VII. THE ASHIKAGA HEGEMONY AND THE RISE OF THE SHUGO DAIMYO

From the founding of the Kamakura shogunate until the end of the thirteenth century, the balance between civil and military authority had continued to give Japan a reasonably stable government. But this precarious condition was not to last beyond the fourteenth century, by which time the evidence of political and social unrest had become irrepressible. Quarrels among the court aristocracy reflected their growing irritability over dwindling returns from the civil proprietorships. Among the upper ranks of the Kamakura housemen there was open resentment over the manner in which the Hōjō monopolized the affairs of the shogunate. In the Kantō, particularly, the families of shugo status had extended their proprietary holdings and regional influence so that they controlled large combinations of landed wealth and military capacity sufficient, in fact, to stand up to the Hōjō family itself. Among the general run of military families the branching of lineages had caused a division of patrimonies into dangerously slender inheritances, and this condition had been aggravated by the strain of defense against the Mongols.

Underlying all of these symptoms of instability was the fundamental problem of the deteriorating balance between civil and military power. After a century or more of operation, the shugo-jitō system was running into trouble. Everywhere officials in the military sector of administration were demanding larger and larger shares of the income from the land, whether from purely selfish reasons or because in reality they had taken over the major share of administrative functions in their areas. Increasingly the jitō had found it difficult to work within the context of shōen law and to behave simply as guardians of the peace. And so they had pressed for the extension of their powers, first through outright acquisition of proprietary rights and then by assumption of contract privileges over entire shōen. And when the slightest disturbance occurred in the provinces, the court families of Kyoto complained that the military stewards failed to deliver rents of any kind or amount. The reluctance of the officials in the shogun’s service to share the fruits of the land with absentee court proprie-

1 Yasuda, Shōen, 181-182.
tors reflected a fundamental difference of opinion over the importance of the services being rendered by the military sector of government.

The event which broke apart the Kamakura order and provided the opportunity for the shugo and jito to make yet further inroads upon the remnants of civil authority and proprietary rights was the so-called Kemmu Restoration. The fact that the fighting which destroyed the Kamakura shogunate began as an attempt by the emperor Go-Daigo to regain imperial control of government has placed a confusing light upon this whole episode. Once the first attack was made upon the Kamakura system the entire country rose up to destroy it, but not necessarily with the aim of supporting Go-Daigo’s objectives. The occasion for the dissolution of the Kamakura shogunate was in fact anachronistic. Go-Daigo, of the Daikakuji line, ambitious to prevent the return of power to the Jimyoin line, and hopeful of recovering the imperial prerogatives of former days, began in 1331 an open attack upon the Hōjō. The result was the brief restoration of 1334 to 1336. But the disturbance which started in 1331 was not to be resolved until 1392, and in the meantime a new shogunate and a new balance of political power which inclined even more toward localism and feudal authority had been brought into existence.

The extensive warfare precipitated by Go-Daigo’s aspirations for the imperial house was fought out across the length and breadth of Japan at many varying levels of interest and motivation. Go-Daigo and his followers among the court nobles sought the return of a polity in which they would again play a dominant role, and the many centrally located temples and shrines were eager for the return of land rights taken from them by the encroachments of military officials. Ostensibly all of the warfare between 1331 and 1392 was fought in support of or against the Go-Daigo cause, but for the most part the fighting involved strictly private aspirations among the military families. Great houses such as the Ashikaga and Nitta hoped to replace the Hōjō in the hierarchy of military power; many members of the military aristocracy, displeased by their status in the gokenin system, especially after the complication of the Mongol invasions, looked for an improvement of their private positions; while at the bottom of society a general eagerness to alleviate the burden of rents and obligations was a compelling motive to join in military action.  

