15: MEDIEVAL JAPAN'S FEUDAL PROCESS[1]

a. In what ways does Late Heian fit the label "prefeudal breakdown," Kamakura and Ashikaga through the Onin Wars "feudalization," and the Sengoku jidai, "defeudalization" and the early stages of "centralized feudalism"? Contrast this Japanese version of a feudal process with Western Zhou China's and Western Europe's feudal processes?

b. Using an ideational determinist perspective, explain how the Japanese feudal process influenced the development of the ruling class and the evolution of cities, markets and townsmen. Contrast this explanation with one from a material determinist point of view.

Having already used the word "feudal process" for ancient China, if I am to play fair, I should do the very same thing with the Japanese feudal process. That way, you can see for yourself whether these two supposedly feudal historical processes were alike enough to justify using the same labels for them.

Since I divided that feudal process up into stages for Zhou Dynasty China (pre-feudal breakdown of the earlier order, feudalization, defeudalization, centralized feudalism, and bastard feudalism), I ought to be able to use the same labels for Japan without having to cut and stretch much to make Japanese history from the 12th through the 17th century fit them. You might wish to go back to chapter 4 at this point to refresh your memory of these five stages in China.

I should also be able to demonstrate that a sufficient degree of political-military isolation occurred during the prefeudal breakdown and feudalization stages to allow the rulers of Japan to risk the devolution of their state into a feudal process. You might want to review chapter 14E on this point and remind yourselves why both Koryo Dynasty Korea and Song Dynasty China withdrew from political-military engagement with Late Heian Japan, and why this did not prevent increased *private* contacts between the three peoples in the course of which new things and new ideas (including ideas on how to organize a feudal polity) continued to be brought to Japan.

[1] 1st draft, 10/94; 3rd rev. By Edward H. Kaplan

A. Late Heian's Prefeudal Breakdown

1. The new classes and the conflict at court

The late Heian period witnessed a pre-feudal breakdown strikingly analogous to late Shang China's. Like late Shang, Late Heian Japan began to feel the untoward effects of the previous increase in the size of its territory and of the increased complexity of its rulers' relations among themselves and with those over whom they ruled. Japan had grown beyond the ability of the old (in Japan's case, the borrowed Chinese) political and social arrangements to handle. We can call these arrangements "old," since they had by then been in Japan for upwards of half a millennium. By the 11th and 12th centuries, however, they could no longer coordinate the big and complex civilization over whose creation they had presided.

The Japanese state now extended all the way up to the Kanto Plain and beyond, well into the middle reaches of Honshu. The ruling class no longer comprised just the old main *uji* aristocracy at the center, in Heian. It now included a large number of provincial military aristocrats and near-aristocrats who kept the peace and collected the *shiki* revenues which fed and clothed the court aristocrats.

During the 12th century, quarrels at court between emperors, cloistered emperors and Fujiwara regents reached the stage when swords need be unsheathed. The great lords of the center called in what they were already calling their "teeth and claws"—the provincial military near aristocrats. No longer would these warriors merely be glorified rent collectors for the great families in Heian.

These provincials had already organized themselves into hierarchies around two high prestige branch clans which had earlier budded off from the imperial clan. These were the Taira (Sino-Japanese pronunciation Heike) and the Minamoto (Genji). Since both court and provinces accepted the higher status of these clans, the courtiers found it easiest to deal with the lesser soldiers through these imperial branch clans.

Once at court, these provincials soon realized that they were at last leading the good life. Life back home in the provincial and district capitals and out on the manors seemed at best only a run-down version of the high civilization of the capital. All things considered, they did not want to go home again. Once they yielded to the temptation to intervene in politics at the center, they dared not stop doing so lest they lose all.

By fighting their masters' battles in Heian, the provincials proved, at first to themselves, and then to everyone else, that they were worthy of remaining at the center. They also demonstrated political merit, at least in military terms. Japan's aristocracy at long last began to meritize.

2. The Gempei Wars: Part I

Soon it was no longer merely a matter of the old order using these provincials as subordinate instruments. The provincials' interests had to be consulted too. They even began to fight among themselves to see which of them—the coalition led by the Taira or the one led by the Minamoto—was going to dominate the court.

The first round of the Gempei wars (the Japanese acronym for Genji and Heike, the Sino-Japanese pronunciation of Minamoto and Taira) got under way midway through the 12th century.

Taira Kiyomori (1118-81). (Papinot, p. 621.)

The Tairas, led by Taira Kiyomori, had most of their assets in men and manors in the west, within convenient distance of Heian, where the first rounds of battles were fought. This allowed the Taira to

establish closer connections with the court than could the Genji. Taira Kiyomori's father worked for the most powerful of the cloistered emperors. Kiyomori himself was rumored to be the natural son of that ruler. This gave his rise to dominance a kind of bastard aura of legitimacy.

The Minamotos' main subbranch had its headquarters way off in the northeast, at the southern edge of the Kanto Plain. At court, they were most closely connected with the Fujiwara, who were the weaker faction by the mid-12th century.

The Taira forces exploited their superior location and court alliances to decisively defeat the Minamoto during the first rounds of the Gempei conflict. Though Taira Kiyomori proved a brilliant strategist and chivalrous warrior, he nevertheless made a few mistakes, above all the mistake of misplaced generosity.

Like all tragic flaws, this misplaced generosity was the opposite side of the same coin as his chivalry, or at least that is how a near contemporary historical romance has it. After his victory and the near annihilation of the Minamotos, this chronicle tells us, Kiyomori spared the two half brothers who were the only survivors among the younger generation of the main branch of the Minamotos. When they grew up, these brothers eventually restored the Minamoto fortunes and, after Kiyomori's death, destroyed the Taira.

But this misplaced chivalry was less important in the ultimate destruction of the Taira than Kiyomori's decision to base himself in Heian. If he had shifted to some key provincial center to the west, he might have more reliably kept control over his provincial military subordinates and still kept an eye on the Heian court. Instead, the next generation of Tairas wound up being co-opted by the old order in Heian.

Also, the west, the original headquarters of Kiyomori's branch of the Taira, was less powerful strategically than either Heian or the eastern lands of the Genji. One might win Heian from the west, but not easily control the Kanto Plain from there. Hence Kiyomori's decision to keep his headquarters, at least temporarily, in the old capital left him vulnerable to the easterners. A shift of a few dozen miles to the west to the new port he was building at Kobe to attract the Chinese merchants would not have helped control the east. As it happened, events overtook the Taira before that move could occur.

After winning the first phase of the Gempei Wars, Taira Kiyomori inadvertently postponed the shift from prefeudal breakdown to feudalization. He did so by integrating the military aspect of sovereignty functionally and geographically with the old civil power.

Locating his military headquarters at Heian, complicated his relationship with the emperor and the Fujiwaras. Even though they had now become Taira puppets, they could continue to plot against the Taira, and the new puppeteer concluded he could only risk running very short strings to his puppets.

Kiyomori remained in Heian not just to keep a grip on his puppets, but also to keep watch on the east. But his warriors, the chronicles tell us, went soft in the fleshpots of the capital, and even Kiyomori became prematurely aged by the complexities of politics at the old court.

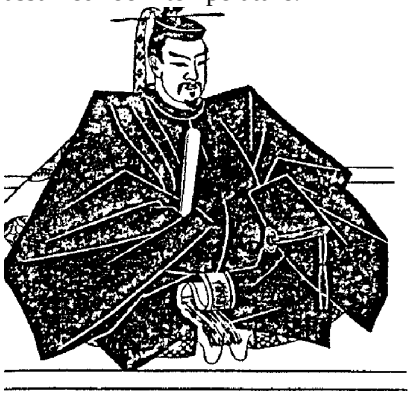
In the end, he took the path of least resistance—imitation of the Fujiwara pattern. He married his daughter to the reigning emperor, and named himself regent for his grandson, the infant Emperor Antoku, after forcing his son-in-law into retirement. Then he died, leaving his successors to suffer a worse fate than the Fujiwara regents whom they had imitated.

3. The Gempei Wars: Part II

The final round of the Gempei Wars got under way in the 1180s, soon after Kiyomori's death. The two Minamoto half brothers whom Kiyomori had spared had grown up. The elder of the two, Yoritomo, was a ruthless, cold blooded, cold hearted politician. He did not make the mistake of sparing his opponents. When he made war, he made total war.

The younger brother, Yoshitsune, has always been the more popular of the two. The medieval romances and the early modern Kabuki librettos drawn from them give him a pretty girlfriend and a Sancho Panza-like sidekick. These fictional works depict him as hanging out with interesting, humorous and sympathetic commoners. Yoshitsune is a paragon of chivalry, the opposite of the suspicious and cold blooded Yoritomo, who eventually purged and killed him.

Since the Japanese, like American Southerners (and for much the same sort of reason), have always loved a chivalrous loser more than a cold-hearted winner, this tragic fate was enough to seal Yoshitsune's popularity even before his body assumed room temperature.



Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199). (H. Paul Varley, *Samurai*, p. 70.

Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159-89).(Papinot, p.383.)

Much more important than these personal idiosyncrasies was the fact that after the Minamoto victory over the Taira, not only did Yoritomo order the men of the main branch of the Taira exterminated, but he shifted the seat of power out of Heian to the Minamotos' own headquarters in the east, Kamakura.

