The institutional foundations of the Tokugawa daimyo have been obscured by the lack of insight which historians have traditionally shown into the history of the Ashikaga period and, in particular, into the late Ashikaga, or Sengoku, age. Like the Dark Ages in Europe, this chapter of Japanese history has been accepted in historiography as a dark and formless era of war and trouble. Japanese historians have dismissed the Sengoku period as a time of ge-koku-jō when the political order was capriciously turned upside down by unworthy leaders. The colorful Western historian, James Murdoch, has heaped his most caustic invectives upon the main figures in Ashikaga history. Of the founder of the Ashikaga shogunate he claimed, “Takauji may indeed have been the greatest man of his time, but that is not saying very much, for the middle of the fourteenth century in Japan was the golden age, not merely of turncoats, but of mediocrities.”

To Murdoch the Sengoku period was a “vile” age when the Japanese people showed, as he put it, a “lust for war and slaughter . . . utterly beyond human control,” and only the timely arrival of the “great trio” of daimyo, Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu, saved the day for Japan.

Walter Dening, Hideyoshi’s biographer, is even more eloquent in depicting the contrast between the Sengoku age and the peace which Hideyoshi brought. “The history of this time,” he wrote, “is a history of successful usurpation age after age . . . The whole country was a scene of desolation unprecedented in Japanese annals. By the genius, indomitable courage, and resolution of one man, the whole aspect of affairs was transformed.”

To historians such as Murdoch and Dening the daimyo of the late Sengoku age were heroes who brought peace and stability to a chaotic world.

But not all writers have drawn the pre-Tokugawa centuries so darkly nor the daimyo so brightly. Even Murdoch recognized some redeeming features in the Ashikaga period. Recently a brighter side to this dark age has been found by Japanese historians. Nakamura Kichiji was the first to develop this new view, and subsequently it has been included in Western literature. The Sengoku period was a time of hopeful signs, we are told, characterized by the emergence of lightfooted peasants who, as ashigaru, vaulted into the ranks of the samurai; by the emergence of free cities; by an expanded foreign trade; and many other purportedly “anti-feudal” tendencies.

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2 Murdoch, I, 636.
4 Nakamura Kichiji, Hōkensei saihenseisshi [History of the Re-establishment of the Feudal System] (Tokyo, 1939).
Justified or not, this picture of the Sengoku age is paradoxical to the historian. For, in proportion to the emphasis placed upon the supposedly hopeful or "progressive" signs in Sengoku society, the work of Murdoch's "great trio" is minimized and the daimyo are less admired. For when it is discovered that Hideyoshi, after his unification of Japan, did not complete these trends, and, as one recent writer puts it, did not "respond with a plan of integration which would have placed Japan on the threshold of progress as a modern state and world power," the question arises "Why not?"

The answer most frequently given is that Hideyoshi was a spokesman of conservative feudal interests. Nobunaga's reduction of Sakai, Hideyoshi's slamming of the door in the face of those who would have followed him out of the peasantry, and Ieyasu's purported return to outgrown feudal institutions have been held against Murdoch's heroes. Japanese historians have gone further. Suzuki Ryōichi has called the social settlement under Hideyoshi a "betrayal" perpetrated by a victorious coalition of feudal groups against the struggling nōmin. In his words, "The new absolute feudal hegemony . . . suppressed the further anti-feudal struggle of the peasantry . . ." What are we to believe: that the dark ages were dark or bright, that the "great trio" were heroes or traitors?

The answer to this question lies in the study of the daimyo who emerged as the new political masters of Japan and of the methods by which they gained and governed their domains. Of all the institutional products of the Ashikaga period, the daimyo were without question the most significant. A study of the Ashikaga period in the light of the evolution of the daimyo as the representative figures of Japanese local and national government, rather than as individual heroes, can illuminate this enigmatic chapter of Japanese history, divorced from the labels of ge-koku-jō or of hero-worship. Conversely, it is only as we trace the institutional origins of the daimyo back into the Ashikaga period that their true significance as the molders of local government in Tokugawa Japan can be understood.

