

## Military Reform and the Illusion of Social Mobility in Bakumatsu-era Chōshū\*

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In the sixth month of 1866, a peculiar battle took place outside the village of Ōno, as this hamlet located on the border between Chōshū and Hiroshima domains suddenly became center stage for the opening act of Chōshū's rebellion against the Tokugawa shogunate. Although this battle may have seemed unremarkable when compared to the more dramatic events of the campaign, it stood out for two reasons. First, the day's fighting ended with a Tokugawa victory—a rare event in the war that ultimately toppled the shogunate. But the battle was remarkable in another respect: during at least one point in the firefight, neither of the forces engaged was composed of hereditary warriors.<sup>1</sup>

To grapple with the deteriorating political climate of the 1860s, the shogunate and a number of domains used the inherent flexibility of the Tokugawa status system to recruit front-line soldiers who were not of warrior status. During the shogunate's 1866 war against Chōshū domain, peasant conscripts from the Kantō region formed the backbone of the Tokugawa army. Many of these commoner soldiers were veterans who had seen service in Mito domain during the shogunate's suppression

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\*An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Early Modern Japan Network annual meeting in Philadelphia in 2010. The author wishes to thank Philip Brown, David Howell, Steven Wills, Maren Ehlers, Amy Stanley, Chelsea Foxwell, and three anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> This essay uses the term “warrior” to refer collectively to men who could claim some status as arms-bearers, and “samurai” to refer only to the high-ranking “full samurai” (士) who might enjoy drastically different privileges, responsibilities, and compensation from lower-ranking *ashigaru* (足輕), or foot soldiers, and warrior menials (武家奉公人) like *chūgen* (中間), who performed a wide variety of tasks.

of the Tengū Insurrection in 1864. By the same token, Chōshū forces consisted primarily of several hundred troopers from the famous mixed units, or *shotai* (諸隊), many of which permitted warriors and commoners to serve side-by-side; they also included between three and four infantry companies composed of outcastes. Beginning in 1865, Chōshū's leaders recruited more than four hundred outcastes to serve in the ranks of the mixed units. This decision demonstrated the lengths to which Chōshū was willing to go in order to maximize its available manpower. Of the domains that made major military recruitment efforts, it appears that only Chōshū organized all-outcaste combat units.<sup>2</sup>

While the domain's decision to employ outcastes as fighting men was unparalleled at the time, the experience of outcaste soldiers was in many ways typical of the men caught up in the military reforms of the Restoration era, whether those men were menial warriors, peasants, townsmen, or outcastes. The military reform efforts conducted by the shogunate and several domains during the 1860s sought to widen the pool of available manpower by recruiting men on the social margins. From the perspective of those in power, warrior menials and commoners, among others, represented a more pliable option than the warriors in the shogunal and domain armies because they lacked a vested interest in the organizational status quo. For higher-ranking warriors, on the other hand, rank and unit affiliation were more than occupational concerns; they also determined warriors' position within the retainer band. As such, the reform of existing military organizations portended a potentially serious restructuring of the warrior elite—one that domain authorities were eager to avoid.

Chōshū's auxiliary units have received significantly more scholarly attention than other experiments undertaken in this era of widespread military reform. Historians of the Bakumatsu era in particular have treated the *shotai* as a microcosm of the motivations at work within Chōshū in the 1860s, and by extension, in the Meiji Restoration. This perspective pervaded the work of prominent post-

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<sup>2</sup> Inoue Kiyoshi provides a valuable overview of a variety of efforts to recruit commoners during the Bakumatsu era. Inoue Kiyoshi, *Nihon no gunkokushugi* (Tokyo: Gendai Hyōronsha, 1975), 1:98-139.

war Marxist scholars like Tōyama Shigeki and Inoue Kiyoshi, who argued (albeit along different lines from one another) that the genesis of the *shotai* provided a window into the tensions and contradictions that would characterize the modern Japanese state.<sup>3</sup> They were thus much more likely to concur with E.H. Norman in viewing units like Chōshū's Kiheitai (奇兵隊) as a bridge to the modern Japanese military:

The Kiheitai of Chōshū... is an interesting transitional type, containing in it the seeds of the armies of the early Meiji era, when all four classes were regarded as equal in status and when the government army recruited from all four classes routed the old *samurai* armies of feudal reaction...<sup>4</sup>

This point is echoed in Edward Drea's recent history of the modern Japanese army, which also views the *shotai* as the primary progenitors of the modern Japanese army.<sup>5</sup> For these scholars,

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<sup>3</sup> For Tōyama and E.H. Norman, mixed-status units like the Kiheitai represented a domainal effort to co-opt the revolutionary energy of the peasantry—an approach continued by the Meiji government in the years after the Restoration. Later Marxist scholars approached the issue differently. Inoue Kiyoshi—and later, Tanaka Akira—viewed the *shotai* as products of a "middle-class ethno-nationalist" (中間層民族主義) movement, in which low-ranking warriors and well-to-do commoners partnered with one another for the cause of barbarian expulsion. Both of these scholars also viewed the *shotai* as essentially transitional, incorporating both progressive and "feudal" elements.

<sup>4</sup> E.H. Norman, *Soldier and Peasant in Japan: The Origins of Conscription* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1965), 30.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 1-9. Although Drea does treat the Kiheitai as a point of origin for the modern Japanese army, his critical analysis of its military capabilities represents a welcome

departure from the often-laudatory assessments of its performance.

Chōshū's recruitment of commoners and the later prominence of *shotai* officers in the Meiji officer corps create an inviting point of connection. Other historians, however, have questioned the putatively progressive character of units like the Kiheitai. For instance, Albert Craig's classic study of Chōshū's role in the Restoration emphasized the allegedly "feudal" characteristics of the *shotai*, arguing that they "were organized as an emergency measure, not as a new type of unit favored by semi-revolutionary leaders..."<sup>6</sup> Craig's work shed much-needed light on the composition and internal dynamics of the *shotai*, but was more occupied with negating the Marxist appraisals of the significance of the *shotai* than elucidating their significance within the context of the domain's military reforms. Much like his Marxist antagonists, Craig viewed Chōshū's initiatives as *sui generis*.