Kamakura lay at the southern edge of the Kanto Plain, dominating the main road leading north and east up the coast from Heian.

Modern Kamakura is a lovely, genteel little city. It attracts Japanese and even Western esthetes. It plays a role somewhat analogous to both San Francisco and Boston in America's culture. Virtually every limpwristed American or New Age intellectualoid who comes to Japan, from the Japanophile ghost-story writer Lafcadio Hearn at the turn of the century on down to Jerry Brown (the ex-Governor Moonbeam of California) in 1986-7, has put in some time in one of Kamakura's Zen monasteries.

But when Yoritomo first established Kamakura as the military capital of Japan, it was merely a strategically located but

rough-hewn frontier town with none of Heian's social graces. It was full of rough, cold-eyed men, like Yoritomo himself. These fellows knew what they had to do to win and keep power, and proceeded to do just that.

Evidence is beginning to pile up that many of the Minamoto warriors even belonged to a somewhat different ethnic group from the warriors of the Kansai and points west. The Minamoto warriors of the Kanto may have constituted a group closer in physical type to the modern Ainu than most other Japanese.

The University of Michigan physical anthropologist Loring Brace found that a number of Kamakura warriors massacred and buried in a mass grave there in 1333 at the time of the Kamakura regime's fall had long skulls shaped like modern Ainu skulls rather than the round skulls of the Kansai. They may, therefore, also have lacked epicanthic eye folds and had bushy eyebrows, like modern Ainu. Long heads also show up among the sorts of women later recruited as geishas, and among male actors specializing in warrior roles, both in the traditional kabuki theater and in the movies. The late movie star Toshiro Mifune, long headed, bushy eyebrowed and often photographed with five o'clock shadow, is a perfect example of the type.

Brace speculates that the Minamoto recruited Ainu-like Emishi as mercenaries, and that these men gradually evolved into the Kanto Plain lower aristocracy. Such men came to dominate the Japanese ruling class during the ensuing feudal process.

Needless to say, Brace's hypothesis has caused consternation among he round-headed majority in Japan, if not among such politicians as former Prime Minister Nakasone. When accused by Ainu civil rights groups of anti-Ainu racism, he claimed his long head and shaggy eyebrows suggested he was himself of Ainu ancestry.

B. Kamakura and Early to Middle Ashikaga Feudalization

1. Kamakura feudalization

Whatever their ancestry, these Kanto Plain warriors meant business, particularly the head of the Minamoto clan. Yoritomo quickly got the emperor to give him the now ancient title of shogun (in full, barbarian-of-the-east-subduing generalissimo). However, he transformed that title's meaning.

The title itself was geographically appropriate. After all, Yoritomo was ruling in the east, and perhaps with the help of eastern ex-barbarians. But the east was no longer a new frontier (though it retained for some time yet some of the characteristics of an old frontier). Thanks to its fertile flat agricultural land and the minerals in its northern hills, it was on the way to becoming the richest region of Japan.

Now, therefore, the title shogun could mean something different from what it had meant before. It no longer just meant generalissimo—in effect chief of staff of the Chinese style centrally controlled army. It now really meant the feudal sovereign, the leader who had gained full control of the military aspects of sovereignty. This leader was now determined to establish his own separate capital, near the center of his own power, surrounded by his own vassals—the other eastern provincial military aristocrats who had been part of his victorious coalition.

Partly unconsciously, the lords of Kamakura were running the logic of Chinese administrative history backwards: They took Chinese bureaucratic ranks, which had evolved out of the titles of true feudal vassals in ancient China, and redefined them back into feudal terms.

By this time, Chinese political history, including the history of Western Zhou feudalism, was becoming familiar to Japanese aristocrats through Chinese history books imported by Buddhist monasteries. The rulers of Kamakura could easily model themselves on Zhou's founders.

This self-consciously feudal coalition was no mere adjunct of the Minamoto family. Yoritomo's subordinates were true vassals, not just relatives who headed traditional *be* or *tomo,* though memories of these hereditary dependents of the ancient *uji* no doubt helped flesh out the idea of the vassal gotten from Chinese history books.

The relationship between vassal and lord had become much more political than familial. For example, the in-laws of Minamoto Yoritomo belonged to the Hojo family, and the Hojo were a branch of the Taira. But for reasons of state, they had allied themselves with the Minamotos early on in the Gempei Wars. Hojo Tokimasa even provided refuge for the two orphaned half-brothers. Yoritomo rewarded Tokimasa for this good deed by taking as wife Tokimasa's formidable daughter, Masako. In other words, politics determined family relationships rather than the reverse.

During the next generation, the Minamoto line died out, and the Hojos took defacto control over the shogunate on the basis of their rank as hereditary chief ministers of the shogun. To legitimize their usurpation, they brought in a tame (because infant) Fujiwara prince, adopted him into the Minamoto clan and put him to work as a puppet shogun. The Hojos remained the real power behind the shogunal throne. (Adoption was by then already quite common in Japanese society.)

For the better part of the next several generations, one of the current set of Hojo brothers or uncles would serve as hereditary chief minister at Kamakura. Another brother or uncle would serve as the Kamakura government's chief resident in Heian. He would watch over the Fujiwaras and the emperors to make sure that they did not cut loose from the lengthy puppet strings that stretched back along the Tokaido (East Coast Highway) to the feudal sovereigns at Kamakura.

One might easily imagine how so puppet-ridden a politics might have inspired the later *bunraku* puppet theater. In *bunraku* the puppeteers are fully visible to the audience. Their black costumes symbolize both their power and (along with the black backgrounds employed) the theatrical convention of their invisibility. All of them also wear black hoods, except for the chief puppeteer, whose head alone is bare. Several of them, acting together, openly manipulate the realistic but one-third life size puppets directly, more openly than Edgar Bergen did Charlie McCarthy. The Hojo manipulated the members of both the shogunal and imperial courts in a similarly open fashion.

So complicated a set of puppet-like political relationships could work over the long distance from Kamakura to Heian because the shogunal administrators also set up in Kamakura a robust feudal and military administration entirely parallel to but separate from the old Chinese-style bureaucracy.

This new structure extended down from Kamakura through the provinces to the districts, right down to the manorial level. Its creators did not have much of a

Chinese-style administration to replace. By the 12th century, very few Fujiwaras or other high court aristocrats were bothering to go out to the provinces to serve as provincial governors or district chiefs. They dispatched lower-ranking aristocrats to perform such duties on their behalf, or simply let the new provincial military elite take on these tasks informally.

The new Kamakura shogunal administrators regularized the role of the provincial military. They created the offices of military provincial governor (*shugo*) and manor steward (jito) at the district level.

The job of the latter was to supervise the manors, especially the many manors newly taken away from the Tairas and their friends. The *shiki* revenues from these were reassigned as feudal private property to the friends of the Minamotos.

These manor stewards had the job of making sure that the commendation revenues coming up from these manors was passed on to the shugo, who in turn passed it on to the Shogun at Kamakura. Only a bit of *shiki* revenue was allowed to filter up further to the Fujiwaras and emperors at Heian.

The *shugo* and *jito* could be trusted over the horizon from the shogun at Kamakura because they were the shogun's sworn vassals. Their feudal contracts were supposed to be put in written form, and some of these survive. Any disputes among these newly feudalized provincial magnates would be settled in the shogun's own courts. These courts were presided over by his housemen—vassals who served in the feudal capital rather than in fiefs. These housemen, mostly new and mostly from the Kanto, dominated the new feudal ruling class.

Of the prefeudal elite institutions, only the Buddhist temples and monasteries retained direct control over manors. The abbots of these Buddhist establishments in effect became great feudal lords in their own right. The Heian aristocrats had, however, to receive their revenues by way of this feudal hierarchy.

This proved to be a highly coherent, very stable system. Within a generation, it wholly replaced the decaying Equal Fields System.

Feudal manorialism differed from the Heian manors out of which it grew principally in terms of who now received the commendation revenues first and most fully. Prior to the onset of feudalization, these revenues went up to the court at Heian by ad hoc, haphazard routes. Once feudalization was instituted, the *shiki* revenues went up to Kamakura (not Heian) from titular manor holders by way of the manor stewards and provincial military governors, all of whom were sworn vassals of the shogun in Kamakura. Only at the shogun's pleasure could any revenue reach the men of the old court. The *shiki* revenues were now primarily financing a new and explicitly feudal political system.

2. The Mongol invasions and the decline of Kamakura

Two Mongol invasions, in 1274 and 1281, had two consequences: They demonstrated the power and versatility of this feudal military hierarchy, but they also served to disrupt its coherence.

By the 1270s, the Mongols were on the verge of conquering all of China. They had full control of North China and Korea. Japan was next on their list. They sent envoys to demand Japan's submission. When the Hojos decapitated these envoys and sent their heads back to China in boxes, they could anticipate that trouble would follow.

The Hojos promptly and efficiently mobilized the feudatories all the way up to northernmost Honshu, and brought feudal military levies all the way down to the expected site of the Mongol attack on the west coast of Kyushu. There, with the help of typhoons, and the limitations of 13th century naval architecture, they beat the Mongols off twice and destroyed their two fleets.