In recent years, Japanese historians such as Nagahara Keiji, Satō Shin'ichi, Toyoda Takeshi, Itō Tasaburō, and Nakamura Kichiji, have directed serious attention to the institutional origins of the daimyo. Although these scholars have not always agreed upon the interpretation of their data, their studies have given us a useful periodization and nomenclature for this field of study. Basically, what these men have done is to make a series of cross-sectional analyses of the structure of Japanese local administration at four points in time from, roughly, the middle of the fourteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. This admittedly artificial segmentation of the continuum of social change has provided the data for the postulation of four ideal daimyo types, each building successively upon the institutions of the previous, and each embracing larger and more effective areas of hegemony. They are: (1) the shugo-daimyō type which characterize the period from mid-fourteenth century to somewhat beyond the Ōnin wars, approximately until the 1490's, (2) the sengoku-daimyō type which emerged before 1500 and continued into the 1560's and 1570's, (3) the shokuhō-

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daimyō type which came into being under Nobunaga and Hideyoshi and lasted until the early seventeenth century, and (4) the kinsei-daimyō type which became dominant during the Tokugawa period and matured by the end of the seventeenth century. Each of these types exhibited certain distinctive patterns of social and political organization within several levels of government: (1) the level of ultimate authority and sanction for the exercise of legal or administrative powers, (2) the level of power organization among the local elite, and (3) the level of relationships between local power holders and the various subordinate groups of local inhabitants.

The possibility that the military confusion of the Sengoku period masked many fundamental and even revolutionary social and political changes has not been ignored completely by historians. The traditional emphasis upon the "reunification" of Japan has implied the adoption of certain new practices of military and political organization. G. B. Sansom has laid considerable stress on the shift in social organization from clan to family and on the changing nature of feudal law. K. Asakawa has studied the evolving patterns of land tenure and fiscal administration. What has been lacking has been a recognition of the full magnitude and variety of the institutional changes which accompanied the emergence of the modern daimyo and the capacity to describe these changes comprehensively. A structural study of the daimyo domain provides the materials for such an integrated treatment.

It may be argued, of course, that a single pattern of daimyo evolution cannot possibly emerge from the diverse local histories of the scattered regions of Japan. And it is unquestionably true that, in terms of timing and pattern, social change in Japan has shown considerable regional variation. On the other hand, enough work has been done by Japanese historians to show that there is a "main stream" of daimyo evolution illustrated by the progression of the four ideal types described above. The following amplification of the institutional origins of the modern daimyo combines this recent work of Japanese historians with data taken from the case study of a single locality: the province of Bizen, which occupies today the southeastern third of Okayama Prefecture. The history of the rise of the modern daimyo in Bizen follows rather closely the main stream of daimyo development. Admittedly, it contrasts with the pattern in some of the fringe areas of the Japanese islands, as those familiar with Asakawa's work on Satsuma will recognize. But the Bizen case is close to the norm.

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10 Satsuma, the scene of the Asakawa’s study of the iki house documents, is one of the few regions in which a shugo family of Kamakura origin, the Shimazu, managed to retain its power and continue as a daimyo under the Tokugawa hegemony.
of the process as it unfolded throughout central Japan, and it was this area which provided leadership both in social change and political unification.

Bizen, one of the original 66 provinces established in the eighth century, had a history of relatively stable administration with strong ties to the center of court influence at Kyōto. Comprising an area of about 670 square miles, it supported a population of just under 400,000 persons by the end of the seventeenth century. During the Tokugawa period, it was totally dominated by the daimyō of Okayama, hereditarily assigned to the house of Ikeda. Although Bizen did not provide the base of support for a major shugo-daimyō power during the early Ashikaga period, it eventually gave rise to an indigenous daimyō family, the Ukida, which gained national prominence under Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. The Ukida were succeeded by the Ikeda during the early years of the Tokugawa hegemony, and it was the latter house which perfected the institutions of the modern daimyō in Bizen.

The shugo-daimyō

The wars of the dynasties during the last half of the fourteenth century witnessed the emergence of a group of powerful local families bearing the title of shugo and given appointment by the Ashikaga shogun. These shugo were essentially military governors, for they served both as the military subordinates of the shogun and exercised the remaining civil functions of the former imperial provincial governors.11 These military governors were, in effect, the institutional forerunners of the later daimyō, although in only rare instances, such as the Shimazu, Ōtomo, or Date, did shugo families manage to perpetuate their power to become daimyō at a later age.

The units of shugo jurisdiction and appointment were provinces (kuni) such as Bizen, over which they exercised prescribed legal powers vested in them by the shogun, who derived his authority in principle from the emperor. In most provinces, however, a sizeable discrepancy existed between the jurisdictional authority of the shugo and the area of their enforceable authority. The imperial bureaucratic system was nearly dead, but the system of military allegiances and controls had not yet fully taken its place. This, in essence, was the weakness of the Ashikaga policy, and not Murdoch's turncoats and mediocrities.

