

## Introduction

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Before the modern era, war was unusual in Japan. The fact is surprising, perhaps, since warriors figure so prominently in the national portrait. Japan nonetheless held at least a surface peace during much of the classical period (ca. 700–1180), and again during the early modern period (ca. 1615–1850). Even in the middle ages (ca. 1180–1467), which we associate tenaciously but often mistakenly with samurai disquiet, hostilities of significant duration and scope were departures from a more durable order. Conflict certainly did shoot throughout Japanese history. And conflict often resulted in local rebellions and uprisings, as well as armed quarrels across the spectrum of grievance. Words like *peace* and *order*, then, are imperfect measures. I use them to suggest not the unlikely ascendancy of social concord, but the uncommon absence of social convulsion.

This is a book about a convulsion that broke the surface of peace—about an unusual war that was fought for a century and more after 1467. Its length alone set the “Era of Warring States” apart from previous upheavals; the open warfare of classical and medieval times had rarely lasted more than five years. Yet in every way, the events of the warring states period moved outside past experience. Battle spread across place and station to test all attachments and configurations of power. The majority of the adult male population took up arms; major warlords could assemble tens of thousands, eventually hundreds of thousands, of troops.

Convulsion is one of the hardest historical experiences to understand, insofar as its purposes and structures emerge dynamically, often obscurely, through the process of confrontation itself. Search as we will for organizing stories about war, convulsion lacks any single plot that links obvious causes to consistent developments. Thus, those of us who write about the warring states tend to retreat, as we search for master themes, into characterizations of the period as “transitional.” The label is fine in its way. Civil war clearly did separate the medieval and early modern polities. Japan looked very different in, say, 1450 and 1650, and we have traced the passage between those times through the war years—years of profound change, surely, even if we require the longest view to sort change out convincingly. Hence, by making transition our plot, we finesse the deep confusion of war to focus on the death of medievalism and the birth of early modernism. The last story has been most compelling among historians, since the relative clarity of the early modern settlement seems to illumine the terrain preceding it—showing us what to notice, to ignore, to judge as “aberrational.”

Most scholarship has centered on the warring states themselves.<sup>1</sup> These were scores of local domains (finally numbering over two hundred) that warlords wrested from medieval landholdings, and medieval proprietors, as semi-autonomous fiefdoms. The hardest of them would become the units of the national federation created by the “unifiers” of the early modern state. In this story of domainal formation, the end of the medieval polity recedes into a subsidiary motif, as does the wartime experiment with alternative political visions that survived unification (if at all) in mutant shapes.

The historical treatments of the warring states are abundantly vital and subtle. Yet we have found it difficult, perhaps undesirable in many cases, to escape a teleological narrative. In this work, too, themes of death and genesis arise that anticipate the seventeenth century. Certainly, I began the project looking for a coherent plot about wartime change and the passage into a new peacetime order. But I found something else: a record of pervasive yet indeterminate violence. Fracture seemed to defy coherence, the monotony of injury to defy change, the deflection of movement to defy linear passage. The documents of war led into a deracinated world where I began to look away from the long arcs of historical connection to the words and daily conduct of particular men and women. My subject became not transition but convulsion itself. And this book became an exploration of the distinctive experience, and the distinctive imagination, of a time apart from other time.

My territory is the city of Kyoto, Japan’s capital since 794 and,

throughout wartime, still the headquarters of a putatively national government that was nominally legitimated by the imperial house and administered by the Ashikaga shogun and their deputies. Like most history of the period, this one is local, although its attention to the urban scene, rather than the great provincial domains, is not common.<sup>2</sup> Nor were cities common. In a sparsely urbanized society where few towns numbered much more than 5,000 people, Kyoto stood apart in its immensity—for it embraced at least 100,000 residents—as well as its complexity. Gathered in the capital were the civil nobility, the military officials of the shogunate, a vast religious establishment attached to Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines, the elite among the country's artisans and traders, and an enormous population of workers in all categories. Kyoto's experience of war was not, then, emblematic of the national experience (although I believe it is suggestive). It was the experience of the nation's center in an increasingly centerless society. War began in Kyoto. Later, it began to end there as well.

