

**THE SPARROW'S DREAM:
The Meiji Revolution and Local Self-Assertion in Northern Japan**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

It is an axiomatic fact of world history that the southwestern Japanese clans led the winning coalition in the Meiji Restoration war of 1868, swept away all opposition, and built the modern Japanese order. This victory is often taken as a given, but this is not enough for a comprehensive view on the Meiji Restoration. In this dissertation, I will go beyond simply accepting the southwesterners' obvious success. I will explore why the Northern Alliance, a collection of domains in northeastern Japan, failed where the southwesterners' succeeded. Following on the powerful, albeit sporadic Japanese research stretching over the last thirty-odd years, I argue that the Alliance simply presents an imperfect analogue to the Kyoto-based southwestern coalition, which formed the modern Japanese government's nucleus. The allies drew on a tradition of its own local political legitimacy and self-assertion stretching back a millennium, and engaged in "horizontal" cooperation amongst themselves, rather than relying on their ties in relation to the shogunal or imperial center. I argue that it was not conservatism, xenophobia, or technophobia that doomed the alliance. The southwestern clans contained or set aside individual agendas in pursuit of collective victory, kept up more frequent international trade thanks to major ports like Nagasaki, and benefited from sound fiscal policies, good harvests, and booming populations. Conversely, what doomed the Alliance was fragmented political agendas, irregular foreign trade through remote ports, and a combination of poor finances, deep debt, and massive depopulation due to major famines earlier in the 19th century.

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PREFACE

Many people assisted in the completion of this dissertation. As this is the case, I will only mention a few names, and trust that the rest will know that I am no less thankful for the part that they played.

Thus, thank you first to Richard Smethurst and Evelyn Rawski, my advisors and mentors during my time at Pitt. From the rigor of academic standards to the pleasures of “talking shop,” their presence has been constant and their influence powerful. Thank you also to my other committee members: David Howell, Bill Chase, Raja Adal, and Lawrence Glasco, for their insight, their participation in this process, and their ready words of advice, encouragement, and inspiration. Thank you to Hiro Good and the East Asia staff at Hillman Library for their tireless efforts in securing new and useful reference materials. Thank you to my professors at Pitt, some of whom remain as of this writing, others of whom have retired or moved on, for helping me learn the skills necessary to get to this point in my academic journey. Thank you to professors and staff at Tohoku Gakuin University and Ursinus College, where as an undergraduate I did earlier stages of research which fed into this project, and where I started to ask the seemingly unanswerable questions that led me to where I am now.

Thank you also to my friends at Pitt and beyond, including Jim Hommes, Christy Czerwien, Chris Eirkson, Tim Smith, Olivia Furukawa, Jonathan Bronson, Aura Sofia Jirau,

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Last but not least, I'd like to acknowledge my girlfriend, Gracie J. Gollinger, for her steadfast love and support in the whirlwind of my graduate education's closing act. She has been one of the most vocal advocates of my academic and non-academic writing, and has been ever beside me at this, the beginning of my life's newest chapter. Words cannot properly express what she means to me.

Now then: let's turn to the Alliance. Any and all errors in the words that follow are my own.

Dedication

To Gracie Jane:

My “stars over Mount Washington,”

and

To my great-uncle

Captain Nishan Bakkalian, M.D., Ottoman Army:

Whose memory inspired and carried me

through college and graduate school,

And who, a century ago,

Was the *first* Doctor Bakkalian

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores one facet of the Meiji Restoration. It focuses on the story of one vanquished group active during the Restoration, the Northern Alliance, which fought in Japan's Boshin War of 1868-1869. While the Meiji Restoration has been extensively studied in English and Japanese, English historiography has lagged behind in its discussions of the Boshin War. Scholarly discussions tend to focus on the period either immediately before or immediately after it. Yet to have a truly comprehensive picture of the Restoration, we cannot afford to omit the war. We must also continue to correct the trend of overemphasizing the views and future plans of the winning parties at the expense of silencing or diminishing the vanquished parties' narratives and voices. Northern Japan did not go passively into the Meiji era. Its people had their own plans for Japan, which, deserve our consideration. When we consider also that protesters in the north today continue to agitate against what they see as poor government decisions made at their expense, this reexamination becomes all the more timely.

1.1 AN ATTEMPT AT SOME DEFINITIONS

For better context, as well as a guide for the non-specialist reader, let us begin with some working definitions for the three major concepts relevant to the present work: the Meiji Restoration, the Boshin War, and the Northern Alliance.

First, and perhaps the most broad, is the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新). This was the chain of events connected to the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the nominal restoration of the Emperor to direct power, along with their associated large-scale societal, technological, and political changes. However, the Restoration's temporal parameters are difficult to define. It is sometimes confined to 1868, but has also been defined more broadly as from the arrival of Commodore Perry's American naval squadron in 1853 through to 1868, or even from 1853 to 1877, the end of the Seinan War.¹ I follow the latter definition, and define it as running from 1853 to 1877.

As opposed to this fluid and debated concept, the Boshin War is a bit more clearly and explicitly defined. It broke out on January 27, 1868, when the ex-shogun's army, marching on the imperial city of Kyoto, fired on troops from the three great southern domains of Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa.² With control of the imperial court, and with sympathetic nobles ensuring their legitimacy, the southern domains noted above could rightly call themselves the imperial army. The subsequent fighting that ran until the late spring of 1869 can be divided into three phases. The first was the war between the imperial army and the ex-shogun's army. This lasted until the surrender of Edo Castle, the shogun's political seat, in the late spring.³ The second phase was the war in the north of Japan's main island. The northern domains, antagonized by the imperial government's emissaries, formed a defensive alliance (which I call the Northern

¹ Kokushi Daijiten defines it most broadly as running from the 1850s to the 1870s. *Kokushi Daijiten*, s.v. “Meiji Ishin,” accessed November 23, 2015, <http://japanknowledge.com/lib/display/?lid=30010zz469810>

² Oishi Manabu, *Shinsengumi: Saigo no bushi no jitsuzō*. (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 2001), p. 178.

³ Hoya Tōru, *Boshin Sensō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007), p. 305.

Alliance) and fought the imperial army from the late spring through the late fall.⁴ The present work focuses on this phase of the war. The final phase pitted the imperial forces against the self-styled Ezo Republic on the northern island now called Hokkaido.⁵ The latter was comprised of survivors from the shogun's army and the Northern Alliance. Its biggest asset, in retrospect, was likely the winter which slowed the imperial advance. Fighting resumed the following year, and after a short, sharp campaign, the Ezo Republic surrendered in May 1869. This surrender also marked the end of the war.

Finally and most critically for this dissertation is the Northern Alliance. It is most commonly called *Ōuetsu Reppandōmei* (奥羽越列藩同盟), meaning Mutsu-Dewa-Echigo Interdomainal Alliance. For brevity's sake, I refer to it in the present work as either Northern Alliance or simply "the Alliance." The domains of northeastern Japan formed the Alliance in the spring of 1868, under the leadership of Sendai and Yonezawa domains, though as we will see in the pages that follow, it was Sendai domain, and the Date family, which formed the Alliance's center of gravity. It was initially part of the imperial army, but soon took up arms against the latter.⁶ The Alliance has been sometimes cast as pro-shogun, as we will see in the historiographic analysis below, but I will argue in this dissertation that its motivations had little or nothing to do with the Tokugawa family and the by-then defunct Tokugawa Shogunate. Despite some skilled combat leadership and bold outreach to foreign powers, its actions were at best disjointed, and it

⁴ Ibid, pp. 304-305.

⁵ Previously known as Ezochi, it was renamed Hokkaido in 1869. William W. Fitzhugh, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 71.

⁶ Sendai troops first went to war whilst bearing the imperial brocade banners. Yamada Norio, *Tohoku Sensō* (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1978), pp. 79-81.

was not able to effectively oppose the southwestern coalition's increasingly inexorable advance. With the surrender of its leading domains, the Alliance ceased to exist in the late fall of 1868.

1.2 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE BOSHIN WAR

Though Tohoku (northeastern Honshu) history and the Meiji restoration both have long historiographies in English, Tohoku political self-assertion has never been studied quite in the way it is in this work. As such, it is difficult to compile an exact historiography. But as the core of this dissertation is the Boshin War, what follows is a historiography of the Boshin War, especially as it relates to the Tohoku region and the Northern Alliance.

The victorious, newly ensconced imperial government ordered the compilation of the Boshin War's first history, in 1869, almost immediately after the war ended, when an imperial decree called for the compilation of national histories.⁷ These histories' role was to justify the emperor's legitimacy and create a narrative that presented the end of the old order as a necessary step on a path of progress.⁸ A Bureau of History Compilation, established in 1876, published the book *Main Points of Meiji History* the same year.⁹ The government soon disbanded it and founded a new Office of History Compilation, which functioned under the auspices of the government's

⁷ Margaret Mehl, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan: The Decline and Transformation of the Kangaku Juku* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2005), p. 28.

⁸ For more on this topic, see Margaret Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

⁹ *Meiji Shiyō*. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998).

Council of State.¹⁰ This organization remained government-affiliated until its transfer to Tokyo Imperial University's control in 1888.¹¹ It continued its work there until abolished by the American occupation's order.

The Office of History Compilation was responsible for many official histories including *A Chronicle of Great Japan* and *A Record of the Restoration*.¹² Prefectural governments also sponsored the compilation of official histories; those encompassing territories of old domains that supported the imperial government compiled histories that followed the central government's narrative. One such history was Akita's 1908 *The Circumstances of Akita Domain's Imperial Loyalty in the Boshin Year*.¹³

Couching discussions of the Meiji Restoration in the terms of loyalty or disloyalty to the emperor was important to the Boshin War's former orthodox interpretation. To quote the historians Jansen and Rozman, in the Meiji era “the sovereign became the cornerstone of every institution.”¹⁴ For example, in *Circumstances of Akita Domain's Imperial Loyalty*, the Meiji government's forces are labelled as the “imperial army.” This may seem true enough, but those who opposed the imperial army are called “traitor army” or “pro-Shogunate faction,” though Akita forces were initially Alliance troops. The assassination of Sendai domain messengers by

¹⁰ Stefan Tanaka, *New Times in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 50.

¹¹ Present-day Tokyo University.

¹² *Dainihon Hennenshi*. Ed. Konishi Ichū. (Osaka: Fujie Takuzō, 1883); *Fukkoki*. Ed. Rinji Shūshikyoku. (Tokyo: Naigai Shuppan, 1929-1931).

¹³ *Akita-han Boshin Kinnō Shimatsu*. Ed. Akita-kenchiji kanbō. (Akita: Akita Kenchiji Kanbō, 1908).