Bizen, during the early Ashikaga period, was divided into some 105 shōen units, administered under a confusing welter of resident and absentee proprietorships. Of these, 4 were held by the imperial family, 4 by court families, 26 by centrally located temples or shrines, and 12 by the Hosokawa family whose head served as deputy shogun (kanrei). Thirty or more small shōen were held, probably under resident proprietorships, by military families, most of them former jūrō.12 One of these houses,


12 These figures were compiled by Madoka Kanai from the following sources: Nagayama Usaburō, Okayama Ken nōchiki [History of Agricultural Land in Okayama Prefecture] (Okayama, 1952), 394–452; Nakamura Naokatsu, Shōen no kenkyū [Studies on shōen] (Tokyo, 1939), 601–623; Takeuchi Rizō, Jirō shōen no kenkyū [Studies on Temple Shōen] (Tokyo, 1942), 63–64, 77, 471–472; Nishioka Toranosuke, Shōenshiki no kenkyū [Studies on Shōen History] (3 vols., Tōkyō, 1956–1957), III, 882–886; Shimizu Masatke, Shōen shiryō [Documents on Shōen] (2 vols., Tōkyō, 1933), 1121 ff.
the Matsuda, briefly held the appointment of shugo of Bizen, but lost the title to a stronger power, the Akamatsu of the neighboring province of Harima. The Akamatsu served as shugo of Bizen for most of the years from 1364 to 1522.\(^13\)

From almost any point of view the basis of Akamatsu power was precarious. In Harima, the family held 12 shōen in varying degrees of completeness, and other holdings were scattered over 6 other provinces. In its home province the Akamatsu may have controlled a tenth of the land and counted a majority of the bushi families as their allies or vassals. But the interests of absentee court and religious proprietors were still evident in the province. In Bizen the Akamatsu held but two of the 105 shōen, so that their authority rested almost entirely on the uncertain submission of the Matsuda house which dominated western Bizen and on the services of the Urakami, who, as jito of one of the Akamatsu shōen, fought for a precarious hold over eastern Bizen. To both of these houses, the Akamatsu assigned titles as deputy-military-governors (shugodai).

The existence of a gap between the area of enforceable authority and that of legal jurisdiction accounts for the importance the shugo placed upon their participation in the affairs of the Ashikaga shogunate and the reliance they placed upon the shogun's support in their own local affairs. It is an historic irony, however, that this reliance upon central rather than local sources of power was to be their undoing. The necessity the shugo felt for the legal authority of the shogunate and the court involved them more and more in the affairs of the capital. But as the shugo families turned their attention to Kyōto, they found the task of organizing and holding their territories increasingly beyond their means. The network of relatives and trusted vassals on whom they depended became scattered and divided in loyalties and interests. Neither the force of the oath of allegiance nor family solidarity based on primogeniture had been perfected.\(^14\) Competition on the national stage drew the shugo and their armies away from their power bases, so that they gradually lost their hold over the lower echelons of their own subordinates. Real initiative in the provinces began to pass to another level of local families, very often to the shugodai who had been able to put down stronger roots in the local soil. In the Ōnin war, the shugo families exhausted themselves opposing each other, so that nearly all disappeared or became the puppets of their stronger vassals. Between 1467 and the 1530's, the far-flung jurisdictional territories of the shugo broke into fragments, and a second wave of families of local origin inherited the pieces.

The sengoku-daimyō

In Bizen, the collapse of the Akamatsu between 1483 and 1522 brought the two shugodai families, the Matsuda and Urakami, to the fore. Theirs was not a simple case of inheritance from the Akamatsu, however. The territories controlled by these

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\(^{13}\) Mizuno Kyōchirō, "Shugo Akamatsu-shi no ryōkoku shihi to Kakitsu no hen" [The Territorial Administration of the shugo Akamatsu House and the Kakitsu Incident], Shōrin, 42 (1959), 254–281.

emerging *sengoku-daimyō* were of a new and more rugged type. In them, the gap between legal and effective control had been wiped away, or, more correctly, it had become impossible to lay claim to jurisdictional authority unsupported by actual military force.