Ending does not appear here. Just as my choice of locale is somewhat uncommon, my temporal framework may be disconcerting. The body of the book opens with the Ōnin war (1467–77), a rough yet serviceable marker for the commencement of widespread fighting.\* Chronology variously intrudes and recedes thereafter, but rarely do I mention events after the 1550s. I appear to stop in midcourse, refusing to cross the divide of 1568. The year 1568 is another rough yet serviceable marker, indicating the commencement of the “unification” phase of civil war. It opened with the invasion of Kyoto by Oda Nobunaga; it closed around 1615 with the ascendancy of the Tokugawa house, and the gradual stabilization of early modern governance. The last period of war was also convulsive and unpredictable, as resistant to plot as the preceding century of upheaval. Yet still, the conflict after 1568 was sufficiently new in kind to signal a break from the past. We might measure the difference in scale: highly localized struggles were converging into national contests for hegemony. Behind this shift was a more profound change: the division of interest and force that had riven local politics (and kept politics local) was yielding to stunning concentrations of power. Several regional lords were building war machines of a size and cohesion adequate to suppress divergent contests in their home domains and then to

\*Ōnin is an imperial era name (designating the years 1467–69) and thus an indication of the chronological framework of the war. Because this particular upheaval lasted until 1477, it is frequently called the Ōnin-Bunmei war to indicate its continuation into the following imperial era. (Bunmei designates the years 1469–87.)

move far beyond their borders. Just how this preponderance of force was achieved is a question we have yet to answer satisfactorily.

So I stop with the 1550s because the break occurring around 1568 separated two rather different worlds—not, in the end, two “phases” of a continuous movement. We can find numerous connections between the two periods. But my interest is in the particularity of the earlier years that connection distorts. The first century of war brought a diffusion of power and purpose that made a variety of political experiments possible. At least in Kyoto, this was a century of trial rather than of emergent resolutions. The 1550s represent a “midcourse” of warfare only if we insist on the union of beginning and ending.

The essential feature of the first century of warfare was rupture itself—rupture so extensive that it opened cleavages in every unit of the polity and society. Originally provoked by competition for high political office, war exposed divisions within the shogunal hierarchy of the Ashikaga and between the shogunate and its provincial officers; within and between martial houses across the country; within and between the networks of local magnates and common soldiers; within the manorial jurisdictions of civil proprietors and between those proprietors and military challengers. The dynamic of force also generated agrarian and sectarian and urban uprising. It came to license brute redress in every manner of quarrel. Bare numbers may suggest the dimensions of the upheaval. Kyoto went through seven bloody transitions in government between 1467 and 1568, as well as numerous failed coups and invasions. Marches on the city by debtors occurred almost annually for thirty years; a radical movement of townspeople under the banner of the Lotus sect reverberated for a decade. The landscape of war was stark: residents of a repeatedly burned and assailed city retreated into two separate enclaves that they protected with moats, walls, and watchtowers.

This experience of rupture was an experience of violence. The fact is central to the age but can be occluded in modern writing that makes war a backdrop for other, often abstract, developments. In our day, it is the filmmaker Kurosawa Akira who has laid firmest claim to the land of battle. I am not sure why injury has tended to fade from view, although I have wondered whether the scale of twentieth-century atrocity has reduced the gravity of our response to the past. Perhaps our attention to the institutional brutalities of modern states has also led us to slight premodern brutality. My own previous work has a bloodless quality, yet I have tried to convey here, through the words of contemporaries, some sense of war's violence. What diarists called “a world without the Way,”

I call the culture of lawlessness. The phrase has several meanings that I shall gloss later. Most immediately, it describes the unleashing of force in the service of particular interest, and the virtual equation of power and injury.