More recent scholarship has attempted to move away from the debate about the place of the *shotai* in the Meiji Restoration and the consequent privileging of Chōshū's role in it. Hōya Tōru, for instance, agrees with Craig's characterization of the *shotai* as essentially feudal, but argues that an inordinate emphasis on the role of these plucky auxiliaries distracts from the broader picture of military reforms in Chōshū and completely effaces the significance of efforts conducted in other domains and in Edo. Hōya advocates focusing on hitherto underexplored aspects of the Chōshū's military reforms, such as the reorganization of the domain's foot soldiers, warrior menials, and rear vassals (陪臣) into rifle companies, if only for the simple reason that these units did most of the domain's fighting in the 1868-1869 Boshin War.<sup>7</sup>

While Hōya is right to note that an overemphasis on the significance of certain *shotai* has led to a limited perspective on the character of Chōshū's military reforms, it is not necessary to go beyond the domain—or even the *shotai*—to validate his

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departure from the often-laudatory assessments of its performance.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 280.

<sup>7</sup> Hōya Tōru, "Bakumatsu Ishin no dōran to gunsei kaikaku," in Takahashi Noriyuki, Yamada Kuniaki, Hōya Tōru, and Ichinose Toshiya, *Nihon gunjishi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006), 288-290.

point. By juxtaposing the Kiheitai with the Ishindan (維新団), an all-outcaste unit organized in 1865—and one unit among many in a broad-based military reform effort that incorporated hunters, Shinto priests, outcastes, and other liminal status groups—it becomes evident that the domain's military reforms were intended primarily to use the inherent flexibility of the status system to address manpower needs in wartime, and were thus not aimed at implementing a more egalitarian vision of military service. In this respect, while the outward appearance of Chōshū's military reforms seemed to distinguish the domain from its contemporaries, it had far more in common with the other reformist polities of the era than is typically acknowledged.<sup>8</sup>

This essay aims to connect scholarship on military reform with the resurgence of interest in the status system. Recent works of historical scholarship have advanced a more nuanced understanding of the fundamental—and often complex—role of status in Tokugawa society, which "... permeated and shaped virtually every aspect of the social formation..."<sup>9</sup> While earlier conceptions of the status system stressed its supposedly static and quadripartite character, a notion echoed in Tokugawa-period Neo-Confucian discourse, the situation on the ground was often significantly more complex. More often than not, occupation rather than heredity determined where individuals fit into the status hierarchy; thus, changes in occupation could allow individuals to achieve a small measure of social mobility, though this was often only temporary.<sup>10</sup> The warrior estate was no exception. In Chōshū, while some men of menial *chūgen* status had hereditary rank, many others who were employed in the domain's provincial administration were com-

moners, and the terms of their employment differed little from that of paid laborers.<sup>11</sup>

When military recruiting became a pressing concern in the 1860s, the shogunate and reformist domains were able to use the flexibility in the status system to their benefit, as they promised volunteers a range of status-based incentives for enlisting. In Tokugawa vassal lands (旗本知行地) in the Kantō region, peasants answered the shogunate's call for conscripts not only for the signing bonus, but also for the prospect of promotion to menial warrior status.<sup>12</sup> In Chōshū, commoner volunteers were often permitted to comport themselves as warriors by exercising the right to surname and sword (名字帯刀) for the duration of their service. Outcastes who enlisted were promised a similarly status-appropriate reward: the legal abrogation of their status (穢多之名目被差除).<sup>13</sup> Temporary status promotion was also a common recruitment tool in domains that did not anticipate using commoners in front-line service. Mito, Hiroshima, Tosa, and Wakayama domains, for instance, created peasant militias charged with coastal defense; their militiamen were permitted the right to surname and sword while on duty.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, Satsuma, despite its reputation as a reformist domain, proved (as usual) to be a significant exception to the trends of military reform. Rather than seek new sources of manpower, the domain simply mobilized its large population of rusticated warriors (郷士 or 外城士), many of whom made their actual livelihood as agriculturalists, but who outnumbered castle warriors by a ten-to-one margin.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For instance, a number of domains—including Mito, Obama, Kokura, Tosa, Geishū (Hiroshima), and Chōshū—organized commoner militias for coastal defense. However, although some of these units saw combat, many were little more than ill-equipped neighborhood watch organizations. Inoue, 98-112.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 59.

<sup>10</sup> David Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 34.

<sup>11</sup> Morishita Tōru, "Chūgen," in *Shokunin, oyakata, nakama*, ed. Tsukada Takashi, *Shirizu kinsei no mibunteki shūen* 3 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2000), 154-187.

<sup>12</sup> "Heifu kaitei no fure," in *Rikugun rekishi*, ed. Katsu Kaishū, *Katsu Kaishū zenshū* 13 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1974), 3:341-342.

<sup>13</sup> "Kaki no uchi kyōsō no mono ra senjō makari ide sashimenji no koto," in *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishūin*, ed. Yamaguchi-ken (Yamaguchi: Yamaguchi-ken, 2000), 6:50.

<sup>14</sup> Inoue, 99-104.

<sup>15</sup> Kagoshima-ken, ed., *Kagoshima-ken shi*, (Kagoshima: Kagoshima-ken, 1967) 3:119-120. A 1756 census put the castle warrior population at

When viewed in this light, late-Tokugawa military reforms that led to the creation of non-traditional units were more often than not stopgap measures—not intentional repudiations of the status system. As the military crisis surrounding the 1868 Meiji Restoration began to abate, outcaste and commoner volunteers were the first to be disbanded. Moreover, the temporary social advancement secured by individual soldiers was soon effaced by the legal abolition of status distinctions in the early Meiji period. Simply put, while the stretching of status boundaries greatly facilitated the shogunate and domains' ability to carry out military reforms, the apparent social mobility offered to volunteers was transitory in most cases and largely illusory in many others, as in the case of Chōshū's outcaste soldiers.

### Military Reform in the Bakumatsu Era

The inclusion of commoners and outcastes in the ranks of late Tokugawa military units was a consequence of a half-century of heightened concern for the protection of shogunal and domainal territory from foreign incursion. For most of the eighteenth century, military concerns had remained peripheral for both central and regional authorities in Japan. However, the situation changed as Euro-American imperial powers began expanding their reach into East Asia. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, scholars like Hayashi Shihei urged the shogunate and domains to strengthen coastal defense (海防). The point was driven home by the infamous *Phaeton* incident of 1808, when the eponymous British frigate raided the Dutch factory in Nagasaki. After infiltrating the harbor under Dutch colors, the British abducted two of the Dutch traders and extorted provisions from local officials. The incident so embarrassed the officials charged with the port's security that the Nagasaki magistrate committed ritual suicide. In the wake of the *Phaeton* debacle, the shogunate and southwestern coastal domains—especially Fukuoka and Saga, who were charged with the security of Nagasaki harbor—expended a great deal of effort and re-

3,500, and country warriors at around 35,000. Kimura Motoi, Fujino Tamotsu, and Murakami Tada-shi, ed., *Hanshi daijiten* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1988), 7:548.

sources to upgrade existing coastal artillery batteries and construct new ones.<sup>16</sup> Concerns over defense intensified in the two decades following the First Opium War (1840-1842) between Great Britain and Qing-dynasty China, as efforts to strengthen coastal defense were subsumed under the rubric of military reform (軍政改革).