Go-Daigo’s effort at restoration was doomed from the start. Although at the outset the emperor was joined by military leaders such as Nitta Yoshisada and Ashikaga Takaui, there was a deep cleavage of interest between the bushi leaders and the court. For Go-Daigo was not content merely to reinstate the old organs of imperial government. He was equally intent upon bringing the new institutions of military rule under imperial control and thus to act the complete sovereign. His granting of the title of sei-tai-shōgun to his son, Prince Morinaga, his appointment of courtiers as provincial military governors, his abandonment of the private proprietorships of the imperial family so as to wipe out the difference between the imperial house and imperial government all indicated his determination to return to centralized imperial rule. To this his military supporters had no intention of acquiescing. By 1335, Ashikaga Takaui had turned against Go-Daigo and was proceeding toward the reestablishment of a new shogunate under his own control. Having captured Kyoto and driven out Go-Daigo in 1336, Takaui set up the emperor Kōmyō of the rival Jimyoin line to legitimize his position and established a new military headquarters in the imperial city. In 1338 he became shugen. But while the dream of restoration was soon forgotten, the fighting did not cease. Go-Daigo fled with his court to the hills of Yoshino, where he and his successors clung to the claim that they were the rightful sovereigns. From 1336 to 1392, therefore, two emperors contested the throne of Japan. For the country at large, the existence of two imperial causes provided the excuse for the extensive fighting referred to as the “war of the dynasties.”

The Kemmu Restoration and the wars which followed from it plunged Bizen into several periods of bitter warfare. News of Go-Daigo’s plot against the Kamakura shogunate in 1331 called forth some immediate though desultory fighting in Bizen, as a number of families seized the opportunity to attack local Hōjō partisans. Most of this action emanated from imperial shōen, such as Toyohara, in which the tradition of loyalty to Kyoto was especially strong. There were, of course, many military families not in shogunal service who were ever on the watch for ways to

retaliate against the recent inroads upon their privileges. One of the first of this kind to distinguish himself was Kojima Takanori, a man of Toyohara-no-shō, who attempted to join Go-Daigo in Kyoto in 1381. Go-Daigo's first plot was a failure, and he was sent into exile to the island of Ōki. Kojima Takanori is believed to have made a futile effort to free the emperor from the Hōjō guard which was leading him into exile, and failing to do so, returned to Bizen.8

But Go-Daigo's exile was short-lived; in 1333 he made his escape, sending out in advance of his return to the mainland a new plea for support. The response from the provinces of Kibi was immediate. In Bizen the Kojima, Ōtomi, Wada, Chima, Fuji, Nakagiri, and Ishii; in Bitchū the Niimi, Mimura, Shō, and many others joined the command of the Akamatsu of neighboring Harima province in an attack upon the Hōjō headquarters in Kyoto. By 1334 the restoration had been achieved. In Bizen only a few loyal vassals of Kamakura put up resistance, but they were easily swept aside.

Because of the short life of the restoration it is difficult to determine what changes it brought to the Kibi provinces. A number of proprietorships obviously changed hands, and some of these changes favored court families. For instance the office of military steward of Higasa-no-shō of Bizen was transferred to a court family. In Niimi-no-shō of Bitchū the proprietorship was granted to Tōji temple of Kyoto, thus reversing the course of military encroachment. But in Bizen the post of military governor remained in military hands, since Matsuda Moritomo, a former Kamakura houseman, became the first appointment after the Restoration. Before many changes could have taken effect in Bizen, however, Ashikaga Takauji had turned against Go-Daigo, and the province was plunged into a much more serious struggle of conflicting interest between those who supported or opposed the Ashikaga.

Leadership against the Ashikaga in Bizen went to Kojima Takanori. On the Ashikaga side the Hosokawa family of Sanuki prov-

8 Kojima Takanori's exploits are known only through certain passages in the Tashōki, and as a consequence a number of historians of the early Meiji period questioned whether such a person actually existed. The plausibility that Takanori was a military leader who emerged from one of the shōen of Ōki district is now fairly well established. See Fujii Shun, "Kojima Takanori no ittō taru Ōtomi, Ōtomi ryōshī ni tsuite," in Shichō, 1933, vol. 3.

