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Samurai Discontent and

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE LATE TOKUGAWA PERIOD

by RAY A. MOORE

SAMURAI discontent with the *status quo* of the late Tokugawa period is a theme which aroused intense controversy among historians until fairly recently.¹ Much of the debate over the role of the 'lower' samurai in overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate assumed that the lower ranks were moved to action when their livelihoods were threatened by the failures of the political system. It is not the purpose of this paper to revive the 'lower-samurai' controversy or to review the various arguments put forth by its proponents and opponents, or to attempt to explain the human motivation or changes in the temper of the times which led to disenchantment with the Tokugawa government. Rather, this is an attempt to approach the broader problem of samurai discontent from a somewhat different perspective. There were of course several reasons for widespread discontent which, though not limited to the nineteenth century, was expressed more openly towards the end of the period than ever before. Historians have offered various explanations for it, including political conflicts over national policy within the ruling Tokugawa coalition of daimyo, the spread of formal education and growing respect (at least in principle) for individual ability among the samurai, the feeling of intellectual isolation, and, by comparison with the merchants, economic decline of the samurai.²

While there is much to be said for each of these explanations of the problem, research

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¹ The controversy appears in English in E. H. Norman, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State*, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1940; Honjō Eijirō, *The Social and Economic History of Japan*, Kyoto, 1935; and has been treated more recently by A. M. Craig, 'The Restoration Movement in Chōshū', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XVIII, February 1959, pp. 187-98; and in several

suggestive articles by T. C. Smith, including his recent "'Merit" as Ideology in the Tokugawa Period', R. P. Dore ed., *Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan*, Princeton, 1967, pp. 71-90.

² Sakata Yoshio and J. W. Hall, 'The Motivation of Political Leadership in the Meiji Restoration', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XVI, November 1956, pp. 31-50; R. P. Dore, 'The Thought of Men: The Thought of Society—The Educational Systems and Ideologies of the Tokugawa Period', *Asian Cultural Studies*, III, October 1962, pp. 73-86; T. C. Smith, 'Japan's Aristocratic Revolution', *Yale Review*, L, 1960-1, pp. 370-83; and G. B. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan*, London, 1950, pp. 245-6.

in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century family records of four domains (*han*) suggests that insecurity of status and feelings of social discrimination in the samurai class may have been another important reason for growing disenchantment with the *status quo*. This paper will attempt to shed some light on the reasons for these feelings by analyzing patterns of status change in four *han* during the early nineteenth century. The data used here were collected originally as part of a study of samurai social mobility during the Tokugawa period and come from genealogies, family histories and public service records compiled by officials of four *han*—Hikone, Kaga, Owari and Sendai—which represent the main types of Tokugawa daimyo and four major geographical regions in Japan.³

Since the major argument made here is that samurai discontent was related to patterns of social mobility, it is necessary to touch briefly on the nature of these patterns.

Table 1
Social Mobility in the 19th Century (%)

| <i>Han</i> | 1st Generation ¹ | 2nd Generation ² | 3rd Generation |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Hikone | 11 (25.0) | 8 (16.3) | 5 (10.9) |
| Kaga | 11 (23.0) | 7 (15.2) | |
| Owari | 40 (57.9) | 34 (48.6) | 41 (58.6) |
| Sendai | 13 (21.0) | 11 (17.2) | |
| Total | 75 (34.4) | 60 (26.2) | 51 (44.0) |

¹ Data from the first generations of Hikone and Owari samples, and second generations of Kaga and Sendai.

² Data from the second generation of Hikone and Owari samples and the third generation of Kaga and Sendai.

Table 1 summarizes data on three generations of samurai chosen by random sample from samurai family service records. The first generation in the early nineteenth century covers the period from roughly 1790 to 1825. Most of the samurai of the second generation were heads of households and often held *han* offices during the 1830s and 1840s. Since pertinent Kaga and Sendai family records end during this period, the third generation includes only retainers of Hikone and Owari who were household heads and officeholders during the last two decades of the Tokugawa period. Another important feature of the sample is that many of the Owari members represent the lowest ranks of the samurai class (*sotsu*).⁴

³ 彦根、加賀、尾張、仙臺. Daimyo typology is discussed by Itō Tasaburō 伊藤多三郎, *Nihon bōken seidoshi* 日本封建制度史, Tokyo, 1951, p. 256; and by J. W. Hall, 'Foundations of the Modern Japanese Daimyo', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XX, May 1961, pp. 317-29. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the directors and staffs of the Tokugawa Rinseishi Kenkyūsho

徳川林政史研究所 (Owari), Sendai Shiritsu Hakubutsukan 仙台市立博物館, Kanazawa Shiritsu Toshokan 金沢市立図書館 (Kaga) and the Ii 井伊 family of Hikone for permission to use and photograph records in their possession.