In the region of Bizen today, the remains of over 200 small hilltop fortifications, dating from the Sengoku period, stand as evidence of a new kind of political-military organization based on entrenched military power. At the bottom of Bizen elite society, small *bushi* landowners, asserting themselves in their immediate neighborhoods, built up small but strongly consolidated units each consisting of a fort and surrounding siefs, unifying within the protection of the fort the many *myōshu*, or cultivators, of these siefs. These were the building blocks of the power structure of a new warring society, the individual leader of which was the mounted fighter, or *ki*. Such leaders were gradually and systematically organized into larger valley-wide hierarchies of loyalties under the leadership of the former *shugodai* during the wars of the Sengoku era. But while it was primarily upon military coercion that the former *shugodai* relied for their regional hegemony, they utilized as well the residue of prestige and legal authority which remained from their previous official titles.

In Bizen, two competing centers of military power came into existence led by the Matsuda and Urakami. Each of these longstanding powers had entrenched themselves in mountain fastnesses from which they could extend control over the lesser military houses within small but defensible geographical regions. The Matsuda, controlling the Asahi River valley of western Bizen, counted 350 *ki* among their vassals in the 1490's and could muster 5000 men in emergency. Their domain, or, rather, sphere of influence, was an area of relatively fluid boundaries including 20 major tributary-valley forts and many smaller ones. The Urakami sphere of power which embraced the Yoshii River of eastern Bizen did not reach full maturity until the 1550's. By that time it consisted of some 172 separate siefs (*chigyōchi*) held by 59 major vassals. Each vassal was enfeoffed directly, and few held less than what was later the equivalent of 500 *koku*. Thus we can visualize the majority of these 59 vassals as petty castle-holders, each possessing his own followers and land-holdings of long standing. *Sengoku-daimyō*, such as the Urakami and Matsuda, were in effect leaders of separate coalitions of local families (generally referred to as *kokujin*), most of which had grown up within the *shōen* system as *jiō*. These coalitions had been drawn together over a long period of time and were characterized by a heavy reliance on kinship and marriage relationships in addition to bonds of vassalage and enfeoffment for purposes of solidarity. This was particularly true of the Matsuda, the majority of whose supporters were heads of branch families or were linked to the Matsuda by direct marriage ties.

As a general rule, at least until after 1530 or so, the daimyo of the Sengoku period did not acquire jurisdiction over territories which approached in size those of the

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20 *Keda-ke monjo* [Keda-house Archives], Urakami Ukida ryōke bugenchō [House Rolls of the Urakami and Ukida], doc. Zatsu, 717.
21 Okayama Shi zhi, II, 1325.
shugo. But their grip was more secure and complete. Their holdings and those of their followers were closely compacted into contiguous domains which, in most instances, had been won or defended in battle. Thus the distinction between boundaries of legal jurisdiction and outright control had been largely obliterated. Within this area, the complex division of rights which characterized the shōen system had given way to the holding of land in fief. By now the absentee interests of courtiers or distant temples had been almost entirely squeezed out. In other words, the vertical lines of authority and control had been pulled short and taut. Very little administrative and almost no fiscal contact existed between the provinces and Kyōto. The individual daimyo domains were essentially independent. Within them the power and authority relationships consisted of a hierarchically structured system of allegiances in which military service was exchanged for grants of fief. Furthermore, the exercise of the functions of government, coincided with those relationships. It is this situation which can be compared most closely with the model of decentralized feudalism in Europe.

The shokuhō-daimyō

In Bizen as elsewhere, no sooner had the new local powers consolidated the domains from which they could draw extensive military and economic support, than they began to contest for territory among themselves. Beginning during the 1530’s and reaching a crescendo after 1560, the struggle raged for local and, eventually, national hegemony. In most locales—and this was true of Bizen—the original sengoku-daimyō did not survive the devastating wars of the 1530’s to 1560’s. Again they were replaced by a new group of families which showed still greater capacities for leadership and organization under the strenuous requirements of warfare. This was the heyday of ge-koku-jō, when, according to the traditional view, military upwards displaced their legitimate superiors by treachery and trickery. In actuality, however, it is clear that these new leaders, who inherited the domains of their former lords and proceeded to carve out even larger territories, built their successes upon certain clearly defined institutional advances.

The basic weakness of the daimyo of the early Sengoku period was that, as time went on, their vassals became increasingly powerful and insubordinate. The new daimyo of the late Sengoku period were able to impose a sufficiently effective control over the fighting men and the resources of their domains, a special capacity that kept them relatively free of such centrifugal forces. This capacity was well illustrated in the growing concentrations of military and economic might which the new daimyo assembled in the great castle headquarters of their domains.