4 Okayama no rekishi, 186.

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ince (to the south) and the Akamatsu of Harima province (to the east) rallied the men of Bizen and Bitchū for an attack upon Go-Daigo in Kyoto. But the initial Ashikaga attack on the imperial capital proved a failure. Ashikaga Takauji retreated to Kyushu, and his supporters in central Japan fell back to defensive positions. The Akamatsu fortified their castle of Shirahata. In eastern Bizen, a castle at Mitsuishi along the Harima border became a center of support for the Ashikaga cause. Its defender, a member of the Ashikaga family, was surnamed Ishibashi. The Matsuda of western Bizen strengthened their defenses at Tomiyama. Against these centers the Kojima, Imaki, Wada, Ōtomi, and others made up the local support for Go-Daigo and his champion Nitta Yoshisada. Briefly the restoration cause gained the ascendancy. The forces of Nitta's generals, driving into Bizen from Harima, where they had invested the Akamatsu, laid siege to Mitsuishi castle and set up powerful defenses at Fukuyama just over the Bizen border in Bitchū. But by this time the Ashikaga forces had regrouped and had resumed the attack. The army of Ashikaga Tadayoshi, Takauji's brother, defeated the loyalists at Fukuyama in what turned out to be a crucial battle. From this point the Ashikaga swept through Bizen, crushed Nitta Yoshisada in Harima, and successfully relieved the Akamatsu. Takauji entered Kyoto in triumph in 1336.8

The Ashikaga victory over Go-Daigo and the establishment of a new shogunate in 1338 did not by any means assure the same kind of stability for Bizen that the Kamakura victory had provided a century and a half earlier. The great shugo families who assumed control of the provinces frequently resorted to arms to settle their conflicting interests in Bizen and adjoining provinces. Yet from the point of view of the structure of government, the establishment of the Ashikaga hegemony brought into being a new and relatively stable balance between civil and military authority which persisted for roughly a century and a half. The wars of the restoration had destroyed all but the highest symbols of civil government. The system of provincial governments was entirely superseded. And while the shōen system continued to serve as the basis of land law and land management, local administration was now almost completely taken over by the lines

8 Okayama no rekishi, 186-190; Okayama-shi shi, 1061-1114.
of authority which culminated in the Ashikaga shogunate. For areas such as Bizen, nearly all the authority of local government was concentrated in the hands of the shogun's local deputies: military governors of a new and more powerful type and their private vassals.

The Ashikaga shogunate, while superficially resembling the Kamakura shogun's headquarters, rested upon a balance of power between military and civil authority which had shifted far toward the direction of complete military hegemony. Symbolic of the encroachment of military authority over the older imperial system was the fact that Kyoto itself had become the seat of the shogunate. No longer were there two primary centers of government physically separated by several hundred miles. Kyoto was now capital to both military and civil authority. And although vestiges of imperial central government were preserved, the shogun was now admittedly the only real authority and was able to issue orders in the imperial name.6

In external form, of course, the imperial order remained: the emperor was still looked to as sovereign, the provinces retained their identity as administrative subdivisions of the state, and shōen law served as the basis of land management. But though the court families might still claim the right of proprietorship over their far-flung shōen, they now had almost no possibility of interference in administrative affairs and were at the mercy of military land stewards for whatever income they might receive from their lands. The Ashikaga shoguns, though they coveted high court ranks and posts, no longer depended upon such appointments to provide them with the channels through which they could exercise authority. Court backing served merely to add the stamp of legitimacy to their possession of power. In contrast to the Taira, who had had to infiltrate the imperial channels of authority, or the Minamoto, who justified their position as the military and police arm of the imperial government, the Ashikaga shoguns were able to claim in their own right all but the slightest residue of sovereign rights. They constituted in themselves the main government of Japan and governed quite frankly through their own system of command, using an expanded system of shugo appointment in the provinces.