¹⁴ Marius B. Jansen & Gilbert Rozman, Overview of *Japan in Transition from Tokugawa to Meiji* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 21.

which Akita left the Alliance, is termed *chūriku*: “punitive execution.”¹⁵ This term connotes a criminal or traitor’s execution. The imperial government’s view on the Restoration remained largely unchanged until Hara Takashi’s 1917 statement that some regard as a turning point in the Restoration’s political and historiographic reinterpretation: “The Restoration was simply a conflict of political views.”¹⁶

Revisionist histories and compilations soon followed. A good example is Yamakawa Kenjirō’s 1933 work *A War History of Aizu in the Boshin Year*.¹⁷ Yamakawa, better known for his work in physics, was a survivor of the war. He removed the question of imperial loyalty from his discussion: the imperial troops were the “western army,” the ex-shogun’s army was “the former shogunate army,” Aizu troops were “the Aizu army,” and the Alliance forces were “the Alliance army.” Other such revisionist works were compilations of primary documents from the defeated domains, such as those which appear in the eighteen-volume *Collected Writings from Sendai*.¹⁸ In the wake of those initial authors and editors from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the revisionist trend in Japanese historiography has continued unabated. Particularly noteworthy is *A War History of the Boshin Campaign*, a massive two-volume work by Ōyama Kashiwa numbering well over 1,800 pages, which took over twenty years to complete. It covers

¹⁵ *Akita-han Boshin Kinnō Shimatsu*, p. 56; Nozoe Kenji, *Akita kenjin*. (Tōkyō: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), pp. 184-185. This was a delegation of military messengers under Sendai retainer Shimō Matazaemon, who were there to press Akita for reinforcements in the fighting on the southern front, and to hand over court nobles who had taken shelter in the Akita castle town.

¹⁶ Oka Yoshitake, *Five Political Leaders of Modern Japan*. Translated by Andrew Fraser and Patricia Murray. (Tōkyō: University of Tōkyō Press, 1986), pp. 86-87.

¹⁷ Yamakawa Kenjirō. *Aizu Boshin Senshi*. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1933).

¹⁸ *Sendai Sōsho*. Ed. Taira Shigemichi. (Sendai: Hōbundō Shuppan, 1971-1972), 18 vols.

almost every single military action of the war in detail, and includes maps, orders of battle, and photographs of key figures. Ōyama even discusses the rewards and punishments meted out by the central government that followed the war.¹⁹ Also of note is Haraguchi Kiyoshi's *The Boshin War*, the earliest (1963) political history on the war and its meaning, intended to address what was then a lacuna in scholarship, as previous work had been either from an imperialist or military science perspective.²⁰

Two leading mid-20th century voices that still shape the current writing on the Boshin War and the Northern Alliance are Sasaki Suguru and Ishii Takashi. Sasaki, emeritus professor at Kyoto University, wrote *The Boshin War* (1977, republished 2002).²¹ He complains that history books do not measure the Alliance by the same standard they do the Meiji government.²² He further argues that the events in of 1868 in northeastern Japan represent the most important and most costly phase of the war.²³ Ishii, a Tsuda University emeritus professor, wrote two major books on the war: *The Civil War of the Restoration* (1977) and *Theories on the Boshin War* (1984).²⁴ In *Theories*, Ishii argued that the war had three successive phases, with the Alliance's fight as part of the second.²⁵ He argued that the Alliance was a loose federation that "showed no

¹⁹ Ōyama Kashiwa, *Boshin no Eki Senshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Jiji Tsūshinsha, 1988), p. 871-877.

²⁰ Haraguchi Kiyoshi, *Boshin Sensō* (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1963), pp. 1-2.

²¹ Sasaki Suguru, *Boshin Sensō: Haisha no Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 2002), p. 222.

²² Sasaki, p. 222.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ishii Takashi, *Ishin no Nairan* (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 1977), p. 197; ___, *Boshin Sensōron*. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1984).

²⁵ Ishii, Introduction to *Boshin Sensōron*, p. 3. One of these was the nascent government that had coalesced around the emperor; the other was a revamped form of government that centered on the shogun.

objective signs of one day becoming an absolute political authority” like the Meiji government, so its fight with that government was not a fight between equal political entities.²⁶ In terms of sheer numbers, this phase of the war was more costly, but as a war between unequal entities, Ishii believed that it was secondary to the earlier phase of the war involving the shogun’s government against the Meiji government. He wrote that Sasaki Suguru’s claim that the Alliance’s fight was qualitatively and substantively the largest phase of the war is “inexcusable.”²⁷ The northern-born Sasaki, claimed Ishii, wrote with a regional bias.²⁸ However, in Sasaki’s defense, the latter is open about his regional connection driving his desire to write on the war.²⁹

The first work specifically dedicated to the Northern Alliance was Hoshi Ryōichi’s 1995 book *Northern Alliance: The Dream of an Independent Government in Eastern Japan*. It was the first book entirely dedicated to discussing the Alliance’s history, and looks in particular at the political and intellectual currents that shaped its leading figures.³⁰ An unfortunate flaw of the book is Hoshi’s concern with casting the war as a struggle of East versus West.³¹ As with Sasaki’s book, Hoshi overemphasizes the place of the Alliance in the war’s history. However, he goes further than Sasaki and compares its defeat with Japan’s defeat and “one-sided final disposition” in World War II.³²

²⁶ Ishii, *Boshin Sensōron*, p. 330.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 330.

²⁸ Ishii, Introduction to *Boshin Sensōron*, p. 3.

²⁹ Sasaki, p. 224.

³⁰ Hoshi. *Ōetsureppandōmei: Higashinihon Seifu Juritsu no Yume* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1995).

³¹ Hoshi, Introduction to *Ōetsureppandōmei*, i.

³² Hoshi, *Ōetsureppandōmei*, p. 256.

While the Restoration remains a perennial topic of interest for scholars, Kurihara Shin’ichirō’s 2007 doctoral dissertation *Research on the Formation and Extent of the Northern Alliance* represents the latest material on the Alliance available in Japanese.³³ His research focuses on the extent of the Alliance’s political organization and capabilities, as well as its members’ political and diplomatic relations with other Japanese domains and foreign powers.³⁴

English books have taken longer to overcome the effects of Meiji orthodoxy. William E. Griffis wrote *The Mikado’s Empire* in 1876. It was the earliest work on the Restoration in English. The Japanese government hired him as a teacher, so unsurprisingly he followed the Meiji historical orthodoxy mentioned above. At the point in his narrative where the Alliance would appear, he mentioned the victory of imperial forces in Edo, and added “[t]he theatre of war was then transferred to the highlands of Aidzu at Wakamatsu,” with nothing further about the Alliance itself.³⁵ In the 140 years since Griffis’ work, other English-speaking authors have moved away from Griffis’ vociferously pro-government stance. Yet the teleological view of the Restoration continues largely unabated. This is partly because the primary Japanese sources consulted by English-language authors come either from authors who were part of the Meiji government or among its allies who won the 1868 war.

³³ Kurihara Shin’ichirō, “‘Ōuetsu’ Reppandōmei no Keisei Katei ni kansuru Kenkyū.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Tohoku University, 2007.

³⁴ Kurihara, pp. 1-3.

³⁵ William Elliot Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1876), p. 315.

Even works published over the past three decades that make reference to the Alliance and the Boshin War devote a paragraph at least, and a handful of pages at most, to their coverage.³⁶ In his book on the revolutionary figure Sakamoto Ryōma, Marius Jansen called the Alliance members “Tokugawa partisans.”³⁷ In *A History of Modern Japan*, Richard Storry wrote that the members of the Alliance were “mindful of their allegiance to the heirs of Tokugawa Ieyasu.”³⁸ This interpretation has somewhat declined in recent years, but there are still recent authors who have continued using the same terms. In his 2009 work on early Ishikawa prefecture, James Baxter writes of the Alliance as “diehards of the old order.”³⁹ Finally, in his 2009 work on the Imperial Japanese Army, Edward Drea called the Alliance “pro-bakufu vassals.”⁴⁰ All of the above authors say that the Meiji government’s opponents had no way of winning, but they do not spend much time discussing why.

Despite this lingering trend, there have been authors since the 1970s who have adopted a different approach, one which is fairer to all parties and their motivations. Harold Bolitho’s 1974 book *Treasures among Men* argues that, “[t]here is little to support a claim that the domains of

³⁶ For example, Mark Ravina devotes a paragraph to the Alliance in a nine-page treatment of the war appearing in his biography of Saigō Takamori, one of the early Meiji government’s senior military figures. See: Mark Ravina, *The Last Samurai: The Life and Battles of Saigō Takamori*. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), pp. 150-159.

³⁷ Marius Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma and the Meiji Restoration*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 334.

³⁸ Richard Storry, *A History of Modern Japan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 102.

³⁹ James Baxter, *The Meiji Unification through the Lens of Ishikawa Prefecture*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 57.

⁴⁰ Edward J. Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1868-1945* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2009), p. 18.

the Alliance were working for a Tokugawa restoration.”⁴¹ In his 2002 work on the Meiji emperor, veteran scholar Donald Keene followed in the same vein, calling the Alliance “a league of antigovernment domains,” and avoiding mention of the shogun altogether.⁴² M. William Steele’s 2003 work, *Alternative Narratives in Modern Japanese History*, is another good example of this trend. Steele’s entire work is devoted to a revisionist “history from below” discussion of the Restoration.⁴³ One of his chapters is devoted to the Boshin War, where he makes ample mention of the Alliance.⁴⁴ Steele asserts his intent is to “complicate” Japanese history and make our picture of it more variegated and even exciting.⁴⁵ Hiraku Shimoda’s and Michael Wert’s books are the most recent works of note to address the war’s aftermath in the north. Shimoda’s *Lost and Found* focuses on the Aizu region and the remaking of regional identity there in the war’s aftermath.⁴⁶ Wert’s *Meiji Restoration Losers* addresses the postwar rehabilitation of the memory of unpopular figures like Oguri Tadamasa and Ii Naosuke.⁴⁷

Despite positive steps taken by these revisionist histories, evenhanded treatment of the Alliance is still rare. Even as recently as 2009, one scholar wrote that “[t]he political and military events of 1867 and 1868 brought an end to learning and instead participation in the Boshin War

⁴¹ Conrad Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1980), p. 443.

⁴² Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 154.

⁴³ M. William Steele, *Alternative Narratives in Modern Japanese History*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 88-109.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Hiraku Shimoda, *Lost and Found* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 1-8.

⁴⁷ Michael Wert, *Meiji Restoration Losers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 1-2.

as the Tohoku [domains] came together in the [Northern Alliance], a military alliance to defend the Tokugawa shogunate against the Satsuma Chōshū forces of the new government."⁴⁸ There is, clearly, room for further reevaluation. The most recent work in English that mentions the Alliance is my own unpublished 2011 M.A. thesis: *Lone Star of the North: The Northern Alliance Reconsidered*.⁴⁹ There I offered detailed historical overview of the Alliance, and argued for its closer study. That thesis favored narrative over contextualization and analysis, but I aim to address that deficiency in the present dissertation.

1.3 ORGANIZATION

The present dissertation analyzes the reasons behind the Northern Alliance's formation and its demise. To that end, this dissertation is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One considers the winning coalition, which had at its core the Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa domains. What were their backgrounds? What did they have in their favor? And what kept them together? I discuss northern geography, history, and political divisions in Chapter Two. Here I in particular aim to complicate the latter-day view of a formless, wild, and unchanging north, by focusing on its points of division and history of internal conflict. Chapter Three traces the roots of northern semi-autonomy in Japanese history. I particularly rely on Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan's work on northern Japan in the 11th century and place the Date clan, senior partner and co-organizer of the

⁴⁸ A. Hamish Ion, *American Missionaries, Christian Oyatoi, and Japan, 1859-73* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), p. 164.

⁴⁹ Nyri Bakkalian, *Lone Star of the North: The Northern Alliance Reconsidered*. M.A. Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2011.