Yet for all its intensity, the wartime experience of rupture was not conclusive. It resulted neither in the full collapse of medieval institutions nor in the dominance of new ones. Particularly in Kyoto, where members of the old elite and their privileged subordinates remained concentrated, continuity with the past was affirmed by the survival (however halting) of shogunal and proprietary organs of rule as well as the persistence of medieval commercial organizations. And leaps into an uncharted future were deflected by the cycles of reprisal and cooptation that succeeded rebellion. Hence, the diarists whose voices we shall hear fastidiously chronicled the facts of convulsion, only to wonder about their always-elusive meanings and then to imagine some return to normalcy—or, as they put it, to “things as they should be.” This very indeterminacy of events has blurred our own sense of period. Scholars who resist linking the early decades of war to the plot of unification and early modern transition link them, instead, to the middle ages. Warfare then becomes not an experience with a unique theme but a tumultuous coda to a continuous medieval history.<sup>3</sup>

This linkage to the past remains important to me, for I often follow the diarists in their concern for the fugitive nature of change, the tenacity of the old order. Finally, however, the indeterminacy of events defines rather than blurs my sense of period. Characterized first by rupture, the era of warring states was more deeply characterized by an exploration of possible political settlements.

One of these possibilities in Kyoto was the revival of some version of the medieval polity—and not simply because the obscure visions and divided interests of many contenders encouraged compromise on familiar terms. Despite resurgent coups and uprisings, the old order retained a practical appeal for warlords, aristocrats, and townspeople alike. I return throughout this book to the hold of the past on the men and women who struggled against it. Urgently intertwined with matters of identity and mentality, no less than with advantage, medieval institutions projected more than a vestigial presence in the wartime capital. Even so, we find those institutions transformed by violence, by the machinations of overlords as well as resisters, and by imagination. This last element is the most interesting. Through an artful politics of litigation conducted within traditional channels, residents of Kyoto invented

a past that they used to remonstrate against misrule. Increasingly a mental construction rather than a continuous reality, the medieval order became a malleable instrument designed for protection or consolation, aggression or opposition, restoration or rebellion. It was no stable model of authority but a host of choices.

Yet even as they reinterpreted the legacy of the past, the residents of Kyoto also explored the possibilities of political and social reconfiguration. On occasion, such possibilities came sharply into view. Particularly in the Lotus uprising, townspeople shaped a radical vision of urban government that rejected the medieval settlement. Other, disparate visions of change led to direct assaults on the shogunal institution, the horizontal alignment of local soldiers against their overlords, and the organization of townspeople in neighborhood associations. More conspicuous than alternative visions, however, was an alternative politics, which I call the politics of demonstration. Although it was this politics that gradually formed movements like the Lotus, its emphasis fell on the process of search rather than on fixed objectives. Demonstration was an act of mass witness accompanied by exemplary displays of violence. It emerged as a form of public negotiation between nascent associates testing their own resolve and presumptive enemies compelled to assess their own loyalties. Usually staged in the streets with theatrical calculation, demonstration combined an immediate purpose (the cancellation of debts, for instance, or the intimidation of rival sectarians) with a broader probing of new social alliances (the alliances of class, locale, wealth, religion, and trade). We encounter it in many divergent situations: in the protocols accompanying battle, the rites of coup and purge, the conduct of major uprisings as well as more mundane protests, the execution of private justice. We encounter it most spectacularly in the forms of wartime play.

In its range and prominence, the politics of demonstration was new. Occupying a middle ground between the rule of faltering institutions and the rule of brute force, demonstration responded to convulsion by taking as given the intractably divided interests and unclear directions that made for convulsion in the first place. Then, through experimental confrontations that permitted retreat or regrouping, it provided a medium for actors who were neither ready nor even disposed to settle on any single formula of power and identification. This was a dangerous politics, certainly. In the act of opposition, no less than in the tentative alliances and movements it generated, demonstration inspired reprisal. And reprisal, in turn, inspired new trials. This process appears most viv-

idly, in Kyoto, in the build up, repression, and deflection of the Lotus rebellion. Such jagged stories—none of them closed—are the content of Kyoto's wartime experience.

These stories belong to what I refer to as the culture of lawlessness. As I have suggested, the phrase partly describes the ascendancy of violence during the warring states period—the unleashing of force in the service of particular interest. But it describes something more elaborate as well: the state of being without, or lacking, the host of social assumptions intimated by the word *law*. Rather than mere transgression against presumptively normative rules of conduct, lawlessness indicates suspension in a world where rules have lost their cogency. It indicates the need to improvise new modes of association in a territory where precedents offered little guidance.