Although shogunal and domainal authorities continued to concern themselves with the construction of shore batteries, their attention began to turn to the creation of new kinds of military units capable of deploying updated weaponry in battle. In most cases, reform efforts took place with the guidance of instructors associated with Takashima-ryū (高島流) musketry and gunnery (砲術), a putatively “Western” style that incorporated Dutch flintlock muskets, artillery, and tactics in its lessons, whereas most contemporary schools continued to stress the use of older matchlock muskets.

Although influential Takashima-ryū instructors eagerly conflated their school with Dutch military science—to the point of encouraging its designation as “the Western School” (西洋流)—its pedagogy changed regularly and often significantly in the twenty years between the school's founding in the 1830s and the tumultuous 1860s. What began as a local offshoot of more traditional Ogino-ryū (荻野流) musketry eventually morphed into a widely patronized school dedicated to advancing Westernizing military reforms. An 1841 demonstration before the senior councilors (老中) proved impressive enough that the shogunate not only permitted Takashima-ryū instructors to seek domainal patrons, but also took steps toward patronizing the school on its own.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1840s, most efforts to adopt Takashima-ryū as the basis for far-reaching military reforms met with failure. Would-be reformers found themselves in conflict with those who stood to lose from change—particularly Japanese mus-

<sup>16</sup> Noell Wilson, “Tokugawa Defense Redux: Organizational Failure in the *Phaeton* Incident of 1808,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 36:1 (Winter 2010), 27-30.

<sup>17</sup> “Takashima Shirōdayū denrai no hōjutsu wo, Egawa Tarōzaemon ni denju subeki wo meizu,” Katsu, 1:55-56. “Takashima-ryū kajutsu shoka denju kurushikarazu no shirei,” in *Ibid.*, 1:73-74.

ketry schools (和流) that feared a loss of influence as a result of the move towards Western-style drill with flintlock muskets, instead of the traditional emphasis on individual marksmanship.<sup>18</sup> In Chōshū, for instance, warriors who had trained under Takashima-ryū instructors advocated its adoption, but the domain made no official move to patronize the school.<sup>19</sup> However, after the shogunate's embarrassing failure to present a credible military threat during the visit of American Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854, Takashima-ryū enjoyed a resurgence in popularity. The shogunate charged Takashima-ryū instructors with re-training bannermen (旗本) and housemen (御家人) at its new Martial Arts Academy (講武所) in Edo. Chōshū authorities sent dozens of men to study under Takashima-ryū instructors in Edo and Nagasaki. In 1859, Yamada Matasuke, one of the domain's high-ranking officials, recommended the complete reorganization of the retainer band into Western-style infantry companies.<sup>20</sup> But in Chōshū, as elsewhere in Tokugawa Japan, warriors' rank and affiliation represented more than their role in the domain army; it also defined their status within the retainer band. For many within the domain, Yamada's proposal was a bridge too far; vehement opposition forced the daimyō, Mōri Takachika, to order the abandonment of any radical restructuring. A similar fate soon befell the shogunate's Martial Arts Academy. In 1858, an inspector (目付) charged with reviewing the academy offered a rather critical assessment of warriors' enthusiasm for Western drill, and by 1860 Japanese musketry and archery instructors had elbowed their way into the curriculum, where they held a great deal of influence until the Bunkyū (1861-1864) military reforms.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> After the 1841 Takashima-ryū demonstration, one *waryū* musketry instructor wrote a scathing commentary that dismissed close order drill—as opposed to the individual marksmanship competitions that Japanese schools stressed—as “children's games” (童子戯). Katsu, 1:38.

<sup>19</sup> Suematsu Kenchō, *Bōchō kaitenshi* (Reprint, Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1967), 1:82.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:204-210.

<sup>21</sup> “Kōbushogakari kansatsu no kenpaku,” Katsu, 3:231-234; “Kōbusho okite,” *Ibid.*, 3:259-

In the early 1860s, military reforms moved beyond early Takashima-ryū efforts to introduce new technology and techniques into existing units, and into thoroughgoing attempts to create Western-style rifle companies. On one hand, these efforts were partly a reflection of the deteriorating domestic political situation. As domains competed with one another and the shogunate for the attentions of a politically revitalized imperial court, open conflict between two or more parties became increasingly likely. On the other hand, the military reforms conducted by the shogunate and reformist domains like Satsuma and Chōshū were also prompted by foreign considerations. For the shogunate, then under the leadership of Fukui daimyō Matsudaira Shungaku, the decision to create a Western-style force composed largely of peasant conscripts was motivated by a desire to have not only a force capable of subduing domestic opponents, but also one that could bolster Tokugawa legitimacy in the eyes of foreign powers.<sup>22</sup> For Chōshū, the military reforms that led to the creation of non-warrior units were the direct result of engagements between the domain and Western nations.

### New Wars, New Soldiers

Chōshū fought a number of small engagements with European and American naval detachments between 1863 and 1864, as imperial loyalists within the domain government seized upon a foreigner expulsion edict (攘夷令) issued by the Kyoto court in late 1862 that the shogunate had mistakenly regarded as *pro forma*. In three separate incidents during the summer of 1863, Chōshū's coastal batteries fired upon foreign ships traveling through the Shimonoseki Straits. Reprisals by American and French naval vessels annihilated Chōshū's fledgling navy and routed the men manning its coastal batteries.<sup>23</sup> This display of unpreparedness

260. The revamped curriculum even included *inuoumono* (犬追物), or archery practice on moving canine targets.

<sup>22</sup> Conrad Totman, *The Collapse of The Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1980), 21-31.