⁴ I use the term *samurai* here to mean both *shi* 士 and *sotsu* 卒.

While presenting only a rough view of the extent of social mobility during the nineteenth century, the data of Table 1 indicates several trends. First of all, social mobility in the early nineteenth century, as measured by changes in samurai stipends, was fairly common among the *shi* ranks of Hikone, Kaga and Sendai but declined steadily during the second and, at least in Hikone, third generations. On the other hand, over half of the *sotsu* and other low-ranking retainers of Owari, many of whom had stipends of ten *koku* or less, experienced some upward movement during their careers in *ban* service.⁵ Although the very high rate of mobility in Owari at the end of the period is reflected by numerous small stipend changes and a stipend reform in 1862 which raised the incomes of many *sotsu*, there is no doubt that throughout the nineteenth century opportunity for advancement among lower ranks was far better than for the middle-ranking *shi*.⁶

A second point which emerges from these data and from Table 2 is that, quantitatively, the pattern of samurai social mobility remained quite constant until the end of the

Table 2
Social Mobility in Three Centuries (%)

| Century | Generation | | |
|---------|------------|--------|-------|
| | First | Second | Third |
| 17th | 56.2 | 41.2 | 34.4 |
| 18th | 28.2 | 26.4 | 25.1 |
| 19th | 34.4 | 26.2 | 44.0 |

Tokugawa period. No major changes in the amount of mobility occurred during the last half century of the period. True, there was more in the first generation of the nineteenth century (34.4%) than there had been during the eighteenth century. There was, for instance, a noticeable increase in status changes during the first quarter of the nineteenth century which seems to have been related to improvements which the Kansei reforms made in the samurai's economic position.⁷ Certainly the retainers of Owari gained much in stability and prestige by receiving a guaranteed family stipend for the first time since the seventeenth century.⁸ This was followed in the next generation by a decline to the level of the eighteenth century, when only about one-fourth of all retainers experienced a change in status, but then jumped from 26.2% in the 1830s and 1840s to 44% in the 1850s and 1860s. However, most of the advancement in the last two decades was scored by lower ranks of the Owari sample. Upward mobility in the middle ranks in the third generation probably increased no more than a few percentage points, perhaps to 30%

⁵ 石

⁶ This contrasts with the pattern in Matsue where social mobility among the *shi* ranks appears to have increased around the middle of the nineteenth century. See Smith, "Merit"

as Ideology in the Tokugawa Period', p. 75.

⁷ 寛政

⁸ *Nagoyashi-shi, seijiben* 名古屋市史、政治篇, II, Nagoya, 1915, pp. 140, 528-9.

at the most.⁹ Therefore opportunities for increasing income and status in the middle ranks were little better in these four *han* than they had been in the eighteenth century.

A third point is that, although opportunity for advancement in the lowest ranks improved during the nineteenth century, upward mobility was controlled in two ways: (1) advancement was limited to one generation; income gains of one generation were not normally passed on to a son, or upward movement made cumulative over several generations; and (2) promotions in rank were most common among the lower ranks whose position in *han* service was precarious or, in some cases, contractual. More than half of all the mobility of the nineteenth century occurred among Owari's low-ranking retainers. Moreover, close to three-fourths of the upward movement involved samurai whose incomes were less than 100 *koku*. This pattern of opportunity during the late Tokugawa period may help to explain the mounting discontent among the samurai irrespective of the *han*'s ability to maintain a fairly high rate of upward social mobility.

