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JAMES W. WHITE

State Growth and Popular Protest in Tokugawa Japan

Most analyses of the Tokugawa regime, which governed Japan from 1600 to 1868, focus on the disintegration, or at best the stagnation and stalemate, of its political institutions over time, emphasizing particularly the decline of fiscal integrity. This essay does the opposite: it argues that in at least one crucial respect the Tokugawa state or *bakufu* grew over time, to a point in no little way analogous to the “absolute states” of early modern Europe.¹ It suggests that, being a state, the Tokugawa regime is best analyzed from a political, not economic or fiscal, perspective. Its particular political perspective involves *the* defining aspect of the state, that is, the creation of a governmental monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory—in this case, the entirety of Japan.²

My approach is interactive and comparative. I shall examine the influence of popular protest on the state and the state’s response thereto, and also the interaction of center and periphery: the gradual monopolization of the legitimate use of force by the central government at the expense of other subnational actors—primarily the feudal lords or daimyo. I shall thus attempt to overcome what I see as the common underestimation of the degree of “absoluteness” of the Tokugawa state.

1. In this essay, the term “Tokugawa state” refers to the central organs of government, the shogun and his administration (collectively known as the *bakufu*), and their official agents in the provinces. It can be argued also that this state was a meaningful governmental entity only when the daimyo domains, or *han*, and *bakufu* are combined—hence the *bakuhan* state. My view rather parallels that of Jeffrey Mass and William Hauser, *The Bakufu in Japanese History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985): the Tokugawa *bakufu* was one of a series of such regimes; each shared power with other actors but each had its own clearly defined structures, officials, and authority. Together they evince a continuity of form and action which suggests the utility of treating each *bakufu* as an independent actor *vis-à-vis* society and its own respective co-actors. Certainly not all of the Tokugawa-era daimyo saw themselves as part of a single national polity.

2. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 154.

I shall also be comparative, for several reasons. First, many analyses of the Tokugawa regime overestimate the degree of “absoluteness” of early modern European states. Second, comparison justifies our focus on absolutism: utilization of such a general rubric facilitates the integration of Japanese studies into an intellectual context familiar to many more than just Japan specialists. Third, comparison highlights the importance of the relationship between popular dissent and state control, since this relationship constitutes a functional equivalent of the warfare that is repeatedly cited as a crucial element in the growth of European absolutism. War emerges in almost all studies as a, if not the, motivating force behind state growth in early modern Europe.³ Both Weber’s definition of the state and the absence of foreign wars in Tokugawa Japan suggest instead a focus on domestic coercion as the index of state growth.

And grow—I shall argue—is what the Tokugawa state did. It began as a relatively effective but relatively undeveloped state in the early seventeenth century and grew steadily in “stateness” though not commensurately in effectiveness. By the nineteenth century it had become a state on a developmental par with its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European counterparts and, as they did, laid the basis for the creation of a modern, centralized state by establishing beyond question the defining aspect of the state, the monopoly of legitimate coercion. At the same time, however, its capacity to rule effectively was in decline.

In this discrepancy lie three further characteristics of many studies of the Tokugawa state with which I shall take issue. First is a tendency to conflate government with Japanese society and economy *in toto*: declining state capability and fiscal viability is quite compatible with private economic growth, as became increasingly apparent in the nineteenth century. Second, state formation or development is frequently not differentiated from state capabilities, although one may find both highly capable pre-modern states and impotent modern ones. Third, other studies also emphasize the *de facto* authority of the state to the neglect of its *de jure* authority. In assessing the emergence of both absolute and modern states it is *de jure* authority—the general acceptance of monopolistic central state coercive power divorced from support for a specific regime—which constitutes absolutism and paves the way for the appearance of the modern state. The ability of the Tokugawa *bakufu* to suppress popular dissent, and ultimately to restrain elite rivals, declined as the Tokugawa era wore on, but I shall argue that the state continued successfully to claim a monopoly of the legitimate use of force versus both contentious commoners and elite rivals

3. The major exception, of course, is the work of Charles Tilly, particularly *The Contentious French* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) and *The Rebellious Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

until the very eve of its demise and that, insofar as the claim grew during the era—albeit not steadily—the era was also one of state growth.

I. The Absolute State in Tokugawa Japan

The most common evaluations of the Tokugawa state revolve around the assertions that it was either feudal or semi-feudal, but not absolutist, and that whatever steps it took toward absolutism were stalemated or reversed over time. To some it was “clearly” or “genuinely” feudal, although some such assertions rest on what I argue are underestimates of *bakufu* authority.⁴ Even to those who consider it a state with a monopoly of coercive power it was feudal and “semicentralized,” and the notion of a monopoly is achieved only by absorbing the lords into the definition of the state.⁵ To some the system was *sui generis*, but in any case it was not a “true central government” but a feudal-central hybrid.⁶

The extraordinary growth of central governmental power at the beginning of the era is usually recognized: public power became intrusive as never before, but the real concentration of power is seen in the hands of the daimyo, not the *bakufu*; the growth of “regular, independent, and impersonal organs of [national] rule” was “attenuated;” and the panoply of characteristics of the rational-bureaucratic Weberian state—public treasury, separate judiciary, national bureaucracy and police and revenue agencies, and national military force—were either absent, “problematic,” or “defective.”⁷ In particular, neither *bakufu* coercive power nor *bakufu* law is seen as penetrating into the lords’ domains.⁸

Moreover, this initial impetus toward centralization either stalled or retreated.⁹ This assessment is not universal, and it acknowledges the consen-

4. Wakita Osamu, “The *Kokudaka* System: A Device for Unification,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1975), p. 299; Ishii Ryōsuke, “Japanese Feudalism,” *Acta Asiatica*, No. 35 (November 1978), p. 29; Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 435ff.

5. Herbert Bix, *Peasant Protest in Japan, 1590–1884* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. xxv–xxvi.

6. Yasumaru Yoshio, personal communication, September 1984; John Hall, *Government and Local Power in Japan 500 to 1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 367ff.; John Hall, *Tanuma Okitsugu, 1719–1788* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 4.

7. Mary Elizabeth Berry, “Public Peace and Private Attachment: The Goals and Conduct of Power in Early Modern Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 237ff.; Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 413ff.

8. Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 413ff.; John Hall and Marius Jansen, eds., *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 205ff.

9. Berry, “Public Peace.”

sus that the regime remained stranded somewhere between feudalism and monarchical absolutism, but on occasion it goes so far as to see a marked reversal of the process of centralization after the first half-century of Tokugawa rule, a contraction of the state which goes beyond a simple decline in capabilities.¹⁰

This essay, as noted, sees the state as “a compulsory political association with continuous organization,” the administrative staff of which “successfully upholds a claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order” within a given territory.¹¹ The Tokugawa *bakufu* ruled a compulsory, clearly territorial association and constituted a continuous organization; furthermore, (a) the daimyo were not entitled to use force among themselves, (b) the *bakufu* enjoyed an unchallenged right to use coercion against them, and (c) the use of coercion by the daimyo *vis-à-vis* their own subjects was increasingly circumscribed by the *bakufu*. Thus it was a state. It was *not* a modern state in the Weberian, rational-bureaucratic sense, and some assertions that it was not an absolute state seem to conflate absolutism with Weber’s notion of modernity and thus see the non-modern Tokugawa state as non-absolute.¹² What sort of state it in fact *was* requires comparison with contemporary states in Europe.