The final encroachment of military authority over civil administration was probably inevitable, but it was greatly, and unwittingly, accelerated by Go-Daigo's abortive restoration. For Go-Daigo, in his attempt to assert control over all government affairs, had sought to coalesce civil and military functions under his imperial authority whenever possible. After the restoration, civil governors were no longer appointed to the provinces, for instance, because shugo were assigned to take their places and serve both as civil and military officers. Where possible Go-Daigo made shugo appointments from among his court followers. But once the restoration failed, military shugo merely asserted themselves in the provinces with enlarged authority. In somewhat the same manner the imperial family lost its position as an independent political force in the capital. The office of the cloister had been abolished in 1321, and many of the imperial proprietorships were thrown into the central treasury by Go-Daigo, all in an effort to return to the ideal form of centralized government. Go-Daigo's failure left the imperial family weakened both politically and economically.7 Under the Ashikaga shoguns there literally ceased to be a civil aristocratic authority capable of influencing the process of government.

Yet the Ashikaga hegemony proved unstable from start to finish. Within his lifetime Takauiji never achieved a steady grip over his vassals, and he never acquired a sufficient authority other than military force upon which he could ultimately rely. His use of family ties and claims of feudal overlordship proved insufficient. Quarrels within his family and among the vassal shugo, now flushed with a sense of their own autonomy, constantly divided the Ashikaga forces. The Ashikaga family lacked sufficient wealth and military resources of its own to dominate the country without the support of its vassals. And so the shogunate from the beginning took the form of an uneasy alliance of powerful families over which the shogun frequently held but a precarious pre-eminence.

But from time to time the Ashikaga shoguns did manage to put together an alliance which held the peace for a number of decades at a time. The most notable of such periods occurred during the latter part of the rule of Yoshimitsu, the third shogun, and lasted

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6 Kuroda Toshio, "Chûsei no kokka to tennô," 313.

7 Matsumoto Shimpachirô, "Gaisetsu," in Nihon rekishi kôsa, 3, Chûsei, 1 (Tokyo, 1951), 34. Hereafter cited as Matsumoto, "Gaisetsu."
for nearly two decades after 1392. By that time the southern court had capitulated, Kyushu had been pacified, and recalcitrant shugo such as the Yamana had made their peace with the Ashikaga. Yoshimitsu, more than any Ashikaga shogun before or after, was able to act the absolute hegemon of the country. This was the high point of Ashikaga power, and it is usual in describing the Ashikaga shogunate to picture it as it appeared during these years.

Ashikaga Takauji had established his headquarters in Kyoto, at Nijō Takakura. Yoshimitsu moved the bakufu in 1378 to Muro-machi and after 1398 to the Kitayama district. As a general rule the shogun or a member of the Ashikaga family personally attended the affairs of the bakufu and made the effort to prevent the kind of usurpation of power which had followed the rise of the Hōjō at Kamakura. After 1362, the office of chief administrator (kanrei) was created and assigned to one among the three most powerful of the shogun’s vassals: the Shiba, Hatakeyama, or Hosokawa. The Ashikaga shogun, for all his later weakness, was more of a real ruler, and the kanrei never attained the influence of the office of shikken through which the Hōjō literally became all powerful in Kamakura. Taken together, the three families who held hereditary title to the post of kanrei represented a balance of real power among the shugo. The heads of these three houses formed an inner council which, when they supported the shogun, gave him the necessary backing with which to act as hegemon of the country.

Unlike the Kamakura shogun whose chief support came from control of administrative and proprietary rights within the imperial system, the material resources of the Ashikaga shogun derived chiefly from the private incomes and military forces drawn from the shogun’s own territories. The shogun’s lands included some 60 shōen throughout the country. At the time he became shogun, Ashikaga Takauji had his main holdings in Shimōsa, Mutsu, Sagami, Mikawa, Tamba, Mimasaka, and Awaji. He was also shugo of Kazusa and Mikawa. The Ashikaga house therefore

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had two prime provincial bases, one in Shimōsa and the other in Mikawa. It was from these territories that the private vassals (fudai-hikan) of the shogun were drawn. The shogun's authority was, of course, nationwide, but outside of his own territories it was exerted indirectly through vassals of the status of shugo.