We must turn now to the question of this discontent and attempt to show how the pattern of mobility is related to it. Fukuzawa Yukichi's complaint that he felt stifled by the Tokugawa system of hereditary ranks and status touches on one of the central reasons for discontent among the middle-ranking samurai.¹⁰ Institutional decline which deprived them of real purpose and threatened their privileged position in society was bound to arouse feelings of apprehension and dissatisfaction. The lower ranks, on the other hand, while enjoying greater opportunity for increasing their incomes through officeholding, found it difficult to translate larger stipends into higher, permanent family status. Both groups were unhappy, but for different reasons.

The first group, the middle ranks, was made up of retainers with incomes from roughly 50 to 700 *koku*, though the definition of 'middle' varies in proportion to the assessed productivity of the *han*. They were discontented in the nineteenth century for many reasons. First, their traditional role, the basis of their prestige, income and status in society, had been eroded by the long reign of peace since the seventeenth century and by the relative rise in authority of civil positions and growth of specialization in the *han* bureaucracy. As Professor John Hall has said, it was chiefly the 'military branches of service in the domains [which], though continuing to command prestige, suffered increasingly from want of money and want of purpose.'¹¹ The traditional military units had little to do except to

⁹ As a result of Ii Naosuke's 井伊直弼 assassination, Hikone suffered a loss of 100,000 *koku* in 1862 and went into a political eclipse from which it never recovered. Retainers lost $\frac{1}{3}$ of their incomes and fringe benefits. *Hikoneshi-shi* 彦根市史, I, Hikone, 1960, p. 625. Much of the increase in social mobility in Owari during the 1860s was due to reform in 1862 which gave low-ranking retainers the same privileged status and inheritable incomes that higher-ranking

retainers had received at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

¹⁰ *Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, Tokyo, 1947, p. 18.

¹¹ J. W. Hall, 'The Nature of Traditional Society: Japan', R. E. Wood and D. A. Rustow eds., *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1964, p. 37.

man the castle gates and form a procession for the daimyo when he ventured forth from his compound. Some entered the civil bureaucracy and became administrators. But their opportunities for advancement were limited by too many potential officials for too few offices, as well as by the slow expansion of administration in a society which relied heavily on the customary leadership of prominent families in the thousands of rural villages. The lack of opportunity for members of the middle ranks to advance beyond their inherited positions appears clearly from the data on social mobility cited above. In Kaga and Sendai during the 1830s, for example, only 15–17% of the middle-ranking retainers received higher salaries. Upward movement in Hikone, already low in the second generation, dropped to almost 10% in the 1850s and 1860s.

Second, the hand of *han* authority lay heavily on the middle-ranking *shi*. His personal tie to the daimyo, often close in the seventeenth century, had given way to an impersonal relationship with the *han* by the nineteenth century. His traditional prerogatives were reduced and restricted. The *han* controlled his income, his customary right to hold certain offices, his right to succeed to the headship of a household and the income that went with that position. The memory of his family's service to the daimyo had grown dim by the nineteenth century; no longer did such claims carry the emotional weight that they had in the seventeenth century. The *han* in the nineteenth century was more likely to ask what service he would render in the future rather than what his family had done in the past. Yet the limited opportunities for service to the *han* and the stiff competition for posts that were available severely restricted his chances for upward mobility. In a sense the middle-ranking *shi* was the victim of the conflict between the traditional system of customary family stipends and the slowly developing practice of rewarding individuals on the basis of service to the *han*.¹²

Third, the *han* frequently attempted to shift their financial burdens to the shoulders of the middle-ranking *shi*. The lack of opportunity in *han* service was bad enough; a meaningless existence was worse. But what was almost intolerable was the widespread practice of *hanchi* whereby the *han* withheld part of samurai family stipends to help relieve *han* financial pressures.¹³ This added insult to injury and reduced their standard of living without providing an alternative source of income. There can be no doubt that it was resented. The anonymous author of the *Shōbei yawa* minced no words when he wrote in the late eighteenth century: 'The reduction of a samurai's revenue had no justifiable grounds whatever. . . . There is absolutely no reason why the rightful revenue of one who has committed no wrong should be cut by one-half.'¹⁴ In Hikone, where the practice was

¹² R. P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, Berkeley, 1965, pp. 203–4, 213, emphasizes that the trend toward appointing 'men of talent' to office weakened the system of hereditary status in the samurai class. Since the middle-ranking samurai's access to high office in the bureaucracy

rested on hereditary status, to the extent that this is so, the middle ranks felt increasingly insecure.

