annual versus Fixed Assessments in Kaga Domain," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14 (summer 1988), 400-401.
3. Quoted in Thomas C. Smith, *Political Change and Industrial Development in Japan: Government Enterprise, 1868-1880* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), 17-18.
4. Herbert P. Bix, *Peasant Protest in Japan, 1590-1884* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), 221.
5. Stephen Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 159-167.
6. Albert M. Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 145.
7. Thomas C. Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 139.
8. *Ibid.*, 169.
9. See James L. McClain, "Failed Expectations: Kaga Domain on the Eve of the Meiji Restoration," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14 (summer 1988), 403-447.
10. Harry D. Harootunian, "Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought," in Marius B. Jansen, ed., *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 5 of *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 171.
11. Donald Keene, *World within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1978), 320-321.
12. Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 197.
13. Keene, *World within Walls*, 329.

14. Herschel Webb, quoted in J. Victor Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790-1864* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 36.
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16. Yasumaru Yoshio, quoted in Harootunian, "Late Tokugawa Culture," in *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jansen, 217.
17. Tetsuo Najita, "Method and Analysis in the Conceptual Portrayal of Tokugawa Intellectual History," in *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period, 1600-1868: Methods and Metaphors*, ed. Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 35.
18. Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: The Kaitokudō, Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 284.
19. Smith, *Native Sources*, 172.
20. Harold Bolitho, "The Tempō Crisis," in *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jansen, 135.