Alliance, into that millennium-long context. Given the Date clan's view of itself, the view across much of the north, and the imperial government's view of it, the clan had a regional primacy that makes more sense when considered in that long context. **Chapter Four** addresses the long-term impact of famine and social unrest, especially the Tenpo famine, on northern Japan. This famine deeply affected the north's agricultural productivity and, consequently its finances, in years that saw major technological development and military reorganization elsewhere in the archipelago. In the case of the Date clan's Sendai domain, crop failures continued almost unabated through 1868. Depopulation was also one of the north's major disadvantages in the decades leading to 1868. I argue that this was a major factor in deciding the war's likely outcome long before the first shots were fired.

Chapter Five addresses the north's external ties, inside and outside the archipelago. Here I argue that northeastern Japan's interest in foreign learning and its interactions with foreigners needs to be taken into account when considering its state of affairs in 1868. The role of foreign military equipment purveyors to the southwestern alliance, such as Thomas B. Glover, has been well documented; the north had its own analogues to Glover. However, despite its best intentions and its attempts at foreign trade, northern ports were remote, which placed them at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis western locations like the more well-connected Nagasaki.

I discuss the move to northern unity, and the Alliance's fight and disintegration, in Chapter Six. I argue that despite the thread of northern semi-autonomy noted in Chapter Three, unity across the whole of northeastern Japan was a relatively new notion. When the Alliance formed in spring 1868, there was also a divergence of opinion on what form that unity should take. As noted in Chapter Three, the Date of Sendai domain had a self-conception as the rightful leading entity of northern Japan. Despite the fact that smaller powers often deferred to the Date,

they also jockeyed for greater personal influence in how the alliance was run. The mid-sized domains also pushed for greater influence in this new alliance. Consequently, the alliance almost immediately suffered from a fragmented political agenda. While the north gained a powerful political asset in the form of a sympathetic imperial prince who, according to some sources, declared himself a second emperor, this was not enough. Fragmented political agendas were not all. The already divided alliance was further plagued by a lack of military coordination and, in some cases, a clash between what was essentially a medieval chain of command that hoped to somehow fight a 19th century war. With this level of disunity, it was relatively simple for the southwestern forces to break through and dismember the Alliance as they did. Perhaps most crucially, no matter what the Alliance marshaled in its favor, and no matter how many victories it managed, it simply did not possess the political clout that the southwesterners possessed—control of the young emperor whom history remembers as Meiji.

In Chapter Seven, I offer a postscript to the war. At least one historian has called the Boshin War the “losers’ Meiji Restoration;” I continue beyond 1868 and consider the losers’ Meiji era. In defeat, they were able to find some of the unity and voice that they had been unable to achieve in war. In doing so, they relied on interpersonal networks centered on old domain communities, much as the victors did, even into the early decades of the 20th century. The victors’ networks have already been the subject of study; to explore the losers’ 19th to 20th century networks can help better round out our understanding of both, as each operated in the new era. These networks were also responsible for driving the early wave of revisionist scholarship noted above.

The Date clan’s crest depicts a pair of sparrows frozen in mid-flight within a circle of bamboo leaves. The Date self-conception as northern leaders and desire for northern semi-

autonomy, which might thus poetically be called the sparrows' dream, guided its actions in 1868. The Alliance could not exist without the Date clan, the region's foremost military and political power, as its center of gravity. Yet there was a disjunction between this self-perception, and the reality of a north that was far from united. When coupled with the financial difficulties stemming from famine and depopulation earlier in the 19th century, the Alliance's disintegration can reasonably be assessed as all but certain. However, the crisis year of 1868, and the northerners' subsequent response to defeat in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, merit our attention all the same. The Meiji Era and its violent birth year, which I explore in the following pages, were in the long run a positive experience for the victors of 1868, who are remembered today as the makers of modern Japan. But that positive outcome came at the expense of the vanquished northerners. Northern Japan's story in 1868 and beyond thus represents the poorly illuminated underside of the victors' far better known narrative.

2.0 THE WINNERS

The Boshin War (*Boshin Sensō* 戊辰戦争) of 1868-1869 was a civil war that affected most of the Japanese archipelago.⁵⁰ Political tensions on the war's eve were already high, having steadily grown to a higher pitch since the 1853 arrival of Commodore Perry's American fleet at Uraga, and the archipelago's subsequent coerced entry into direct, unrestricted diplomatic contact on the world stage.⁵¹ The southwestern coalition (see map in figure 1) led by Satsuma domain (*Satsuma-han* 薩摩藩), Chōshū domain (*Chōshū-han* 長州藩), and Tosa domain (*Tosa-han* 土佐藩), was the victorious party in the Boshin War. Though the last Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (徳川慶喜), peacefully resigned his post and returned political authority to the emperor late in the preceding year, he still hoped for inclusion in whatever new political

⁵⁰ Some sources also call it the Boshin Campaign (*Boshin no Eki* 戊辰の役). One example is the work of Ōyama Kashiwa, who entitles his two-volume compendium *Boshin no Eki Senshi*. There was small to large-scale fighting on all three of what were then Japan's main islands, but especially in Honshu, from Kyoto to the island's northern tip. As we will see below, fighting later spread to Ezochi, but Ezochi only became part of Japan's home islands after the war.

⁵¹ The name Boshin ("yang earth dragon") comes from the Japanese term for that year in the Chinese sexagenary cycle. 1928 and 1988 were also Boshin years. Kenneth Henshall, *Historical Dictionary of Japan to 1945* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), p. 50.

system would form around the imperial court in Kyoto.⁵² Due to the fact that he remained the wealthiest man in Japan, he also hoped for some measure of primacy. But the southern coalition outmaneuvered him, and it rendered the imperial court beyond his reach by surrounding the young emperor with sympathetic advisors, placing pro-Tokugawa court nobles under house arrest, and by surrounding the imperial palace with its own troops.⁵³ By both direct and indirect means, the southern coalition now controlled the emperor, the ultimate source of political legitimacy in Japan.

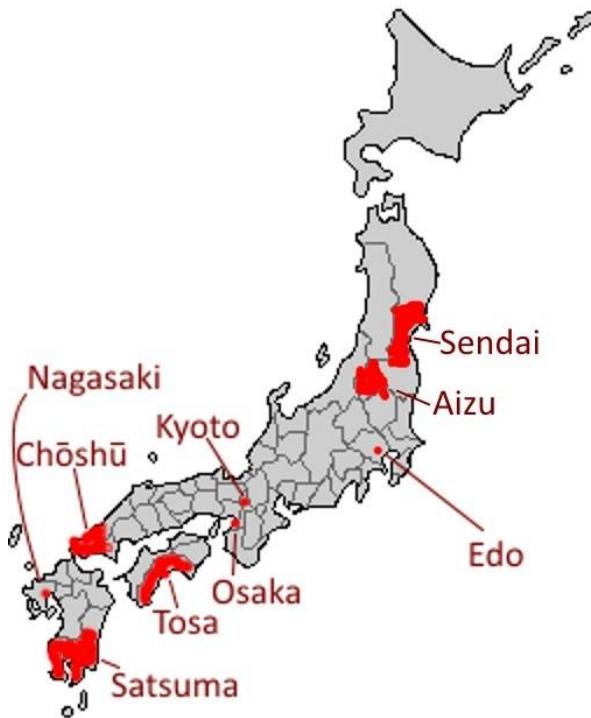


Figure 1. Map of Japan. Key cities and domains highlighted.

⁵² Yoshinobu resigned on November 19, 1867. Sasaki, *Boshin sensō*, p. 232.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 13.

With control of the emperor established, the southern coalition forced the ex-shogun to make the first counter-move.⁵⁴ Yoshinobu still represented a formidable military threat, even though he had resigned shogunal office, as his armies and those of his political allies remained largely intact. In a matter of weeks, the southern coalition undertook a campaign of terrorism in the vicinity of the shogun's capital and other armed provocations in the Kyoto area. Both were designed to force Yoshinobu and his allies into military action that they could not win without control of the emperor.⁵⁵ By making the first move, Yoshinobu and his allies rendered themselves rebels, as they would be striking against the men who surrounded the emperor, and thus by extension, the emperor himself. This would make military action by the southerners against the Tokugawa clan and its various allies a *fait accompli*. The southerners also prepared imperial banners, without the emperor's sanction, and set them aside for the impending conflict: these too would, when the time came, designate their side as the emperor's army.⁵⁶ Any hostile action against those who displayed them, even in self-defense, automatically branded one as a traitor to the throne.

⁵⁴ The southerners spoke of politically and militarily controlling the emperor as having “seized the jewel.” George M. Wilson, *Patriots and redeemers in Japan: motives in the Meiji Restoration*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 49.

⁵⁵ Fukushima Hiroshi, *Bakumatsu, Ishin Yume no ato kikō*. (Tōkyō: Kyoiku shōseki, 1990), p. 163; Ravina, *The Last Samurai*, p. 145. On the orders of senior Satsuma domain official Saigō Takamori, a group of men led by eastern-born Sagara Sōzō 相樂總三 (1839-1868) ransacked merchant warehouses, burned shogunal property, and attacked and harassed the shogunate police. Sagara's career with the southern coalition was short-lived. Having served his purpose, while southern coalition forces marched eastward on Edo in March of 1868, Sagara and his men were captured, summarily tried, and beheaded on charges of leading a “false imperial army” (*nise kangun* 偽官軍).

⁵⁶ Keene, p. 126.

Tokugawa forces advanced on Kyoto shortly after the lunar new year in 1868, with the intent of forcibly delivering the ex-shogun's new year message to the emperor warning him about his untrustworthy coterie.⁵⁷ In delivering it, the ex-shogun and the Tokugawa Army hoped also to reestablish a Tokugawa presence in the imperial capital.⁵⁸ But the southern coalition, despite being severely outnumbered, routed them at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, the Boshin War's inaugural clash.⁵⁹ The southerners had their way: the Tokugawa armies were now rebels, and it was the duty of all loyal imperial subjects to pursue and subdue the rebels. Quickly going on the offensive, the southern armies captured the Tokugawa government's western stronghold in Osaka and, a few months later, they took Edo, the shogun's capital city.⁶⁰ While an attack had been planned, last-minute negotiation secured Edo's peaceful handover to the southern coalition. It was the southern coalition that gave Edo its modern name: Tokyo, the "eastern capital," to which the Emperor and his courtiers moved, late in 1868.⁶¹ After Edo's capture, the southern coalition's successes swept the Tokugawa military's more recalcitrant remnants northward by

⁵⁷ Quoted in Conrad Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1980), pp. 416 to 417.

⁵⁸ Naramoto Tatsuya, *Nihon no kassen: Monoshiri jiten*. (Tokyo: Shufu to seikatsusha, 1994), p. 404.

⁵⁹ Ōishi, p. 178.

⁶⁰ Kojima Keizō, *Boshin sensō kara Seinan sensō e: Meiji Ishin wo Kangaeru*. (Tōkyō: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 2002), pp. 98-99. This was the result of negotiation facilitated by British diplomat Sir Harry Parkes.