¹³ 半知

¹⁴ 昌平夜話. Quoted in Honjō, *op. cit.* (see n. 1), p. 228.

carried out under various names, *han* 'borrowing' of retainers' stipends occurred almost every year from the middle of the period to the end.¹⁵ Hikone records show that, in 1728, retainers whose incomes were figured in *chigyō* were required to contribute one-third of their stipends to the *han*; ten years later those with incomes of more than 100 *koku* contributed according to their status and income, and from 1772 to 1779 gave up one-half of their stipends.¹⁶ During the nineteenth century rare was the year in which Hikone, by means of forced payment, withholding part of the stipend, outright borrowing or other schemes (often intended as reforms to help retainers), did not deprive middle-ranking retainers of a large portion of their incomes.¹⁷

Such pressures from the *han*, plus mounting personal debts which retainers found increasingly difficult to pay off, combined to produce dissatisfaction and desire for reform among the middle-ranking retainers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries political struggles touched off by succession disputes in Kaga, Akita, Kurume and many other *han* were exacerbated by retainers' complaints about financial conditions.¹⁸ Efforts were made to improve the samurai's standard of living, but like the shogunate's ill-starred reforms of the Tempō period (1830-43), most failed to provide relief for the retainers. Only a few *han*, such as Chōshū, succeeded in helping the samurai get out of debt, balance his budget and regain some confidence in himself.¹⁹ Early nineteenth-century reforms in other *han*, often no more than loans to help reduce indebtedness, left the middle ranks of samurai insecure and dissatisfied. As one such retainer of Sakura *han* complained in 1822, the reform 'benefits the *shi* with large incomes and causes a loss to *shi* with small incomes. . . .'²⁰ Statistical evidence from our sample of over 200 retainers suggests, as we have seen, that not only was there lack of opportunity for the middle ranks but that their guaranteed stipends provided little economic stability.

A fourth factor that appears to have contributed to the deterioration of the financial and social positions of middle-ranking retainers is far more difficult to document than financial problems. This was the decline of personal ties of loyalty between the retainer and his lord and the concomitant development of a contractual relationship between low-ranking retainers and the *han*. Though confident pronouncements on this point must await further research in the area of *han*-retainer relations, it can be argued that the retainer's privileged social status and guaranteed stipend were being further eroded by

¹⁵ *Hikoneshi-shi*, 1, pp. 624-5.

¹⁶ 知行

¹⁷ It is important to note, however, that the proportion of income which the *han* borrowed depended on the rank and size of the stipend. In Chōshū 長州, as Albert Craig says, 'a full 50 percent was borrowed only from those with stipends of 100 *koku* and above.' *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1961, p. 43, n. 15. Cf. Bernard

Silberman, *Ministers of Modernization: Elite Mobility in the Meiji Restoration*, Tucson, 1964, p. 35.

¹⁸ Itō T., *Nihon kinseishi* 日本近世史, II, Tokyo, 1952, pp. 222-8.

¹⁹ Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*, pp. 75-7.

²⁰ 佐倉藩. Kimura Motoi 木村礎 and Sugimoto Toshio 杉本敏夫, *Fudai bansei no tenkai to Meiji-ishin* 譜代藩制の展開と明治維新, Tokyo, 1963, pp. 189, 199-201.

(1) the *ban*'s increasing use of low-ranking men whose relationship to the *ban* was limited to one generation and (2) the principle that all retainers with hereditary status must justify their stipends by attaining a certain proficiency in at least one of the arts of war or administration.²¹

Thus by the nineteenth century several factors had combined to undercut the economic security and social status of middle-ranking retainers. Reforms during the eighteenth century were unable to provide more than temporary relief from the burden of debts. Nothing had been done to halt or even slow the erosive effects of the other factors. What appeared to be greater opportunity during the first generation of the nineteenth century proved to be a false signal as far as the middle ranks were concerned. The fears aroused by this continuing decline of status seem to have been particularly acute during the second generation. Furthermore, the increasing mobility of the lower ranks during the last two decades of the period could hardly have reduced the fear among the middle-ranking retainers that their positions were being threatened.