The medieval order (which I sketch more fully in the next section) had been sustained by a dense cordon of statute, institutional practice, custom, and attachment. Although approximate and frequently breached, the constraints of the polity included consent to shogunal decisions concerning appointment, landholding, and judicial actions; deference to the local authority of centrally confirmed governors; and subordination of the self to the corporate hierarchies of proprietorship, vassalage, patronage, and family. To varying degrees, these constraints continued to operate in the wartime capital, where the old order always retained a half-life. Yet they were under daily siege as rupture spread from assassination to riot, from attacks on abbots to attacks on children. Even though rupture was not complete, it nonetheless destroyed the expectations that had once organized everyday life and thoughts of the future. Thus, in many ways the most arresting feature of wartime documents is not their description of particular crises but their quality of apprehension. Writers presume that nothing can be presumed. Social relations and all the connections that had formed identities were a matter of constant reformulation.

Lawlessness was this process of invention, as men and women of all stations rejected stable definitions of selves, attachments, and values to test possibilities. Its hallmark was demonstration, which substituted for medieval constraints an alternative form of public conduct premised upon fluidity rather than stasis. In the culture of play, even more dramatically than in the culture of uprising, the transforming power of demonstration comes into view. Although the experience of the warring states defied closure, it did not preclude lasting, radical change. Urban residents began using political action as a mode of immediate, physical

power in the streets. They began slipping out of the ties of proprietorship and patronage and into horizontal movements of class and wealth.

Throughout these introductory remarks, the medieval polity has been a quiet, seemingly fixed point of departure. It was nothing of the sort. But for readers new to Japanese history, and for fellow students interested in my own presumptions about the prewar years, a bald synopsis may be in order. The task is an awful one. Japan's medieval period was long, its histories were many, and a consensus about their meanings and convergences appears only to recede in recent scholarship. Thus my synopsis, although everywhere indebted to the great historians of this period, is not just bald but idiosyncratic.<sup>4</sup> Impatient readers should hasten on to the Prelude, where this book was always meant to begin.

The political order that prevailed in Japan when civil war broke out in 1467 was a product of accretion. Many disparate layers of historical experience overlapped and blended together in a system created less by design than by crisis and opportunity. Broadly speaking, the medieval settlement had two dimensions—one statist and one lordly—and both derived from the politics of the classical period.

As it emerged around A.D. 700, the classical state assigned sovereignty to a hereditary emperor. He, or for a time she, presided over a national system of government defined by statutory law and staffed by a civil aristocracy. Appointed within intricate hierarchies of power, these civil officials administered sixty-six provinces and their subdivisions, as well as the central ministries that oversaw local rule from the capital (first in Nara, later in Kyoto). They exercised the authority to allocate and tax land, to maintain order and execute justice, and to issue and codify continuing legislation. In addition, civil officials undertook an array of tasks indicative of the reach of state ambition. They conducted diplomatic and trade exchanges with China and Korea; they supervised public works, the minting of coins, and the standardization of weights and measures. They also established a university and a network of officially sponsored Buddhist temples. The cultural and ritual mission of the state was particularly conspicuous. From heroic architectural projects to the elaboration of imperial ceremony, from the compilation of national histories and poetic anthologies to the compilation of local gazetteers, the officials of the classical era cut a wide territory for public custody.