⁶¹ The Emperor arrived on November 26, 1868 from Kyoto, which for a brief time was known as Seikyō 西京, "western capital," before Tokyo supplanted it entirely as Japan's sole capital city. Matsuo Masahito, *Ishin Seiken* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1995), p. 75.

land and by sea, particularly following victory against Shōgitai, a pro-Tokugawa unit that made its stance at Kan’ei-ji, a Tokugawa funerary temple in Ueno, on the east side of Edo.⁶²

By late spring, the Governorate-General for Northern Pacification (*Ōu Chinbusotokufu* 奥羽鎮撫總督府), the southern coalition’s agents who had been present in northern Japan for several months, had thoroughly alienated and antagonized previously cooperative key domains in the region. Faced with a common threat, all of the northern domains came together as the Northern Alliance under the aegis of the Date and Uesugi clans, which inaugurated a fight of its own against the southerners.⁶³ With the southerners’ forces lingering in the Edo area for a time, drawn off in engagements aimed at securing the area in the wake of their fight against the Shōgitai, the northerners had some success.⁶⁴ Despite fighting in unfamiliar terrain with an uneven supply situation, the southerners defeated both the Alliance and its supporters in

⁶² Matsuo, p. 299.

⁶³ Yamakawa, pp. 388-389; *Nihon no Kassen 8: Meiji Ishin*. Ed. Kuwata Tadachika. (Tōkyō: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1978), p. 157. Kujō Michitaka 九条道孝 (1839-1906), a court noble who had served as the Minister of the Left (*Sadaijin* 左大臣), was selected as commander-in-chief (*Sōtoku* 総督). He was accompanied by a couple hundred troops as well as a small staff that included both men of the court and men of Satsuma and Chōshū. Kujō and his troops departed Osaka on 3/24/1868 (3/1/Keiō 4), bound by ship for Sendai. Yamada, p. 44. Ironically in the light of later events, and accusations of treason, the northern domains had even engaged in military action against Tokugawa remnants while bearing the same imperial banners noted above. *Miyagi-ken shi* Vol. 2. (Sendai: Miyagi Kenshi Kankōkai, 1987), p. 705. In the late spring, Sendai men cornered the senior delegate, a Chōshū man named Sera Shūzō, in a Fukushima brothel and executed the following day. Sera had consistently bullied and insulted northern domainal officials who had thereto shown some measure of cooperation, grudging though it often was.

⁶⁴ Matsuo, p. 299.

northeastern Japan, in what was ultimately some of the war's fiercest fighting.⁶⁵ After a brief winter lull in late 1868, the coalition continued its fight in early 1869, this time against Tokugawa army and Northern Alliance survivors in Ezo (modern Hokkaido).⁶⁶ Its final victory came on the morning of 27 June 1869, when Admiral Enomoto Takeaki, acting commander of the combined Tokugawa land and naval forces and president (*sōsai* 総裁) of the self-declared Ezo Republic (*Ezo Kyōwakoku* 蝦夷共和国), surrendered Fort Goryōkaku at the Battle of Hakodate's close.⁶⁷ Subdued at last from south to north, the archipelago was now the victors' to remake. And remake it they did, as the subsequent large-scale political, technological, and social changes in Meiji era Japan well known in world history amply show.

As noted in this dissertation's introduction, English-language histories mention the war but often rush through it, in favor of earlier or later topics in Japanese history. Thankfully, Japanese-language histories do not suffer from the same deficiency. Particularly the past several decades, there has been considerable scholarly and popular attention paid to the war, its principal figures, antecedent issues, and its aftermath.⁶⁸ We are, in one historian's words, "in haste to see the [shogunate] fall."⁶⁹ But if we are to better understand the southerners' northeastern opponents, and the Meiji Restoration as a whole, we must first know who the southerners were,

⁶⁵ Sasaki, p. 230. I define the Alliance's demise by the date of Sendai domain's surrender: October 30, 1868.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 229, Kamiya Jirō, *Bakumatsu Ishin Sanbyappan Soran* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1977), p. 408, Naramoto, p. 433. Japan's new imperial government officially renamed the island on September 20, 1869.

⁶⁷ Sasaki, p. 229. Goryōkaku was one of two western-style star forts in Japan, completed in the mid-1860s as part of the Tokugawa shogunate's crash course in military modernization.

⁶⁸ I rely on many of these as sources in the present work.

⁶⁹ Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *Japanese Loyalism Reconstructed: Yamagata Daini's Ryūshi Shinron of 1759*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), p. 6.

and examine the underpinnings of their success. The present chapter attempts to do so. First, I will outline the winning coalition's core constituents, Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa domains, the leaders of which earned the lion's share of the credit and long-term benefit from the final victory in 1869. The coalition was dynamic; its leaders were aggressive and took decisive action. But the coalition was not without internal differences and even its share of dissenters. Briefly exploring the domains' backgrounds, their respective powers and the bases of their power, and their history and political relationship to the Tokugawa shogunate can help us better understand this.

Next, I examine the makings of the Sat-chō coalition's military success. First, I consider southwestern Japan's advantages, both historically and in the decades leading up to the 1868-1869 war. These victors' home region was a more temperate part of the archipelago, and it escaped the adverse effects of the 1830s-era Tenpo Famine, which ravaged more northerly lands including those under the control of the Northern Alliance's constituent domains. In short, the southwestern domains' populations were undepleted and their crop yields—and therefore, domainal finances—were in far better straits than their northern counterparts. This situation of better resource availability aided the south. Second, I note the importance of intermediaries, either "free" of emotional or hereditary attachment, or less invested in maintaining it, in forging the Satsuma-Chōshū-Tosa coalition, smoothing over its differences, and keeping it on course toward victory. Perhaps the most famous of these intermediaries was the freebooting Tosa-born *ronin* named Sakamoto Ryōma (though he did not live to see the war, much less the coalition's ultimate victory). But he was hardly alone. His and others' sustained efforts allowed the southwestern coalition to avoid the fragmentation of its aims and politics. It was fragmentation that ultimately hastened the Northern Alliance's demise. The networks and ties upon which these men relied did not spring fully formed in the shogunate's waning years: travel to and from the

major urban centers (especially Edo, where until the early 1860s, shogunal law required regular attendance by feudal lords and their retinues) had promoted inter-domainal and inter-regional ties of many sorts for decades prior. That prior history facilitated the incubation of these ties.

Finally, I note the technological advances—in particular military advances—to which the victors of 1869 had easier access. Thanks to their proximity to ports frequently visited by foreign merchants, and finances kept in good order by adept domainal administrators, the coalition led by Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa had a distinct technological edge and far more secure supply lines to the outside world during the 1868-1869 war. With a comparative abundance of resources, these southern domains were also better equipped to more easily undertake projects of industrialization, institutional and educational reform and development, overseas delegations and educational missions, and more.

These, rather than any sort of predestination, are some of the elements that made the Satsuma-Chōshū-Tosa-led army's victory over its northern rivals possible. They are necessary not only to better understand the Meiji order's origins, which were, after all, rooted in this coalition but also to use in comparison when analyzing the Northern Alliance's own dynamics and ultimate failure, later in this work.

2.1 CORE COMPOSITION

The winning coalition in the 1868-1869 war, which formed the nucleus of both the nascent modern Japanese state and military, had many constituents. By the war's end, almost all of Japan's domains had either joined that coalition or otherwise submitted to it. But there were three key domains that contributed most strongly to its victorious military actions of 1868-1869.

Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa, the three major domains of southwestern Japan. The following sections offer a brief profiles of each of them in order to better contextualize and add depth to subsequent discussion in the present work.

Satsuma domain (*Satsuma-han* 薩摩藩), also known as Kagoshima domain (*Kagoshima-han* 鹿児島藩), was the coalition's largest fiefdom at over 700,000 *koku* in official size.⁷⁰ It covered a broad swath of territory in two and a half provinces of southern Kyushu, which made it the southernmost domain in the Japanese archipelago. Its daimyo family, the Shimazu, also held suzerainty over the Ryukyuan Kingdom, which the Shimazu armies had conquered in the 17th century.⁷¹ Like some of the northern domains considered in this study, the Shimazu clan was of *tozama* type. It had deep roots in its home region that stretched back to at least the Kamakura period (1185-1333), when it had been a Kamakura shogunate retainer family called Koremune.⁷²

⁷⁰ A *koku* is generally defined as the amount of rice needed to feed an adult for a year. Japanese domains of the Edo period measured their agricultural productivity in *koku* (either in actual rice productivity or in other productivity converted to its equivalent *koku* amount). By one reckoning, Satsuma's precise size was 770,800 *koku*. Ogawa Kyōichi, *Edo Bakufu Zen Daimyoke Jiten* Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1992), pp. 804-805. This income level put it below the Maeda clan's 1,000,000 *koku* Kaga domain, and above that of the Date of Sendai, whose domain was approximately 625,000 *koku*. Kaga, Satsuma, and Sendai were, in turn, the top three landholdings in the archipelago after the Tokugawa shogun's own approximately 8 million *koku* of personal house land (*tenryō* 天領) in a series of parcels scattered across the entire archipelago.

⁷¹ Tomiyama Kazuyuki and Takara Kurayoshi, *Ryūkyū, Okinawa to Kaijō no Michi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2005), 82-84.

⁷² Miki Yasushi, *Satsuma to Izumi Kaidō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), p. 54. Staying in the same location, whether undisturbed or with only expansions of territory, was extremely rare for an Edo period domain. It was the case for major *tozama* domains but few others. The overwhelming norm was relocation, sometimes several times

In the Edo period, tozama status kept the Shimazu out of direct involvement in shogunal politics, though, like its northern tozama counterparts (particularly the Date of Sendai), it exerted considerable indirect influence, especially through marriage alliances with the shogunal house and other powerful daimyo families.⁷³ Satsuma had indirect access to Chinese and world markets through its vassal Ryukyuan Kingdom. It also controlled the Amami islands, where through an often brutal system that kept the islands' inhabitants (particularly on Amami Ōshima) impoverished and effectively enslaved, it derived major profit from sugarcane harvesting and cultivation.⁷⁴

Due to its sheer size, Satsuma domain samurai were not (and perhaps could not be) concentrated in the Kagoshima castle town. The warrior population was scattered across the domain's length and breadth in smaller subsidiary castles and strategic locations, giving it much

over the tenure of a single daimyo. For more detail on daimyo relocations, see Shiramine Jun, *Edo Daimyō no Ohikkoshi: Ijō Ukwetashi no Saho* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2010).

⁷³ On *tozama* (and *shinpan*) exclusion from direct involvement from shogunate politics, see Marius Jansen, "The Ruling Elite," pp. 68-90 of *Japan in Transition*, ed. Marius Jansen and Gilbert Rozman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 73. There were, however, some notable exceptions to this rule, as in Matsumae Takahiro (松前崇広) of Matsumae domain, who was briefly a senior councilor in the early 1860s and involved in the Bakufu-Court political maneuvering during the leadup to the Second Chōshū Expedition. See Marius B. Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma and the Meiji Restoration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 212. One particularly notable example of a marriage alliance involving Satsuma was that of Shimazu Katsuko, the future Atsuhide (also known by her tonsural name Tenshō-in), who was married to Tokugawa Iesada, the 13th shogun. Hata Hisako, *Bakumatsu no Ōoku: Tenshō-in to Satsuma-han* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007), p. 207.