The second group of dissatisfied retainers at the end of the Tokugawa period were the low-ranking *shi* and *sotsu*. This may seem surprising at first, especially since there existed, as we have seen, ample opportunity for personal advancement in this group—more opportunity than in the eighteenth century. As late as the 1850s, at least half of the low-ranking men of our sample were upwardly mobile. Yet pay raises alone or even promotion in rank and advancement in office failed to satisfy them. What, then, lay behind their dissatisfaction? The spread of education and development of political consciousness through *ban* schools, intellectual stultification and institutional restrictions were undoubtedly partly to blame. But this was not all. The economic factor, whether real or imagined, also played an important part in creating disgruntled feelings among many of them.

Recent literature has eschewed discussion of this point. One no longer speaks of economic motives in samurai behavior during the late Tokugawa period. The writings of Norman, Honjō, Tsuchiya and others of a generation ago, by overstating the importance of economic factors and by finding causative links between *ban* financial difficulties, samurai poverty and discontent and the overthrow of the Tokugawa regime, have turned the efforts of serious students to other approaches. Likewise, the Marxist historians' insistence that class conflict lay at the root of samurai discontent has tended to obscure the nature of the real economic issues involved. The strong emotional reaction of Western scholars to any hint of economic determinism has also helped to prevent exploration of economic aspects of the problem. Yet an analysis of samurai incomes suggests that economic as well as social considerations were deeply involved in the complaints that samurai voiced in the late Tokugawa period.

As we have already established that opportunity for individual advancement for the

²¹ For a clear statement of this principle in Sakura *ban*, see *ibid.* p. 201.

lower samurai had grown during the early years of the nineteenth century, the next obvious question is why this group continued to express discontent. Confining our attention to the evidence of economic issues, data on samurai incomes of the nineteenth century suggest two possible answers: (1) either the stipendiary increases were too few and too small to satisfy their pecuniary demands; or (2) they wanted another type of compensation.

Let us examine, first of all, the matter of compensation through stipend increases. Were there too few income increases to satisfy the lower ranks of this period? The data presented above (Tables 1-2) have shown not only that more than half of them won pay raises in the nineteenth century, but also that reductions in basic incomes were rare (11 of 186). A comparison with stipend increases in earlier periods, particularly the eighteenth century, does show more and more low-ranking retainers getting higher stipends. Their chances for advancement were better than in the eighteenth century; and because of the various reforms, their general financial position appears stronger than it had been for generations.²² Why, then, were they dissatisfied? Could the answer lie in the size of the stipend increases? In other words, were the increases substantial or mere pittance?

The answer, according to Table 3, is that at least three of the four *han* of this study pro-

Table 3
Magnitude of Income Changes

| <i>Han</i> | Generation | Incomes Doubled (%) | Average % of Increase |
|------------|------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Hikone | 1st | — | 21.8 |
| | 2nd | 37.5 | 123.7 |
| | 3rd | 18.2 | 36.4 |
| Kaga | 1st | 28.6 | 70.7 |
| | 2nd | 18.2 | 61.7 |
| | 3rd | 25.0 | 92.5 |
| Owari | 1st | 58.5 | 178.0 |
| | 2nd | 58.8 | 253.5 |
| | 3rd | 62.5 | 205.9 |
| Sendai | 1st | 45.4 | 166.4 |
| | 2nd | 7.7 | 33.5 |
| | 3rd | (Only one example in this generation) | |

vided substantial average increases. In Hikone, Kaga and Owari, for example, between one-fourth and one-half of the retainers in question were able at least to double their incomes

²² Itō, *Nihon kinseishi*, II, pp. 229-42, discusses | in Yonezawa 米澤, Akita 秋田, Kishū 紀州, the main features and consequences of reforms | Higo 肥後, Matsue 松江 and other *han*.

during the course of their careers. Some won fantastic increases of ten-fold or more.²³ Although these were admittedly exceptional cases, 200–500% increases were not at all unusual in Kaga, Sendai and Owari. Perhaps the best indicator of the size of samurai pay raises during this period is the average percentage of increases for all mobile retainers. Owari retainers again led the four groups, with an average pay increase of 200% throughout the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. Kaga's increases were fairly high and steady; Hikone's incomes, which had risen rapidly during the 1820s and 1830s, dropped in the 1850s almost to the low of the early nineteenth century, although substantial additions were still possible for middle-ranking retainers of two, three and four hundred *koku*. The most remarkable feature of Owari's stipend increases is that low-ranking men consistently received large raises during their careers, averaging about 200%, and well over half of them doubled their incomes. On the other hand, men of the three other *ban*, who generally ranked well above the Owari samurai, received far smaller increases.