Under the shogun the government of the country was placed in the hands of the shugo. By the time of Yoshimitsu most of the shugo had been carefully selected by the shogun and were considered trustworthy. The majority (14 out of 21) were branches of the Ashikaga family. While they held surnames different from the Ashikaga, they were included among the cadet lines referred to as ichimons. The remaining seven were families, such as the Shimazu, who had been subdued to vassalage but were too powerful for elimination. They were given “outside” (tōzama) status. 19

The Ashikaga shoguns from the first had difficulty in retaining the loyalty of the shugo. To guarantee loyal service, primary reliance was placed on branch members of Ashikaga lineage, families such as the Hosokawa, Shiba, Hatakeyama, Ishii, Yamana, and Imagawa, who had followed Takauji out of the Kantō. These families formed the core of the Ashikaga power structure and administration. Furthermore, in order to extend the hands of the shogunate to the east and west, members of the Ashikaga main line were set up in strategic spots as governors-general in the Kantō, in the far north, and in Kyushu. Tōzama shugo were of two rather different types. Those far distant from Kyoto, such as the Shimazu and Ōtomo, were able to retain a wide area of local independence but were largely excluded from shogunal affairs. Those who held provinces close to the capital, such as the Kyōgoku, Rokkaku, Akamatsu, Toki, and Ōuchi had given voluntary support to the Ashikaga and were considered trustworthy. They were consequently assigned positions of major responsibility within the bakufu in later years.

From the mid-fourteenth century on, the government of Japan should be thought of in its simplest terms as a central administration (bakufu) under the shogun placed over numerous local administrations under the shugo. Legitimacy was still provided by the emperor, whose delegate the shogun was. But it was largely on the basis of feudal loyalty between shogun and vassal shugo that the exercise of authority in the Ashikaga system was made effective. Within the Ashikaga system the shugo performed at both the central and local levels. Shugo habitually maintained residences in Kyoto as well as in the provinces. In Kyoto they took part in the operation of the bakufu, serving in major policy boards or functional offices, providing armed forces for the shogunal guards and armies, and attending the shogunal needs in various ways. They periodically returned to the provinces where they were charged with the administration of their territories.

Since the shogun was still legally conceived of as chief of the shugo (he himself was shugo of Kazusa and Mikawa) it is the rights and powers of the shugo which best reveal the extent to which military authority had expanded under the Ashikaga. By the end of the fourteenth century the shugo had developed into true regional rulers, having absorbed most of the governmental functions performed by officials of the earlier imperial local administration as well as many of the rights of proprietorship derived from their status in the shōen and kōro as jito. 20 In administrative terms the shugo of Ashikaga times can best be thought of as combining the powers of civil governor (kokushu), the military governor (shugo), and the military stewards (jito), although this was never made explicit. During the brief Kemmu Restoration, it will be recalled, the same individual frequently had been appointed to both civil and military governorships. 21 After the restoration it became increasingly common to omit the appointment of civil governor, leaving to the shugo the ultimate authority over local affairs. Shugo jurisdictions were referred to as kankoku or bunkoku (reflecting the concept of proprietary governorship of the late Heian period).

The increased powers of the shugo were not haphazardly acquired and in most cases found legal support in the Ashikaga code. Specifically provided for in the code were the new rights of pursuit of criminals (karita-rōzeki) and judicial inspection and settlement of land disputes (shisetsu-jungyō), both of which gave the shugo entrance into the lands of civil and military proprietors. 22 Supervision of temples and shrines and the authority to carry out land surveys was taken over from the provincial governors. Of great importance also was a fundamental change in the duties