Feudalism is an ambiguous concept, amenable to social, economic, or political definition.¹³ For our purposes a political definition is best; central to the definition is the perception of feudalism as a system (rather than a state in which the central organs of government monopolize the legitimate use of force). In a feudal system the use of force is legitimately shared between the central regime and a pyramid of hereditarily secure vassals of that regime and their vassals, all entitled to use force—as one aspect of their administrative autonomy—within their own domains and owing service and obedience, within limits, to their respective lords.¹⁴ Derivatives of this fragmentation of administrative and coercive rights included the absence of regular, direct, central extractive and judicial power extending

10. Harold Bolitho, *Treasures Among Men* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 38 and *passim*.

11. Weber, *Social and Economic Organization*, p. 154; H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 78.

12. Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, pp. 78–83; Berry, “Public Peace.”

13. Rushton Coulborn, ed., *Feudalism in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956); Hall and Jansen, *Institutional History*, pp. 31ff.; Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Ishii, “Japanese Feudalism;” Carl Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1942); Peter Duus, *Feudalism in Japan* (New York: Knopf, 1969); Bix, *Peasant Protest*, p. xviii.

14. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, Vol. 1, pp. 161–210, Vol. 2, pp. 326, 446; Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism*, pp. 10–14; Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 192.

into the domains and the necessity of consultation of lords by monarchs before the making of fiscal, judicial, or military decisions of national import.¹⁵

Whether or not Japan fits this definition depends upon the period at which one looks. Some question the propriety of the term at any time but, even with caveats, the consensus seems to be that Japan before 1600 closely approximated the admittedly Eurocentric concept.¹⁶ The caveats begin to multiply rapidly after 1600, however, to such an extent that the concept is perhaps better discarded.¹⁷

The concept of absolutism is at least as fuzzy as that of feudalism. In Europe the characteristics of absolutist rule appeared cyclically, at different times and different rates and to different degrees in different countries, varied dramatically in the length of their survival, and contradicted each other in *de facto* and *de jure* terms.¹⁸ Still, there does seem to be a common set of features of the “absolutist,” “monarchical,” or “leviathan” states which existed in many areas of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including a standing army, a permanent bureaucracy, expanded national legal codes and judicatures, national taxation, political unification or domestication of religion and other political and economic jurisdictions, the nationalization of markets, and the generally accepted claim of royal (read “central”) preeminence in all of these areas—and that of coercion—with the varying necessity of consent by “constituted bodies”—parliaments, diets, estates, or councils.¹⁹

There are numerous analyses of the Tokugawa state which assert that it measures up to the absolute mark or to some aspect thereof.²⁰ Enumeration of the powers of the *bakufu*—over the warrior aristocracy, the court, the lords and their people, over religion and trade, and over political ide-

15. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, Vol. 2, pp. 408ff.; Charles Bright and Susan Harding, eds., *Statemaking and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), pp. 25, 33.

16. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, Vol. 1, p. 211, Vol. 2, p. 447; Hall and Jansen, *Institutional History*, pp. 33–45; Duus, *Feudalism*.

17. Ishii, “Japanese Feudalism,” p. 20.

18. Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 115, 195ff.; Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French*, p. 136; V. G. Kiernan, *State and Society in Europe 1550–1650* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1980), p. 7; Gilbert, *Hintze*, p. 187; E. N. Williams, *The Ancien Regime in Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 18ff. and *passim*; Max Beloff, *The Age of Absolutism, 1660–1815* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

19. Walter Dorn, *Competition for Empire 1740–1763* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), Vol. 1; Williams, *Ancien Regime*; Bright and Harding, *Statemaking*, p. 35; Gilbert, *Hintze*, pp. 173ff.; Beloff, *Absolutism*, p. 20.

20. See, for example, Stephen Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Tōyama Shigeki, *Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1966); Nishikawa Shunsaku, *Edo jidai no poritkaru ekonomii* (Tokyo: Nihon

ology—provisionally reinforces this notion, especially the emergence of the concept of *kōgi* or public authority, a clearly national locus of political power to which lords *and their peasants* were directly subordinate.²¹

However, the major reason for stating that Tokugawa Japan approached absolutism is not because it was so very absolute, but because the absolute states of Europe were not so very absolute themselves. In their claims, of course, they (or at least their monarchs and royal minions) were, but in practice no European state of the period possessed absolute power over either lords or people; the “absolute” states were in fact hodgepodes of intermediate jurisdictions, dissident nobles, fractious estates and parliaments, evasive taxpayers, feudal prerogatives and dues, autonomous local courts and executives, and divine and natural legal limits on the king, as a few examples make clear.²²

Absolutism in England lasted, at best, from Henry VIII until Charles I and entailed a very small standing army, low royal revenues, a powerful gentry and “very slim” bureaucracy and a parliament which, since the days of Edward I, could not be ignored by the king.²³ Prussia as late as 1650 could only debatably be called a state, and the agreement of 1653 by which the Great Elector achieved a standing army and the financial support necessary thereto also empowered the nobles to enserf their own people out from under the jurisdiction of the crown.²⁴ Bourbon France was “an almost indescribably complex” system of class and territorial privileges and interests, of *parlements* able in both theory and practice to checkmate the king, and of a nobility whose opposition made it impossible for the king to balance the royal budget.²⁵ As late as 1789, in one view, France was as much a federation of provinces as a true state, and even in the nineteenth century

Hyōron Sha, 1979); Murakami Yasusuke, “Ie Society as a Pattern of Civilization,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 1984); Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Most Japanese scholars apply the term only to the last thirty or so years of the era.

21. John Hall *et al.*, eds., *Japan Before Tokugawa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), chs. 8, 9, pp. 290–92; Hyakushō Ikki Kenkyū Kai, ed., *Tempō-ki no jinmin tōsō to shakai henkaku* (Tokyo: Azekura, 1982), Vol. 2, p. 241; Berry, “Public Peace;” Mass and Hauser, *Bakufu*, p. 151; Fukaya Katsumi, *Hyakushō ikki no rekishiteki kōzō* (Tokyo: Azekura, 1979). The extent to which *kōgi* was equated with the person of the ruler is debatable, but in the eyes of the commoners it seems to have been more institutional than personal.

22. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), pp. 144–45; Williams, *Ancien Regime*, pp. 9ff., 292; Dorn, *Competition*, pp. 3–20; Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 49ff.

23. Williams, *Ancien Regime*, p. 451; Anderson, *Lineages*, ch. 5.

24. Beloff, *Absolutism*, p. 107; Williams, *Ancien Regime*, pp. 9ff.

25. Dorn, *Competition*, p. 26; Bendix, *Kings or People*, pp. 329, 362; Beloff, *Absolutism*, ch. 3; George Taylor, personal communication, October 1985.

the state was still, to most people, nothing but “*la douane et le fisc.*”²⁶ One need not require much of the governmental institutions of Tokugawa Japan, or of the consciousness of its people, to approach such standards of “absolutism.”

The above suggests that Tokugawa Japan, regardless of the incompleteness of state formation, merits inclusion in the fuzzy and logically inconsistent category of “relatively absolute states.”²⁷ According to one recent appraisal, sixteenth-century Japan was not absolute because it did not produce a central government with a monopoly of military power, control of banking and commerce, management of food production and supply, a national police, surveillance of public works, a social welfare system, a constitution, a legal code, or a national bureaucracy.²⁸ In fact, no European country enjoyed all of these appurtenances of stateness before the nineteenth century; Tokugawa Japan did in fact enjoy some of them; and quite apart from this, they are not the defining characteristics of the state in general: coercion is. In fact, Berry makes an excellent case for Japan as an absolute state, since the one area in which she sees “aggressive” political centralization is “peace-keeping” and civil order.²⁹ Her focus is on state coercion of elites, but broadening the focus to include coercion of the people further strengthens the case, as I shall demonstrate below.