In such circumstances one might expect Owari retainers to be generally satisfied with their lot in life. If anyone was suffering from relatively fixed incomes in a period of inflation, it was the middle-ranking retainers. Yet the latter had few complaints about conditions in Owari after the *ban* granted them hereditary incomes (*seroku*) in 1799.²⁴ By contrast, the low-ranking *sotsu* and others of limited tenure (one-generation employees) continued voicing apprehension about their positions.²⁵ Why they did so is obviously a complicated question. Many factors were involved. However, in the light of these data on stipends, it would seem that, to the extent that their discontent can indeed be traced to stipends, it was due less to insufficient rewards for service or opportunity for advancement than to the fact that the rewards for meritorious service were limited to the generation that earned them and could not be shared with their descendants. This point requires clarification.

The low-ranking retainers suffered severe liabilities. Not only were they paid less than enough to live on, but they were also denied the symbols of hereditary status and full membership in the aristocratic class that might have helped compensate for empty rice bins. The case of Owari illustrates the different treatment of *shi* with permanent status in the ruling class and *sotsu* whose tenure in rank was circumscribed and limited.²⁶ As we

²³ A few examples from the late Tokugawa period: according to Owari's 'Hanshi nayose' (mss. in Tokugawa Rinseishi Kenkyūsho), Yamashita Shōtarō and Nagai Kichinosuke both received 800% increases. The fathers of Nagai Kichinosuke and Nakagawa Shōrokurō increased their incomes ten-fold, while Suzuki Sadakichi increased his sixteen times. 'Hanshi nayose' 藩士名寄, *ya-jō* や上, pp. 9–16; *na-ge* な下, pp. 89–97; and *su* す, pp. 8–18.

²⁴ 世祿. For complaints before the reform,

see *Nagoyashi-shi, seijiben*, II, pp. 534–7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 538–40.

²⁶ Owari is only an example; there is evidence of the same pattern in many *ban*. Perhaps the most careful analysis of the phenomenon is contained in Shimmi Kichiji's 新見吉治 writings. See, for example, 'Bushī no mibun to shokusei' 武士の身分と職制, Shinji Yoshimoto 進士慶幹 ed., *Edo jidai bushi no seikatsu* 江戸時代武士の生活, Tokyo, 1962, pp. 7–52; and his *Kakyū shizoku no kenkyū* 下級士族の研究, Tokyo, 1953.

have seen, in 1799 Owari permitted all *shi* with incomes drawn in theory from specified villages (*chigyō*) to pass along to successors their entire stipends, regardless of the number of years of service, circumstances of retirement or blood relation of successors. Retainers whose stipends were calculated in bales of rice (*hyō*) and received more than thirty bales directly from the *han's* granary, could bequeath one-half of their total incomes to heirs, whereas those who received fewer than thirty bales could pass on all of it to successors.²⁷

Such privileges of succession were restricted, however, to retainers with permanent tenure (*fudai*).²⁸ They did not extend to seventy-six *shi* of low rank or to about 3,500 *sotsu* whose tenures were limited to one generation.²⁹ In 1801 some ninety *sotsu* of *kachi* rank were granted the right of audience with the daimyo, designated hereditary retainers (*fudai*) and granted hereditary stipends of five *koku* and rations for two persons.³⁰ But the other 3,400 or so *sotsu* with limited tenure still had no guarantee of permanent status in the samurai class, even though they might enjoy rapid promotion in office and income during their careers. Furthermore, the regulations of 1801 limited opportunities for inter-generational upward movement among the newly promoted *kachi* by preventing their sons who served in lower ranks from succeeding to more than their father's fixed incomes. Promoting able men from the ranks below *kachi*, or hiring new men for the ranks between *kachi* and *shi* was still possible; but the heirs of such men could be employed only temporarily (that is, for one generation) in the ranks below *kachi*. Thus while the advancement of able men of low status could and did occur in the nineteenth century, even into offices which carried the right of audience with the daimyo, such gains, unless exempted by a special daimyo decree, had to be returned to the *han* at the end of their careers.³¹