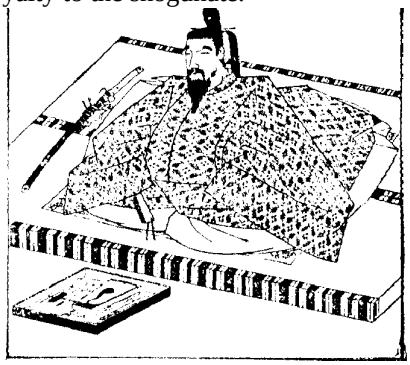
To do this once might have been a fluke. Doing it twice was a very impressive performance. The Japanese were the only people to directly and decisively defeat the Mongols in open battle at the height of their power.

Of course the Mongols were at this point quite literally at the end of their tether, both geographically and technologically. They were trying to use expensive ships the way they normally used up inexpensive cavalry ponies. Ships were not nearly so easily replaceable as horses.

By wasting these enormous fleets of conscripted Chinese and Korean commercial ships, the Mongols undermined both the Korean and Chinese economies, and so ultimately also the security of the Mongol rulers of these sedentary peoples.

The Hojo-run Kamakura Shogunate was destabilized by victory even sooner than the Mongols were by defeat. The Hojos' troubles came from the fact that both custom and explicit promises they had made dictated awarding the *shiki* revenues from the lands of defeated opponents to their vassals. Unfortunately, the Mongols had no manors in Japan that the victors could confiscate and use to reward the vassals who had rallied to defeat them.

All these unfulfilled promises to vassals came back to haunt the Hojos during the last quarter of the 13th century and the first quarter of the 14th century. Two generations of increasingly bitter lawsuits in the feudal courts undermined vassals' loyalty to the shogunate.



Emperor Go-Daigo (r.1319-38). (Papinot, p.119.)

By the 1330s, so disgruntled were many of the vassals that the Emperor Go-Daigo (Daigo II) was able to take advantage of this disaffection to launch a rebellion against the shogunate. The Hojos had not kept a very unwise promise they had made earlier to favor his junior branch of the imperial clan for the next succession to the throne.

Many of the *shugo* joined the emperor in this rebellion. The lead was taken by one of the most powerful of the *shugo*, who had his provincial headquarters to the east of Heian, Ashikaga Takauji.

3. Feudalization deepens under the Ashikaga

Takauji's coalition quickly overthrew the Hojos, and conquered their feudal capital, Kamakura. He even more quickly discovered, however, that he dared not take up residence in Kamakura himself. When he tried to do so, Go-Daigo, who did not merely want to exchange one shogunal puppeteer for another, was just powerful enough to rally the *shugo* of the center and the west against the *shugo* of the east, who were becoming vassals of

the Ashikaga.

Ashikaga Takauji (1305-58). (Papinot, p. 28.)

And so poor Takauji found he had to keep commuting back and forth to Heian so as to sit on the heads of Go-Daigo and his allies among the feudatories of the center and west. Whenever he did that, however, he tended to begin to slowly lose control over the *shugo* feudatories of the east, who considered him merely another *shugo*. Still, by moving to Heian, he could at least lose power much more slowly.

Even after the Ashikaga moved into Heian, it took Takauji's successors another couple of generations just to put down the successors of Go-Daigo. These royal rebels took refuge in the wilderness to the south of Heian surrounding the little country town of Yoshino and placed a series of emperors from the junior branch on this rural throne.

The years from the 1330s up until the 1390s witnessed one of the great scandals of legitimacy in Japanese history: Two emperors reigned simultaneously, one in Heian (the puppet of the Ashikaga shogun, now resident in Heian) and one descendant of Go-Daigo's junior branch down in Yoshino.[2]

Eventually, the Southern Court in Yoshino weakened and allowed itself to be suckered back to Heian with a false promise that the two imperial lines would alternate on the throne. Of course the Ashikaga broke this promise almost immediately. But once its partisans abandoned it, Ashikaaga made sure the Yoshino court was never reconstituted. The civilian aspects of sovereignty were again united in a single, albeit powerless, emperor.

However, the price the Ashikaga shoguns had to pay for this victory was to set up shop permanently in Heian themselves. That meant they had to yield a great deal of the military and political aspects of sovereignty to several dozen *shugo*, particularly those in the east.

In other words, feudalization was deepening. More of the sovereign power than before was now splitting up and filtering down to the level of the many *shugo* leaving the shoguns ever weaker.

Eventually, by the third quarter of the 15th century, the shoguns had lost virtually all power outside of the city of Heian itself. Then their power crumbled even inside the capital city. The *shugo* whose provinces were closest to Heian turned the shoguns into their puppets and became the most powerful politicians of the realm. Finally, these *shugo* came to town to fight it out among themselves for control over the feudal aspects of the sovereign power. Thus occurred the Onin War (the war of the Onin year-period, 1467-77).

In the course of this war, these nearby *shugo* proved to be too evenly balanced for any one of them to become dominant. They could only weaken or wipe each other out, and burned down lots of fine old Heian buildings in the process. That is why when you visit modern Kyoto you will see mostly reproductions of old buildings, but not the Heian period originals.

The Onin War left the fragments of military sovereignty in the hands of two widely diffused groups:

1) the more remote *shugo*, in the far southwest and far northeast. These had been too far away to become involved in the disastrous Onin War, and

2) the many *jito* of the Kansai itself and the mountainous provinces to its northeast. These men had stayed home minding their manors (if you will pardon the pun) during the Onin War. In the resulting power vacuum they were able to gradually usurp direct control over these manors in the absence of their *shugo* masters. The latter had gone to Heian but either not returned at all or returned shorn of power.

This latter group of survivor *jito* now became the *daimyo* 大名 direct "big name holders" of the manors in the territories they supervised. Below them, the holders of original *shiki* rights, those in whose names the manors were registered, now became the owners of fee simple (i.e. direct ownership rather than feudal tenure) property rights in these manors.

These new daimyo engrossed all the revenue bubbling up from manors as taxes rather than as *shiki*, since there were no effective power holders above them to demand shares.

Soon, the surviving *shugo* out at the periphery followed the lead of these ex-*jito* daimyo nearer the center. Because of their distance from the center they could even more easily intercept and engross all the *shiki* revenues generated by the manors of their provinces. This gave them enormous fiscal as well as military power over their provinces. At first these men were called *shugo-daimyo*, but eventually the term daimyo was applied to all such feudal rulers, regardless of their origins.

This brought the feudalization stage to its logical limit.

At or near the center of Honshu—the region between the Kansai and the Kanto—these daimyo holdings soon fragmented down to what we might characterize as small, elemental fiefs, called *han* in Japanese. At this point these were the smallest holdings one can imagine as political units, the smallest ones whose ruler could rule over non-relatives. Below this level would be mere family-owned and cultivated manors, which would not have been political units at all.

You can imagine the archetypical *han* as comprising a short, narrow river valley surrounded by hills. A stockaded castle or keep dominated the middle of the *han.* Smaller stockades stood athwart the main passes on or near its borders.

(If you find yourself running short of imagination at this point, go to your local video store and rent Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, which transmutes Macbeth's Medieval Scotland to Japan during the generation after the Onin War. The scenery is 16th century Japanese.)

C. Late Ashikaga Defeudalization and the Post-Ashikaga Beginnings of Centralized Feudalism

1. Defeudalization

The period starting a generation after the Onin War is called in Japanese the *Sengoku jidai* or "Warring States Period." The Japanese borrowed this label from

[2] The scandal to the legitimacy of the throne posed by the Yoshino Court resembles the contemporary "Babylonian Captivity" (1309-77) in Europe, when there was simultaneously one pope in Rome and another in Avignon in southern France, a situation which likewise scandalized Western Christendom.

ancient China (479-256 BC), and applied it to what turned out to be a somewhat different stage of the feudal process in Japan. China's Warring States Epoch belonged wholly to its "centralized feudal" stage. Japan's *Sengoku jidai* belonged mostly to the preceding, "defeudalization" stage of the feudal process.

Just before the beginning of this period, during the generation after the Onin War, ending around 1500, most of the fiefs had devolved to the smallest possible size. Feudalization had proceeded to its logical limits.

Having reached this logical limit to feudalization, there was no alternative remaining but to reverse the process of devolving power to ever lower levels, and to shift over to the reverse process, defeudalization, the clumping together of these smallest political units into larger ones.

The most localized of the daimyo—i.e. those with the smallest han—now found it advantageous to clump together, voluntarily or otherwise, so that they could beat daimyo who had not yet clumped together theirs' with other *han*.

Once defeudalization got under way, it fed on itself. Those clumps or collections of small elemental fiefs which were most effectively controlled from their centers enjoyed a competitive advantage over entities that were mere collections of subfiefs, ruled by independent subvassals sitting upon their own independent manors or sets of manors.

As a consequence, the most common type of powerful political unit over the next several generations came to be a large feudal principality with one big castle or keep behind a stockade at its center. All of its *bushi*—the Sino-Japanese word for warrior, a near synonym for the feudal term *samurai*, one who serves—would be placed on salary and would serve permanently at that center rather than run their own manors except when called to service.

The central authority kept control of outlying castles by making sure the samurai who garrisoned them were from other localities. The housemen administrators at the center also frequently rotated these garrisons to new locations so that they did not develop local loyalties. The central authority paid them itself out of tax revenues, rather than permitting them to own land in the neighborhood of the garrison. With some hints from Chinese books, shrewd daimyo created centralized bureaucracies to run these centralized feudalities.