If the above is correct, then the question is why does the *bakufu* not look absolute to such observers? Part of the explanation, I submit, lies in the conflation of the concepts of state, absolute state, and modern bureaucratic state, with the first two measured against the definition of the last. For example, the *sankin-kōtai* hostage system and widespread gift-giving of the era may be taken as indicators of non-bureaucratic personalism.³⁰ But such personalism is hardly incompatible with either state power or absoluteness—indeed, Louis XIV’s assembly of the nobility at Versailles was not utterly dissimilar in purpose to the *sankin-kōtai*. And it might not even be premodern, as witness the universal gift-giving and pervasive political personalism of contemporary Japan.³¹

26. Williams, *Ancien Regime*, pp. 2, 136; Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), ch. 15.

27. Were it not for its comparative role I would eschew the term altogether; its use should not distract from my real foci: state growth and coercion. Certainly few of the *bakufu* decrees discussed here were obeyed in their entirety in every corner of the country. But they were accepted in principle more than ever before; their number and scope increased throughout the period; and the key question is *still*: was the central authority in “absolutist” Europe materially greater?

28. Berry, “Public Peace,” pp. 241, 255.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

30. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

31. Bradley Richardson and Scott Flanagan, *Politics in Japan* (Boston: Little Brown, 1984), chs. 4, 5.

Another part of it lies in an insufficiently comparative perspective which overestimates the absoluteness of European absolutism. For example, sixteenth-century Japan saw no “central revolutionary act,” the overthrow of a previous, legitimate national government—but no such overthrow preceded the reigns of Louis XIV, Henry VIII, or the Great Elector, either.³² And part lies in the focus on the powers which the *bakufu* “actually” exercised.³³ Without denigrating reality, one may suggest that the *claims* of the regime, and the acceptance in principle of these claims by elite and popular political actors, have independent relevance. To focus exclusively on the “actual” exercise of power, as noted, risks confusing state formation or development with state performance, especially in the later, declining years of the regime.³⁴

A. State Growth

Oddly enough, the first point to make about state growth in Tokugawa Japan is that it occurred, if only to contest the assertion that there was no “‘state formation’ as it occurred in the west.”³⁵ There was of course no single course of state development in the West either except a process of “increasing stateness” after about 1500 which consisted of

increasing control of the resources in a contiguous territory by an organization that was formally autonomous, differentiated from other organizations, centralized, internally coordinated, and in possession of major concentrated means of coercion. In short: centralization and territorial control.³⁶

In that neither the legitimacy of the *bakufu* nor its territorial control was seriously questioned by significant political actors (as opposed to some alienated intellectuals) until the mid-nineteenth century, there seems to be little room for the assertion that state formation did not take place during

32. Berry, “Public Peace,” p. 253.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 240–41.

34. There is also a possible methodological explanation, and that is that some American Japanists have accepted the *Nihonjin-ron* notion of Japanese uniqueness. Such a development is hardly unique to our field; as Hubert Blalock notes, “often . . . scholars with vested interests in a certain terminology, or in a particular intellectual domain, rebel at the thought of broadening a concept sufficiently that it may be applied to a variety of settings” (*Basic Dilemmas in the Social Sciences* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), p. 98). But it seems that non-Japanists such as Reinhard Bendix, Barrington Moore, Marc Bloch, Perry Anderson, and Theda Skocpol can look at Japan and see substantial comparability, while Japanists see considerably less. This latter viewpoint may protect the empirical integrity of the field, but it is hardly calculated to integrate the field into the broader disciplinary perspectives to which most Japanists also belong.

35. Berry, “Public Peace,” p. 255.

36. Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 34; Tilly, *The Contentious French*, p. 5.

the Tokugawa era. Control of resources, differentiation, and the other factors were fluid—as was also dramatically the case in Europe—but this fluidity of performance must not be confused with the developmental level of the state.³⁷

Which of the above (or other) factors should be considered developmental changes is open to debate. Some observers focus on the appearance of a professionalized bureaucracy, some on a standing army, some on direct, royal taxation of the people, and some on interaction—a central bureaucracy able to levy taxes sufficient to support itself and the army. In order to make my analysis independent of particular institutions I shall focus on the legitimate control of coercive resources; moreover, in differentiating between development and capability, I posit that central assertion of a claim to such control (or to the right to establish any of the institutions commonly associated with the national state) which either is not widely questioned or is actively confirmed by significant political actors constitutes state growth, even if *de facto* realization of the claim takes some time and even if the claim is effectively institutionalized for less than the lifetime of the regime in question.³⁸ Such claims, even if unexploited, are the stuff of which modern nation-states are made; institutional effectiveness is simply the performance side—the realization, institutionalization, and exploitation of the claims—of any polity, modern or not.³⁹ And I would argue that Tilly's definition of increasing stateness given above is sufficiently porous that the Tokugawa state fits in rather easily.

Moreover, the timing of the emergence of the Tokugawa state fits roughly with the appearance of national states in Europe in the period 1500–1650.⁴⁰ Whether one prefers such a broad periodization or clearer (if perhaps meretricious) demarcation points as the reign of Henry VIII, the conclusion of the Fronde, or the Recess of 1653 (and a similar pact in Russia in 1649), the centralizing strides of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa

37. Tilly, *National States*, p. 35; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), ch. 1; G. Bingham Powell, *Contemporary Democracies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), ch. 1; Peter Evans *et al.*, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 350ff.; Lucian Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966), pp. 46ff.; Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966), ch. 11.

38. Evans *et al.*, *State*, p. 171. Note that such claims need not be universally accepted; their ritualistic denial by Choshu domain throughout the era does not contradict the general situation. Albert Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 21–22.

39. Myron Weiner and Samuel Huntington, eds., *Understanding Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1987), pp. 353–89.

40. Tilly, *Rebellious Century*, pp. 26ff.; Kiernan, *State and Society*, p. 1; Anderson, *Lineages*, p. 15; Perez Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers, 1500–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Vol. 1, p. 28.

Ieyasu between the 1570s and the 1620s are part of a pattern. And if, as John Gagliardo says, the transition from royal to state sovereignty, the differentiation of sovereignty and the ruling class, and the depersonalization of thrones did not take place until the mid-eighteenth century in Europe, then the seventeenth- or even sixteenth-century emergence of the concept of *kōgi* cited above situates the emergence of a national state in Japan before it appeared in Europe.⁴¹

But simple citation of dates is too facile; let us review very briefly some of the better-known measures taken by the Japanese unifiers around the end of the sixteenth century. These included the disarming of the peasantry, the elimination of many lordly castles, a national land survey, transfers and attainders of daimyo, physical removal of the warrior class from the land and their transformation into salaried administrators, the dissolution of independent guilds, the subjugation of relatively autonomous (though not “free” in the European sense) cities, the elimination of religion as an institutionalized political actor, and the separation of the regime from the ruling class of lords and warriors both ideologically (through the concept of *kōgi*) and institutionally.⁴² Whether these measures amounted to centralization equal to that of Henrician England, Bourbon France, Frederician Prussia, or Petrine Russia is debatable and beside the point—it seems unquestionable that the process was much the same as what occurred in Europe simultaneously. What is more important is the fact that in many ways the Tokugawa regime never went beyond these centralizing steps. Development did not come to a full halt, much less regress,⁴³ especially in the area of coercion, but despite the fact that the *bakufu* in the nineteenth century was “vastly more complex” than in 1625 it clearly did not represent steady state growth since the early seventeenth century.⁴⁴

Explanations for this “failure” to develop more fully vary, and include the rival power of the daimyo, the decline in the personal abilities of the ruling shogun, the inability of the government to extract adequate revenues from society, and the alienation of the *fudai* lords who staffed a substantial part of the Tokugawa government.⁴⁵ Rather than “failure,” however, the

41. John Gagliardo, *Enlightened Despotism* (New York: Crowell, 1967), pp. 94ff.

42. Bolitho, *Treasures*, pp. 166ff., 134–35; Conrad Totman, *Politics in the Tokugawa Bakufu 1600–1843* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 250.