That territory was gradually overlaid, however, with private lordships. Through a range of legal and extralegal accommodations, noble families



and religious institutions emerged as absentee proprietors of substantial provincial estates. These were variously, often tortuously, formed from reclaimed lands as well as publicly allocated fields that reverted to private control by commendation and other means. In the twelfth century, half of Japan's arable may have constituted estates of divergent size and organization. Yet in general terms, each estate was both a group of properties (ideally defined and removed from state control through official charters), and a hierarchical corporation that united cultivators, local managers, and intermediate sponsors under the jurisdiction of a major proprietor. All members shared income rights in the estate, and members above the cultivating stratum tended to belong to multiple corporations. The most expansive proprietors held scores of estates in different parts of the country and developed correspondingly large bureaucracies to oversee them.<sup>5</sup>

As estates grew in number and autonomy, the apparatus of the state calcified without collapsing. It awarded the titles that conveyed prestige as well as access to estate rights. Ministers and governors also continued to adjudicate land claims and to administer the still-extensive properties outside the manorial system. These properties too, however, came to be governed in a private fashion, insofar as officials regarded provincial resources as a personal benefice. Military power had a private dimension as well, and much of it eluded immediate state surveillance. Following the abandonment of national conscription in the late eighth century, martial responsibility devolved upon various constituencies: the small militias that policed estates under the authority of managers and proprietors; the corps of soldiers attached to provincial offices, who policed nominally public lands either in service to a governor or at their own initiative; and the bands of retainers (who might also belong to the first two groups) that formed around significant provincial families. Such families might hold estate positions at the managerial level, or public offices below the governor, or some combination of both. The greatest of them were descendants of the imperial house assigned commoner status with the surnames Taira and Minamoto. Linked to patrons in the capital, these families and their retainers served as a kind of national guard—recruited to suppress piracy or local rebellion. Yet they acted as frequently in their own interests and were the source of turmoil as well as its remedy, particularly in eastern and northern Japan.<sup>6</sup>

We associate the break between the classical and medieval eras with a civil war, fought between 1180 and 1185, that brought military power to the center of government. But like most transitions, this one too was

fuzzy. At one level, the war focused on competition between the Taira and the Minamoto. The former house had been rewarded with land rights and high titles for several interventions in courtly crises; its head came to serve as Great Minister of State. Dishonored by its own reversals in these crises, the latter house used the occasion of a quarrel between the Taira and the imperial family to declare a war of vengeance. Yet this surface text conceals a far broader conflict between central organs of rule on the one hand (including both the ministries of the classical state and the offices of absentee proprietors) and their local agents on the other. The head of the Minamoto, a man named Yoritomo, attracted wide support with the vision of a new power, separate from the capital, that could vest land rights directly in response to local interests. By 1185, his partisans had defeated the Taira in campaigns across the country.<sup>7</sup>

The ensuing polity was a hybrid that established the character of medieval development. The imperial court survived in Kyoto as the source of political legitimacy and the center of a declining government with authority over “public” lands free of estate formation. Its ceremonial and cultural life retained considerable, if diminished, vitality. The noble and religious proprietors survived as well, although wartime confiscations and rewards had cut into their holdings. But imposed on the classical structures of state and lordship were analogous, eventually dominant, structures of shogunal rule.

“Shogun” is the abbreviation of an infrequently used classical title that was bestowed upon generals charged with internal pacification. One of several honors extended by a wary but compliant emperor to Minamoto no Yoritomo, it became the centerpiece of what would gradually evolve into a distinctive administration.<sup>8</sup> That administration began to take shape as Minamoto no Yoritomo established his headquarters in the city of Kamakura and assumed jurisdiction over the eastern provinces of the Kantō (a boon of victory that may not have produced dramatic changes in local governance). Nationally, the shogun played a peacekeeping role. Perceived by the court as a martial arm of the imperial state, Yoritomo was delegated to station officers in troubled areas as guarantors of order. Over time, officers in two categories spread across the nation: *jitō* (or military stewards) exercised police functions in individual estates and smaller units of public territory, such as districts or villages; *shugo* (or military governors) exercised jurisdiction over capital crimes at the provincial level. And again over time, responsibility for

this network of subordinates prompted bureaucratic and institutional development. Particularly from the 1220s, the judicial organs of the shogunate grew in scope, and in sophistication, to handle not just the cases of military officers (their original province) but the cases of nobles, religious communities, and commoners as well.