2. The trend toward centralized feudalism

Once under way, there was no particular reason why this defeudalization process should not continue. If smallish localized feudal principalities could swallow small elemental fiefs, regional feudal principalities could swallow up subregional ones. Eventually one supra-regional centralized feudality could swallow up all the rest.

Even when that happened, the resulting centralized feudalism was little bigger than Korea or one of the subzones of China which formed the boundaries of some of the great centralized feudalisms of Eastern Zhou times.

During the 75 years following the Onin War, defeudalization proceeded inexorably toward this logical end point: At first a set of regional centralized feudatories crystallized out in the southwest and northeast. But these were too remote to exert power at the center. Smaller but well-placed coalitions that grew up nearer the center had greater potential to unite the whole country.

During the third quarter of the 16th century, three of these centralized regional feudal principalities appeared in succession just east of the Kansai. They were, one after the other, able to put together a centralized feudal state encompassing most and then all of Japan.

Three men organized these coalitions: Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616).

All three came from or eventually associated themselves with small but strategically secure mountain fiefs north and east of Heian. These were close enough to the capital to hope to rise to dominance quickly by occupying it.

All three were either of relatively modest aristocratic rank or (as was true of Hideyoshi) rose from the ranks of commoners entirely on the basis of demonstrated military merit.

All three were born within a decade of each other. The youngest, most prudent, and longest lived of them, Ieyasu, put together what proved to be the stable dominant coalition of the centralized feudal stage.

All three also had at least a measure of good luck. Ieyasu proved the luckiest. Their equally able neighbor and contemporary, Takeda Shingen, had the bad luck to be picked off by an enemy sniper musketeer when he was about to achieve dominance.[3]

As one aphorism of the time put it (later the subject of a comic woodblock print), Oda piled up the rice, Hideyoshi kneaded the dough, but Ieyasu got to eat the *mochi* cake.

The first of this trio to come close to putting a nationwide centralized feudal state together was Oda Nobunaga. Nubunaga unified all or almost all the provincial regional feudatories, except for those in the northeast and on Kyushu. He took Heian itself in 1568, and then moved against the independent feudal power of the militarized monks of the Mount Hiei monastery complex northeast of Heian. He occupied the monastic grounds, and burned down most of its buildings and killed many of the monks.

When the ground did not immediately open and swallow him up (though to be sure he was betrayed and killed by one of his generals a dozen years thereafter), it was taken as a sign even at the time that ideas of Earth had caught up with and perhaps begun to surpass at least the old Buddhist ideas about Heaven.

Oda encouraged such beliefs by favoring the Jesuit missionaries who had come into Japan on Portuguese ships during the preceding generation. That proved to be a dead end. The humbling of the Buddhists allowed a Buddhist-influenced Neo-Confucian vision of Heaven to take its place alongside Buddhism, and let Japan finish its transformation into a double-minded (i.e. Buddhist and Confucian) second stage high civilization.

Oda's destruction of Mount Hiei also reminds some students of European history of Henry VIII of England's confiscation of church lands at the beginning of the 16th century, or of what happened when Louis XIV in 17th century France revoked the Edict of Nantes granting toleration to French Calvinist Protestants.

In all these cases, a strong early modern (i.e. at least centralized feudal if not incipiently post-feudal) monarch asserted dominance over the church that had carried civilization through the feudal pro-

[3] See Akira Kurosawa's magnificent historical movie, *Kagemusha*, which exploits this incident to imagine what might have happened had Takeda had a thieving commoner as his double.

cess to create a double-minded second stage high civilization.

Oda piles up the rice, Hideyoshi kneads the dough, but Ieyasu gets to eat the *mochi* cake. (Papinot, p. 666.)

Oda Nobunaga. (Varley, p. 70.)

In 1575 Oda defeated the remnants of Takeda Shingen's army by using massed musketry, like Christianity, also recently borrowed from the Portuguese. Oda's armorers quickly learned how to manufacture muskets. He was the first Japanese general to understand the advantages of having musketeers fire in volleys by rows.

Oda next moved against the great middle class port city of Sakai, which is now part of the modern metropolis of Osaka. He did not destroy the plutocrats of Sakai, but he did tame them. He took Sakai in 1580. His successor, Hideyoshi, built his headquarters there in Osaka Castle.

The humbling of the townsmen of Sakai was analogous to Cardinal Richelieu during the reign of Louis XIII launching his move against the independence of the middle class of France by mounting a long and ultimately successful siege of the great middle class city of La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast. When, despite English aid, La Rochelle fell, the rest of the French middle class realized that even wealthy French townsmen had to subordinate themselves to the centralized meritocratic framework Richelieu was establishing for the French monarchy.

Attack on Oda by Akechi in 1582. (Papinot, p.467.)

The middle class of Sakai and of a number of towns allied with it, had as La Rochelle had done, earlier turned some of its richest members into a local plutocratic sector of the ruling class. Sakai also put together a number of other towns into a network of markets at least dimly resembling Northern Europe's Hanseatic League, allowing its plutocracy's power to reach up to a regional level. Now this plutocracy would achieve only a hobbled influence at the national level, and be firmly subordinated to a defeudalizing military aristocracy.

Perhaps, though, God (or Buddha) did get Oda after all for his offenses against the Buddho-Confucian Heaven. In 1582 he was ambushed at the Honno-ji Temple in Heian by an envious subordinate, Akechi Mitsuhide, while preparing to depart Heian to launch the conquest of Kyushu, the last part of Japan to remain outside his centralized feudal state.

3. The first centralized feudality

Toyotomi Hideyoshi was Oda's best general. He was originally of even lower rank than Oda, being essentially a commoner who had risen on the basis of military merit and amiability.

His grandfather had been a mere *ashigaru*—a foot soldier—outside the aristocracy altogether. Commoner infantrymen were, however, becoming the decisive weapon in *Sengoku jidai* wars, especially as use of the musket spread.

Nevertheless, Hideyoshi's rise to supreme power is a measure of how open to social mobility the Japanese ruling class was becoming during the last stages of defeudalization and during the creation of a single centralized feudalism.

Hideyoshi was both able and amiable. These traits allowed him to take over the remnants of and quickly reassemble the centralized feudal coalition of Oda Nobunaga. Once this was done, he soon completed the conquest of Kyushu. Then, early in the 1590s, he looked around him and realized he had nothing left to conquer in Japan. He decided to conquer the world.

Some historians think he went somewhat insane at this point, perhaps because of the narrowing of his cerebral arteries that probably killed him a few years later. Perhaps his feelings of social inferiority were what caused him to cross the fuzzy border from neurosis to psychosis. His surviving portraits of the 1590s show an alert but thin and harried man.

Perhaps, though, psychological explanations are unnecessary (as well as unprovable and not very nice).

Hideyoshi might well have rationally decided that since his commoner origins would have made it a scandal for him to demand the title of shogun for himself in Japan, there was no other way to maintain his authority but to conquer the rest of the world. (He had tried appealing to the aristocrats by sponsoring the tea ceremony expert Rikyu, but that was not much of a success. See the movie by that name.) He did not have to be descended from one of the old Japanese families to rule the planet.

It might also have occurred to him that this new task could also keep the *samurai*

too busy abroad to conspire against his attempts to create a stable succession within his own family back in Japan.

The logical place to start on this task of conquering the world was Korea, the part of the rest of the world closest to Japan. And so at the beginning of the 1590s Hideyoshi launched one, and then a few years later a second military expedition to the peninsula.

These campaigns did not succeed in permanently conquering Korea, but they did utterly flatten the peninsula for the better part of the next century. Defending Korea nearly bankrupted China's Ming Dynasty, and opened up Ming China to conquest by the Manchus during the first part of the 17th century. One might argue that Hideyoshi's démarche onto the continent caused at least as much mischief as did the Japanese campaigns of aggression into China of 1931-45, which opened up China to takeover by the Communists.

Hideyoshi died in 1598, with his armies still short of a decisive victory in Korea, and his infant heir vulnerable to usurpation by Tokugawa Ieyasu. We will leave for the next chapter the story of the triumph of the Tokugawa clan's version of centralized feudalism and the subsequent transition of their state into bastard feudalism.

D. The Other East Asian Feudal Process

1. At the pre-feudal breakdown stage

You have now seen a feudal process for the second time, unless you have also studied some Medieval European history. In that case, you have now become acquainted with all three of what from an ideational determinist perspective were the only three reasonably complete feudal processes to have occurred so far in human history. Is this Japanese one close enough to the earlier Chinese one to make it worthwhile to use the same label for both? I would argue that it was.

During the initial pre-feudal breakdown stage, both China's late Shang Dynasty and Japan's late Heian state expanded beyond the capabilities of the existing political and spiritual framework to cope with the enlarged territory. Both needed a new political framework. This turned out in both cases to involve a lord-vassal relationship, based on re-presentation onto Earth of a new religion or a new variant on an old religion.

In the case of China, the new religion was the purified ancestor worship of the Zhou religion of Tian. Re-presentation of this faith's structure of Heaven onto Earth allowed Zhou to create a large territorial state—the feudal empire—which was from the beginning more stable than the bloated but incoherent local state of late Shang times.