43. The challenging, renunciation, or negation of claims which I have suggested would demonstrate political decay (Huntington, *Political Development*, ch. 1) did not occur until the 1840s, and did not become chronic until even later. W. G. Beasley’s judgment (*The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 406) is that even in 1850 it was by no means clear that the regime was on its last legs, and the effectiveness with which Ii Naosuke crushed dissent in the 1850s underscores the point.

44. Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 234.

45. Berry, “Public Peace;” Bolitho, *Treasures*.

simple absence of imperatives to central power beyond that necessary to achieve the *bakufu*'s goals as of the early seventeenth century seems more relevant.⁴⁶ Japan was not part of a competitive state system and not subject to military threat (the temptations of conquest had also been eliminated by Hideyoshi's defeat by the Chinese and Koreans in the 1590s, and domestic aristocratic opposition had been defeated militarily in 1600); consequently, the imperatives to build a fiscal structure capable of maintaining a large military and to stimulate the economy for further extraction—that is, the imperatives toward the emergence of the “leviathan state” in Europe—simply were not there.⁴⁷ State growth everywhere has been confronted, often violently, by established political, economic, judicial, and social institutions; absent the imperative to overcome such opposition, why try? The power of the Tokugawa in 1600 was sufficient to establish political stability and civil order with the acquiescence of the daimyo; elimination of their prerogatives would have entailed further rebellion, and they too had much to gain from the peace that acquiescence entailed. Thus the Pax Tokugawa was partly a marriage of convenience, although after 1600 the threat from the lords who had opposed the Tokugawa unification was minimal.⁴⁸ The failure to dominate, reward, or fully mobilize the abilities of the *fudai* lords derives from this fact: with no need for full centralization the *bakufu* did not need to be overly solicitous of them. The transformation of the lord-vassal tie from a *de facto* relatively reciprocal one to an unalloyed unilateral one with the coming of peace applied within the central government as well as outside.

But the argument that centralization and state development continued after the mid-seventeenth century does not contradict the fact that state capabilities deteriorated over time. Like the achievements of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century state-builders, the process of decline needs no detailed chronicle—*bakufu* revenues declined both absolutely and relative to the national economy, military strength faded with 250 years of peace, economic power slipped away from the chartered merchants and official monopolies into the hands of upstart entrepreneurs, and the Tokugawa's own “crown lands” were fragmented among the descendants of earlier officials. Repeated efforts were made to reform and rejuvenate the system, but Tanuma Okitsugu's confrontation with the daimyo—which included the attempted imposition of a nationwide property tax—ended in his ouster; the last major program of reform ended in “dismal failure” in the 1840s; and in the face of a foreign threat in the 1850s Abe Masahiro “retreated” from

46. See also Bolitho, *Treasures*, p. 38.

47. Dorn, *Competition*, p. 17. Berry (“Public Peace”) and Bolitho (*Treasures*) do in fact raise this point, but only in a cursory way.

48. Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 253.

central prerogative by consulting with the daimyo.⁴⁹ Given our concern with coercion, two significant events were the successful objection in 1840 by one daimyo to a *bakufu* order to transfer his domain, and the expulsion of a *bakufu* cadastral survey team by the people of Ōmi province in 1842.⁵⁰

This decline, too, was limited, and was no more symptomatic of diminished centralizing tendencies than Parliament's deposition of James II in 1688. Matsudaira Sadanobu followed Tanuma, and Ii Naosuke followed Abe. The peasants of Ōmi objected to the corruption of the survey team but did not question the legitimacy of the regime or its land survey policy or its entitlement to punish protesters. Nor did the Daimyo of Shōnai object in principle to the *bakufu*'s rights of transfer or singlehandedly fend off his own transfer, as we shall see. And, finally, what dispersion of loyalty and national political focus did occur was at least to some extent reversed with the coming of foreigners in the 1850s, and much of it was not even dispersion but rather the reconceptualization of centralized, national authority under the throne instead of the shogun.⁵¹ Rather than a monotonic process of diminishing *fudai* integration into the national government, what seems to have occurred was a waxing and waning of *fudai* loyalty and consequent central strength in response to their perceptions of their own and national interests. Indeed, in its last-minute efforts to rejuvenate itself in the face of the foreign threat, the *bakufu* was able to enlist the abilities of such *fudai* lords as Ii Naosuke. The decisive blow to the system did not come until the emergence of Choshu domain as an active competitor for sovereign power in the 1860s.⁵²

B. The State and Coercion

Throughout this account of state growth in early modern Japan, I have emphasized the role of coercion, of elite and popular contention and state response. This is because coercion defines the state, but it is also due to the profound utility of dissent and state control as indices of state growth and

49. Herman Ooms, *Charismatic Bureaucrat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Charles Sheldon, *The Rise of the Merchant Class in Tokugawa Japan 1600–1868* (Locust Valley: Augustin, 1958), pp. 102, 125ff.; Mass and Hauser, *Bakufu*, pp. 185ff.

50. William Kelly, *Deference and Defiance in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), ch. 3; Hugh Borton, "Peasant Uprisings in Japan of the Tokugawa Period," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, second series, Vol. 16 (May 1938), ch. 6.

51. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Ooms, *Bureaucrat*, p. 12; Shōji Kichinosuke, ed., *Minshū undō no shisō* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1981), p. 416; Hyakushō Ikki Kenkyū Kai, *Tempō-ki*, pp. 216ff.

52. Thus creating a condition of "multiple sovereignty"; Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

as causes of that growth. Throughout history, forms and frequencies of popular protest have varied with forms, developmental levels, and capabilities of regimes; and the need to create domestic order (and not just national security) has provided unending incentives for governments to grow and strengthen themselves.⁵³ In early modern Europe, for example, state growth involved myriad “brutal collisions with rebellious subjects” and the “taming . . . of nobilities.”⁵⁴

Central coercion of political elites is of secondary concern here, both because it is better documented and because even those more critical of the notion of an absolute Tokugawa state acknowledge the completeness of the *bakufu*'s legitimate (that is, unchallenged in principle) prerogatives in this area. Before 1600 samurai and commoners often formed coalitions in Japan, as they did in Europe,⁵⁵ but the battle of Sekigahara eliminated the barons from active contention in Japanese sovereign rivalry even more completely than the Fronde did in France, since it came amid a process in which the lesser warrior nobility was being removed from the land while the peasantry was being bound thereto and disarmed.⁵⁶ Indeed, even in the declining years of 1840–41, it is doubtful that the Daimyo of Shōnai mentioned above would have been able to resist the transfer order of the *bakufu* had he not been assisted by both widespread popular protest against the order and rivalries within the *bakufu* which created allies there.⁵⁷ We shall enumerate some of the ways in which the *bakufu* controlled and coerced the nobility, but its relationship to the common people is a better index of the evolution of state development and performance.

Another factor of import in Europe which I note only in passing is the position of institutionalized religion. It is hardly coincidental that three of the four largest rebellions to occur in early modern Europe—the French civil war, the English revolution, and the Netherlands rebellion—all had religious overtones, and it is quite possible that as much blood has been shed by governments in the domestication of their religious rivals as in the subjugation of their neighbors.⁵⁸ The process was bloody in Japan as well,

53. For example, *ibid.* and Tilly, *Contentious French*.

54. Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers*, Vol. 1, pp. 93, 95.

55. Katsumata Shizuo, *Ikki* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1982); Aoki Michio *et al.*, *Ikki* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai, 1981), esp. Vol. 2; Tilly, *Contentious French*; Roland Mousnier, *Peasant Uprisings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

56. Wakita Osamu, “The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1982); Vlastos, *Peasant Protests*; Michael Birt, “Samurai in Passage,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Summer 1985).