In Bizen, this new stage of organization was achieved by the military leader Ukida Naoie.19 The history of Ukida’s rise is remarkably similar to that of the better-known military figures of this age, such as Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, or Ikeda Terumasa, who eventually took over Bizen. In 1545, Ukida Naoie, a minor vassal of the Urakami, was given command of a small fort on Bizen’s sea frontier. He was assigned 30 men for its defense and a small fief nearby. Here were the in-

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19 The Ukida House has left behind only a very few documents relating to its rise as the first great daimyo of Bizen, perhaps due to its violent demise in 1600. The available records are fairly well assembled in Okayama Shi shi, II, 1403 ff. A few house rolls recovered from the archives of the Ōoka family are found in the Okayama Kenritsu Toshokan (Okayama Prefectural Library).
gredients of a new power structure which was eventually to take over all of Bizen and parts of neighboring provinces. There were two important innovations in authority relationships. Ukida Naoie was in effect the commander of his 30 men. In the words of the day, he was their yoriya (parent) and they his yoriiko (children). Between them was a chain of command relationship differing fundamentally from the previous marriage or oath of vassalage tie. Secondly, these men were maintained on Naoie's fief. They lived in his castle and lived off his land which adjoined it. Thus the degree of dependence between these men and their leader was more complete.

As Naoie and his men fought their way out of the corner of Bizen, he added to his fiefs and began to set out some of his own yoriiko as commanders of outlying castles. About half of his original band became unit commanders (kumigashira) possessing their own vassals, and five of these became major castleholders within Naoie's territory. The granting of such privileges involved certain risks which a leader like Naoie must have recognized. In a sense, it meant a return to the older form of less dependent lord-vassal status. But it was unquestionably necessary because Naoie had not yet developed a sufficiently effective centralized control over his expanding territory. As it was, Naoie worked hard to maintain his dominance over his men, rotating commands frequently, and periodically pulling back his major vassals to his own castle headquarters. Moreover, he maintained a large force of troops under his own direct command, so that the military center of gravity of his holdings was clearly located in his main castle. Thus Naoie moved his own headquarters to successively larger castles until in 1573 he entered Okayama castle, newly built to house his swelling corps of fighters. By this time Naoie was mustering from 10,000 to 15,000 men in his frequent campaigns. His fiefs extended over nearly a tenth of Bizen.²⁰ Although he was nominally still vassal to the head of the Urakami house, he was beginning to have ambitions of his own.

After the middle of the sixteenth century, while local leaders such as Ukida Naoie were perfecting strongly centralized military organizations within their own territories, the older regional lords, such as the Matsuda or Urakami, held to their systems of extended coalitions of independently enfeoffed vassals. Continuing to rely on the presumed invulnerability of their mountain castles, they came to depend more and more upon their own subordinates to do their fighting. As a consequence, they were obliged to permit their vassals a dangerous rate of growth and freedom. During the 1560's and the 1570's, the many kokujin vassals of the Urakami were showing signs of restlessness. It was now increasingly possible for such local families to make alliances outside of Bizen with neighboring powers such as the Mōri to the west, the Amago to the north, or even with Oda Nobunaga, who had begun to push westward from Kyōto. By this time, however, the head of the Urakami house could only depend upon Ukida Naoie to keep his restless vassals in line. While Urakami Munekage sat in his mountain citadel of Tenjinyama, the Ukida reduced, one after another, the tributary-valley powers of the Urakami vassals for disciplinary reasons. One by one, the small hilltop castles of this area were put to the torch. In 1568, the Matsuda were wiped out under Ukida Naoie's generalship. While this was going on, the Urakami, depending on the loyalty of the Ukida and other close vassals, failed to expand their landed and military resources to keep pace with the process of consolidation. By

²⁰ Urakami Ukida ryōke bugenchō.
1573, when Ukida Naoie moved into Okayama castle, he, not Urakami Munekage, commanded the majority of Bizen’s military forces, and his castle at Okayama was larger than that of his overlord. In 1577, Naoie, using the pretext of a succession dispute in the Urakami house, stormed Tenjinyinma and displaced his lord. Bizen was now unified under his command. Within a generation, the network of small hilltop castles which had stood for the independently enfeoffed kokujin had been superseded by the consolidated domain commanded by the Ukida at Okayama.