In the case of Japan, the new religious variant was at first the Amidist variant of Buddhism and several of its offshoots. Some of the monastic corporations devoted to these variants on Mahayana Buddhist faith also began to domesticate Confucian philosophy and historiography into Japanese life for the first time. Confucianism and Buddhism began to intertwine. Both of them inspired the potentially feudal new Taira rulers. Some of these new ideas allowed the subsequent Kamakura Shogunate to rule firmly over its large territory stretching from western Kyushu to well north of the Kanto Plain. Heian Japan had conquered this land, but could not keep a grip upon it.

2. At the feudalization stage

During the ensuing feudalization stage, both Western Zhou and Kamakura Japan employed the lord-vassal relationship to organize their large territories. The Chinese linked vassalage, but not exclusively so, to the main patrilineal descent group. The Japanese idea of vassalage pretty much transcended ties of family.

Because the Japanese had been reading Chinese history books for several centuries by this time, they realized that the feudal political relationship of Western Zhou times was just what they needed. They even copied much of the vocabulary of Zhou feudalism for their new institutions.

In the Japanese case, however, the spiritual underpinnings of the feudal process were somewhat different from those of Zhou China. Western Zhou was still an early civilization and so had nothing as sophisticated as Buddhism in its spiritual larder. However, in the course of the feudal process, the Zhou reinterpreted their religion into true philosophy— the early versions of Confucianism—and became a first stage high civilization.

The proprietors of Kamakura and Ashikaga Japan eventually swallowed ever larger doses of much later versions of a Confucianism that had been influenced by Buddhism in post-Han China. They used it to justify, from the perspective of Heaven, the political loyalties required by their own feudal process.

Kamakura and Ashikaga Japan also had, however, something that ancient China of Shang and Western Zhou times had lacked—Amidist Buddhism, and then Zen Buddhism. Both were sophisticated religions produced by the nearby second stage high civilization of China. Zen was influenced by Chinese soft Daoism, and so could introduce into Japan this highly sophisticated South Chinese contribution to high civilization.

The Japanese interpreted Zen in ways congruent with their bent toward independent institutionalization of religion. They also overemphasized and slightly reworked its "hard" Daoist components to fit the needs of its burgeoning feudal military aristocracy.

Once the Japanese samurai intellectuals had learned to combine this Japanified Zen with Confucian elements, they also had the beginnings of a double-minded view of the world. All that Zhou China had during its feudal process and for many centuries thereafter was something leading toward a more sophisticated but still single-minded view of the world.

In short, the feudal process moved ancient China out of the early civilized stage toward the threshold of the first stage of high civilization; but it moved medieval Japan out of the first stage of high civilization toward the threshold of the second stage of high civilization.

3. The defeudalization stage

The earlier Chinese feudal process headed fully into its defeudalization stage during late Western Zhou and the first half (Spring-Autumn Era) of Eastern Zhou. China began to defeudalize because at the edges of the feudal empire the fiefs were bumping into alien cultures whose states were just as strong as or stronger than the Zhou fiefs.

As Japan feudalized during Kamakura and early to mid Ashikaga times, it did not bump into foreigners. There were no foreigners to bump into, except some vestiges of the Emishi, who were no real competition, and probably not very foreign either. Once the Mongols departed,

neither China nor Korea had any political-military ambitions in Japan. It was for that reason that most Japanese political units could devolve all the way down to the level of the smallest minimal fiefs, something that in China never happened.

Once at the minimal fief level, during the subsequent Sengoku jidai period of late Ashikaga times, Japan began defeudalizing. This was not because of external pressure. To devolve further would have been to drop below the level of political relationships, and so to give up high civilization altogether, something that has not yet happened on this planet.

We might reiterate here that the Japanese "Warring States" epoch mostly belonged to the defeudalization stage, but China's Warring States belonged wholly to the next stage of centralized feudalism. The early modern Japanese historians who borrowed this term from the Chinese histories did so because of the multitude of battling sovereign entities present in both late Eastern Zhou China and late Ashikaga Japan. They lacked the benefit of hindsight we enjoy and which allows us to make a somewhat more precise distinction between the two eras.

4. At the centralized feudal stage and beyond

The Chinese feudal process culminated during its Warring States period in a multiplicity of fairly large centralized feudalisms. Seven great powers competed in military and economic terms with each other. Japan's feudal process culminated in just one centralized feudality comprising virtually all of the Japanese archipelago. This, one might argue, was a matter of geography. Japan was just too small for more than one centralized feudal polity to be a stable outcome of the defeudalization process.

Though the two feudal processes were not identical, to demonstrate identity is neither necessary nor possible in history. Some people even define history as the scholarly discipline wherein things never happen exactly the same way twice. I think, however, that I have demonstrated that the ancient Chinese and medieval Japanese phenomena are similar enough at the political level to justify applying the label "feudal process" to them both.

An even more persuasive case can be made for also calling what much of Europe went through from the 10th through the 15th or 16th centuries a feudal process, though I cannot do so here. The European feudal process was more similar to the Japanese than to the Western Zhou. The European and Japanese feudal processes were not only roughly contemporary with each other, they served to carry both from the first into the second stage of high civilization.

Comparison of European and Japanese feudalism is not a useless exercise. Rough similarities between Europe and Japan during the post-feudal stage of the last four centuries can most plausibly be explained as common effects of common causes—the preceding feudal process in both cases.

The European and ancient Chinese feudal processes are also congruent. When modern Europeans began to read ancient Chinese history in Chinese, they spontaneously translated the term *fengjian* 封 建as "feudal." When modern Chinese learned to read European history in English, they mentally translated "feudal" into *fengjian*.

Representatives of the Japanese and European feudal processes actually met each other. During the 16th century, centralized feudal Europeans began to visit incipiently centralized feudal Japan. By the end of that century, some Japanese had toured Europe. Both sides were by turns delighted and disconcerted by the similarities to themselves they found in the other, and they have continued, both consciously and unconsciously, to also notice post-feudal similarities ever since.

St. Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit to reach Japan, pronounced the Japanese "white men," and "the best people yet found." He recognized the similarity between the highly sectarianized Buddhism he found the Japanese practicing and the independent institutions of his own Catholic faith and the Protestant heretics who had recently broken off from Catholicism. Nevertheless, he promptly denounced the Buddhist sects as pagan and set to work, with some success, to convert the Japanese to Christianity.

The Japanese, for their part, saw both spiritual and practical profit to be gained from Christianity, and 100,000 of them converted to Catholicism during the last forty years of the 16th century.

Their great feudal lords pounced upon muskets even more promptly during the last generation of wars of unification.

E. The Feudal Process & Socio-Economic Institutions

1. Material versus Ideational Determinism

When dealing with a feudal process, particularly one in East Asia, where Marxism has exerted so much influence, we must take account of the Marxist approach to feudalism. Marxism exercises its charms especially among East Asian historians, not just on the Marxist-ruled mainland of China, but even in Japan where a majority of Japanese historians profess what might be characterized as a kind of right-wing Marxism, a non-denominational Marxism for which the label "material determinism" might still be appropriate.

Many American academics also even after the fall of the Soviet Union, still profess a kind of nondenominational Marxism. The consensus among them is still to recognize no enemies to the left. To retain their dignity, they now tend to disparage as "vulgar Marxism" the view that historical causation always comes from the material side. In fact, however, they, like all Marxists and many pragmatists, really believe in material determinism, though they may disguise this belief, even from themselves.

Marx's partner, Engels, is often disparaged by intellectuals as merely a "vulgar Marxist." Nevertheless, especially in China, Engels is still quoted with approval almost as often as is Marx himself.

Marx and Engels, you may recall, defined Feudalism or Feudal Society as the stage after Slave Society. Slave Society had created a more advanced "mode of production" for agriculture, one more productive because it used land much more intensively than Primitive Communism and somewhat more than Slave Society which focused slave labor upon land. Nurtured by the slaveholding ruling class, at least the population of slaves grew.

Land, once the relatively abundant resource, eventually became the scarcer factor relative to population. The slaveholding ruling class then shifted its base and became a land dominating—really a land stealing—ruling class. Marxist historians argue that a feudal process rests

upon this new economic substratum. A feudal society rests upon "landlordism." Vassals and subvassals must all be shoehorned into being defined as landlords, even when they lose possession of land.

Strict application of this scheme forces orthodox Marxists to deny that Western Zhou was feudal because it lacked landlords. A decentralized feudalism can be recognized during Eastern Zhou, and the age of universal state is characterized as "centralized feudalism." Coherent comparison with the Japanese and European feudalisms is muddled since nothing really comparable to China's universal state can be found in either of the other two feudalisms.

The Marxists' "mode of production" concept supposedly shows how the material level always determines the non-material aspects of life. They believe Feudalism is just one of the several basic modes of production. However, like all of the other Marxist "modes of production," Feudalism turns out to be an inadequately defined mixture of technological recipes and social organization.

The Marxist assumption is that technology determines social arrangements and that both of these are in some sense "material." And yet, monks may invent the clockwork mechanism so necessary eventually for the industrial age the better to call each other to prayer. (In fact that is precisely why the clock was invented in the West.) Social organization is itself under some circumstances, as even many Marxists will concede, the result of logically and chronologically prior political and even religious formulations.