The Kamakura shogunate lasted from 1185 until 1333, first under the authority of Minamoto no Yoritomo and his descendants and then under noble figureheads controlled by regents in the Hōjō house. In many ways it was an extension of the classical state, which undertook the public functions of peacekeeping and adjudication through offices sanctioned by the court. The public presence of the shogunate was enhanced, moreover, by additional functions that mimicked classical initiatives: the patronage of Zen Buddhist temples, the construction of monuments, the compilation of a history, the codification of laws, the maintenance of an elaborate ceremonial. Most important, the shogunate, rather than the court, received (and once executed) Mongol ambassadors demanding the submission of Japan and then supervised the national defense against the invasions of 1274 and 1281. The growing prominence of the shogunate inspired resistance virtually from its inception. An armed attempt at imperial restoration, supported by warriors disenchanted with Kamakura, failed in 1221. This crisis and continuing disquiet tilted the balance of power away from Kyoto. Following the restoration attempt, the shogunate disciplined members of the imperial family, confiscated estates, and stationed a garrison in the old capital.

The statist dimension of Kamakura rule was only one part of a complex settlement, however. The ambitions of armed men and local functionaries that brought the shogunate to power always underlay the exercise of public authority. Thus, at one level the officers of a national administration, military stewards and governors were also competitors for private advantage, which they sought through their official commissions. The search was variously eased and complicated by the conditions of their tenure: appointments tended to be hereditary, the surveillance of Kamakura remote, their incomes dependent on enterprise rather than fixed stipends, and their functions a matter of negotiation. The experience of military officers was predictably diverse.<sup>9</sup> Some failed to establish a presence; others—constrained alike by civil authorities and by litigation—assumed modest, often vulnerable roles. But still others became substantial powers who carved out landholdings and income rights

from both estates and the nominally public domain—through reward and patronage, judicial actions, the reluctant concessions of proprietors, and outright aggression.

Let me trace the history of the succeeding shogunate before reflecting on the integral structures of the medieval polity. Kamakura fell in the 1330s as a result of two rather different movements, each indicative of competing directions in Japanese governance since the classical period. The emperor Go-Daigo mounted another attempt at imperial restoration, this one briefly successful between 1333 and 1336, which sought the recovery of national power by a throne committed to systematic public rule. Here was the statist model of universal, bureaucratic administration guided by statutory law. But Go-Daigo was dependent on supporters with divergent purposes. By 1336 one party had diverted the advantage to the martial house of Ashikaga in expectation of the increased rewards to warriors that the compromises of Kamakura and the imperial absolutism of Go-Daigo had foiled. Here was the lordly model of particular, personal administration guided by interest and accommodation.

The ensuing government was the familiar mixture, with both statist and lordly elements amplified. Eight shogun of the Ashikaga line held office between 1338 and the opening of civil war in 1467. (Seven more assumed the title during wartime.) They made their headquarters not in Kamakura but in Kyoto, where the imperial court, the civil nobility, and the community of aristocratic and religious proprietors also resided. Yet the authority that had once been contentiously shared by civilian and martial institutions was now exercised more securely by a dominant shogunate. Partisans of Go-Daigo mounted sporadic rebellions for two generations. Even so, courtly power waned as the Ashikaga resolutely occupied Kyoto and used Go-Daigo's legacy for their own purposes.

The emperor's vision of a cohesive rather than a bifurcated rule resulted in the creation under the Ashikaga of stronger *shugo*—military governors of the sixty-six provinces who came to preside, without the intervention of civil officials, as the chief administrators of the countryside. Delegated by the shogun to assume emergency powers that gradually became normalized, these *shugo* collected martial taxes, confiscated rebel holdings, conducted inquiries, and executed judgments on behalf of the judicial offices of the Ashikaga. They took direct control over what remained of public territories; they established a degree of power over local strongmen, such as the stewards (*jitō*) of the Kamakura era. They also cut into estates—through the imposition of martial taxes,

through police actions that resulted from their jurisdiction over a growing body of crimes. Perhaps the clearest symbols of a new *shugo* presence were the provincial capitals they established.<sup>10</sup>