<sup>23</sup> Furukawa Kaoru, *Bakumatsu Chōshū han no jōi sensō: Ōbei rengō kantai no shūrai*, Chūkō

shocked domain authorities into action. Soon after the French attack on Chōshū's shore batteries the domain recalled Takasugi Shinsaku from internal exile and appointed him to the command of the defenses along the Shimonoseki Straits. Takasugi came from a high-ranking samurai family and had studied both at the domain school, the Meirinkan (明倫館), as well as Yoshida Shōin's school, the Shōka Sonjuku (松下村塾). In 1862, Takasugi had received domain permission to travel to Shanghai, where he witnessed firsthand the powerlessness of Qing authorities at the hands of Western empires and Taiping rebels. The experience made him a convert to the anti-foreign cause, and he engaged in a variety of anti-Tokugawa and anti-foreign activities before his return to Chōshū and exile in 1863.

While some accounts of the Kiheitai's creation paint Takasugi as a visionary, the unit is best understood as one of many auxiliary forces designed to augment the domain army's capability during a time of crisis. As Takasugi's petition to the domain government put it:

There are [two kinds] of soldiers: regulars and irregulars. There are [two kinds] of battles: [battles of] deception, and [battles of] truth. One can secure victory by knowing one's force. Regulars face the enemy with massive force—they meet truth with truth. Units like the eight divisions (八組) led by the chief magistrate (総奉行) are regulars. What we want to organize is [a unit] that will penetrate the gaps in the enemy masses, harassing them by disappearing and reappearing as if by magic (神出鬼没). Because they will use unorthodox methods to secure victory, they will be called the Irregulars (*kiheitai* 奇兵隊).<sup>24</sup>

Takasugi went on to state that his Kiheitai would welcome volunteers regardless of rank, but with language specifically describing the recruitment of

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shinsho 1285 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1996), 46-47, 51.

<sup>24</sup> Suematsu, 1:454. The title of the Kiheitai refers to Sunzi's distinction between "regular" (*sei*) and "irregular" (*ki*) forces.

warriors, noting that they would be selected "without distinguishing between rear vassals, foot soldiers, or domain samurai (陪臣輕卒藩士を不選同様相交り)."<sup>25</sup> The petition made no specific mention of recruiting commoners, let alone outcastes.

While several accounts of Bakumatsu-era Chōshū portray the Kiheitai as the direct antecedent of the conscript army of Meiji, it is better understood as a warrior auxiliary unit that incorporated progressively larger numbers of commoners.<sup>26</sup> The initial decision to permit the recruitment of commoners was motivated partly by Takasugi's desire to secure the financial backing of wealthy Shimonoseki merchants like Shiraiishi Sei'ichirō. Many of the earliest commoner volunteers were men of mercantile background connected to Shiraiishi and his confederates.<sup>27</sup> Although commoners eventually made up more than half of the Kiheitai, they most likely accounted for fewer than one-third of the unit's troopers through the end of 1864.<sup>28</sup> The percentage of commoners serving in the ranks increased significantly in early 1865 when the Kiheitai and other mixed units conscripted peasants in their rebellion against conservatives in the domain government. However, the seemingly egalitarian recruiting procedures of the Kiheitai did not extend to outcastes, who were not permitted to join at any point in the unit's six-year existence. In fact, in an 1865 letter to two of his junior officers, Ōta Ichinoshin and Yamagata Aritomo, Takasugi advocated excluding outcastes "for the time being."<sup>29</sup> While the letter does not reveal the logic behind this decision, Tejima Kazuo has argued that Takasugi may have viewed outcastes as less than fully Japanese, and thus a hindrance to achieving the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Norman, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Tanaka Akira, *Takasugi Shinsaku to Kiheitai*, Iwanami shinsho no Edo jidai (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993), 102-106.

<sup>28</sup> Craig, 270-281.

<sup>29</sup> Tejima Kazuo, "Kiheitai ni okeru 'eta' gunji tōyō no igi: Takasugi Shinsaku no kyōheiron," *Buraku mondai kenkyū*, no. 111 (May 1995), 58. In fact, the Sharpshooters (狙撃隊) summarily executed a shrine attendant (宮番)—also outcastes in Chōshū—for attempting to join the unit while pretending to be a peasant.

ethnic unity he thought would be necessary for dealing effectively with foreign powers.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the prominent position of the Kiheitai in many narratives of the Bakumatsu era, it was only one of a dozen similar units.<sup>31</sup> Domain authorities granted Takasugi permission to form the Kiheitai in the sixth month of 1863. At that time, they also allowed the creation of several other volunteer auxiliary units. At nearly five hundred men—to the Kiheitai's three hundred—the largest of these was the Yūgekitai (遊撃隊), later known as the Yūgekigun (遊撃軍), which had originally been created to accompany the domain heir on a procession to Kyoto. Composed largely of menial warriors such as *chūgen* and *ashigaru*, the Yūgekitai became an umbrella unit for several smaller outfits. Many of these units were formed on a voluntary basis by liminal status groups: a group of *ikkō* Buddhist monks formed the Vajra Platoon (金剛隊); a group of Shintō priests formed the Divine Power Platoon (神威隊); a group of fifty wrestlers formed the Brave Wrestler Platoon (勇力隊), which was at one time commanded by Itō Hirobumi; and a small group of hunters formed a unit of sharpshooters.<sup>32</sup> For the most part, however, each of these units furnished fewer than fifty fighting men.

Whether dealing with warriors, commoners, or Buddhist monks, domain authorities took great pains to minimize any potential social disruptions. The mixed unit regulations issued in the twelfth month of 1863 imposed stringent restrictions on the enlistment of samurai men. Heads of household (本人) and heirs (嫡子) from high-ranking households were only permitted to enlist if they received express permission from *shotai* commanders.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 76-78.

<sup>31</sup> Tanaka, appendix 2. According to Tanaka Akira's estimate, the Kiheitai accounted for just one-quarter of Chōshū auxiliaries at its high-water mark in the twelfth month of 1863. After major military reforms were undertaken in 1865, the Kiheitai's size declined precipitously relative to the domain's overall manpower.

<sup>32</sup> "Kijima Matabei, Kusaka Yoshisuke [Genzui], jōkyō otomo ni tsuki yūgekitai toritate ōsetsuke no koto," in *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin*, 6:76.

Samurai serving in the domain army were allowed to join up provided that they found suitable substitutes for themselves. The same scrutiny extended to commoners. Only peasants and townsmen who had no domestic or occupational responsibilities were permitted to enlist in the mixed units.<sup>33</sup> However, as the "examination" (詮議) intended to verify the status of commoners consisted of a single short form to be completed by a town magistrate (町奉行) or rural intendant (代官), it seems likely that any clever commoner could talk his way into one of the *shotai*.