⁷⁴ Tomiyama, p. 87. For more on Amami-Ōshima, see Ōe Shūzō, *Meiji Ishin no Kagi wa Amami no Satō ni Ari* (Tokyo: ASCII Media Works, 2010). Ōe believes that the Amami sugar trade was critical to the *entire* Meiji Restoration, even goes so far as to literally entitle his book "The Key of the Meiji Restoration is in Amami's Sugar."

greater proximity to the land and the non-warrior population than the retainers of most other domains.⁷⁵ Satsuma also had an unusually high concentration of samurai resident within its boundaries.⁷⁶ This was a legacy of the Shimazu clan's peak of military power in the 16th century, when thanks to a powerful northward drive against its local rivals, it briefly controlled almost the entirety of Kyushu.⁷⁷ This did not last long, as forces under the regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉), responding to the desperate pleas of Shimazu's much-harried and embattled adversaries, invaded Kyushu in 1587. By the end of their campaign, the Toyotomi armies drove the Shimazu back to their home territory in Satsuma Province. While the Shimazu were required to surrender most of Kyushu under the terms of the subsequent peace arrangement, Hideyoshi was generous and allowed them to keep slightly more than their original holdings. This maintained Shimazu control over the original provinces of Satsuma and Ōsumi, as well as the

⁷⁵ Interestingly, Sendai domain was similar to Satsuma in this regard. Its warrior population had the same sort of long history that Satsuma's did, and who also resided in castles and fortresses of various sizes scattered around the domain. See *Sendaijō to Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai*, ed. Kobayashi Seiji (Tokyo: Meichō Shuppan, 1982), for a discussion of Sendai domain's system of fortifications and the basis on which its warriors lived outside the castle town and performed daimyo-like alternate attendance on their lord in his castle town. In the category of sub-domains, Satsuma also had Sadowara domain (*Sadowara-han* 佐土原藩), a subsidiary ruled by a cadet branch of the Shimazu. Like Sendai's subsidiary domains, its ruler was both independent daimyo and also had political (and in theory, military) duties to the “main” house. In my opinion, Satsuma and Sendai's list of similarities makes their later political and military hostility all the more ironic.

⁷⁶ With the samurai, foot soldier, and Ryukyuan samurai-equivalent population taken together, this population was, by one late Edo period reckoning, 969,511 in total. Though this was counting families rather than people, Satsuma had 43,119 samurai, 107,738 foot soldier, and 10,158 Ryukyuan samurai-equivalent families. Ogawa, p. 805.

⁷⁷ Mary E. Berry, *Hideyoshi*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 87-89.

southern portion of Hyūga province.⁷⁸ Interestingly, rather than lay off retainers as other defeated and diminished *tozama* clans in the same era did when their territories were reduced by higher authorities, such as Hideyoshi's administration or the subsequent Tokugawa shogunate, the Shimazu kept them.⁷⁹ This rare case of a highly concentrated warrior population gave the domain a large and at least nominally trained population base from which to draw in the war that eventually swept the archipelago.

Chōshū domain, also known as Hagi domain (*Hagi-han* 萩藩), was the other side of the well-known "Sat-chō" moniker, and anchored the lands on the western tip of Honshu.⁸⁰ The Mōri clan was its ruling family. Originally from nearby Aki Province and with a history in the area almost as long as the Shimazu, the Mōri had the misfortune of siding with the losing party in the fighting that all but secured Tokugawa Ieyasu's path to the Shogunate in 1600.⁸¹ The Tokugawa administration drastically reduced the Mōri family's holdings, from ten provinces spanning

⁷⁸ Delmer M. Brown, "The Impact of Firearms in Japanese Warfare, 1543-1598," pp. 236-253 of *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (May 1948), p. 239.

⁷⁹ The Uesugi of Yonezawa domain, who will appear later in this work, and who once controlled a large domain of over 1,000,000 *koku* encompassing a broad swath of northern Honshu's Sea of Japan coast, offer a contrasting example, who lost most of their territory in the 17th century and laid off many retainers in an effort to save domainal finances.

⁸⁰ Late in its existence, when the domainal seat was moved to Yamaguchi (in Suō Province 周防国), it was also known as Suō-Yamaguchi domain. This was the origin of the modern name of Yamaguchi Prefecture (*Yamaguchi-ken* 山口県).

⁸¹ Kasaya Kazuhiko, *Sekigahara no Kassen to Ōsaka no Jin* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007), p. 40. The Mōri clan was one of the wealthiest supporters of the losing side.

western Honshu, to Suō and Nagato, the two at its westernmost tip.⁸² This left a fiefdom of approximately 369,000 *ku* in size.⁸³ Unlike the Shimazu, the Mōri did not hold on to the entirety of their former retainer force. The ensuing generations of Mōri daimyo and their retainers never forgot this slight against them by the Tokugawa, and even went so far as to incorporate the memory of it into their new year's traditions.⁸⁴

Despite the Mōri clan's loss of its original territory and power, the domain still controlled an enviable strategic position. Nagato and Suō overlooked the approach to the Straits of Shimonoseki, through which, even during Japan's isolationist years, a great deal of shipping passed. It would use this position against foreign shipping in the 1860s, and face one of its most humiliating defeats as a result, when a fleet of foreign vessels led by the British and French navies shelled the Chōshū coastal batteries there.⁸⁵ Though it was in Honshu, Chōshū domain's proximity to northern Kyushu put it within easy reach of both Nagasaki and Tsushima, two places involved in regular foreign interaction during the Edo period.⁸⁶ This would, in time, come in handy during its efforts at military modernization and at armed opposition to the shogunate. These efforts would ultimately stand the domain in good stead and, as we will see below, offer it

⁸² Ogawa, p. 655.

⁸³ By one reckoning, its exact income level was 369,410 *ku*. Ogawa, p. 655.

⁸⁴ This is the tradition, by now well known by both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, of the senior Mōri retainers coming to pay their respects to their lord, where one of them would invariably ask, "sire, is it time to overthrow the shogunate yet?" to which the daimyo would reply, "not yet, it remains too strong." Perhaps unsurprisingly in hindsight, in the 1860s, the answer at last became "yes." See Umetani Noboru, *Meiji Zenki Seijishi no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1978), p. 18.

⁸⁵ David C. Jaundrill, *Twilight of the Samurai* (Columbia University: Ph.D. dissertation, 2009), p. 73.

⁸⁶ Chinese and Dutch trade came through Nagasaki, Korean trade through Tsushima.

a strong, well-trained, well-equipped fighting force with high morale to put in action almost immediately at the Boshin War's start.

Tosa domain (*Tosa-han* 土佐藩), a large (202,600 *koku*) *tozama* domain in southern Shikoku also known as Kōchi Domain (*Kōchi-han* 高知藩), was the third leader in this alliance.⁸⁷ Tosa's ruling Yamauchi family was a *tozama* daimyo house like Satsuma's and Chōshū's lords. But *unlike* the Shimazu and Mōri, the Yamauchi had comparatively good relations with the Tokugawa shogunate, which made the family an initially reluctant participant in the southern alliance.⁸⁸ The Yamauchi sided with the Tokugawa during the tumultuous events of 1600, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, first Tokugawa shogun, rewarded them for it.⁸⁹ He granted the entirety of Tosa Province, taken from the Chōsokabe clan, as a new fief to the Yamauchi.⁹⁰ Fourteen generations of Yamauchi later, this debt to the Tokugawa made certain Tosa officials—including the domain's well-connected ex-daimyo Yamauchi Yōdō—more sympathetic to the shogunate in its dying days, and more likely to support conciliatory policies toward vanquished enemies.⁹¹ Some of the unaffiliated actors noted below, who facilitated the alliance's formation, were Tosa-born. Though they did not have the same ties of politics and inheritance that bound many Yamauchi vassals, they had ties to Yamauchi vassals, which eventually aided their efforts

⁸⁷ Marius B. Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma and the Meiji Restoration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 22.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 22.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 22.

⁹⁰ This was a significant boost—202,600 *koku* in Tosa rather than an earlier 68,000 *koku* split between separate territories in Tōtōmi and Ise. Ogawa, p. 703.

⁹¹ Totman, pp. 380-381, 399.

in bringing Tosa into the fold. Reservations notwithstanding, Tosa domain was part of the force that defended Kyoto from the Tokugawa army in the Boshin War's opening days, and Tosa men served as senior commanders in the imperial army during the months that followed.⁹²

In sum, the winning coalition's core trio came from different circumstances, both in terms of their ruling families' histories as well as their relationship to the Tokugawa shogunate. Perhaps the most salient common characteristic between them was their daimyo's status as part of the *tozama* type. This kept them on the outside of direct involvement with the Tokugawa administration. But on its own, it was not enough to keep them united and sustain their efforts in the 1868-1869 war.

2.2 GEOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, AND OTHER ADVANTAGES

The ideologies, wealth, and histories of the winning coalition's three most powerful political entities were not the sole basis of their eventual shared victory. What of the long-running advantages that they enjoyed due to their physical location? Long before the late Edo period, southwestern Japan had several important geographic and economic advantages. Due to its lower latitude, it tends to be warmer than other parts of the archipelago. This renders it more favorable to rice cultivation, unlike the more temperamental conditions in northern Japan. Due to its location, trade and general travel to and from the Chinese coast, the Korean peninsula, and the

⁹² Itagaki Taisuke, a Meiji era statesman and Freedom and Popular Rights advocate, was one of those commanders, and led some of the major military actions in northern Japan. Tani Tateki, Meiji era cabinet minister and Imperial Japanese Army general, was another. On Itagaki, especially in the Meiji era, see Shinba Eiji, *Itagaki Taisuke: Jiyū minken no yume to haiboku*. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1988). On Tani, see Kobayashi Kazuyuki, *Tani Tateki* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 2011).

Okinawan islands was particularly convenient. At certain points it was also a liminal space where the archipelago's cultural and linguistic boundaries overlapped with those of its neighbors. The small island of Tsushima is one example of this. Situated in the eponymous Tsushima strait about midway between northern Kyushu and the Korean port of Busan, its people and leaders often acted as a political and mercantile intermediary between Korea and the main Japanese islands.⁹³ Depending on the context, its rulers also saw no problem in portraying their land as a Korean island with the name Taemado (대마도), yet an island occupied by non-Koreans.

Particularly important to any discussion of 19th century events are the ports on Kyushu's northern coast. Hakata and Nagasaki in particular were especially old and frequently-visited by ships from the Asian continent.⁹⁴ Yet this stretch of coast could at times also be a strategic liability. Perhaps most famously, the Mongol Empire under Kubilai Khan attempted two ultimately ill-fated amphibious landings at Hakata in the late 13th century.⁹⁵ Long before that, the early Yamato state stationed military units in Kyushu to keep watch in the event of a potential invasion from the continent.⁹⁶ Yet more often, it was a relatively peaceful interface with the continent beyond the archipelago's shores. Despite restricted foreign trade from the early 17th century onward, this interface via trade continued, albeit confined to Tsushima and Nagasaki

⁹³ The Sō 宗, Edo-era daimyo of Tsushima domain (*Tsushima-han* 対馬藩), had shogunal approval to do so on its own, trading directly with Korea rather than through Nagasaki, where Dutch and Chinese traders were restricted. Tomiyama, p. 87.

⁹⁴ For more on Hakata as international port, see the collected works in *Hakata: The Cultural Worlds of Northern Kyushu*, ed. Andrew Cobbing (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁹⁵ For more on the failed Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281, Kondō Shigekazu, *Mongoru no Shūrai*. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003).