The low-ranking retainers of temporary status were thus clearly in an inferior position. Not only in preserving gains of their generation but also in all matters of social rewards, family status and continuity, they fared worse than their social superiors. These low-ranking retainers were not content with higher incomes and opportunity for advancement; they wanted special privileges, permanent tenure and treatment in such matters as adoption equal to hereditary retainers;³² and they wanted to preserve their gains for their progeny. Their discontent stemmed, therefore, not from the failure of the system to provide opportunity for men of talent to move ahead, or from their own personal failures to win appointment to high office. They were unhappy because they could not have it both ways—recognition of their ability and the rewarding of that ability by hereditary income and status—as men of *shi* ranks had. They were demanding equal treatment with the *shi*, but in doing so were also demanding the reconciliation of what in the long run

²⁷ 儀. *Nagoyashi-shi, seijiben*, II, pp. 520-34.

²⁸ 譜代

²⁹ Figures for the period 1801-62 are from *Nagoyashi-shi, seijiben*, II, pp. 82-4.

³⁰ 徒士. *Ibid.* p. 533.

³¹ *Loc. cit.* Shimmi, *Kakyū shizoku no kenkyū*, pp. 43-4.

³² Special consideration was given to *shi* after 1799. *Nagoyashi-shi, seijiben*, II, p. 534.

were contradictory principles. According to this analysis, much of the dissatisfaction in the lower ranks of the samurai class arose not simply because the *sotsu* resented a system which appointed men to office on the basis of family status and perpetuated a certain amount of hereditary officeholding, but because when the demands for appointment of men of talent to office were partly met in the eighteenth century by the system of supplementary income (*tashidaka*),³³ the men of talent who were promoted in the bureaucracy were not accorded the same treatment as the men of higher status.

The proof of discrimination between the low- and middle-ranking retainers is clear from an analysis of income data of three generations. The measure of discrimination is how frequently members of the two groups could pass on their gains to the following generation. Table 4 shows that fifty-five men in the nineteenth-century sample received higher incomes, but that only seventeen of them passed on all gains to their successors. One passed on most of the increase, eight passed on some, and twenty-nine none. In

Table 4
Preservation of Income Gains of First Generation

| <i>Han</i> | All | Most | Some | None | Total |
|------------|-----|------|------|------|-------|
| Hikone | 9 | | | 1 | 10 |
| Kaga | 4 | | | | 4 |
| Owari | 4 | 1 | 8 | 27 | 40 |
| Sendai | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 17 | 1 | 8 | 29 | 55 |

Hikone and Kaga, where the average income of the sample was 350 *koku* and only 2% had less than 99 *koku*, thirteen out of fourteen retainers passed on all of their gains to their successors.³⁴ But the vast majority in Owari, where more than half had incomes under ninety-nine *koku*, failed to preserve stipend increases for their heirs. Such increases were usually paid as supplementary incomes to qualify them to hold higher offices in the bureaucracy than their status would normally have permitted. The supplements were temporary, being recovered by the *han* at the end of a retainer's career.

In only a few cases did such supplements become part of the regular income. The figures in Table 5 indicate that four of the Owari men preserved the gains made during their careers for their sons, eight preserved some and one most. Do these exceptions indicate the presence of factors other than differential treatment based on status? The four men in question had very low incomes, from seven *mai* of silver to seven *koku* and rations for two; they served in a variety of civil and military offices for an average of

³³ 足高

³⁴ The one who did not, Yamaji Shinjūrō, retired in 1803 after 27 years of service. And although he had raised the family income from 100 *koku* to 120, his heir was still too young for

regular service and was not appointed to office until 1830. The age of his heir explains why the 20 *koku* was retained by the *han*. 'Jichū yuishochō' 待中由緒帳 (in the Ii family archives of Hikone), xxxix.

twenty-five years.³⁵ It is possible that their long service to the *han* accounted for their special treatment. However, these exceptions simply prove the rule that retainers in low-income brackets were normally unable to pass on the gains accumulated during one generation of service to the next generation.