Not all of the auxiliary units created by Chōshū were composed of marginal men and relations between units were sometimes tense. The Vanguard (先鋒隊) consisted entirely of volunteers from among the ranks of the high-ranking mounted warriors who formed the daimyō's bodyguard (馬廻). As these men lacked any significant status-based incentive for volunteering, it is possible that political factionalism within the domain—in this case, the desire not to be outdone by the loyalist-leaning Kiheitai—led high-ranking samurai to join another unit, the Senpōtai.<sup>34</sup> Unlike the troopers in the Kiheitai and the Yūgekitai, the all-samurai Senpōtai was only obligated to obey orders from the domain elders. And unlike many of the other mixed units, they were not required to train in Western-style infantry tactics. In other words, their chain of command never overlapped with those of any other mixed units. Relations between the Senpōtai and other less pedigreed units were rocky from the start. Tensions finally boiled over in the eighth month of 1863, when the Kiheitai and Senpōtai engaged in a drunken brawl during a visit by the domain's heir.<sup>35</sup> It appeared that not all of the warrior troopers in Chōshū's auxiliary units were enthusiastic about fighting next to commoners.

### Recruiting Outcastes

In the same year that Chōshū permitted the creation of the Kiheitai and other mixed units, Yo-

<sup>33</sup> "Yūgekitai sono hoka shotai kisoku, ninzū sadame no koto," in *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin*, 6:87-89.

<sup>34</sup> Craig, 209.

<sup>35</sup> Tanaka, 23-27.

shida Toshimaro (Eitarō), a minor official in the domain's administration, proposed tapping a hitherto unexploited pool of manpower: outcastes. Toshimaro was born into a low-ranking foot soldier household. In fact, the family's status was so low that one of his patrons in the domain government once derisively referred to him as "the gatekeeper's kid" (門番の子).<sup>36</sup> At the age of sixteen, he enrolled at the Shōka Sonjuku of Yoshida Shōin (no relation), where he met the men who would later lead the domain in its rebellion against the shogunate, including Maebara Issei, Yamagata Aritomo, and Itō Hirobumi. In fact, Toshimaro earned a place among the so-called "Four Heavenly Kings" (四天王) of Shōin's school, a group that included Takasugi Shinsaku, Kusaka Genzui, and Iriye Kūichi.

In early 1863, Toshimaro sent a proposal to the domain government advocating the recruitment of outcaste soldiers for military service. Volunteers would be rewarded with the legal abrogation of their outcaste status. The date of the petition's composition is unclear; however, according to Nunobiki Toshio, the leading historian of Chōshū's outcaste military units, it was likely composed sometime between the third and fifth months of 1863—before the formation of the Kiheitai.<sup>37</sup> While the original text of the memorial is no longer extant, in a subsequent letter Toshimaro recommended the recruitment of outcastes for two reasons. First, they represented a more reliable source of manpower than masterless warriors (浪人) and other transients (浮食之徒). Second, recruiting outcastes instead of peasants would prevent disruption of the agricultural base of the domain.<sup>38</sup> Both

<sup>36</sup> Nunobiki Toshio, *Chōshū-han Ishindan: Meiji Ishin no suiheijiku* (Osaka: Kaihō Shuppansha, 2009), 54.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-66. Nunobiki's work represents the most complete appraisal of the Ishindan and other outcaste units. However, it is primarily concerned with the significance of these units vis-à-vis the outcaste community in Chōshū, and less occupied with their place in the history of military reform and the status system.

<sup>38</sup> "Toyū toritate ni kansuru Yoshida Eitarō shokan danpen," in Nunobiki, *Chōshū-han Ishindan*, 184-187.

of these points make it clear that Toshimaro saw the recruitment of outcaste soldiers as a means of augmenting the domain's military power without undermining its economic and social stability.

The domain government responded positively to Toshimaro's recommendation. In the seventh month of 1863, Toshimaro was given a temporary promotion to higher rank (士御雇) and responsibility for overseeing the recruitment of outcaste soldiers with an eye toward using them in the field.<sup>39</sup> Just three days later, the Yamaguchi town magistrate issued a call for volunteers to outcaste communities both within the town and in villages throughout the domain.<sup>40</sup> The document began by referencing Chōshū's enforcement of the imperial expulsion order, then moved quickly into a call for soldiers—a not-so-subtle suggestion that outcastes who volunteered on the domain's behalf would see front-line service against its foreign enemies. Young men from outcaste communities were to be recruited up to a maximum of five men per one hundred homes; recruitment beyond this total was strictly forbidden. The pronouncement listed four criteria that potential volunteers would be required to meet: strength (強壯), bravery (勇氣), agility (早道), and quick wits (才知). Those who served the domain faithfully would earn the right to comport themselves as menial warriors by wearing warrior over-garments (胴服) and a single short sword; they could also earn abrogation of their outcaste status (穢多之名目被差除).<sup>41</sup>

But the call for volunteers provided no detail as to how the post-service abrogation of outcastes' legal status would be carried out, posing a potential problem for domain authorities and the outcastes themselves. Shedding the derogatory label of "outcaste" may have represented a step forward, but it meant little in practice if emancipated individuals remained in their communities and plied the same trades. The rewards outlined in the pronouncement suggest that the domain may have planned to organize outcaste soldiers into a new status category

<sup>39</sup> "Yoshida Toshimaro toyū toritatekata hikiuke ni shite kengi ōsetsuke no koto," in *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin*, 6:49.

<sup>40</sup> "Kaki no uchi kyōsō no mono ra sashimenji no koto," in *Ibid.*, 6:50.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:50.

among the ranks of warrior menials, in much the same way the shogunate did with its commoner conscripts.