57. Hyakushō Ikki Kenkyū Kai, ed., *Tempō-ki*, pp. 99ff.; Kelly, *Deference and Defiance*, ch. 3.

58. Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers*, Vol. 1, pp. 141ff.

as the unifiers of the late sixteenth century destroyed hundreds of Buddhist monasteries and killed thousands of clerics. The proscription of Christianity largely finished the process and the execution of upward of 40,000 persons following the religiously-tinged Shimabara Rebellion of 1637–38 both demonstrated the *bakufu's* awareness of the incendiary potential of religion and extinguished the issue.

Still, my focus on domestic, popular coercion might come as a surprise to European historians, given the tremendous emphasis in that field on external coercion—to wit, warfare—as an impetus to state growth.⁵⁹ Indeed, some studies simply exclude the peasantry as political actors for significant parts of European history.⁶⁰ Even analyses of popular unrest frequently probe further back, finding the causes of unrest in state extractions and regulations designed to provide for greater military capability.⁶¹ Certainly there were aspects of state growth independent of the military imperative, and these too stimulated popular opposition, but Tokugawa Japan's isolation from the competitive state system provides a purer case of the relevance of popular dissent to state growth.

Indeed, perhaps the case of Japan indicates the overemphasis of war as a cause of state growth.⁶² Tokugawa Japan fought no wars and thus needed no massive standing army, a less penetrating administrative structure, a less extractive revenue agency, and less complete subordination of subnational actors, but still saw the emergence of an “absolute” state. These factors may explain why Tokugawa absolutism never fulfilled its early seventeenth-century promise, but—since each has historically been associated with intense anti-regime opposition—they may also explain why it lasted so long.⁶³ The common people resisted government pressures at every turn and forced it to expand, change, and occasionally acquiesce, but they had no aristocratic or clerical allies, no free-city sanctuaries, and no heretical or revolutionary ideological tradition, and thus they carried on alone.⁶⁴

59. Gilbert, *Hintze*; Tilly, *Contentious French*; Anderson, *Lineages*.

60. Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1981), pp. 4–11.

61. Robert Weller and Scott Guggenheim, *Power and Protest in the Countryside* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982), pp. 18ff.; Mousnier, *Peasant Uprisings*; Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 23–34; Tilly, *Contentious French*; contrast with Kiernan, *State and Society*, p. 12.

62. Overemphasis is also suggested by the fact that war does not play the same role in state development in the Third World today as it did in early modern Europe: Evans *et al.*, *State*, p. 362.

63. Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 255.

64. Yasumaru Yoshio, *Nihon no kindai to minshū shisō* (Tokyo: Aoki, 1975); Shōji *et al.*, *Minshū undō*.

II. Contention, Coercion, and State Formation

A. Subordination, Regulation, and Extraction

It is my contention that the acid test of state growth is the monopolization of coercion. Such a focus is open to charges of tunnel vision or uncausal explanation. In fact, the claims of “absoluteness” made on behalf of the Tokugawa *bakufu* could be supported by analysis of many factors in addition to coercion—it is simply the most important of the lot—and a cursory glance at a few such will suggest to non-Japanists the parallels between Tokugawa and European absolutism.

The first aspect of absoluteness, cited by Reinhard Bendix as *the* most important single step toward national unification in England, was the subordination of institutionalized religion to the crown in 1534.⁶⁵ The same step was incontrovertibly taken in Japan by 1640. A second aspect was the regulation of commerce in particular and the economy in general. The *bakufu* monopolized coinage, eliminated customs barriers (except its own) along major roads, eliminated free guilds, promoted a national marketing system, made extensive efforts to control prices throughout the country (with the result that by the eighteenth century interregional rice price differentials had decreased dramatically), and in the mid-nineteenth century successfully eliminated the chartered guilds.⁶⁶

A third aspect of state centralization involves the regulation of the daimyo both nationally and within their own, nominally autonomous, domains. Nationally, the daimyo were required to reside in the *bakufu* capital of Edo in alternate years and leave family hostages there when absent; their marriages required *bakufu* approval; and even when assembled there was “not a whisper of parliament” about them.⁶⁷ It is difficult to rank this situation as inferior to that of the contemporary English Parliament or the French *parlements* on some scale of centralization. Moreover, despite the appearance of intra-domainial autonomy, *bakufu* penetration was also extensive. The right of domains to legislate internal laws was limited to those areas not infringing on *bakufu* law.⁶⁸ During a locust plague and resultant dearth in 1732, the *bakufu* ordered less affected domains to ship rice to

65. Bendix, *Kings or People*, p. 290.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 431–432; Hall, *Japan Before Tokugawa*, pp. 224–26, 241, 370; Harada Tomohiko, *Kinsei toshi sōjō shi* (Kyoto: Shimonkaku, 1982), p. 92ff.

67. Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 36.

68. Harafuji Hiroshi, “*Han Laws in the Edo Period*,” *Acta Asiatica*, No. 35 (November 1978), p. 46. One must note, however, that these limits were “fluid and vague” and applied with great variation across domains.

those in need and later decreed the establishment of grain storehouses in all domains. Through most of the era the *bakufu* required periodic censuses to be carried out, and the *bakufu* sent both spies (*metsuke*) and official teams of inspectors (*junkenshi*) into the domains to check on daimyo finances, administration, living standards, economic production, and military power.⁶⁹ In at least one instance the *bakufu* sent its own officials into a domain to run its reform program.⁷⁰ And in instances of gross maladministration, popular revolt, insufficient attention to popular needs, or a lord's death in the absence of an heir, *bakufu* prerogatives and actions included transfer of the lord or his family, change in size of domain, outright abolition of the domain, and attainder, in addition to a variety of punishments ranging from domiciliary confinement to mandatory suicide.

A final aspect of state growth is fiscal: national states are often defined in terms of their ability to tax both elites and people directly and regularly. In this area *bakufu* prerogatives were clearly incomplete, but again, they were not necessarily much less complete than the halting, inconsistent steps taken by putatively absolute regimes in Europe. The *bakufu* did in fact extract resources of manpower and money from the daimyo regularly for road building and repair, castle repairs, riparian works, and the support of both domestic and visiting Korean emissaries. The most common such extraction was the *tetsudai fushin*, but extraordinary levies were also made in time of government need.⁷¹ Moreover, in the nineteenth century the *bakufu* routinely imposed coastal defense obligations—a clearly national burden—on a large number of lords.⁷² *Vis-à-vis* the people, the *bakufu* imposed a direct, unmediated, national corvée burden of manpower and pack-horses on villages along the main highways, whether in *bakufu* territories or lordly domains, and in 1854 elicited from the court an order to temples nationwide to offer up their bronze bells for cannon.⁷³

69. Hall, *Government and Local Power*, p. 364; Ooms, *Bureaucrat*, ch. 4; Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 59; Yamada Tadao, *Ikki uchikowashi no undō kōzō* (Tokyo: Azekura, 1984), pp. 209–10.

70. Shōji *et al.*, *Minshū undō*, p. 467.

71. The *tetsudai fushin* were demands for assistance for specific *bakufu*-sponsored public works projects, although it should be noted that they had an additional, regulatory objective: the weakening of domain economies *vis-à-vis* that of the *bakufu*. Yoshizumi Mieko, "Tetsudai fushin ni tsuite," *Gakushūin Daigaku bungakubu kenkyū nempō*, No. 14 (1967), p. 83; No. 15 (1968), p. 87.

72. Rekishigaku Kenkyū Kai, ed., *Kōza Nihon-shi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai, 1985), Vol. 6, pp. 279ff.