And so, like the Irishman in Lincoln's joke who said, "I'm not supposed to drink, but if you will slip a little whiskey into my water glass unbeknownst to myself, I would be happy to sip away at it," the Marxist says, "I believe in material determinism, but if you will slip a little social and even metaphysical (i.e. non-material) determinism into my historical mixture 'unbeknownst to myself' I will accept it."

Unlike the Marxists, I would prefer to pour out the whisky of non-material (i.e. ideational) determinism in public. That way we can all notice right from the beginning that some aspects of a feudal process, particularly if we do not hold strictly to a Marxist definition, are first of all political, and even metaphysical.

These metaphysical novelties do not just have political consequences. They also cause social and economic changes.

A new feudal class evolves with far more intimate links to localities than its prefeudal predecessors. These localities are much more likely to have geographically based economic importance than do prefeudal local governments.

Because during most of the feudal process the sovereign power is fragmented, no one sovereign is strong enough to hobble the development of the economy. Hence economic life comes out of the feudal process far more robust than when the process began.

More sophisticated material determinists concede most of the above consequences of a feudal process, but do not recognize that the direction of causation is from the non-material to the material side rather than the other way around: No new vision of Heaven, no fiefs; no fiefs, no castle towns; no feudal political-military decentralization, no tempering of political control of the fief markets permitting rapid progress toward industrialization.

2. Social consequences of a feudal process

Even before the prefeudal breakdown stage, there may already be a local group destined to become the later feudal ruling class. Once redefined according to the logic of the lord-vassal relationship, this local group of leaders sometimes constitutes the first people to become significantly socially mobile.

During defeudalization, as the number of fiefs decreases, while the number of feudal aristocrats increases, some of them lose their old jobs. These men become socially mobile downward. Some of them turn out to be able to fit the new templates of merit defining the terms for service in the new and differently organized larger feudal principalities, and become socially mobile upward again.

Some people are even drawn upward from outside the aristocracy, from the ranks of the commoners—the bourgeoisie or chonin or townsmen—and even from the nameless masses below the chonin.

3. Towns and townsmen

The feudal process creates a number of towns and townsmen operating in relatively unconstrained and hence successful markets. At the level of material organization, creation of a network of towns is the first and most conspicuous result of this originally religio-political feudal process. Each vassal sets himself up in a strongpoint within the territory of his fief. A town inevitably grows up around each strongpoint if the fief lasts any significant length of time.

If this has not already occurred during the prefeudal breakdown or before, towns also crystallize out around the postal relay stations set up by the prefeudal rulers. During the feudal process, many of these towns prosper if they are located along the transportation routes linking vassals to lords.

Towns are, logically enough, places where "townsmen" live. By historical accident, the word "townsman" does not have any resonance in the English language. To evoke the proper tingling of the emotions in English, we must employ the French word "bourgeois" or "bourgeoisie" for the entire class of townsmen, or perhaps the German word "burgher." The Japanese and the Chinese respectively get the same sort of charge from the Japanese word chonin or the ancient Warring States Chinese word *shimin* 市民

All these words mean the same thing, literally person of the urb or burg or *cho* or *shi*. All of these monosyllables mean "town," or "ward" of a town, but the connotation of the words that include them implies that such people constitute a socially cohesive class. This class must be distinguished from the feudal aristocracy of lords and vassals. No less than the aristocrats or clergy, it constitutes what feudal process Europeans came to call an "estate of the realm."

In Medieval Europe, the burghers constituted the "third estate," after the feudal lords and the clergy, and on occasion met as one of three houses in an "Estates General," or proto-parliament. In East Asia, artisans and merchants were ranked after officials and farmers. Unlike Medieval Europe, these Asian "estates" never met in a parliamentary body.

Even viewed from an ideational determinist perspective, the feudal process, though originating in religion, influences politics. Political changes in turn make possible, through the creation of towns, the proliferation of this class of townsmen whose members think of themselves as townsmen, and focus their lives around urban (i.e. economic) activity and expect

to rise in social status by growing rich.

F. The New Social Hierarchy Made By Japan's Feudal Process

1. A provincial military aristocracy

Let us apply the above framework more concretely to the Japanese case.

The provincial military aristocracy and near aristocracy of Late Heian Japan, came into existence to transmit the commendation revenues from the manors to the great lords in Heian.

At that stage, however, these provincial aristocrats were only just barely recognized as being above the status of commoners by the great families of Heian who employed them. They certainly had not yet become members of a feudal ruling class. That only began to happen at the end of the Heian period, after the fall of the Taira, and the founding by the Minamoto of the Kamakura Shogunate.

The Minamotos partly re-invented and partly borrowed from ancient Chinese books the idea of the feudal lord-vassal political hierarchy, and legitimized it in mixed Confucian and Zen Buddhist terms. They thereby utterly transformed the relationship between the provincial military aristocrats and their superiors. This new relationship also drastically redefined the nature of this provincial elite in the minds of its own members. The Zen vision of Heaven made them part of the aristocracy.

A class of mere collectors of revenues was transformed into a set of vassals and their housemen tied by religious and philosophical bonds of loyalty to their feudal lords. They remained loyal to these lords even when not members of the same family as the lord, and even when sent by him away over the horizon from the lord's central domains.

The ancestors of these vassals served in the centrally controlled Heian Period armies that conquered new territories, and after demobilization settled at or just behind the advancing frontiers. Some of them obtained manor lands, or became initial name holders of land and so commendors of part of its revenues to their social superiors. Some of them eventually became "teeth and claws" enforcers who collected commendation revenues from others for relay to their superiors in the old Chinese-style political hierarchy.

These people did not become a feudal ruling class until the organizers of the Kamakura Shogunate after the 1180s made them into one by setting up a feudal hierarchy defined in military-political and ultimately religious-philosophical terms. Only when defined as vassals or as the housemen of vassals did members of this provincial military become a feudal aristocracy.

In the course of Kamakura and the first two-thirds of Ashikaga times, the self-identity of this class of feudal warriors was deepened by attachment to a Daoist-influenced form of Chinese Buddhism, called Chan Buddhism (Japanese pronunciation Zen). Like classical Chinese Daoism, Zen emphasized the moral autonomy of the individual believer.

In late ancient China this autonomous individual might be a tyrannical Sage-King (as in the "hard" passages of the Lao Zi), or he might be a mere warrior who attached himself to some feudal lord.

In Medieval Japan the Zen believer would remain loyal to his feudal lord precisely because of the voluntary nature of his feudal oath of vassalage. No external force compelled him to obedience. He *chose* to take the path of obedience to a feudal superior. Otherwise unattached to the world, he was therefore indifferent to both life and death, and so gladly offered up his life on behalf of his feudal lord.

Even in the techniques with which he wielded his weapon, such a warrior was guided by his spontaneous, intuitive understanding of the weapon's nature, albeit this spontaneity was the result of long practice in imitation of predecessors.

2. The samurai during the defeudalization stage

During the defeudalization stage, the structure of this feudal ruling class's power changed yet again. Many of its lesser members became socially mobile upward, often at the cost of earlier feudal loyalties.

We have seen several such fellows already: Oda Nobunaga, and Tokugawa Ieyasu were relatively minor daimyos from the poor mountainous area north of the main highway between Heian and the Kanto Plain. Through cleverness, good luck, and ruthlessness, they put together the first and last of the nationwide centralized feudal coalitions.

Oda and Tokugawa were by no means unique. As Japan moved into the centralized feudal stage, the top ranks of its aristocracy became alarmed at the extent to which social mobility was occurring. Recall that Oda's successor was Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Even though Hideyoshi's background was utterly non-aristocratic, his grandfather having been a mere foot-soldier, his merit as general and military politician put him atop men with far more distinguished antecedents.

Nevertheless, so unsettling to a stable social order was such social mobility felt to be, that when Hideyoshi took supreme power he himself acted to end the very social mobility that had made possible his own rise. Should such mobility continue, he and his advisers reasoned, it would likely destabilize the centralized feudal regime he was putting together.

Hideyoshi proclaimed a series of decrees generally referred to under the label "sword laws." If a military aristocrat wished to retain the two swords—the long and short sword—the wearing of both of which simultaneously was the prerogative only of the samurai, he had to give up direct economic contact with the land.

He had to move to the castle town of his lord and there live off a feudal stipend. This was a kind of salary in kind (with perhaps some cash too) derived from the tax revenues the feudal lord or daimyo collected as primary name holder of the former manors constituting his fief. The samurai was no longer permitted to directly own or cultivate land himself.

If, on the other hand, an aristocrat wanted to gain or retain direct contact with the land, especially as its owner, he had to give up the two swords. Now bereft of political significance, the manors became mere private landholdings. Thus was the great separation of the classes decreed: Landholders could no longer be aristocrats.

Like most successful legislation, these sword laws institutionalized a trend that had already long since set in anyway. Even though not universally enforced, the most successful feudal principalities during defeudalization were the most centralized ones, which already tended to treat their samurai in precisely the fashion prescribed by the sword laws.