Toshimaro's efforts came to naught as the turbulent politics of the Bakumatsu era forced a temporary halt in efforts to recruit outcaste soldiers. In mid-1863, the Chōshū delegation to the imperial court was ousted from Kyoto at the instigation of a rival delegation from Satsuma. Rather than attempting to outmaneuver Satsuma in the diplomatic arena, Chōshū's loyalist leadership launched an ill-advised coup attempt in the seventh month of 1864. Several hundred men from the domain army attacked the Tokugawa, Satsuma, and Aizu guard force around the imperial palace. Chōshū forces were repulsed with heavy losses, and the domain was branded an "enemy of the court" (朝敵), as several musket balls had struck the interior of the palace compound.<sup>42</sup>

For what would be its last effective show of military might, the shogunate organized a twenty-one domain, 150,000-man punitive expedition to subdue the rebellious domain. With civil war looming, the domain's loyalist-leaning leadership was replaced by a conservative faction that was eager to reach a peaceful accommodation with Tokugawa negotiators. In the twelfth month of 1864, the domain's new leaders agreed to disband the *shotai*—with the exception of the *Senpōtai*—and execute the leaders responsible for the failed coup attempt. With its mission apparently accomplished, the shogunal punitive force decamped without attacking. As Tokugawa forces began marching home, Takasugi and the other mixed unit commanders, having disobeyed the domain's directive to disband their men, attacked domain offices at Shimonoseki. After a brief three-month civil war, the *shotai* commanders overthrew the conservative faction and took the reins of the domain government.<sup>43</sup>

One of the new leadership's first priorities was a thorough reform of the domain's military capabilities. After all, since the *shotai* victory in the domain's civil war represented an embarrassing reversal of what had initially seemed like a Tokugawa political victory, it was a forgone conclusion

that the shogunate would organize another punitive expedition. Under the leadership of Ōmura Masujirō (formerly known as Murata Zōroku), Chōshū began a three-pronged military reform that involved the purchase of vast quantities of updated weaponry, the expansion and regularization of the mixed units, and a gradualist reorganization of the main-line domain army.<sup>44</sup> As part of the effort to expand the available manpower resources of the mixed units, domain authorities resurrected Yoshida Toshimaro's plan to recruit outcaste soldiers.<sup>45</sup>

The actual recruitment of outcaste soldiers seems to have begun in 1865, just a few months after the mixed units seized control of the domain government. Although it is unclear precisely when recruitment began, a later account of the *Ishindan* (維新団), the most prominent of the outcaste units, refers to outcastes undergoing "Western firearm training" (洋銃習練) from the winter—i.e., the ninth through twelfth months—of 1865.<sup>46</sup> Formal regulations for the *Ishindan*'s dress and conduct followed in the opening month of 1866. As a result, it seems likely that the *Ishindan* and other outcaste units were organized in mid-1865, trained for several months, then put into the field in the opening months of 1866, just before the domain's war against the shogunate.

The *Ishindan* was one of three outcaste units organized by Chōshū's military leaders. Most of its soldiers hailed from an outcaste community in the Kumage district on the domain's eastern border. The *Ishindan* was comprised of four platoons of approximately forty men each, for a total of 160 men.<sup>47</sup> Although the *Ishindan*'s commanding officer was a commoner, many of the unit's non-commissioned officers hailed from the upper strata

<sup>44</sup> "Gunsei kaisei ni tegumi ōsetsuke no koto," in *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin*, 6:486.

<sup>45</sup> Resurrecting Toshimaro was another matter; he had been killed in the infamous Ikedaya massacre of Chōshū loyalists that took place in Kyōto in 1864.

<sup>46</sup> "Ishindan' senkō shōten sata," in *Ibid.*, 6:1042-1049.

<sup>47</sup> "Ishindan niban *shōtai tai*'in meibō," in *Ibid.*, 6:1016-1018.

<sup>42</sup> Noguchi Takehiko, *Bakufu hoheitai: bakumatsu o kakenuketa heishi shūdan*, Chūkō shinsho 1673 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002), 63-68.

<sup>43</sup> Tanaka, 78.

of the Kumage outcaste community; the unit's first sergeant (惣頭取), Katsujirō, was one of the community's elders (年寄).<sup>48</sup> Coincidentally, it seems that Katsujirō's prominence in his village was largely due to his involvement in the expanding gunpowder trade.<sup>49</sup> The domain also organized two other outcaste units: the Isshingumi (一新組) and the Yamashiro Chasentai (山代茶釜隊). Unlike the Ishindan and Issingumi troopers, who came from communities that handled animal products, the Yamashiro troopers belonged to a community of *chasen*—a subgroup of outcastes who made a livelihood by manufacturing and selling small implements such as tea brushes (茶筌).

Although the troopers of the Ishindan, Isshingumi, and Yamashiro Chasentai fought alongside both warriors and commoner soldiers, an array of physical signs set them apart from their supposed comrades. All of the troopers in Chōshū's mixed units were required to wear shoulder patches (袖印) listing their unit and name. At the same time Chōshū's leaders organized the Ishindan, they also permitted the creation of peasant and townsmen militias, in which volunteers were allowed to serve as foot soldiers, despite the fact that many of these units were armed with antiquated weapons and were not intended to see frontline service.<sup>50</sup> But unlike most commoner volunteers, outcaste soldiers were not granted the right to surname and sword for their term of service. As a result, the Ishindan troopers' patches listed only their given names. Not that a casual observer would need to read troopers' patches in order to distinguish them from commoners and warriors—troopers in the Ishindan, for instance, were required to wear black tunics, black trousers, and black bamboo hats. The same regulations prohibited outcaste volunteers from wearing fabrics made from silk or grosgrain

(呉絹服) or decorating their uniforms in any way.<sup>51</sup> Using sumptuary regulations to distinguish outcaste volunteers from their warrior and commoner counterparts was one way to preserve the status system despite the fact that the notional separation between arms-bearers and the rest of the population was being transgressed in fact.<sup>52</sup>

The singling-out of outcaste units extended beyond the sartorial realm, as status distinctions were effectively maintained in less publicly apparent ways. A glance at the Ishindan's regulations reveals that Chōshū's military leaders were also skeptical of outcastes' abilities on the battlefield. While most of the Ishindan's regulations resemble those of other mixed units, even those composed primarily of samurai, two provisions specifically prohibited acts of battlefield cowardice. For instance, item three read:

In matters of movement and tactics (進退かけ引之儀), always request [orders] from your superiors. As a matter of course, those who commit willful acts (我儘之働き), exhibit cowardly behavior, or do not wait for the orders of their superiors will be punished severely.

The next provision warned that “those who withdraw before the enemy is sighted may be punished summarily.”<sup>53</sup> To prevent the feared lapses in discipline, each of the outcaste units was placed under the command of a separate mixed unit. The Ishindan was under the command of the predominantly samurai Yūgekitai, and the Isshingumi was under the Mitatetai (御楯隊). In addition, as if to emphasize the outcaste units' position vis-à-vis the other mixed units, the commanding officers of both the Ishindan and the Isshingumi were commoners,

<sup>48</sup> Nunobiki, *Chōshū-han Ishindan*, 78.