The Ukida domain, centering on Okayama, was typical of those brought under control by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. It rested, not only on a generation of military conquest, but on extensive redistribution of land rights and simplification of tenures. Productive land was being systematically surveyed and converted to a uniform measure (kokudaka). Naoie held some 400,000 koku. His retainers, or housemen (kashin), were organized in chain of command fashion. A band of some 1400 retainers of officer status were organized into 14 groups (or kumi) each headed by a trusted commander.21 Seven of these were set up as subsidiary castle holders guarding the frontiers of Bizen and the approaches to Okayama. Each held lands producing over 10,000 koku. In other words, they were embryonic daimyo. But they were obliged to reside in Okayama. The unit commanders (kumi-gashira) of lesser status were officers who commanded their men on a yoroiya-yoriko basis. This was essentially an army type of organization in which there was a minimum identity of family to locality or dependence upon family ties for loyalty. A significant source of the daimyo’s power in this system was the balance between daimyo’s lands and those of his retainers. In the Ukida domain, some 25 per cent of the territory was now held directly by the daimyo as chokkatsuchi.22 This made the maintenance of standing mercenary divisions controlled by the daimyo (the daimyo’s own kumi) possible and useable to maintain loyalty if needed. Such troops were frequently paid, not in fiefs, but in rice stipends.

From the point of view of local government in Bizen, two significant developments accompanied the consolidation of the Ukida domain. First of all, despite the Ukida acquisition of complete proprietary and administrative authority over Bizen on the basis of conquest, this conquest was capped eventually by the acquisition of legitimacy from higher authority. In Bizen, this legal authority was acquired, first from the Mōri who had secured legitimacy as shugo from the Ashikaga shōgun, then from Oda Nobunaga whose control of the capital and of the powers of the shōgunate gave him de facto if not de jure legitimacy. When Ukida Naoie died in 1580, his son secured confirmation of his status in Bizen by receiving Nobunaga’s red seal certificate (shuinjō), a token of complete legal jurisdiction over Bizen under the new structure of sovereignty emerging in Kyōto.23 The use of the shuinjō as the capstone of a new national political order was further extended by Hideyoshi.

The other important development related to the more general structure of society.

21 See Ōoka-ke monjo (Ōoka House Archives), Ukida Chūnagon Hideie Kyō kashi chigyōchō [Roll of Fiest of the Housemen of the Middle Counsellor, Lord Ukida Hideie], Okayama Kenritsu Tosokukan, doc. 69.8/132.
22 Taniguchi Sumio, “Bizen hansei no kakuritsu keite" ["The Establishment of the Bizen Domain Administration"], Okayama Daigaku Kyōikuigakubu kenkyū shūroku [Collected Research Papers from the School of Education, Okayama University], II (1956), 1-3.
23 Okayama Shi shi, II, 1492, 1504. The significance of the shuinjō is discussed in Okuno Takahiro, Nobunaga to Hideyoshi [Nobunaga and Hideyoshi] (Tōkyō, 1955), 61–63. But the technical study of the
Because of the disappearance of the *shōen* and the weakening of the decentralized system of *enfeoffment*, it became increasingly common to find the inhabitants of the domain, both samurai and commoners, treated as functional groups and classes. The Ukida band of retainers, as we have seen, was not a cluster of individually enfeoffed and locally independent vassals, the typical organizational pattern for the *sengoku-daimyō*. It was organized into *kumi* within which the daimyo's men were assigned statuses which were commonly differentiated according to military rank and function.24 Thus the family-based categories of vassal classification—cadets (*kamon*), or vassals (*jūdai*)—became less important than military rank terminology—generals (*karō*), group commanders (*bangashira*), unit commanders (*kumigashira*), officers (*heishi*), petty officers (*kachi*), or foot soldiers (*ashigaru*). Status, once achieved, was still largely inheritable, but there was also considerable mobility, partly because of the constant displacement through military defeat of daimyo and their retainers at the top and the need for those below to fill out the positions evacuated above them. The *kumi* method of securing the loyalty of retainers to the daimyo through intermediary group leaders (*kumigashira*) may be thought of as something of a transition system. Retaining some features of the previous practice of independent enfeoffment, it nonetheless yielded increasingly to the direct interference of the daimyo.

Within the domain at large, also, the vertical chain of fiscal or loyalty relationships between enfeoffed proprietor (*jito*) and subordinate cultivator (*myōshū*), were beginning to give way to large, horizontally structured, functional class relationships between the “daimyo's men” (*kashin*) and groups such as farmers, merchants, and artisans.25 This change was accompanied by the increasing reliance on class or group legislation and the use of bureaucratic methods of military and civil administration to replace the older reliance on personal allegiances and kinship ties. Hideyoshi's social policy was to a large extent an extension of these trends. In particular, by taking leadership in carrying out a nation-wide cadastral reassessment, he laid the foundation for a new system of rural administration and taxation. It is to these new techniques of political and military organization that we can attribute the success of the *shokuhō-daimyō* in recruiting armies of tens of thousands and in building and maintaining citadels of grandiose size. Bizen saw not only the erection of a great castle at Okayama but an intensive resurvey of the land and an accompanying reordering of the agricultural population under the Ukida.26

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24. This is revealed in the structure of the Ukida house rolls. See especially: *Ukida Chūnagon Hideie Kyō kashi chigyōchō*.