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12 Sugiyama, "Muromachi," 58.
13 Ibid., 49.
14 Itō, Hōken, 142.
15 Nagahara, "Namboku," 24; Sekai rekishi jiten, 22.205.
exercised by the shugo within the shogunal system itself. Under the Kamakura system all gozenin throughout the country were considered direct housemen of the shogun; thus jitō came only indirectly under the authority of the shugo. By Ashikaga times the shugo stood between the shogun and the lesser provincial families. In the provinces, now, the shugo confirmed the holdings of jitō, or more likely had absorbed the jitō’s powers into their own.\(^{16}\) Military service was now recruited not in the name of the shogun but by the shugo, who thus became the heads of regional hierarchies of military men. When the shugo gained the ability to distribute lands captured in war or left vacant as a result of military action their local independence was nearing completeness, for this was a privilege which had once adhered to the shogun alone. Finally shugo received various supra-shōen powers derived from the civil governors to recruit labor and to collect special taxes (tansen) within the provinces under their jurisdiction. Thus while their powers did not specifically include all those of the former civil and military governors, they did come more and more to comprise a full complement of the powers of government at the local level. The ascendency of the Ashikaga shugo thus robbed the civil governors of their function, so that the title rapidly lost all political significance.\(^{17}\) The only provinces in which governorships remained after the fifteenth century were those of Ise, Hida, and Tosa, and these were quite special cases. On the other hand, military houses of shugo rank freely acquired the titles of provincial governors for their own social distinction.

The new circumstances to which the military aristocracy of Ashikaga times had risen was made apparent in numerous ways. Beginning with the shogun, the great families of provincial aristocratic provenance took up residence in Kyoto and began to assume the cultural guise of the old nobility, building palaces, patronizing temples, dressing and behaving in courtly fashion. In their lives the shugo sought to exemplify the new political status they had achieved. This was particularly evident in the provinces, where the shugo and their great vassals now constituted the only real aristocracy. The civil court families were too politically weak and too much removed from practical affairs to serve as anything more than a shadowy reminder of the days of imperial grandeur. No longer did scions of the Fujiwara or the imperial family descend to the provinces, there to dominate local affairs in the name of the court. Their position was now taken by the military nobility, who by their acquisition of outstanding landed wealth, political power, and noble status fused at the local level the tokens of superiority which had previously been divided between the bushi and kuge.

Such changes in the way of life of the provincial military elite were the natural outcome of the changing capacities of the military families, as against the old court and religious bodies, to profit from the landed proprietorships which still persisted in Japan. Although it was not until the end of the fifteenth century that the shōen system finally came to an end and the court aristocracy was cut off entirely from its economic support, the elimination of civil authority over the land system was more or less complete by the time the Ashikaga type shugo had entrenched themselves. The wars of the dynasties had done much to weaken the prestige and wealth of the imperial family and the court nobility. The bitter years during which the court had been divided into two camps had left the whole structure of shōen proprietorships in confusion. With the defeat of the southern court, many shōen were lost outright to their civil proprietors. The imperial house, for instance, lost most of the shōen held by the junior branch, for Go-Daigo, confident of his ability to revive the imperial system of government, had actually given back to the public domain the shōen in his possession. These were the portfolios of Hachijō, part of Shichijō, and half of Muromachiin.\(^{18}\) The failure of the Go-Daigo cause meant that all these lands passed into the hands of military proprietors. Remaining to the imperial house were only the estates of the senior branch of the family, among them the Chōkōdō and half of the Muromachiin proprietorships. Meanwhile the imperial family had lost its control over the public domains of the provinces. By Ashikaga times even the practice of granting provinces as proprietorships was abandoned or taken over by the shogun. In Bizen, for instance, while a few parcels of public domain remained on the books, these were held under the disposal rights of the shogun.

As for the other court families, during and after the war of

\(^{16}\) Yasuda, Shōen, 274.

\(^{17}\) Satō “Shugo,” 106-115.