Nor was the enhancement of the *shugo* the only indication of a powerful Ashikaga state. Heir to Kamakura's traditions, Ashikaga deputies also made and codified laws, maintained a judiciary and other central institutions, and conducted restored diplomatic relations with China. Their cultural enterprises outstripped the court's. Further, the shogunate assumed control of the money-lending establishment and issued an expanding corpus of commercial legislation. These and similar initiatives give the impression of a resurgent imperial state, this time under a martial house (which had imperial ambitions of its own, in the judgment of some distinguished historians).<sup>11</sup> The impression is accurate in a sense, for the Ashikaga shogunate at its zenith (around the early fifteenth century) was a coherent national regime that influenced most aspects of public life. But the impression needs to be modified by two significant considerations. First, the shogunate retained limited authority over the court and surviving civil proprietors, and a quite erratic authority over parts of Kyushu and the northeast where entrenched local families held the preponderance of power.<sup>12</sup> Second, the shogunate functioned as an interdependent part—rather than as the sovereign body—in a system of lordly corporations.

As a practical matter, power was exercised at the local level within a variety of particularistic units forged in disparate ways. The old estates, uniting cultivators and managers and proprietors, numbered among these units; and some of them, especially those controlled by great temples, remained large and strong. The general decline in civil authority was replete with exceptions. Most other units were military proprietorships—the holdings established by stewards of the Kamakura era, for example. The majority of military proprietorships arose in the Ashikaga era through the agency or compliance of the *shugo*.

In theory powerful officers of state, these *shugo* were also men of mixed backgrounds and personal resources whose authority derived from a shogunate with an insecure mandate of rule. The victory over Go-Daigo in the midst of considerable ferment had not provided a structure of military alliances. By vesting considerable provincial jurisdiction in the *shugo*, a group that included Ashikaga collaterals as well as Kamakura houses and great rivals, the shogunate created a body of virtual peers to extend and consolidate its power. (A sort of peer rule was confirmed by the creation of a *shugo* council and the appointment

of a chief administrative officer, the *kanrei*, from the *shugo* ranks.) But the problem of integration confronting the Ashikaga equally confronted these provincial governors. And the problem was exacerbated by the conditions of tenure: *shugo* frequently administered several, non-contiguous provinces; their assignments were rotated on occasion; and they were expected to reside for extended periods in the capital of Kyoto, where some of them jointly exercised central and provincial responsibilities. This diffusion of interest, combined with often-limited backing, made the *shugo* reliant on deputies. And thus, we find the spread of military proprietorships.

The *shugo* used the prerogatives of office to build alliances with a range of old and new men: with former *jitō*, with retainers who served or fought for their houses, with local magnates who had used estate or public commissions to establish land bases, with leagues of fighting men ready to exchange allegiance for reward. Sometimes called *shugo-dai* (deputy *shugo*), a term that properly refers to formal representatives of the governors, this complex stratum of agents is better called *kokujin*—or men of the land (alternately, men of the province). Alliance between them and a *shugo* involved the exchange of deference (and often of military support) for land or income privileges. And such privileges took multiple forms: custodianship of public lands, or properties confiscated from rebels and criminals, or estates conceded to the “protection” of *shugo*, or territories set aside from other holdings expressly to generate revenue for military actions. Allies of the *shugo* might also receive favorable judicial rulings that confirmed their holdings against rival claimants. They might exercise certain prerogatives—to collect field taxes, say, or to enforce punishments or police markets—that constituted private sinecures.

Some of these privileges were more secure than others. Some formed the basis of domainal rights (*chigyō-ken*, often translated as fiefs) while others did not. Most were hereditary and partible but others needed renewal. I nonetheless call them all proprietorships and associate them with lordly patterns of rule, to indicate several general points. The privileges derived from personal awards with an implicitly contractual function. They generated private resources rather than a public purse. They typically entailed a jurisdiction over several village communities that was randomly mediated by other authorities. But, of course, villages too were important mediators of authority.