73. Constantine Vaporis, "Post Station and Assisting Villages: Corvée Labor and Peasant Contention," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter 1986), p. 377; Mass and Hauser, *Bakufu*, p. 177.

The point here is not to try to assign some precise degree of absoluteness to the *bakufu* which can be compared to that of, e.g., Tudor England. The subject is inherently vague: which is more absolute—irregular extractions levied by unchallenged *bakufu* fiat, or regular, formalized taxes levied only with the approval of Parliament or *parlement*? Certainly the *bakufu* did not monopolize revenue power—but neither did the French state until after 1789.⁷⁴ And certainly its effective fiscal power eroded over time. But the *legitimacy* of such regulations as the above was not challenged until the last years of the regime, as was the case with coercion as well.

B. The Nationalization of Contention and Coercion

In addition to monopolizing the use of coercion *vis-à-vis* the common people the Tokugawa state (a) established a monopoly of coercive prerogatives *vis-à-vis* the lords; (b) oversaw the transformation of coercion and contention into national phenomena via the centralized regulation of protest and the development of a centralized judicial system with national jurisdiction over political crime and litigation; and (c) became the object of these now-national phenomena, as trans-domainial protests exceeded the coercive capacities of individual lords and as the people themselves came to see the state as the proper agency of redress for their grievances.

The subordination of the nobility by the Tokugawa state has been sufficiently described elsewhere; as Mary Berry notes, the unification regimes of the late sixteenth century were “politically aggressive” in the area of “peace-keeping” and civil order, depriving the lords of the “wherewithal” of war and establishing a “monopoly on war” which in fact eviscerated their putative autonomy.⁷⁵ In contrast to European absolutism, in which the state could not dispose at will of the liberty or landed property of nobles, the *bakufu* could and did transfer, expropriate, imprison, and execute them.⁷⁶ The great French state-builder Cardinal Richelieu eliminated the resistance of the Huguenots, executed conspiring nobles, leveled castles, banned dueling, and suppressed the Estates; Lawrence Stone describes as the Tudors’ greatest victory their elimination of armed vassal bands, of legal use of violence in private quarrels, and of collusion among noble families and retainers.⁷⁷ But even these vaunted measures do not necessarily match, much less exceed, those of Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu.

74. Tilly, *Contentious French*, p. 254.

75. Berry, “Public Peace,” pp. 241ff.

76. Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 49ff.

77. Evans *et al.*, *State*, pp. 173ff.

This is not to refute the view of Berry and others that *bakufu* repression of the nobility continued apace or accelerated during the early Tokugawa period. During the seventeenth century, *bakufu* treatment of the aristocracy was draconian: in 1598 there were 180 “outer,” or *tozama*, daimyo; by the end of the era only 98 still survived.⁷⁸ Rebellious peasants were punished, but rapacious or incompetent lords were also.⁷⁹ In the eighteenth century the pattern changed. The people began to demand not only honesty but structural and policy change in the face of increased governmental extractive efforts; the *bakufu*’s attitude toward protest stiffened, and it began to emphasize solidarity with the daimyo more and more.⁸⁰ But even then, nobles low and high were routinely punished in the wake of *junkenshi* reports and peasant protests, and in the aftermath of protests in Nambu domain in the 1840s and 1850s over 200 domain officials were punished.⁸¹ Thus the decrease in sanctions of lords as the era wore on is ambiguous—it may have resulted from *bakufu* weakness; it certainly resulted in part from the state’s sense of common interest with the lords and even with upperstratum commoners in the face of increasing popular protest; it may well have been due to the avoidance by lords of actions known to invite punishment: faced with dissent, a lord could give in and lose face and revenue or resist, perhaps intensify the dissent, and risk obliteration of rank, domain, and family. Unsurprisingly, increasing numbers of lords responded to contentious commoners with conciliation as time went by.⁸²

The Tokugawa state usurped the autonomy of the domains in regard to the regulation of popular dissent. It did not—despite some arguments to the contrary—do so in a totally repressive way, nor were the people bereft of all rights *vis-à-vis* the government.⁸³ Legal rights there may not have been, but traditional, “common-law” rights were strongly felt by the people and respected by both national and local officials (disrespect by the latter, of course, was grounds for dismissal or worse).⁸⁴ Official petition and complaint boxes (*meyasu-bako*) were posted about, a variety of suits against officials were accepted, and in certain, circumscribed instances petitions of protest were acceptable also. In general, pleas and protests con-

78. Craig, *Chōshū*, p. 18.

79. Sasaki Junnosuke, *Hyakushō ikki to uchikowashi* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1974), pp. 35ff.; Vlastos, *Peasant Protests*, p. 37.

80. Hayashi Motoi, *Hyakushō ikki no dentō* (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1976), pp. 87ff.

81. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 5, pp. 183ff., 223; Sasaki Junnosuke, *Murakata sōdō to yonaoshi* (Tokyo: Aoki, 1973), Vol. 2, pp. 367, 370; Fukaya Katsumi, *Nambu hyakushō Meisuke no shōgai* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 1983), p. 144; Shōji *et al.*, *Minshū undō*, p. 437.

82. Harada, *Toshi sōjō*; Fukaya Katsumi, *Hyakushō ikki*; Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vols. 2, 5.

83. John Dower, ed., *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E. H. Norman* (New York: Pantheon, 1975), p. 330; Hall and Jansen, *Institutional History*, p. 209.

84. Vlastos, *Peasant Protests*; Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*.

cerning economic matters were received; criticism of the regime or the polity *in toto* was banned.⁸⁵

In general, however, the *bakufu*'s involvement with coercion of protest grew during the era, and its attitude hardened. During unification the state bound the peasants to the land, disarmed them, and established collective village responsibility for villagers' misdeeds.⁸⁶ At the same time, peasants' absconding was permitted if the local constable or lord were unjust and if the peasants' taxes were paid up, and tax strikes were also legal under certain circumstances. Direct petitions to higher authority (including the shogun himself) were legitimate if the official with immediate jurisdiction over those protesting refused repeatedly to accept them or otherwise acted unfairly.⁸⁷

This leeway did not last long, however. The legal channels did not adequately control the volume of peasant protest which accompanied the establishment of the Tokugawa regime, and changes began. In 1622 organized, collective protests were banned.⁸⁸ In 1633 petition procedures were clarified and channels and justifiable grounds narrowed. Direct petitions to higher, non-local authorities were banned (albeit still with exceptions) and illegal petitioning became a capital crime, but (in 1643) village headmen also became obligated to announce the relevant regulations to the people.⁸⁹ And the second half of the century saw a constant stream of bans on contentious gatherings and organizations of all sorts; such edicts usually applied only to Tokugawa house lands at first, but by the end of the century applicability had become almost universal.⁹⁰

By the eighteenth century the fiscal problems of both *bakufu* and domain governments had become acute, and economic change had begun to affect the stratification of the commoner class, bringing new strains. Both factors led to increased popular protest and contention; in per capita terms the eighteenth century saw by far the greatest increase in contention during the Tokugawa era.⁹¹ And the *bakufu* expanded its concern and reach ac-

85. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 1, pp. 104, 123ff., Vol. 4, pp. 54ff., 176; Vlastos, *Peasant Protests*; Aoki Kōji, *Hyakushō ikki no nenjiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shinseisha, 1966), p. 6.

86. Hall, *Government and Local Power*; Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*; Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 2.

87. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 1, pp. 121–22; Vol. 2, pp. 168ff.; Vol. 5, pp. 170ff.; Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*, pp. 185–86; Yamada, *Ikki uchikowashi*, pp. 14–15.

88. Yamada, *Ikki uchikowashi*, p. 37.

89. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 5, pp. 194–95; Vlastos, *Peasant Protests*; Yamada, *Ikki uchikowashi*, p. 37.