⁹⁶ Karl Friday, *Hired Swords* (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 96

respectively. These were also the ports visited by Europeans in the 16th century, and it was through their visits there that firearms made their first appearance in Japan, as did Christianity.⁹⁷ Both carved a respectable niche in that part of the archipelago by the 17th century. Though the Tokugawa shogunate outlawed Christianity and enacted tight controls on international trade and travel, trade did continue.⁹⁸ Those local polities in or near northern Kyushu were well aware of the advantage of keeping up with what came through Nagasaki, be they in the form of goods, news, or ideas. The port was under direct Tokugawa control, but it was perhaps the most remote of shogunal installations. And so by the late Edo, with shogunal regulations less strictly enforced and shogunal power steadily on the wane, it was a simple matter for major regional powers to make their own deals and conduct their own trade through there. By the Boshin War's start, the Tokugawa officials who ran the port either left or surrendered quietly.

Another point of contact with the world beyond the archipelago was to the south of Kyushu. As noted above, the Satsuma domain conquered the Ryukyuan kingdom, long a middle ground between more powerful political entities on the continent, in the early 17th century. From then until the Meiji era, the Okinawan court kept up a dual allegiance to Satsuma and the ruling Chinese dynasty-- first the Ming, then from 1644 the Qing.⁹⁹ Chinese imperial emissaries regularly visited their Okinawan subjects, but thanks to careful management of sensitive materials, the emissaries from Beijing never figured out the truth about Satsuma's conquest. In turn, the court would send delegations to the shogunal capital at Edo, under the auspices of the

⁹⁷ For more on the first visit of Europeans to Japan, see Olof Lidin, *Tanegashima: The Arrival of Europe in Japan* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2002).

⁹⁸ Tomiyama, p. 84.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 74-75, 88.

Ryukyuans' Satsuma overlords.¹⁰⁰ These delegations served as a visible example of the Japan-centered model of the originally Chinese notion of “civilized vs. barbarian” (*J. ka-i, C. hua-yi* 華夷). In Japan, this placed Japan's political core (rather than China's) at the civilized world's center, with the world extending outward in concentric circles of ever-increasing “barbarianness.”¹⁰¹

The prestige of having its own vassal kingdom was not the only boon to Satsuma's overlordship of Okinawa.¹⁰² It also allowed the domain to have a sort of back door through which it could conduct its own trade and diplomatic efforts with the world beyond.¹⁰³ This let Satsuma sidestep direct shogunal scrutiny, nominal though it may have been, at Nagasaki. Closer to Kyushu, Satsuma also had the Amami chain, a small group of islands that lay between Okinawa and the Satsuma coast. While the rest of the archipelago was under a feudal system, Satsuma domain officials kept the Amami islanders under a form of near slavery.¹⁰⁴ The Amami islands were the site of Satsuma's sugarcane cash crop; as with sugarcane cultivation elsewhere,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ For an English-language discussion of this model of global order, see Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 15-18. This was also employed in interactions with the Ainu, on Japan's northern frontier in Ezochi (modern Hokkaido).

¹⁰² An Okinawan delegation performed the alternate-attendance voyage undertaken by daimyo from all around Japan, but would, at times, also take part in the Shimazu alternate-attendance entourage to and from the shogun's capital. The Shimazu could thus boast that they were the only daimyo to whom a foreign king owed allegiance.

¹⁰³ Charles Yates, *Saigō Takamori: The Man Behind the Myth* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995), p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Even Saigō Takamori, who spent time in effective exile on the island, submitted a memorial to the domain administration criticizing the administration of Amami as so oppressive that foreigners could potentially turn the locals against the domain. Yates, p. 60.

this was back-breaking, intense work that produced an extremely lucrative product.¹⁰⁵ Most importantly to our discussion, the profits from the Amami sugar trade allowed Satsuma to devote further funds to its project of military modernization in the closing decades of the Edo period.¹⁰⁶

Finally, factors of climate, especially in the decades spanning the late 18th and early 19th century, gave southwestern Japan a material and population advantage. The Tenmei (1780s) and Tenpo (1830s) famines, named for the era names (*nengō* 年号) in which they occurred, took a massive toll on central and northern Japan. Even decades later, in the 1860s, the impact of those disasters lingered in the north. As will be noted in the coming chapters, the population drain on northern domains was significant (worsened by a trend of infanticide), and the domains' agricultural yields—especially those of Sendai domain, the Alliance's leader-- never fully recovered.¹⁰⁷ As a result, this also affected their domainal finances, which in turn affected their ability to finance military and political reform, education, or development projects. Year after year, Sendai, the north's largest domain, had failed or poor harvests.¹⁰⁸ Unlike its southern counterparts, Sendai domain consequently had to operate on a severely limited budget (one sixth

¹⁰⁵ For a comparative example of slavery, sugarcane cultivation, and the situation of the people directly involved with it on the ground, in this case from Caribbean history, see Manuel Moreno Franginals, *The Sugarmill*. tr. Cedric Belfrage. (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974).

¹⁰⁶ Ōe, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ 1834-1838, 1841-1846, 1849-1850, and 1852-1867 were all bad harvest years for Sendai domain, due to famine, drought, flood, storms, unseasonable weather, and more. See the chart on *Miyagi Kenshi* 宮城縣史 2. ed. by Miyagi Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 宮城縣史編纂委員會編纂 (Sendai 仙台市: Miyagi Kenshi Kankokai 宮城縣史刊行会, 1987), p. 647, which I share in adapted form below in Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁸ Sendai domain also had a lengthy problem with debt, dating back to Kansei 11 (1799). *Miyagi Kenshi* v. 2: *Kinseishi* (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1966), p. 674.

of its usual budget, in order to even manage) during the crucial years leading up to 1868.¹⁰⁹ Southern Japan, despite the fact that it had its own natural and manmade disasters, never had to contend with an environmental and fiscal crisis of that magnitude during the same years. Thus, natural forces beyond domainal politics or political ideologies already shifted the playing field, at least in terms of available resources and manpower, quite strongly in the southern domains' favor.

2.3 MAINTAINING THE COALITION

The Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa domains had a set of mutual treaties that officially sealed their relationship as allies during the Boshin War.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, however, treaties are pieces of paper and it takes more than words alone to hold a coalition together in times of combat. Furthermore, Satsuma and Chōshū had their fair share of mutual distrust, only a few years before the Boshin War, they were on opposite sides of various aspect of national politics. Satsuma was a close shogunate ally in the mid-1860s, while Chōshū was a political pariah.

How then did these political entities manage to not only hold their own rough ties together, but also to bring in other domains to their coalition, over the course of a challenging and ever-changing military campaign to unify the archipelago under their control? The answer lies in the men who forged these ties of alliance. By and large, they tended to be low ranking people unattached to a given domain, or if born into a domain's retainer force, they had no

¹⁰⁹ This was an order instituted by clan elder Tadaki Tosa in 1862. *Miyagi Kenshi* v. 2, p. 690.

¹¹⁰ Yates, pp. 84-88.

compunctions about abandoning their hereditary obligations or stipends, traveling without official permission, petitioning or even murdering people far beyond their station, and in general subverting the old order into which they were born.¹¹¹ In time, they would become indispensable to the subsequent late-19th century project of building the modern Japanese nation-state.

Sakamoto Ryōma (坂本龍馬) was perhaps the most famous of these "unattached" mediators. He was born in Tosa to a family of country samurai (*gōshi* 郷士), who held warrior status but were exempt from the duties of a full-fledged Yamauchi retainer.¹¹² Ryōma was active among the shishi, the "men of high purpose" who gathered particularly in the imperial capital with radical imperialist agendas.¹¹³ He formed the proto-corporation Kaientai, which smuggled weapons for the loyalist cause. His ties were variegated and wide-reaching, from domainal governments to shogunal functionaries to disaffected lordless samurai.¹¹⁴ The birth of the Satsuma-Chōshū detente and thus the ensuing coalition was the work of Sakamoto Ryōma and his associates. Without emotional or hereditary ties to restrict their freedom of action, they were well-equipped to do this. Ryōma himself did not survive to see the war, as unknown assassins

¹¹¹ For an example of someone who traveled without permission and seemed to care little for the rank and stipend he inherited or forefeited, see Fukuzawa Yukichi, *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, translated by Eiichi Kiyooka (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966). Many of the members of Shinsengumi, a paramilitary unit tasked with reinforcing Aizu domain-directed Tokugawa shogunate police efforts in Kyoto, also did the same. See Ōishi, p. 254.

¹¹² Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma*, p. 3; Itoya Toshio, *Sakamoto Ryōma* (Kyoto: Chobunsha, 1975), p. 241.

¹¹³ Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma*, p. 95.

¹¹⁴ Ryōma even became the student of Tokugawa bannerman and admiral Katsu Kaishū. Though he had set out to assassinate Katsu but was so taken by his views that he decided to become a student instead. Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma*, p. 162.

murdered him and his colleague and frequent travel companion, Nakaoka Shintarō, in Kyoto in the weeks prior to the war.¹¹⁵ But his friends and associates continued his work, and several went on to prominence in Meiji Japan.¹¹⁶

Another category of facilitator was the men who had domainal ties but whose actions often put them at odds with the established order in their domains, and who thus internally challenged and subverted their domains' entrenched interests and local scores. A famous example of this type of man, in Satsuma domain, was Saigō Takamori. Saigō came from a samurai family of humble rank, as did other future military and political leaders in his coterie, some of whom were relatives and neighbors. These include Ōkubo Toshimichi, Ōyama Iwao, Tōgō Heihachirō, and others.¹¹⁷ Despite their humble origins, they made their way into increasingly powerful offices in the domainal hierarchy.¹¹⁸ This empowered them to secure and improve their own station and material wealth inside the domain. It also allowed them to build new systems of

¹¹⁵ Shinsengumi, the pro-shogunate paramilitary force active in the Kyoto area, is often blamed for Ryōma's murder, but this has been effectively disproven. Although there are a number of theories about the assassination's specifics, the prevailing opinion seems to be that the assassins were in fact from Mimawarigumi, another Kyoto-based paramilitary force in shogunate service. Imai Nobuo, a Mimawarigumi survivor, admitted to having taken part in the murder. For more, see Kikuchi Akira, *Shinsengumi 101 no Nazo*. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2000), pp. 163-168.

¹¹⁶ An especially noteworthy name among Sakamoto Ryōma's Kaien-tai associates was Mutsu Munemitsu, a samurai of Kii who went on to a career in high office in the Japanese government, including as foreign minister, during the tenure of which he successfully negotiated the end of the unequal political status that had existed between Japan and Great Britain. For more, see Louis G. Perez, *Japan Comes of Age: Mutsu Munemitsu and the Revision of the Unequal Treaties* (Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁷ Ravina, *The Last Samurai*, p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Yates, p. 83.

military and political organization that ran counter to the entrenched interests of the wealthy old guard of senior retainers, who were most often, though not always, in favor of a more conservative status quo.¹¹⁹ This was also the case in Chōshū, where young, lower-ranked samurai overtook the old guard in domainal leadership. Many of them were students of Yoshida Shoin, steeped in his brand of imperial loyalism and less likely to favor reconciliation with the Tokugawa shogunate. They directed domainal policy along these lines, and took a hard line against the shogunate and its allies among the hereditary vassal (*fudai* 譜代) and cadet branch (*kamon* 家門) domains.

The boundaries between these groups were often blurry and indistinct. There was communication between them, and a shared ideology of imperial loyalism through which they rationalized their political actions.¹²⁰ Of course, these connections did not, as it were, spring out

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Komatsu Tatewaki, a high-ranking Satsuma retainer who held the office of clan elder, was an exception to this. Komatsu would later be instrumental in ensuring the willing compliance of the Satsuma daimyo in setting an example for other daimyo in Japan by surrendering his domain registers (*hanseki hōkan*) in 1869. For a relatively recent biographical treatment, see Takamura Naosuke, *Komatsu Tatewaki* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012).