No less complex than superior levels of power, villages included many layers of wealth, status, and land rights. Some, especially in the home

provinces, had developed their own councils. Some were openly defiant of all overlords. Most were influenced by a stratum of armed peasants—the *jizamurai*, or soldiers of the village—who alternately provided support for and resistance to ambitious deputies of the *shugo*. Peasant uprising occurred with increasing frequency in the Ashikaga period, and few proprietors could prevail without the use of intimidating force or concessions to some element of the cultivating population. The spread of the Ikkō sect among peasants and the consequent growth of religious uprising provided one of the gravest challenges to civil and military proprietors alike.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, we find within the Ashikaga settlement four broad, internally varied tiers of power: the shogun and their immediate functionaries in the capital; the *shugo*, or military governors, who were charged with provincial rule; the *kokujiin*, or men of the land, who actually exercised proprietorship over a range of discrete jurisdictions; and the cultivators who generated the resources of land and labor. We also find an imperial court that continued to legitimate martial authority and civil proprietors with their own ties to *kokujiin* and cultivators.

Within some of these tiers of power, group identities and even a sense of solidarity found occasional expression (among courtiers, for example, or sectarian cells of farmers). But profoundly divided by wealth, influence, and interest, members of a tier were more often competitors whose primary concerns were organized by vertical alliances across tiers—what I call corporations—which first appeared in the estates of the classical era. Medieval corporations normally included cultivators, the *kokujiin* proprietor of their villages, and the *shugo* protector of that *kokujiin*. But there were many permutations. *Kokujiin* leagues might form direct connections with a shogun; armed farmers might seek the patronage of a *shugo*; a *shugo* might be eclipsed by a formidable deputy; a great temple might unite with diverse *kokujiin*. And so forth. Except for the lower strata of peasants, individuals also tended to belong to multiple corporations. Nor were these units confined to the tenurial relations of land. The China trade bound shogun, *shugo*, temples, and merchants in private exchanges for profit. Artisans and traders formed guilds linking themselves to peasant producers and proprietary authorities. City people were tenants of noble or military houses.

*Corporation* is another vexing term that I have bent somewhat out of shape here. I use it nonetheless to indicate several more general points. The operative units of power and social identification in medieval Japan were rarely class, station, wealth, occupation, and relationship to a uni-

versal entity like the state. Rather, they were particular units of attachment, formed through discrete negotiations, that bound persons of different status for the exchange of goods (including honor and service) in pursuit of private advantage. Although most had a territorial dimension, they united resident and absentee members through flexible contracts renegotiated by exigency and conflict. They emerged from above—as a lordly protector who represented the shogun or emperor vested authority in a subordinate proprietor; they also emerged from below—as strong cultivators or *kokujin* exacted concessions from superiors. Yet all corporations were premised on vertical alliances to distribute and regulate power rather than on impersonal public structures.

What, then, was the relationship between statist and lordly forms of rule in medieval Japan? Much of the scholarship on the period has centered on this question, with the implication that these apparently incompatible versions of governance were competitive or fitfully ascendant. A related question for historians across the spectrum concerns where, among the different tiers, power really lay. Was power hierarchical—flowing from the shogun to successively more dependent *shugo*, *kokujin*, and peasant cultivators? Or was one presumptively lower tier—the tier of *shugo*, for example, or of *kokujin*—the actual locus of power?<sup>14</sup>

Such questions have yielded a great deal of astute reflection, yet I increasingly find them unsatisfactory. Questions predicated on the anomalies and discordances in a system that lasted more than three centuries (without frequent convulsion) slight the possibility of integration. And efforts to find any single, stable configuration of power slight the dynamism of all political relations. Even though it carries its own clear problems, my formulation of the medieval polity tries to allow for integration and dynamism. I call this polity a complex corporatist state.<sup>15</sup>

*State* refers to the superstructure of the shogunate (and to the imperial court behind it) that could legitimately award or confirm claims to resources through appointment, judicial action, and edict. Frequently an interested party to these transactions that established its own network of influence, the shogunate was an executive and a mediator that set the frames within which local contests occurred. It was certainly heir to an imperial state that conceived the nation as a whole, with both a ceremonial and a legal center where precedents were defined and officers delegated. Yet it was not the custodian of any absolute value—the privilege of the sovereign, the public good, the universal rule of law. The shogunate remained a versatile, chameleon institution. Constrained by