Table 5
Preservation of Income Gains of Second Generation

| <i>Han</i> | All | Most | Some | None | Total |
|------------|-----|------|------|------|-------|
| Hikone | 7 | | | | 7 |
| Kaga | 7 | | | | 7 |
| Owari | 2 | 2 | 4 | 24 | 32 |
| Sendai | 9 | | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| Total | 25 | 2 | 5 | 25 | 47 |

By contrast, the men of higher rank and income of Hikone, Kaga and Sendai preserved all their gains for their successors. Table 5 shows that of the twenty-six *shi* who registered gains during the second generation of the nineteenth century, twenty-four passed them on to the next generation. But of the thirty-two *sotsu* who received increases in stipends, only eight were able to preserve any part for their heirs; twenty-four had to return all gains to the *han* when they retired. Owari *sotsu* had to wait until 1862 for income reforms which gave them succession rights equal to *shi*. In that year the *han* guaranteed them permanent incomes with full rights to pass on to their successors whatever gains they accumulated during their years of service. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, even the lowest-ranking retainers of limited tenure received hereditary stipends.³⁶

To return now to the main point of this discussion, it seems clear that demands from the lower samurai ranks for the appointment of men of talent to *han* offices were not demands for meritocracy.³⁷ There is no evidence that they were rejecting the Tokugawa status system and demanding that personal ability be the main criterion for determining social position. Rather their demand was for a share of the privileges which the higher ranks enjoyed, for equal treatment within the system. They felt that if they were the able men of the *han*, they should not only hold office but also accumulate high and permanent family incomes. To ease the conflict between the principle of hereditary status and the need for able men in office, many *han* had already adopted by the nineteenth century some version of the shogunate's system of temporary supplemental income (*tashidaka*) to qualify men to hold office above their permanent status. But this failed to get at the root of the problem. In fact, just the opposite; it provided safeguards for the preservation of status in the *shi* ranks by granting only temporary increases in income and thus limited the amount

³⁵ 枚. Biographical information is from 'Han-shi nayose', *su*, pp. 305-8; *na-ge*, pp. 75-8, 142-5 and 351-4.

³⁶ Shimmi, *Kakyū shizoku no kenkyū*, p. 18.

³⁷ R. N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan*, Glencoe, 1957, p. 25.

and duration of upward social mobility, too much of which would have disrupted the stratification system and created an intolerable burden on *han* finances. It did permit able men to hold offices at much higher levels than their permanent status would have allowed.³⁸ But rather than satisfying them, the temporary supplementary incomes seem to have aroused further discontent by placing in their hands the power and responsibilities of office without the prerogatives which normally went with them. The failure to find a way of satisfying the different demands of middle and lower ranks of samurai reflected, on the one hand, a basic contradiction between what Thomas C. Smith calls 'merit as ideology'³⁹ and the principle of ascribed status, and, on the other hand, severe institutional restrictions on potential channels of upward mobility for the samurai.

In sum, much of the samurai discontent in the nineteenth century can be traced directly to the failures of the system of hereditary status to provide security for the two largest groups in the class. The middle ranks of *shi*, from which most of the chief administrators were drawn and which had formed the basis of the daimyo's power since the seventeenth century, feared the gradual erosion of their privileged positions. The reasons were many, as has been emphasized; but perhaps the most important was the fear that their privileged positions, already badly eroded by institutional decline and repeated financial crises ('want of purpose and want of money'), were further threatened by demands that all hereditary retainers justify their status by service to the *han* and by appointment of non-hereditary retainers to many administrative posts. The lower ranks enjoyed greater opportunity for promotion than did the middle *shi*. In a society which valued and rewarded individual ability and performance they might have been satisfied with their relatively frequent promotions, new responsibilities and stipends. But Tokugawa Japan was not such a society. Despite signs in the early nineteenth century that the principle of ascription had weakened and that, in Ronald Dore's words, 'gradually the barriers of status began to give way',⁴⁰ income and position were still determined by birth, and hereditary membership in the elite samurai class was still the highest honor which the society could offer. This exploration of samurai incomes and social mobility in the nineteenth century suggests that the lower ranks were unhappy with anything less.

³⁸ Shimmi, 'Bushii no mibun to shokusei', p. 31.

³⁹ "Merit" as Ideology in the Tokugawa Period', *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, p. 213.