¹²⁰ This is not to imply that their northern enemies were anti-emperor by any means. As we will later see, the Date clan may have set up its own claimant to the imperial throne, in the person of Abbot-Prince Rinnōji no miya Kōgen (輪王寺宮公現), former abbot of Kan’ei-ji Temple in Edo. The prince fled northward after the temple’s destruction that spring. The court later recalled him to secular life, and after a brief time in confinement shortly after the 1868 war, the court reinstated him as imperial prince and allowed him to join the imperial army. As Army lieutenant general Kitashirakawa-no-miya Yoshihisa 北白川宮能久, he led Japanese forces in the invasion of Taiwan. Where he died of malaria. Those sources that say he did become emperor in 1868 call him Emperor Tōbu (*Tōbu-tennō* 東武天皇 or *Tōbu kōtei* 東武皇帝), with a reign name of Taisei (大政). There is not enough evidence to *conclusively* prove that the prince *was* northern emperor, but as news of it even reached The New York Times, some historians

of the earth fully formed. People of warrior status or who had access to at least some of its privileges (such as relatively free travel under domainal auspices, or access to centers of foreign learning) routinely traveled to and from the archipelago's major urban centers, where they met and lived alongside people from lands far away from their own.¹²¹ That being the case, one could hardly say they were unaware of people from, or developments in, other parts of the archipelago.¹²² After all, while in great urban centers such as Edo or Osaka, they studied alongside, deliberated with, debated, competed against, trained with, trained under, drank with, married, adopted, were adopted by, and even murdered people from lands they had never

consider it to have been rather likely. The *Times* correspondent claimed the prince had only temporarily become emperor and would relinquish power upon the northern alliance's success, and loyally serve the young Meiji from then on. See "JAPAN." *New York Times*, Oct 18, 1868, p. 3. For an historian who supports the Emperor Tōbu theory, see Ōishi Manabu, *Saka no Machi: Edo Tōkyō wo Aruku* (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo, 2007), p. 46.

¹²¹ Schools in the Kyoto/Osaka and Edo areas, run by late Edo period samurai class educators like Sakuma Shōzan, Takashima Shūhan, Ogata Kōan, or Katsu Kaishū, filled a particularly vital role in connecting people from across the archipelago. For a firsthand account of the Ogata school, see western Japan native Fukuzawa Yūkichi's *Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, p. 69, for an account of a prank at the expense of one Tezuka Ryōan, son of a domainal doctor from eastern Japan. Coincidentally, this was famed comic book artist Tezuka Osamu's great-grandfather.

¹²² For more on the shogunate's alternate attendance system, and its role in forcing Edo into the role of middle ground during the Edo period, see Constantine N. Vaporis, *Tour of Duty*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008). Some samurai even went on national tours, often at the behest of their daimyo or clan elders. Yoshida Shōin (吉田松陰), the much-lionized Chōshū-born teacher of many Meiji era leaders, did a walking tour of northern Japan in the early 1850s, where he got to know, and became known by, educators, political leaders, and common people, some of whom even shared his views. Harry D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 35.

personally visited.¹²³ These interactions facilitated the later furthering of cross-domainal connections on all sides of the political spectrum during the decades that led up to the 1868-1869 war.

Further, some of the “unattached” people noted above could, and did, return to their home domains or go on to other service and either hold high rank or otherwise serve in an official capacity. Fukuzawa Yūkichi, who later rose to prominence as the founder of Keiō University, was one example of such people. He was originally of low-ranking Nakatsu domain retainer roots, though not in Nakatsu; he was born to a Nakatsu retainer family on assignment in Osaka. Fukuzawa went on to serve as a shogunal bannerman and a delegate on two of the shogunate’s military missions to the United States.¹²⁴ This blurring of feudal affiliations, and reliance of a personal network that transcended domainal boundaries, allowed people like Fukuzawa to forge the lateral ties that aided the foundation for the coalition that followed. In the long run, those lateral ties, subversive of the hereditary order, also allowed for the construction of a new order that did away with the old order entirely.

¹²³ One of the most famous examples of this sort of murder across domainal lines was the killing of shogunal master of ceremonies Kira Yoshihisa by ex-Asano retainers under the command of former clan elder Ōishi Kuranosuke during the Akō Incident of 1701. Another case, albeit less famous, was the 1860 murder of shogunate firemen by Sagawa Kanbe’e, a senior Aizu vassal who believed them to be looting Edo townhouses in the wake of a major citywide fire, and decided to take justice into his own hands. Fukushima Hiroshi, *Yume no Ato Kikō* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shoseki, 1990), p. 160. Many of the forms of interaction that I list above were also true of the transient samurai population’s equally transient overlords, in whose entourages they traveled.

¹²⁴ Fukuzawa, p. 185. This included the 1860 Man’en Delegation, which toured several northeastern U.S. cities and met with President James Buchanan on the eve of the American Civil War. See Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2005), p. 4.

In short, ties forged both because of, but also in spite of the old order's boundaries helped the Satsuma-Chōshū-Tosa coalition cohere. When the planning for war began, it is unlikely that any of these domains' functionaries saw themselves as dismantling the entire system within a few years. However, their ties opened the door to new political possibilities. Consequently, rather than depend on the shogunate to provide a locus for their interactions, which it was increasingly ill-equipped to do, they built their own political entity. The presence of free or loosely attached leaders and intermediaries not only helped keep this coalition together, but also streamlined the process for incorporating many other domains—some willingly, some unwillingly-- over the coming conflict's course.

2.4 REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT

The policies, geographical advantages, and loosely affiliated “free” agents noted above made possible an amazing variety of reforms and developments to the three domains in the years between 1853 and the outbreak of war. Rather than recount everything in detail, I will simply touch on some of the more salient examples.

A well-known example of the sort of military reform possible for the victors of 1869, this one specifically in Chōshū, was the Kiheitai (騎兵隊). This was a paramilitary organization formed without regard to hereditary caste or status by Chōshū samurai outside the elite conservative circles, some of whom were former students of the radical thinker Yoshida Shoin.¹²⁵ Yoshida's students included several people who went on to great prominence in

¹²⁵ Jaundrill, pp. 73-74.

building the modern Japanese state, be it as industrialists, statesmen, or educators.¹²⁶ Perhaps the most notable of the Yoshida students who was crucial to the formation of Kiheitai was Takasugi Shinsaku (高杉晋作), a Chōshū retainer of modest stipend.¹²⁷

Under Takasugi's leadership, Kiheitai not only saw successful action during Chōshū's wars against the Shogunate in the 1860s, but also kept up pressure on conservative elements within the domain that favored more conciliatory policies towards the shogunate. Well-armed and bolstered by high morale, Kiheitai veterans went on to play an active role in Chōshū's fight during the Boshin War.¹²⁸ Though Takasugi did not survive to see his domain's eventual triumph, his work was nonetheless critical in helping Chōshū to secure final victory.¹²⁹ In its recruitment across caste and status lines, Kiheitai was an early forerunner of the Imperial Japanese Army and its well-known universal conscription standard, though it was not the earliest.¹³⁰ There were earlier attempts at doing the same, such as Takashima Shūhan's (高島秋帆) and Egawa Tarōzaemon's (江川太郎左衛門) experimental infantry and artillery units.¹³¹

¹²⁶ These included later Field Marshal Yamagata Aritomo, home minister Shinagawa Yajirō, and Japan's first prime minister, Itō Hirobumi. Henry Van Straelen, *Yoshida Shoin: Forerunner of the Meiji Restoration* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1952), p. 81.

¹²⁷ Thomas Huber, *The Revolutionary Origins of Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 144.

¹²⁸ Yamada Akiyoshi, who later became an Imperial Army general and a cabinet minister, is a particularly notable Kiheitai trooper who did so.

¹²⁹ Takasugi died in 1867 of tuberculosis. As Thomas Huber observes, he was the only member of Yoshida's student body whose death was "not overtly political." Huber, pp. 143, 206-207.

¹³⁰ Jaundrill, p. 74.

¹³¹ This is not to say there is no connection between the two; Chōshū domain did send some of its samurai to study Takashima's gunnery style. Jaundrill, p. 72.

Once again, ties independent of and subversive to the old order's strictures, albeit instituted on the local level, sustained these efforts. Chōshū's military successes also allowed it to pressure its particularly powerful neighbors, such as the Hiroshima domain to the east, to adopt a friendlier stance.¹³² In time, these domains and others in the vicinity would be among Chōshū's earliest military and political supporters and advocates in the buildup to the 1868-1869 war. With an immediate vicinity thus rendered largely peaceful, the domain's leaders could think beyond defense and focus instead on the looming conflict against the shogunate's remnants and later against others, including the Northern Alliance.

Thanks to its access to the continent, Satsuma was a leader in experimentation with new technologies, systems of organization, and strains of learning. This had a long history in the domain, even before the 19th century. Shimazu Shigehide, late 18th century daimyo, was known for his interest in foreign language, western-style medicine, and systems of metal casting and pottery production.¹³³ Later, the daimyo Shimazu Nariakira (島津斉彬), Shigehide's grandson, actively encouraged shipbuilding and reverberating furnace construction. He also personally

¹³² Hiroshima, ruled by the Asano family (another *tozama* daimyo clan) was larger than Chōshū, at 426,000 *koku* in size. Tokugawa forces used Hiroshima as a forward headquarters during their wars against Chōshū, but Hiroshima domain grew increasingly unwilling to take an active part in the shogunate's campaigns. Chōshū also neutralized other potentially hostile neighbors. For example, it occupied part of Kokura domain in northern Kyushu, and forced its leaders into burning the castle town and abandoning it completely. Chōshū forces also effectively eviscerated the nearby Hamada domain, the land of which lay to the northeast. When it was all over, Chōshū forces had captured most of Hamada's territory and forced its daimyo, a Tokugawa collateral lord closely related to several high shogunate officials-- into exile in one of his domain's smaller, more distant exclaves. See Ogawa, pp. 636-637, and Totman, pp. 233.

¹³³ Yates, p. 20.

experimented with more mundane technologies like silver plate photography.¹³⁴ Satsuma's main facility for these industrial endeavors was called the Shūseikan (集成館), founded in 1853, which at its height employed over 1,200 people.¹³⁵ Shūseikan, equipped with a blast furnace and a reverbratory furnace, helped to develop Satsuma's capacity to locally manufacture military materials.¹³⁶ Following its disastrous confrontation with the British Royal Navy that ended in the shelling of the Kagoshima castle town, Satsuma domain engaged in a massive acquisition of European-made military equipment.¹³⁷ It purchased state of the art rifles, brand-new artillery pieces, and even warships, from English businessmen operating out of ports on the China coast. Perhaps most notable of the merchants who supplied Satsuma in this capacity was Thomas B. Glover, business representative of the Shanghai-based Jardine Matheson Corporation.¹³⁸ Prussians were another source of military hardware. A fair amount of American military surplus equipment (including but not limited to weapons) also found its way into Satsuma and southern coalition hands. With this large and powerful arsenal in its hands, Satsuma forces led the way in the military campaign against northeastern Japan, including the Northern Alliance's core

¹³⁴ The oldest photograph ever taken by a Japanese person was, in fact, that of Nariakira, taken in 1857 by Satsuma retainer Usuki Hikoemon. Murano Moriji, *Shimazu Nariakira no Subete* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1989), p. 203. There also exists a portrait of three of Nariakira's daughters, who may have been photographed by Nariakira himself.