25. Disregarding the controversy over whether the resulting condition should be interpreted as more "feudalistic" than the previous situation, Japanese studies have agreed upon the importance of certain basic changes in the organization of rural and urban communities. See Shimizu Mitsuo, *Nihon chūsei no somaruku* [The Medieval Village in Japan] (Tokyo, 1942); Miyagawa Mitsuru, *Taikō kenchī ron* [On the Cadastral Survey of Hideyoshi] (2 vols., Tokyo, 1957); Shakaikesaishū Gakkai, *Hōken ryoishu ni no kaikuritsu—Taikō kenchī wo meguru shomondai* [The Establishment of Feudal Proprietorship—Various Problems Related to the Hideyoshi Cadastral Survey] (Tokyo, 1957); Araki Moritaka, "Taikō kenchī no rekishi keta kentei" ["The Historical Foundations of the Hideyoshi Cadastral Survey"], *Rekishi gakku kenkyū*, 163 and 167 (1954).

26. For studies of the effects of the reorganization of the land system under the Ukida see Kanai Madoka, "Shokuhō-kō ni okeru Bizen" ["Bizen during the Shokoku Period"], *Chōkōshi kenkyū*, XLII (1959), 9-20; Shibata Hajime, "Sengoku dogosō to Taikō kenchī" ["The Sengoku Local Gentry and Hideyoshi's Cadastral Survey"], *Rekishi kyōiku*, VI, No. 8 (1958), 52-63.
The *kinsei-daimyō*

Despite the marked improvement in technique of political and military organization evolved by the daimyo who fought to a standstill under Hideyoshi’s hegemony, these new techniques were to prove insufficient for the more stable age which followed. Thus, despite the outward resemblance between the daimyo of the Shokuhō age and those of the Tokugawa, many institutional differences lay between them. Between 1600 and 1700, the process of internal evolution of the daimyo domains was accelerated by two factors: the frequent shifting of daimyo from locale to locale, and the predominant atmosphere of peace. Bizen was typical of most Japan in this respect. Immediately after 1600, five different daimyo houses governed Bizen in short succession. It was not until 1632 that Ikeda Mitsumasa, moving to Okayama from Tottori, set up the line which continued until 1871. These changes, it should be emphasized, were made, not as a result of local wars or battles for Bizen, but by order of the Tokugawa shogun. The period of adjustment to peaceful conditions was, for most parts of Japan, a traumatic experience. For, once the fighting ceased, the threat of war, which had acted as a powerful justification for the exercise of harsh military discipline, ceased to exist. It now became necessary to devise new theories of government based on new sanctions of power, to clarify administrative practices, and to work for the social and economic security of the people.

In their search for a new theory of government commensurate with their new-won powers, the *kinsei-daimyō*, as is well known, adopted a number of Confucian-based principles of sovereignty and social morality. In Bizen, this adoption awaited the pioneer work of Ikeda Mitsumasa, whose enunciation of the daimyo’s position as an agent of heaven under the guidance of the shogun, placed the daimyo securely in a “naturally ordained” political order and justified the social structure which he ruled.

After 1600, the daimyo continued to improve their methods of administration on a more bureaucratic basis, amplifying their legal codes in the process. Within the domain, the centralizing power of the daimyo was increased over his retainers and subjects, while, at the same time, he became less a personal despot and more a legal symbol. In Bizen, by the end of the seventeenth century, all subsidiary castles had been eliminated, and the practice of direct enfeoffment of high ranking retainers was displaced by the stipend (*hōroku*) system in all but name only. The daimyo’s men were now considered his officers (*kashin*). Within the domain a uniform local administrative organization, staffed by the daimyo’s officers, was placed over the urban and rural sectors alike. The daimyo’s retainers were now strictly ordered according to 12 ranks (*kakyū* or *kakushi ki*) in ascending order from *ashigaru* to *karō*. Although for disciplinary purposes these retainers were still grouped into *kumi*, their real relationship to the daimyo was on the basis of service in rank within the military and civil bureaucracy. Though certain ceremonial remnants of feudal practice, such as audiences and investitures, still remained, their importance diminished. Oaths of loyalty were now tied to posts in the bureaucracy. Within the samurai class in Bizen, then, a shift from personal vassalage privately rewarded by enfeoffment was giving