The many less centralized fiefs did not proclaim sword laws, or if they pro-

claimed them did not strictly enforce them. Hideyoshi's centralized feudalism did not last long enough to put the sword laws into full effect. The sword laws were not systematically extended until the first few reigns of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

I also trust you have noticed that by severing the connection between feudal aristocracy and landlordism these measures also throw into doubt the link Marxists assert between landlordism and feudalism. Landlordism, or at least this Japanese defeudalization stage form of landlordism, was severed from feudal status rather than linked to its maintenance or strengthening by a feudal vassal.

Connected up with the sword laws was an outright ban on firearms put into effect not long after the beginning of Tokugawa.

This ban did not have the benign motives claimed for it by such contemporary American liberals as Noel Perrin, a pro-gun control English professor who has written on this subject.

The motives of the early modern Japanese government seem to have been more akin to those ascribed to American gun-banners nowadays by the National Rifle Association: The Tokugawa authorities wanted to disarm commoners so as to hinder their social mobility upward by making sure commoners could not employ "the great equalizer," the musket against the state.

You may recall that the musket *was* employed as a great equalizer by that most conspicuously upwardly mobile of lesser military aristocrats, Oda Nobunaga.

The musket was not a native Japanese weapon. It had only come in with the Portuguese in the 1550s. Within ten years, however, Oda's house artisans were manufacturing muskets on a mass basis. He equipped whole regiments of commoner footsoldiers with muskets, and he taught them how to fire by row in unison, so that the first row of a formation would all fire their muskets at once, then kneel down to reload, clearing the way for the second row to fire in unison, etc. This coordinated massed musketry had the effect of a machine gun, and proved very effective in several of the key battles that enabled Oda to create Japan's first centralized feudalism.

The early Tokugawa rulers who banned the gun wanted to prevent coalitions like Oda's from being put together again against themselves. The Tokugawa authorities anticipated inversely the NRA's slogan: If only samurai were armed, and if they were only armed with swords, only samurai and only Tokugawa's own samurai would rule.

3. The Japanese townsmen

As the logic of a feudal process suggests, a chonin class came into existence in Japan along with extensive town life in the course of the feudalization stage of the process. The *chonin* first appeared (or at least began to be noticed in the primary sources) during mid to late Heian times, at first in Heian city itself. During feudalization, however, they appeared in ever larger numbers in the new towns that the feudal process was creating next to the fief strong points, and in the postal towns that now became busier way-stations along the roads and paths connecting the fiefs to the center at Kamakura.

In these towns, indeed even in Kamakura itself (the first and biggest of the castle towns), the new Amidist form of Buddhism appeared in its most exaggerated form. The religious tradition that worshipped the Bodhisattva of the Pure Land of the West, Amida Bodhisattva, was given a surprisingly Lutheran-like twist by a mid-13th century preacher named Nichiren (1222-82) who worked in and around Kamakura. Nichiren eventually shifted his allegiance from Amidism to the Lotus Sutra and two Bodhisattvas from the underworld associated with it. He remained steadfast during a two-year detention in Izu, developing and sending out to his disciples a new *mandala* (symbolic chart of the components of the cosmos) and warning the authorities they were risking foreign invasion and defeat if they did not adopt his new sect. He lived just long enough to see his somewhat vague prophecy affirmed by the Mongol invasions.

By the time Nichiren was through, sects embodying his version of the old faith (thereafter called Nichiren Buddhism) had set roots among the townsmen in the form of independently instituted congregations led by a married priesthood, whose members believed in salvation through faith alone in the Lotus Sutra which would assure believers rebirth in a variant Pure Land from that of the Amidists. This strikingly resembled the Protestant Christianity of Reformation era Europe, with Nichiren playing the role of Martin Luther some 250 years before Luther's birth. Since Nichiren had chronological priority, perhaps we ought instead to call Luther the German Nichiren.

Nichiren (1222-82). (Papinot, p. 439.)

Most amazing for a Buddhist sect, Nichiren Buddhism was shot through with an often downright nasty though principled bigotry (not unlike Luther's), against other, non-Buddhist religions, but even against other Buddhist sects, and indeed against heretics within the Nichiren Buddhist movement itself. Nichiren himself was perpetually in trouble with the state as well as the church.

As a consequence of its penchant for intolerance, Nichiren Buddhism has, also like European Protestantism, displayed an amazing talent for fissioning into a multiplicity of mutually antagonistic sects, and has been doing so from the 13th century right up to the present.

One 20th century offshoot of Nichiren Buddhism, the Soka Gakkai, won enormous numbers of converts after World War II by offering a kind of metaphysical social security for newly urbanized Japanese farmers who had moved to the cities to work in factories, but who had not yet gotten used to urban life. (This is strikingly analogous to the 20th century role of Evangelical Protestantism in comforting first-generation migrants to the city from rural southern regions in the U.S.)

So like Protestantism in its forms and in the social niche it occupies is Nichiren Buddhism, that during the last two decades it has even managed to migrate into North America, and not just into California, that mother of strange new religions, but even into the Midwest. The sect's American name was initially Nichiren Shoshu of America (NSA, not to be confused with the National Security Agency). It is now known as SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA).

The NSA has enjoyed at least a modest success here because it came along at

the right time to take advantage of the last phases of the post-war urbanization of the American south and far west, which earlier encouraged the spread of evangelical Protestant sects analogous to the NSA.[4]

With so feisty a spiritual underpinning as Nichiren Buddhism, many towns, particularly those that grew up around postal stations and so never had any resident feudal lords in them to cramp their styles, linked up into trading networks. These trading networks developed political institutions to parallel their economic links, and blossomed into leagues of cities, ruled over by home-grown plutocratic ruling classes.

One of the most powerful of these was the Ikko League, which centered upon Sakai, the port city of what is now greater metropolitan Osaka. Sakai and the Ikko League play a role in Japanese history analogous to that played in Medieval Europe by Hamburg and the Hanseatic League late in Germany's feudal process.

Only very late in the creation of Japanese centralized feudalisms to replace the long-dead Chinese style political institutions for local governance did these cities finally become subordinated to the military aristocracy. Sakai was only taken over by Oda Nobunaga as he approached completion of a Japan-wide centralized feudalism. After Oda's murder, Osaka became the castle town of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and then one of the chief cities of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

G. Evolution of Manors

1. Pre-feudal and feudalization stage manors

The manors are crucial to understanding the economy of feudal process Japan. Their history also reveals clearly the inadequacy of the Marxist view that property relations determined the nature of Feudal Society. Let us, therefore, look briefly at the curious changes that the manor underwent in the course of the Japanese and the ancient Chinese and medieval European feudal processes.

Japanese manors appeared well before the feudalization stage. They were partly inspired by the ancient forms of landholding employed by the great ruling clans of Japan before high civilization arrived. Tang Dynasty China's *zhuangyuan* (*shoen* being the Sino-Japanese pronunciation of *zhuangyuan*) was their immediate model. Both countries' aristocrats used the manor as a way to subvert the periodic redistribution of land required by the Chinese-style Equal Fields system.

A *shoen* did not look like what you might think of as a "manor." The European version of the manor, whether ancient Roman or medieval European, was normally (though not always) a compact piece of land. The Japanese manor was normally composed of paddy fields, scattered about to take advantage of flat parts of the terrain and the presence of adequate water storage at slightly higher elevations. A paddy field had to be leveled, diked and periodically flooded to grow rice. The locations of the component parts of a manor were also determined by accidents of original ownership of the scattered individual strips covered by various commendation contracts.

The only thing such scattered fields shared was that they were owned by one person, their original name-holder. Beginning during Heian times, the name-holder "commended" shares of the revenue produced by this land (called *shiki* rights) up to his political superiors.

As a consequence, Japanese manors were not measured by physical area, but rather in *koku*, a roughly bushel-sized measure, to determine the amount of grain a particular field could turn out per year. A 10 *koku* field, for example, was one that, regardless of its size, could produce 10 *koku* of rice per year. Production was the important measure, since it determined how much grain a particular field's commoner actual cultivator could provide for commendation upward.

During the feudalization stage of the feudal process there evolved ever more complicated feudal political hierarchies through which the commendation process passed upward *koku* of rice, or their value equivalents in other produce.

The *jito* or manor stewards supervised this process on the local level. They forwarded the produce to the *shugo* (military provincial governors). The *shugo* in turn forwarded it to the shogun at Kamakura, who determined how much of it might be granted to the civilian sovereign and his officials at Heian. These *shiki* rights were not ownership over the land itself.

Only the great Buddhist monastic establishments, with their fief-like networks of branch temples and monasteries in town and country were able to maintain their own separate hierarchies of commendation and keep ownership of manors almost entirely within their own hands.

2. During defeudalization

During the defeudalization stage, the more remote of the *shugo* and the shrewder of the *jito* became *shugo-daimyo* and daimyo respectively—people who themselves were both the original and ultimate commendees of the revenues from the land because they had stopped forwarding commendation revenues to higher levels. As daimyo, they had become the men who disposed of all the disposable revenues from the land over which they ruled. They did not own land, they merely taxed it.

If successful, daimyo did not set up sub-manors. That is, they did not allow, at least not if they hoped to be successful over the long run, their own subordinates to become or remain the owners of manor land. They put the samurai in their entourages "on salary" rather than allowing them to directly control land. This pattern of behavior foreshadowed the sword laws of the centralized feudal stage, which more formally separated direct ownership of land from aristocratic status. That is, if someone wanted to own land, he had to give up ruling class status.