<sup>49</sup> Animal by-products like feces and bones were used to produce potassium nitrate, or saltpeter, an essential component gunpowder production. Despite the growing demand for these commodities in the Bakumatsu era, the open transport of animal “pollutants” caused the occasional disturbance. *Ibid.*, 73-82.

<sup>50</sup> “Nō shō hei kisoku no koto,” in *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin*, 6:425-426.

<sup>51</sup> “Ishindan heifuku go kikai taimei no koto,” in Nunobiki, *Chōshū han Ishindan*, 193.

<sup>52</sup> In this respect, the regulations echo Donald Shively's contention that sumptuary regulations helped preserve the appearance of status distinction in the face of late Tokugawa social change. Donald Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 25 (1964 - 1965): 156.

<sup>53</sup> Nunobiki, *Chōshū han Ishindan*, 191.

whereas warriors commanded the majority of the mixed units.<sup>54</sup> Simply put, the same mixed units that promised social mobility to commoner and outcaste volunteers effectively re-constituted Tokugawa status categories in new ways, as the pre-recruitment status of any trooper would have been obvious to any of his comrades. While the use of commoners and outcastes as fighting men represented a significant departure from the past, life in the ranks was probably more like life in the village than soldiers had expected.

Although a desire to secure trainable recruits motivated domain authorities' decision to recruit from the social margins, they distrusted the loyalty of volunteer outcaste units that they did not organize themselves. In the first month of 1865, a *chasen* named Kinsaku attempted to contribute to Chōshū's war effort by organizing his own outcaste platoon: the thirty-man Kaminoseki Chasentai (上関茶釜隊).<sup>55</sup> How Kinsaku intended to contribute to Chōshū's auxiliary forces is unclear, but the unit's training schedule was far from rigorous, calling for just six days of practice per month.<sup>56</sup> Any ambitions Kinsaku had came to naught. In 1866, the Second Kiheitai (第二奇兵隊) arrested Kinsaku and his second-in-command, Tomizō, pending an investigation into allegations of espionage. The investigation never took place. Both of the accused committed suicide days after their arrest, though the circumstances surrounding their deaths were suspicious to say the least: despite being in custody, Kinsaku and Tomizō both acquired short swords that they used to dispatch themselves. After the two men's deaths, all of the *chasen* who had signed the founding oath of the unit were taken in for questioning by local authori-

ties.<sup>57</sup> The Kaminoseki Chasentai's history thus came to an abrupt end.

### War and Peace

Chōshū's outcaste soldiers saw combat for the first time in the summer of 1866, when Tokugawa forces began their second punitive expedition against the rebel domain. Troopers from the Ishindan played a major role in repulsing the first shogunal advances from their Hiroshima camp into Chōshū's branch domain of Iwakuni. In fact, the unit's performance on the battlefield silenced the jeers of its Iwakuni compatriots. During the 1866 battle for the village of Ōno, the Ishindan lost one man killed and six wounded, which accounted for nearly one-third of Chōshū's casualties on the day.<sup>58</sup> Although casualty counts for the war lack a great deal of detail, it seems that a total of six outcaste soldiers—in the Ishindan, Isshingumi, and Yamashiro Chasentai—died in the fighting, while twenty-six were wounded.<sup>59</sup>

Although outcaste soldiers had acquitted themselves well on the battlefield, the domain replaced them with low-ranking warriors like *ashigaru*, *chūgen*, and rear vassals (陪臣) as soon as it was able. While the *shotai* had been fighting Tokugawa forces on Chōshū's borders, the loyalist domain government had hurriedly re-organized the main body of the domain army into rifle battalions. That process was almost complete by the end of 1866. As these new units came into service, outcaste units were the first to be disbanded. The Yamashiro Chasentai was disbanded in the eighth month of 1866. While it is unclear when the Ishindan and the Isshingumi were disbanded, Nunobiki suggests that they most likely met the same fate soon afterward.<sup>60</sup>

Chōshū eventually granted the outcaste troopers bonuses in recognition of their service, but only in 1871—several years after the units were disbanded. Katsujirō, the Ishindan's organizer and first ser-

<sup>54</sup> Nunobiki Toshio, "Bakumatsu Chōshū han hisabetsu burakumin shotai no katsudō," *Nihonshi kenkyū*, no. 112 (May 1970), 66.

<sup>55</sup> Nunobiki, *Chōshū han Ishindan*, 113-119. Kinsaku's journey had begun in 1864, when he traveled to Kyoto in an attempt to join the Shinsengumi (新撰組). After that attempt ended in failure, Kinsaku returned to his home village of Ōno, where he organized his own unit.

<sup>56</sup> "Kaminoseki Chasentai ketsumeigaki," in Nunobiki, *Chōshū han Ishindan*, 198-201.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-112.

<sup>58</sup> Noguchi Takehiko, *Chōshū sensō*, Chūkō shinsho 1840 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2006), 177-182. Nunobiki, *Chōshū han Ishindan*, 147-152.

<sup>59</sup> Nunobiki, "Bakumatsu Chōshū han hisabetsu burakumin shotai no katsudō," 70.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

geant, received the highest sum: three gold *ryō*, to be paid as five bales of rice. The unit's other non-commissioned officers also received between two and three bales of rice each, depending on their rank. Most soldiers received far less: seventy-five bales of rice to be divided among 132 men. The dead reaped the greatest reward. The families of Saikichi and Kimizō (two troopers who fell on the Hiroshima front) received modest stipends for life, as did the families of those who suffered serious wounds.<sup>61</sup> However, given the timing of the bonuses, it is unclear whether these "lifelong" stipends continued to be disbursed after the domain's dissolution.

Did outcaste soldiers receive the abrogation of their status advocated in Yoshida Toshimaro's original recruitment proposal? The official list of the troopers' mustering-out bonuses made no mention of whether any of the volunteers were granted the legal abrogation of their outcaste status. This raises two possibilities: one, that any status promotion was granted in another set of documents; or two, that Chōshū either abandoned some of the recommendations outlined in Toshimaro's proposal or reneged on its promise entirely. While the paucity of sources precludes a definitive answer, the question is immaterial; once the need for non-warrior auxiliary forces had passed, Chōshū authorities took swift and decisive steps to return the status system in the domain to the prewar status quo.