90. Yamada, *Ikki uchikowashi*, pp. 38ff.

91. This statement is based on a comparison of demographic change and the frequency of social and political conflict—weighted for magnitude—during the Tokugawa era, based on data compiled by Aoki Kōji in *Hyakushō ikki sōgō nempyō* (Tokyo: San'ichi, 1981). For an explanation of the process see James White, "Economic Development and Sociopolitical Un-

cordingly. New laws of 1712 and 1713 aimed at speedy resolution of popular complaints and dismissal of bad officials, but in 1721 the shogun revoked the right of peasants to protest against the misdeeds of their own lord.⁹² This was not, however, “a direct reinforcement of the daimyo’s right to determine the fate of his own peasantry,” since it was accompanied in the 1730s and 1740s by further edicts requiring daimyo, upon the request of *bakufu* intendants, to furnish troops to put down protests in neighboring domains and specifying a variety of punishments for village officials (*within* the domains) within whose jurisdictions protest took place. The policies of mid-century furthered centralization, not decentralization.⁹³

Such *bakufu* measures often had a depressant effect on protest, but only temporarily; consequently, the rest of the eighteenth century saw a continuation of bans on, and ever harsher sanction of, protest. The *bakufu* began to intervene in domains to prevent concessions to protesters; from 1769 onward a series of edicts called for the use of firearms against protesters; and after 1770 a system of rewards for informants was put in place. And the definitions of riot, conspiracy, and illegal gathering were broadened so as to include almost all nonofficial assemblages.⁹⁴

Thus by the end of the eighteenth century the structure of proscribed political crime and proscribed punishment was in place. But the extension of state power went beyond these edicts: the *bakufu* established a judicial system with self-arrogated national jurisdiction and demonstrated no shyness about following this jurisdiction straight into the domains when necessary. The *bakufu*’s judiciary included the High Tribunal or *hyōjōsho*, somewhat akin to England’s Star Chamber, and certain boards and officials in Osaka and Edo (such as the Auditor General or *kanjō bugyō*) had judicial powers of their own—and their authority reached just as far as they cared to assert it.⁹⁵ Commoners did not have any legal right to bring suits to

rest in Nineteenth-Century Japan,” Akira Hayami, ed., *Pre-Conditions to Industrialization in Japan* (Tokyo: Keiō University, 1986). For a similar exercise see Yokoyama Toshio, *Hyakushō ikki to gimin denshō* (Tokyo: Kyōiku-sha, 1977).

92. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 1, pp. 136, 140.

93. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 212ff.; Bolitho, *Treasures*, p. 189; Yamada, *Ikki uchikowashi*, pp. 51ff.; Vlastos, *Peasant Protests*; Yasumaru, *Nihon no kindai*, p. 151; Maruyama Masao, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 251; Hayashi Motoi, *Zoku hyakushō ikki no dentō* (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1976), pp. 170ff.

94. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 2, pp. 235ff.; Vol. 5, pp. 219–30; Yamada, *Ikki uchikowashi*, pp. 66ff.; Rekishi Kagaku Kyōgi Kai, ed., *Nōmin tōsō-shi* (Tokyo: Azekura, 1974), p. 17; Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*, p. 34.

95. Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, p. 187; Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 4, pp. 174ff.; J. R. McEwan, *The Political Writings of Ogyū Sorai* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 109.

these organs, but in fact they did so constantly, and the courts and various officials could—and did—take under consideration any petition they pleased, whether or not the petitioners' immediate overlord approved.⁹⁶ The *junkenshi*, too, could bring back to Edo any complaints they had chosen to receive on their trips of inspection and submit them to the relevant officials.

Evidence of the development of this judicial function may be seen in the growth—well advanced by the eighteenth century—of an infrastructure of legal institutions and roles in Edo. Litigants were housed in *bakufu*-designated inns or *kujiyado*, and the owners and employees of these inns came to serve as legal advisors and court-ordered mediators. *Bakufu* injunctions against frivolous litigation and lawyerly specialization were forthcoming, but to no avail.⁹⁷ The proliferation of such roles is not my point; what is significant is that these roles and institutions appeared and multiplied in the *bakufu*'s capital and dealt with protests and appeals from all parts of the country, in both Tokugawa and daimyo territories.

Similarly, the *bakufu* ignored domainial autonomy when it served its purposes to do so, despite the absence of any explicit judicial rights within the domains.⁹⁸ Following the Temma Rebellion of 1764, which spread over a number of daimyo domains, Tokugawa vassal domains, and Tokugawa house lands, the *bakufu* sent its own investigators throughout the entire area affected, where they arrested and interrogated at will, remanded suspects to Edo, and ultimately sentenced several hundred commoners and officials for various offenses.⁹⁹ And after the Kamo Rebellion of 1836 (which involved six daimyo domains, 15 Tokugawa vassal domains, and some Tokugawa house lands) the *bakufu* remanded the ringleaders to Edo and announced the sentences of the 11,457 individuals convicted.¹⁰⁰ As long as protests remained entirely within a domain the autonomy of the lord might have been respected, but it is clear that when the *bakufu* perceived a wider relevance, it felt free to move in.

The nationalization of contention under the Tokugawa regime did not simply take the form of expanding state coercive prerogatives. As the object of popular protest, the state also was constrained thereby, and was pressed repeatedly to alter policies and personnel to meet the popular challenge. And underlying the popular focus of protest on the state was a momentous change in popular consciousness, the development of the notion that the common people throughout the land were foremost—if not first—

96. Vs. Hall and Jansen, *Institutional History*, p. 227.

97. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 4, pp. 61, 174, 190ff.

98. Totman, *Tokugawa Bakufu*, pp. 33–35.

99. Kitazawa Fumitake, *Meiwa no dai-ikki* (Tokyo: Bunka Shobō Hakubun, 1982).

100. Shōji *et al.*, *Minshū undō*, p. 478.

the subjects of a depersonalized public authority—the *kōgi*—embodied at present (but neither immutably nor exclusively) by the shogun.

The flow of bans, edicts, and proscriptions during the Tokugawa era already cited were one consequence of popular protest. But the consequences of protest were much more widespread than such decrees indicate—the entire posture of Tokugawa fiscal and economic policy was shaped during the eighteenth century and after by popular dissent. During the seventeenth century economic production grew nationwide, but the established forms of revenue did not extract the entire surplus, as they were designed to do. Given rising government expenses, new revenues were essential; a spate of governmental reforms during the 1720s attempted to increase and regularize revenues, but they set off a string of protests which largely negated them.¹⁰¹ As the century wore on the *bakufu* was in fact pushed away from its overwhelming dependence on the land tax because the peasants simply would not tolerate its increase and neither state nor domain was able to repress or extinguish resistance.¹⁰² Thus the focus on taxation of non-agricultural manufacturing and trade grew, which stimulated these sectors and led to further conflict stemming from changes in the stratification of village society. Among these conflicts were villager demands to audit village accounts (which had already been the focus of *bakufu* edicts since the end of the seventeenth century), the elimination of numerous official positions in the countryside (the cost of which the villagers complained about), and a set of restrictions on alienation of land (which was hastily repealed when tenant farmers, sensing state legislation, rose against their landlords).¹⁰³

But the 1720s' reforms did not suffice to right the finances of either *bakufu* or domains, nor did the harsher coercion subdue the people. In 1745 and again in 1759 top *bakufu* officials were sacked, largely over their inability to establish fiscal stability without sparking protest or to cope with the protest itself.¹⁰⁴ In 1764 a planned increase in the state's post-road corvée was repealed following the Temma Rebellion, and in 1781 a publicized currency-commodity exchange rate change was repealed following another massive protest.¹⁰⁵ During the 1780s the *bakufu* was riven by conflict revolving around the controversial *bakufu* councillor Tanuma Okitsugu, and popular conflict was drawn in: a protest against the corrupt government of the town of Fushimi (in the hands of Tanuma allies) was made to, and ac-

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 467ff.; Bix, *Peasant Protest*, p. 137; Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*, pp. 216ff.