What this means is that manors, at least as originally defined, simply disappeared during the defeudalization stage of the Japanese feudal process. There were landowners, but they lacked the sort of *political* prerogatives over their land which members of the commendation hierarchy had enjoyed earlier in the feudal process. So we cannot speak of their holdings as "manors" in the normal sense of that word.

3. Comparisons with Europe and China

If you compare this situation with that in medieval Europe, you find that Europe had manors going into its feudal process, during it, and coming out of it. The man-

[4] This postwar religious revival is sometimes called by historians of American religion the "Fourth Great Awakening" of American evangelical Protestantism. I mention this bit of recent American social history here to emphasize how congruent with the West (which also went through a feudal process and its socio-economic consequences) are some of Japan's analogous institutions.

ors of post-feudal Europe were still mostly owned by one wing of the ruling class, just as were the manors of late ancient times before the feudal process started. That historical accident of European history gave Marx and Engels the idea of linking manorialism (or landlordism as they often called it at later historical stages) with feudalism. It seemed plausible to do this, since manors seemed to be present all along during the European feudal process.

The Japanese historical experience appears to contradict this material determinist explanation of the causation. Japan had peculiar sorts of manors going into its feudal process, kept them most of the way through its feudal process, but saw their disappearance and transformation into private farms owned by commoners—i.e. people outside the military ruling class—before the feudal process was over.

It is possible, though just barely, to assert that Heian period manors were causes of the post-Heian feudal process. I suggest, however, that you will find the alternative non-material chain of causation, more plausible. The Marxists must explain why the supposed material cause of the feudal process, the manorial system, took so long to get around to tripping that process off. (The same question might also be asked about ancient Roman manorialism's long delay in causing medieval European feudalism.)

The Chinese situation was even more perverse from the point of view of a Marxist interpretation, which must assume that manors must have constituted at least part of the pre-feudal "mode of production" that caused Chinese feudalism to appear in the first place. Unfortunately for the Marxists, it is all but certain that *no* manors existed in China before the Western Zhou feudal process got under way or for most of its course. Private ownership of land first appeared near the end of defeudalization. Before then, as they had since Neolithic times, villagers enjoyed usufruct rights over fields. Neither they nor their rulers "owned" land.

Something deserving the name manor did not appear in China until well after the feudal process. Manors worked by serf-like farmers tied in some legal-customary fashion to land owned by others only seem to have appeared from late Tang times on. This was long after a feudal process defined in ideational determinist terms had ended.

This is one of the reasons why Chinese Marxists prefer to start Chinese feudalism well after Western Zhou times. They have a kind of ramshackle decentralized feudalism begin during Eastern Zhou, followed by 20 centuries of centralized feudalism starting with Qin and Han. This at least allows them to tie manors to one phase of something that they can label as a Feudal Society.

It also allows them to apply the adjective "feudal" to virtually anything of which they disapprove that happened in China from the time of Confucius until the middle of the 19th century. Calling something "feudal" is far more refined and genteel than having to apply some more vulgar epithet to things of which you disapprove. Unfortunately, the Marxist Feudal Society only starts after the age of lords, vassals and feudal contracts.

The Marxists' problem is that the politics of what they call the centralized feudal age—really the whole of the history of imperial China from Qin to Qing times—is only dimly linked to the lord-vassal relationship. That is why they also have to call this the age of "bureaucratic feudalism."

You might as well talk of an age of Squared Circles so as to admit that what you are dealing with are squares, even though you prefer to think of them as peculiarly flat-sided circles. I would suggest that my locution, "bastard feudalism," captures the occasionally feudal rhetoric of China's imperial epoch without taking these verbal flourishes more seriously than they deserve.

H. Urban Markets During the Feudal Process

1. International trade and money

Some things did not happen in the course of the Japanese feudal process. One of them was that the Japanese did not monetize their economy with native coins. They turned out a few coins during Nara times, but soon gave up on them since virtually all internal exchange then was political rather than economic exchange.

They monetized very widely and deeply from the beginning of feudalization on, but with foreign coins, predominantly with Chinese coins, mostly from the Song period. Because paper money drove coins out of circulation within China, Chinese merchants exported coins as commodities to Japan during Song, Yuan and Ming times in exchange for Japanese timber and metals.

The Nara Period *Mannen tsuho* (Ten-thousand years Universal Treasure) of 760 AD. (Papinot, p. 353.)

You might jump to the conclusion that monetization with foreign coins must have been inferior, and that the markets created thereby must have been weak. You might also, though, be surprised to learn that the United States economy during the colonial and early national period thrived on foreign coins.

The "dollar" was not even originally an American coin. It was originally a Hapsburg silver coin, called the "thaler" named after a "valley" (German *thaler*) controlled by the Hapsburgs in southern Germany that produced a great deal of silver. Eventually the Hapsburgs also became the rulers of Spain. In the 16th century, Spain discovered and conquered Mexico. Silver coins made by deputies of the Hapsburgs in Mexico quite naturally came to be called "thalers" and their name was gradually mispronounced Spanish-style as something like "dollar." Much of our original currency was made up of these foreign coins during both the colonial and early national periods, into the Age of Jackson.

It may even be an advantage for a young market economy to use foreign money: Its own government would not then be able to diddle its still vulnerable men of the market by arbitrarily changing the coins' weights or face values. A fragmented, feudal government would be more likely than a centralized government to allow the markets this freedom.

The Japanese soon became active participants, even outside of Japan, in the China trade that brought them so many Chinese copper coins. This continued right up into the early 17th century, near the end of the feudal process.

So ubiquitous were Japanese in this foreign trade that China's Ming Dynasty even called native Chinese merchants engaged in illegal foreign trade "Japanese pirates." The Chinese authorities could not bring themselves to admit that most of the overseas merchants were still Chinese.

Trade with China was the chief engine for economic progress within Japan all through the feudal process. Japan was not unique. Foreign trade normally plays such a role even in non-feudal historical processes. For Japan, as it did for feudal process Europe before it, international trade provided much of the initial burst of economic energy coursing through the new feudal towns.

The first goods such places handled were often foreign, mostly Chinese, goods on their way into the hands of the abbots of the local monasteries or military aristocrats. Many of the Japanese goods these markets handled were on their way to being exported to China. Raw copper, silver and even cedar logs comprised the most valuable items from Japan.

2. Beginnings of urban markets

Japan entered into the first stage of high civilization with no permanent cities. At first, even the purely religio-political capital was a small, movable affair. By the 710, the Japanese rulers set up their first fixed capital at Nara, and finally by the late 8th century the capital moved to and remained in the nearby Heian.

Soon, provincial and district towns appeared, but these were limited in size and rudimentary in organization. Essentially, however, Chinese-style administrative cities failed to "take" below the level of the capital city. People did not voluntarily move into most such places. During feudalization many of them were abandoned.

The handful of surviving administrative cities gradually developed markets during the pre- feudal breakdown stage, and these markets blossomed during feudalization, but mainly as links between foreign traders and the new towns created or expanded by and during the feudal process.

3. Postal towns and castle towns

There were two kinds of cities that eventually did take hold in a big way:

First, there were the postal cities on the main roads or trails leading from the provincial and district towns and (later on) from the castle towns up to the religio-political capital, Heian, and later to the first feudal capital, Kamakura. These grew up around stables and official hostels of the Chinese sort set up at economically and geographically logical places as stopping places on the routes linking center to the Chinese-style provinces.

Second, there were castle towns—the towns that grew up around the *han* (fiefs) that mostly formed during the defeudalization stage.

Both of these, in contrast to the more formal Chinese administrative city layout of Nara and Heian, grew up in haphazard, unplanned fashion in response to the exigencies of market relations.

The postal towns appeared first, and they produced the most independent segments of the urban middle class. Though towns like Sakai lost their political independence even before the completion of centralized feudalism at the end of the 16th century, the manners and morés of their inhabitants have retained an aura of bourgeois independence, and even arrogance right into modern times. Just as people from Hamburg still think themselves smarter and more cultured than Berliners, for whose bureaucratic rationalism they express contempt, people from Osaka, the modern metropolis incorporating medieval Sakai, think of themselves as superior to bureaucratic-minded Tokyoites. (The latter return the favor, in spades.)

It was, however, the later appearing castle towns that provided the largest number of towns and middle class people. Because they had grown up around feudal era castles, their social orders were closely tied to the military aristocracy that ruled from these castles. In this sense the Japanese *chonin* resembled the dependent townsman class of France and non-Hanseatic League Germany more than they did the more independent Hanseatic, English and Dutch townsman class who ran their own cities, and from which our equally independent-minded American bourgeoisie is descended.

Though the majority of modern Japan's cities began as castle towns, most of them have long since lost their castles. They were burned down long before the American B-29 raids of 1944-45, most during the battles of the *Sengoku jidai*, or by accident since, or by order of the victorious Tokugawa who feared that rebels might make use of them. But the castles have left their heritage behind:

Physically, there is still often an open space toward the middle of such cities which is sometimes the only park in an otherwise densely built up Japanese industrial city.

In terms of social organization, the castle towns left behind the tradition of a separate class status for the townsmen they contained, even though these townsmen, like those of Germany and France, if not England, remained dependent on the feudal proprietors of government and their post-feudal bureaucratic or militarist or spoilsman political party successors right up to the present. EHK