\(^{18}\) Okuno, Kōshitsu, 39.
the dynasties, many of them were extinguished and their estates taken over by local interests. Many other courtiers, finding that the titles to their shōen were empty of economic return, moved to the country and began to live directly off their lands in a final desperate attempt to salvage a living from their inheritances. Within a generation, these families ceased to retain their identity as courtiers. Those few court families whose prestige was too great to permit their complete elimination, notably the main Fujiwara families, remained in the capital and eventually became utterly dependent upon the shogun and shugo to protect their absentee interests. By the middle of the fifteenth century such families were living mainly on the sufferance of the great provincial military lords who, out of a lingering sense of obligation, or because the courtiers could provide certain cultural and prestige benefits, continued to make token payments on shōen in the provinces under their control.¹⁹

Among the old non-military interests the religious bodies alone managed to improve their position somewhat under the Ashikaga regime. The reasons for this will become more apparent in the following chapter. In an age of sincere religious belief, of course, temples and shrines possessed a spiritual power which protected them from the most flagrant violation of their rights. Buddhist establishments such as the great monastic temples of Kōyasan, Tōdaiji, Kōfukuji, Tōji, and Saidaiji were generally able to take care of their local interests, however, through their branch temples and the extensive bureaucratic organizations staffed by their priesthood. In the struggle for power both at the capital and in the provinces, the great temples had certain advantages. They were able to recruit and maintain large bodies of armed monks for protection or coercion. Their considerable military power thus enhanced their status as objects of favor by competing court groups during the unsettled years before and after the Kemmu Restoration. The emperor Go-Daigo, for instance, gave liberally to Enryakuji and Tōji to curry their support, and as a result Osada-no-shō in Bizen passed to Tōji in 1326. The newly emergent military aristocracy also gave generously to the temples. Thus in most locations, including Bizen, the religious establishments increased their proprietary holdings at this time.

¹⁹ Itō, Hōken, 130-132.

But the ability to retain or increase the number of proprietorships was to mean increasingly little as time went on. For one thing, with the establishment of the Ashikaga shogunate the entire legal superstructure of the shōen system was largely taken out of the hands of the civil authorities. By the time of Yoshimitsu the ultimate legal authority relating to the shōen now resided entirely with the shogun and extended to the provinces through the shugo. Courtiers and temples were therefore obliged to take their shōen problems to the bakufu. It was the shogun who now determined such important matters as the division of shares of income between civil and military sectors. During the fourteenth century the shogun permitted a constant encroachment of the military interests over those of civil proprietors.

By the end of the Kamakura period many shōen had been divided between military and civil proprietary sectors. This practice had gone furthest in the peripheral provinces. In central Japan, court and religious bodies had had better success in retaining their absentee land rights. But during the north-south dynasty wars, those local families who had involved themselves in the fighting had everywhere broken with the customary restraint of shōen or jītō law, in many instances claiming the entire proceeds of shōen on the pretext of military necessity. When peace was restored, the Ashikaga shogunate saw that a return to pre-Kemmu conditions would be impossible, since the costs of maintaining military establishments had grown so drastically. As a result the shogunate legalized a practice known as hanzai, or half rights. Under it the shugo were empowered to hold back for military purposes one half of the shōen proceeds destined to the absentee proprietor. Although in 1368 the lands of the imperial family, the principal Fujiwara house, and the primary holdings of the great temples were exempted from the hanzai system, this order had little effect in limiting the further encroachments upon the non-military proprietorships.²⁰

The hanzai provision made for important changes in the overall system of land management and local administration. Although unlike the chūbu procedure, hanzai practice did not result in an immediate division of proprietary rights over the shōen, it gave the shugo authority to hold back one-half of the

²⁰ Sekai rekishi jiten, 22.305-306.
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proprietor’s share at the provincial level. Before long, therefore, this was actually translated into a division of the land base, placing still further holdings under the proprietary powers of the military families. For the civil aristocracy this was a heavy blow. For in those holdings in which the *shita*-*chûbun* division had not been carried out, the *hanzei* order provided the excuse for an immediate half-and-half division of land rights. Where such a division had already been made, it became the justification of a further reduction by half of the absentee proprietor’s income.