102. Anne Walthall, *Social Protest and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), p. 224.

103. Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*, pp. 216–20; Rekishi Kagaku Kyōgi Kai, *Nōmin tōsō*, p. 64.

104. Hayashi, *Zoku hyakushō ikki*, pp. 200ff.

105. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 2, pp. 235ff.

cepted by, Tanuma's enemies in the *bakufu*, who succeeded in purging the town government wholesale. Throughout the tenure of Tanuma, his rivals drew strength from the support of smaller lords who felt threatened by the popular protests which accompanied his rule. And the ultimate eclipse of his faction was the direct and immediate result of a massive riot in Edo in 1787.¹⁰⁶ The later period of concentrated *bakufu* efforts at reform, the Tempō Reforms of the 1840s, also commingled reform with popular contention: the reforms were designed partly to counter the crop failures and famines of the 1830s, but they were also the result of major uprisings which occurred in the 1830s at the conjuncture of dearth and inept policy, which were often aimed directly at the *bakufu*, and which (especially in the case of Ōshio Heihachirō's rebellion of 1837), shocked the state to its roots.¹⁰⁷ And as late as 1853 the chronically rapacious Nambu domain suddenly fell all over itself acceding to peasant demands for administrative, fiscal, personnel, and commercial policy change after a neighboring domain communicated them to the *bakufu*.¹⁰⁸

The acute attentiveness of the state to these protests and the fact that the people aimed them at the state were not coincidental. Rather, they reflected a shrewd and quite modern peasant consciousness of the locus of real and ideologically sanctioned political power, and a consequent sense of governmental responsibility. This situation stemmed initially from the explicitly reciprocal nature of the Tokugawa political economy: the peasants owed payment (*toritate*) of taxes and in exchange were owed the assurance of a livelihood (*naritachi*). The proper goal of government was *jinsei*, or benevolent rule. Such rule was not necessarily light or humane; indeed, it was always oppressive and exploitative and often cruel in the extreme. But the government was bound by its own ideology (and by the cold rationality of a regime dependent on a land tax) to enable the peasants to survive. The term "peasant" (*hyakushō*) did not include everyone on the land, but only landholders; but they possessed a status granted them back at the very beginning of the era, by the state, which entitled them to economic viability under official policy. In demonstration of this status, peasant manifestoes and petitions often referred to the people as "honorable peasants" or *onbyakushō*, implying something close to rights pertaining to their position.

Invocations of and demands for *jinsei* on behalf of the *onbyakushō* fill the petitions of Tokugawa commoners. What is important is the transformation which took place during the era in the concept of *whose onbya-*

106. Harada, *Toshi sōjō*, pp. 22ff.; Hayashi, *Zoku Hyakushō ikki*, pp. 200ff.; Ooms, *Bureaucrat*, pp. 73ff.

107. Fukawa Kiyoshi, *Nōmin sōjō no shisōshiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1976), pp. 151–52.

108. Shōji *et al.*, *Minshū undō*, pp. 437ff.

kushō they were. Initially the evidence indicates that they saw themselves as subjects of their respective lords, but over time it is very clear that this consciousness broadened and universalized, and the petitions came to refer to their principals as “honorable peasants of the realm” (*tenka no on-byakushō*) and “honorable peasants of the public authorities” (*kōgi no on-byakushō*), and to the objects of *jinsei* as all the people (*banmin*), not simply the subjects of one domain.¹⁰⁹ Up until roughly the Tempō era (c. 1840) *kōgi* and *tenka* had as their referents the *bakufu* or the shogun himself. But from that point on, according to Fukaya Katsumi and others, it broadened even further to presume “the existence of a benevolent public, state authority more general than that of the *bakufu*”—that is, the imperial court.¹¹⁰ This psychological disengagement from the *bakufu* had already appeared on the elite level; one should note here, again, that it did not presuppose or seek a less centralized political system—indeed, it sought the opposite.¹¹¹

The notion of *kōgi* also was not a new one; indeed, it was current on the elite level since before the beginning of the era.¹¹² Popular perceptions of the *bakufu* as the court of last resort, invocation of whose name legitimized dissent, spread only later, but by the nineteenth century it was common—the peasants of Nambu domain, who rebelled in 1853 against their lord, even called for him to be transferred by the *bakufu* whose essential (if not immediate) subjects they considered themselves to be.¹¹³

The conditions of state coercion we have described deteriorated during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Diminished military power on every level of the system, fiscal insecurity, and administrative ineptitude led to fewer punishments for protest, more inconsistent punishment, more concessions to protesters, and grossly diminished popular intimidation in the face of the government. In the 1860s, power flowed away from the *bakufu* into the hands of insurgent anti-Tokugawa domains and powerful, self-interested local commoners. The Tempō Reforms had fallen flat, unbuttressed by a vital regime, and the *bakufu* courts became practically defunct, no longer performing their safety-valve function.¹¹⁴ Commoners became disobedient, rude, and abusive of officials, and were less and less deterred by threats of dire punishment.¹¹⁵ And both the coercive powers of

109. Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*; Rekishigaku Kenkyū Kai, *Kōza Nihon-shi*, pp. 103ff.

110. Hyakushō Ikki Kenkyū Kai, *Tempō-ki*, p. 241.

111. Maruyama, *Intellectual History*, pp. 291ff., 346.

112. Berry, “Public Peace.”

113. Fukaya, *Hyakushō ikki*; *Nambu hyakushō*.

114. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 2, pp. 278ff.; Aoki Michio, personal communication, February 1984.

115. Fukawa, *Nōmin sōjō*.

the *bakufu* in particular and the potential coercion of such a power-sharing state in general were wanting in the face of an international system in which war was now a real factor.¹¹⁶

During the 1860s the *bakufu*'s claim to a monopoly of power dissolved. Commoners in some localities organized their own paramilitary forces (*nōhei*) to protect themselves from riotous peasants precisely because government forces were not up to the task. This was usually done with tacit or active *bakufu* cooperation, and may not signify the loss of its coercive monopoly.¹¹⁷ In the mid-1860s, however, a group of anti-Tokugawa domains led by Choshu rose to challenge the *bakufu*—not to challenge the notion of state monopolization of coercive powers, but to replace the Tokugawa with a new central regime. They succeeded, and proceeded to create a state which built on Tokugawa foundations, which—at least in that respect which Weber tells us defines the state—continued the logic of the early modern Tokugawa state into the modern Japanese state. That this new state was created with such an extraordinary combination of speed and absence of bloodshed may not be unrelated to the fact that in politics and ideology, in farmhouse and castle, important precedents had already been asserted and accepted.¹¹⁸

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

116. Mass and Hauser, *Bakufu*, pp. 10, 193.

117. Aoki *et al.*, *Ikki*, Vol. 5, pp. 80–82; Patricia Sippel, “Popular Protest in Early Modern Japan: The Bushū Outburst,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1977), p. 309; Shōji *et al.*, *Minshū undō*, p. 490; Rekishi Kagaku Kyōgi Kai, *Nōmin tōsō shi*, pp. 312ff.

118. See Maruyama, *Intellectual History*, pp. 341ff. Moreover, it is unlikely that the Meiji-era protesters analyzed by William Kelly (*Deference and Defiance*, ch. 11) and Roger Bowen (*Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 123ff.) came out of nowhere; their consciousness probably owed much to the actions and ideas of their obstreperous predecessors discussed above.