In that respect, the experience of outcaste troopers was a harbinger of what was to come for many commoner veterans. In 1869, after the coalition of loyalist domains led by Satsuma and Chōshū successfully overthrew the shogunate, Chōshū embarked on a program of military retrenchment. The domain began dismissing commoners from the *shotai*, often with the tenuous justification that they had requested discharges.<sup>62</sup> Not all of the former soldiers went home willingly. The night of his discharge, Kiheitai trooper Isono Kumazō, the second son of a merchant in the castle town of Hagi, committed ritual suicide in a training

building within the unit's camp. Although the unit's records state that Isono killed himself to atone for past offenses, the timing of his actions—in this case, the immediate aftermath of his discharge—suggests at least some measure of intent to register disaffection with the domain's policy.<sup>63</sup> Soon afterward, the domain announced plans to create a four-battalion regular army (常備軍) of 2,200 men, hand-picked from its regular and irregular units.<sup>64</sup> In the end, almost all of those selected were samurai. The domain disbanded the remaining commoner units two weeks later.

The decision sparked a revolt. Over a thousand recently unemployed soldiers from the Kiheitai—mostly commoners—left their camp outside Yamaguchi and established a base at the town of Miyaichi.<sup>65</sup> With the prospect of promotion to warrior status off the table, these disaffected veterans began petitioning the domain government to redress the unfairness of the regular army selection process.<sup>66</sup> The mutineers' ranks soon swelled to two thousand. After the veterans crushed an all-samurai force organized by the domain government, the Meiji government intervened. In March of 1870, a force commanded by Kido Takayoshi arrived in Chōshū and defeated the rebels in less than a week. The remaining soldiers dispersed; some tried to return home, while others fled to neighboring domains. Chōshū, however, had no intention of letting the matter drop; it appointed investigators to track down fleeing rebels.<sup>67</sup> Do-

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 3:604; Ichisaka Tarō, *Chōshū Kiheitai: shōsha no naka no haishatachi*, Chūkō shinsho 1666 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002), 192.

<sup>64</sup> "Jōbihei seisen no koto," in *Yamaguchi-ken shi, shiryō-hen, bakumatsu ishin*, 6:917.

<sup>65</sup> "Shotai kaisan ni tsuki jotai, hōchikusha no ranbō torishimari no koto," Ibid., 920.

<sup>66</sup> Ichisaka, 192-93. The mutineers also objected to what they viewed as the domain's attempt to fully Westernize its regular army. Suematsu, *Bōchō kaitenshi*, 2:1663.

<sup>67</sup> "Dattaisha no tansaku tsuiho to shite Teruchi Sannosuke ra shosho sashimawashi no koto," *Yamaguchi-ken shi, shiryō-hen, bakumatsu ishin*, 6:981-982. Once armed conflict seemed likely, domain authorities compiled a list of any rebel

<sup>61</sup> "Ishindan' senkō shōten sata," *Yamaguchi-ken shi shiryō-hen bakumatsu ishin*, 6:1042-1049.

<sup>62</sup> Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai, ed., *Kiheitai nikki*, Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai sōsho 85-88 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1971), 3:601.

main authorities also investigated the households of former soldiers suspected of participating in the revolt, as well as any reports of peasants wearing swords.<sup>68</sup> Similar, though less violent, phenomena occurred in other localities in 1869, as domains and prefectures alike tried to restrict commoner volunteers' attempts to exercise the rights to surname and sword.<sup>69</sup>

### Conclusion

Both outcaste and commoner volunteers joined Chōshū's war effort in search of some kind of social mobility. For commoners, that may have meant pursuing the prospect of employment as a warrior menial. For most outcastes, mobility may have meant the potential abrogation of their status—at least on an individual level. The political and military crisis of the Bakumatsu era led the shogunate and reformist domains to use the inherent elasticity in the Tokugawa status system to employ commoners—and in Chōshū's case, outcastes—as fighting men. But when the crisis faded, domains like Chōshū moved quickly to close the

narrow avenues of social mobility they had opened. Not that it mattered in the end. When the status system was legally abolished by the Meiji government between 1869 and 1871, the social context that gave meaning to commoner and outcaste veterans' mobility disappeared. While the 1873 Conscription Ordinance eventually opened up a different military path to social mobility, elements of the Tokugawa status system persisted even in the early years of the modern, conscript army. This was particularly true for outcastes, according to Yamagata Aritomo's biographer:

From the moment the Conscription Ordinance was promulgated, Duke [Yamagata] gave sufficient attention to the former XX [eta] and XX [hinin], who were now the same as commoners. Because many from that group were engaged customarily in leatherworking and were well practiced in the treatment [of leather], when they conscripted and assigned to active duty, they were made cobblers and assigned to the mending and production of the shoes used in the military.<sup>70</sup>

In other words, outcastes had been emancipated so that their sons could be conscripted by the state to perform the same trades their ancestors had. For outcastes, at least, social mobility proved largely illusory in both the experimental military forces of the Bakumatsu era and in the early Meiji army.

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units and veterans they were able to identify. Sidney Devere Brown and Akiko Hirota, eds., *The Diary of Kido Takayoshi* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983), 1:326.

<sup>68</sup> “Dattaisotsu kyodō no kyōbōsha todokedashi no koto,” “Moto dattaisotsu no uchi fukokoroe nite taitō haikaisha torishimari no koto,” *Ibid.*, 6:927, 932.

<sup>69</sup> In 1869, for instance, a group of rusticated warriors from the hamlet of Totsukawa (outside Kyoto) who had fought for the new government protested when they were not offered military employment. Meiji leaders quelled the nascent uprising with both threats and exhortations to loyal behavior. Senda Minoru, *Ishin seiken no chokuzoku guntai* (Tokyo: Kaimei Shoin, 1978), 23. The following year, officials in Kumihama prefecture complained to the Ministry of Civil Affairs (民部省) that, despite the end of the Boshin War, many commoner veterans refused to stop exercising the right to surname and sword. Kumihama-ken, “Nōmin taitō no gi ni tsuki ukagai” (Kōbunroku 2A-9-36-41, National Archives of Japan, 1870).

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<sup>70</sup> Tokutomi I'ichirō, *Kōshaku Yamagata Aritomo den* (Tokyo: Yamagata Aritomo Kō Kinen Jigyō Kai, 1933), 2:225-226.