The other special feature of the *hanzei* practice was that it was enforced by the *shugo*, not the *jitô*. This meant that the provincial military governors automatically acquired fiscal rights in all non-military *shôen* within the area over which they were given jurisdiction, and their rights were quickly extended through the practice of contract management on behalf of absentee proprietorships. As the *jitô* had done previously, now the *shugo* began to assume the entire responsibility of rent collection for the court or temple proprietors, setting up their agents (called *daikan*) to manage the *shôen*.

Once this had happened, the authority of the civil proprietors to interfere in local affairs became minimal. The *shugo* had become the sole authorities in the provinces. And as they became increasingly independent of shogunal control, they became the real masters of the countryside. By such time, the *shugo* had converted themselves into what Japanese historians have called *shugo-daimyô*, that is, great regional hegemons with extensive territorial holdings. The provinces over which the *shugo-daimyô* held sway were referred to as their *ryô-koku* (proprietary provinces).

It is characteristic of the provinces of the Kibi area that not one of them gave rise to a local family of sufficient capacity to hold the title of *shugo* for any length of time. The Matsuda, with headquarters at Tomiyama on the lower Asahi river plain, were named *shugo* of Bizen at the time of the Kammu wars and managed to retain the title until 1364. The Takahashi and Kô families based at Matsuyama on the Takahashi River, and the Shibukawa and Hosokawa of Kamogata were successively named *shugo* of Bitchû in these early years. But none of these families was in a position to do much more than hold a title that was greater than their capacity to fight off competitors, and they were eventually superseded.

More typical of the Kibi provinces during the period of *shugo-daimyô* ascendancy in Japan was the intrusion of powerful influences from adjoining provinces. Bizen generally found itself under the control of a *shugo* whose primary base lay in the province of Harima to the east. This meant that Bizen was contested by the Akamatsu and the Yamana families. Bitchû, most often assigned to a branch of the Hosokawa house, was in reality controlled by the main Hosokawa headquarters in Shikoku. Later on, the Môri, with headquarters at Hiroshima in Aki province, became paramount in Bingo and Bitchû. Mimasaka, constantly subject to the shifting balance of outside *shugo*, fell successively to the Akamatsu or Yamana from the east, or later to the Amako from the northwest.

If the area of the four provinces did not give rise to indigenous families able to warrant the title of *shugo*, it did support numerous local families of secondary importance. Among these the most powerful achieved the status of deputy governor, or *shugodai*, under one or another of the *shugo* based in the adjoining provinces. In Bizen, in addition to the Matsuda, who fell to deputy status after 1364, there was the Urakami, foremost vassals of the Akamatsu. In Bitchû the base of the *shugodai* was generally Matsuyama castle at the site of the present city of Takahashi. Here the Akiba, Ueno, Shô, and Mimura successively dominated local affairs while acknowledging their subordination as deputies of the Hosokawa and later the Môri. In Mimasaka no single center achieved local preeminence. Families such as the Gotô of Yunôgô and the Miura of Katsuyama stood out, however, in the military struggle. (See page 264 below.)

The new Ashikaga order was imposed upon Bizen between the time of the Kammu wars and the establishment of the Akamatsu hegemony over the province some time after 1364. From that time until 1484, when the Akamatsu house lost its ability to control its deputies, the Matsuda and Urakami, Bizen existed under the governance of a typical *shugo-daimyô* house. We can imagine that such control was never so systematic nor so effective as that provided by the civil governors and shogunal officials of the Kamakura period. The times were unsettled, warfare was frequent,
and the pattern of land ownership was undergoing drastic change. Nonetheless a certain style of government developed during these years in which the shugo-daimyō played the dominant role. In local affairs Bizen was governed increasingly in a manner congenial to the military aristocracy in which authority followed the channels of vassalage and enfeoffment. But also, insofar as the shugo combined the function of civil and military governors, they exercised certain vestiges of imperial authority. Just as the shugo and jito of the twelfth century were legitimate creations of the imperial system, so were the shugo of Ashikaga times the products of imperial law. Theirs was still to this extent a transitional form of government.