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27 For an analytical treatment of the stabilization of the Bizen domain under the Ikeda see Taniguchi, “Bizen hansei,” pp. 4-14.

way to a system of military statuses which led to a civil and military bureaucracy. Loyalty was becoming a principle rather than a private commitment.29

Changes of a similar sort affected the lower levels of society in Bizen. Under the impact of Confucian theory, the people (tami) were distinguished by class or function and placed under broad legal codes.30 For the farmers especially, the change from personal indenture to membership in the village as taxpaying tenants of the daimyo was a major change. After 1600 in Bizen, first the direct hold of the samurai, then of the shōya or village heads, over the villagers was replaced by a bureaucratic system of local government.31 It has been claimed that the strict class structure adopted by Hideyoshi and perfected by the Tokugawa constituted a “refeudalization” of Japanese society. Somewhat the reverse is probably closer to the truth. For the establishment of legally defined statuses (mibun) freed many sectors of Japanese society from the more restrictive and more personally conceived relationships based on private vassalage or indenture.32 These trends were not, of course, uniformly characteristic of all Japan. They constituted, however, the dominant pattern of the institutional change which accompanied the rise of the daimyo of Tokugawa times. Moreover, they involved changes not easily made nor successfully carried out in most of Japan until well into the Tokugawa age. In fact, the Tokugawa daimyo did not mature institutionally until at least 1700.

The Sengoku age was indeed a time of significant social change in Japan, but not simply of the capricious kind implied by the phrase ge-koku-jō. Bizen saw not only the rise and fall of a procession of military houses, but also a radical change in the methods of local government and in the structure of relationships which joined government and society. In this the daimyo were both participants and products.

1. At the highest level of political organization, that which provided the sanctions for exercise of power, Bizen passed from the shaky jurisdictional authority of the shugo-daimyō, resting on uncertain military support and a weak legacy from the imperial tradition, to a nearly absolute authority vested in the daimyo by virtue of the shogunal charter (shuinjō), the imperial consent, and Confucian principles of morally exercised authority.

2. At the level of the organization of power, Bizen passed from the system of extended family relationships, utilized by the shugo-daimyō, to the Sengoku system of decentralized direct enfeoffment, to the military group (kumi) system of the

29 Taniguchi Sumio, “Han kashindan no keisei to kozō—Okayama-han no baai” ["The Structure and Organization of the han Houseband—The Case of Okayama"], Shigaku zasshi, LXVI, No. 6 (June 1957), 594–615.
30 See Hampō Kenkyūkai, ed., Hampōshū, 1, Okayama-han [Collected han laws, 1, Okayama-han] (2 vols., Tokyo, 1959–1960); Okayama Shishi, vols. III and IV, for the most extensive published sources on Okayama legislation.
32 Nakamura Kichijii, in his article “Kokudaka seido to hōkensei” (cited in note 7) has recently reversed the dominant academic trend in Japan led by Araki and Miyagawa who have taken the stand that the Tokugawa period brought a true serfdom to the Japanese peasant and therefore represents the final attainment of feudalism in Japan. Nakamura has emphasized the many "non-feudal" aspects of the Tokugawa political and social structure.
Shokuho period, to the rank (kakyū) or status (mibun) structure utilized by the daimyo of the Tokugawa period.

3. At the level of the common inhabitants of Bizen, there occurred a gradual shift from a condition characterized predominantly by vertically structured personal relationships to one based increasingly on administrative and class-defined relations between government and individual. Large segments of Japanese society were developing new horizontal relationships within the boundaries defined by such social concepts as rank and status.

To return to our question of interpretation regarding Japan's dark ages, it is obvious that one of the common fallacies of historians has been the assumption that the daimyo and the system of local control he represented remained constant throughout the several centuries preceding 1700. Changes in the nature of the daimyo establishment in fact represented a dynamic theme which ran through the Sengoku and early Tokugawa periods. These changes underlay the confused condition of warfare during the Sengoku era and continued to affect Japanese government and society even after the supposed freezing of society by Tokugawa Ieyasu. Hindsight criticism has been heaped upon Hideyoshi and Ieyasu for their failure to unify Japan completely and for their "return" to a restrictive, status-bound society cut off from foreign contact. A more accurate analysis of the state of local government and social organization shows that Japan underwent many major internal changes after 1590 and that these changes can by no means be characterized as retrogressive.