¹³⁵ Ōe, p. 149.

¹³⁶ Ōe, pp. 148.

¹³⁷ For the shelling of the Kagoshima castle town, in retaliation for Satsuma men's assassination of British merchant Charles Lenox Richardson, see Yates, 64.

¹³⁸ Michael Gardiner, *At the Edge of Empire: The Life of Thomas Blake Glover* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2007), p. 49.

domains. Their ties also aided other southern allies in their own programs of military modernization.

2.5 CONCLUSION

It was no mere chance-- or in one recent author's rather sensationalist words, the will of the Sun Goddess-- that the political-military coalition led by Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa emerged victorious in the Boshin War and went on to form the core of the modern Japanese state.¹³⁹ Thanks to their location, they were spared the effects of the major famine that so deeply harmed their northern counterparts. This gave them resources, both material and human, that allowed for the successful prosecution of war in 1868-1869. These resources were, in turn, successfully marshalled by a cadre of adept domainal administrators, who put them to good use at a time of great political and strategic uncertainty, thereby increasing their domains' military strength and political influence at the critical moment when the shogunate's power was in decline.

Thus bound by interdomainal ties brokered by independent actors, equipped with cutting-edge military and transportation technologies, and bolstered by finances and populations that were largely undepleted over the preceding decades, the southwestern coalition's core trio of domains was from the outset in a strong position to prosecute a successful military campaign.

But so much for the southwest and the victorious coalition. We will now turn our attention to the domains of northern Honshu. Though those domains stood (at least nominally)

¹³⁹ As noted with annoying repetition in Romulus Hillsborough, *Shinsengumi* (Boston: Tuttle, 2005), pp. 157, 159, 204.

united during a critical period in the spring through early fall of 1868, this wide-reaching regional unity, fragile though it was at its best, was the exception rather than the norm. The north's politics were disorientingly complex, and its long history as a place "inside but outside" the rest of the archipelago was, in fact, all too often tumultuous.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Takahashi Tomio, *Hiraizumi: Ōshū Fujiwara-shi Yondai* (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1978), p. 28.

3.0 THE NORTH UNTIED

All the domains of northern Honshu island stood together for a brief period in 1868 as the constituents of the Northern Alliance. Figure 2 denotes their castle town locations, as well as the castle towns of northern Echigo, outsiders whose domains later joined the alliance.¹⁴¹ Despite grand dreams for the future, such unity in northern Honshu Island was the exception rather than the norm. This chapter examines some of the issues that divided the north; a later chapter examines its points of unity.¹⁴² Some, but not all, of the divisions were political. Domains of various sizes and types occupied the region. Their aims, political and military clout, and relationship to the shogunal center at Edo were complex and uneven.

Other divides were the result of geography and its effect on communications. High speed communications and transportation networks connect modern Japan, but this was of course not always the case. Before and during the 1860s, lines of travel and communication, such as they were, were slower and far more tenuous. A third type of divide was historic. Small powers nominally loyal to the Tokugawa shogunate and relatively new to the Tōhoku region, coexisted

¹⁴¹ Onodera Eikō. *Boshin Nanboku Sensō to Tōhoku Seiken*. (Sendai: Kita no mori, 2005), pp. 127-128. Map adapted from the map posted at <http://wtfm.exblog.jp/17446578/> The Echigo domains were outside of the Tohoku region, and thus are not treated in this chapter.

¹⁴² The northern section of Honshu island which Mutsu and Dewa once comprised, hereafter referred to by its modern Japanese name *Tōhoku* (東北).

alongside older, larger powers with deep local roots, like the Date of Sendai. This prompted some measure of mutual suspicion. The old clans also had their own internal disputes, some of which bordered on the catastrophic, as in the various “Date disturbances” (*Date-sōdō* 伊達騷動) that divided (sometimes lethally) the Sendai domain retainer force. Sometimes the older Tōhoku powers also had inter-domainal rivalries or vendettas that stretched for centuries, as was the case between the Nanbu of Morioka and the Tsugaru of Hirosaki, and many others.

This chapter examines the myriad divisions and episodes of instability in the north, realities that made a horizontal coalition all the more surprising. By developing a clearer understanding of these divisions, we will be better equipped to understand the local challenges that any attempt at unity had to confront or surmount. In the end, some of these very political, geographic, and historical divisions made the Northern Alliance’s cohesion difficult -and contributed to its ultimate demise.

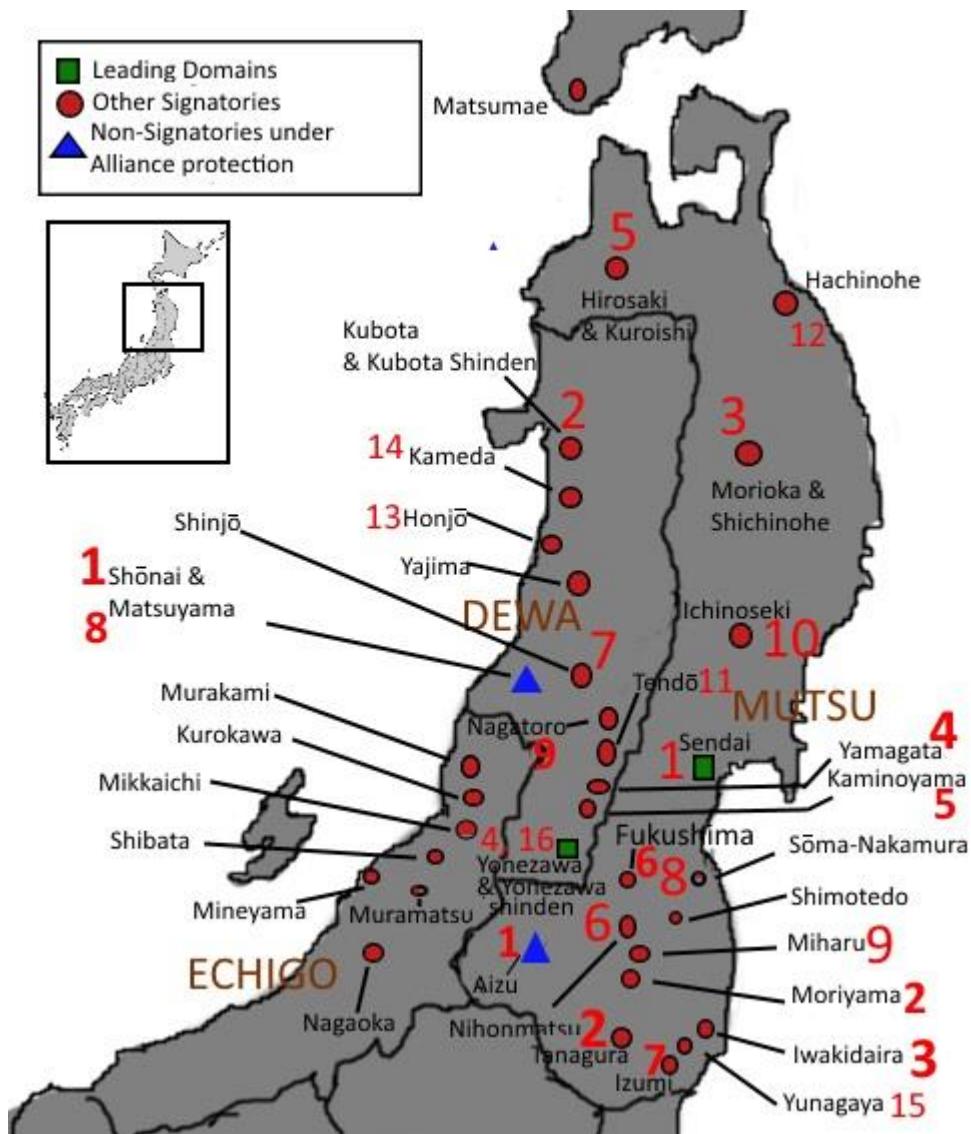


Figure 2: Map of northeastern Japan with Alliance castle towns highlighted

3.1 TŌHOKU GEOGRAPHY: DIVIDES AND LINKAGES

The largest topographical factor that divided Tōhoku was the Ōū Mountain range (*Ōū sanmyaku* 奥羽山脈), which runs like a spine for 310 miles through the center of northern Honshu island. Geographically, domains on either side of the mountains, such as Sendai and Akita, were close, at least in terms of straight-line distances. But in the words of a popular saying in southern Dewa (in what is now Yamagata Prefecture), “Sendai, like the nape of the neck, is close but far away.”¹⁴³ Given relatively rough roads that ran through high mountains, overland travel between the two coasts unsurprisingly slowed during winter.

Yet despite such obstacles, there were travel links between the two coasts, both by land and by sea. Several major highways (*kaidō* 街道) also crisscrossed the region, the Ōshū Highway (*Ōshū kaidō* 奥州街道), the path of which is noted in Figure 3, being the longest. Starting at Nihonbashi, the Edo terminus of three major national highways, it ran northward through the Kantō plain, through the castle town of Utsunomiya, turned coastward and crossed through Sendai, then Morioka, before reaching Soto-ga-hama, a beach on the Tsugaru Peninsula’s northern tip.¹⁴⁴ Regional political disputes and potential bad weather notwithstanding, it was a

¹⁴³ *Sendai to bon no kubo wa chikakute tōi* 仙台と盆の窪は近くで遠い. Kimura Shōtarō, *Yamagata Seikatsu Fūdoshi* (Tokyo: Chūō-shoin, 1982), p. 47.

¹⁴⁴ Hatanaka Morikatsu, a Sendai retainer and diarist, made the trip from Sendai to Edo in a little over a week in the spring of 1777, which he chronicled for then-daimyo Date Shigemura, who was on alternate attendance in Edo. Hatanaka Morikatsu, “Michi no Ki,” pp. 441-462 of *Sendai Sōsho* vol. 8, ed. Taira Shigemichi (Sendai: Hōbundō,

well-traveled post road. The Ushū-kaidō ran along the coast of the Sea of Japan, linking Dewa Province with the roads south from Kōri post station, in southern Mutsu Province. Other, smaller roads linked other castle towns and post stations.

Major river networks also linked the interior with the coast and its deepwater ports. The Kitakami was one such river. Its source was in what was then Nanbu (Morioka) domain. From there it flowed southward past Hanamaki, over the border into Sendai domain territory, then continued southward until it reached the waters of Sendai Bay, and the Pacific Ocean, at the port of Ishinomaki. The Aga river flowed through southern Mutsu and connected towns like Aizu-Wakamatsu with the deepwater port of Niigata, on the Sea of Japan. In short, despite often rough terrain, the Tōhoku region in the 19th century was rather well-connected, at least during the drier seasons. Yet despite these connections, as we will see, the region was politically divided and often anything but peaceful.

1972), p. 462. Folklorist Mihara Ryōkichi also recounts the case of Itō Shichijūrō and Hayashi Shihei, both of whom made the trip in three days and three nights. Mihara Ryokichi, *Kyōdoshi Sendai Mimibukuro* (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1983), p. 16. National Route 4 and the Tōhoku Main railway line now take up most of its path.

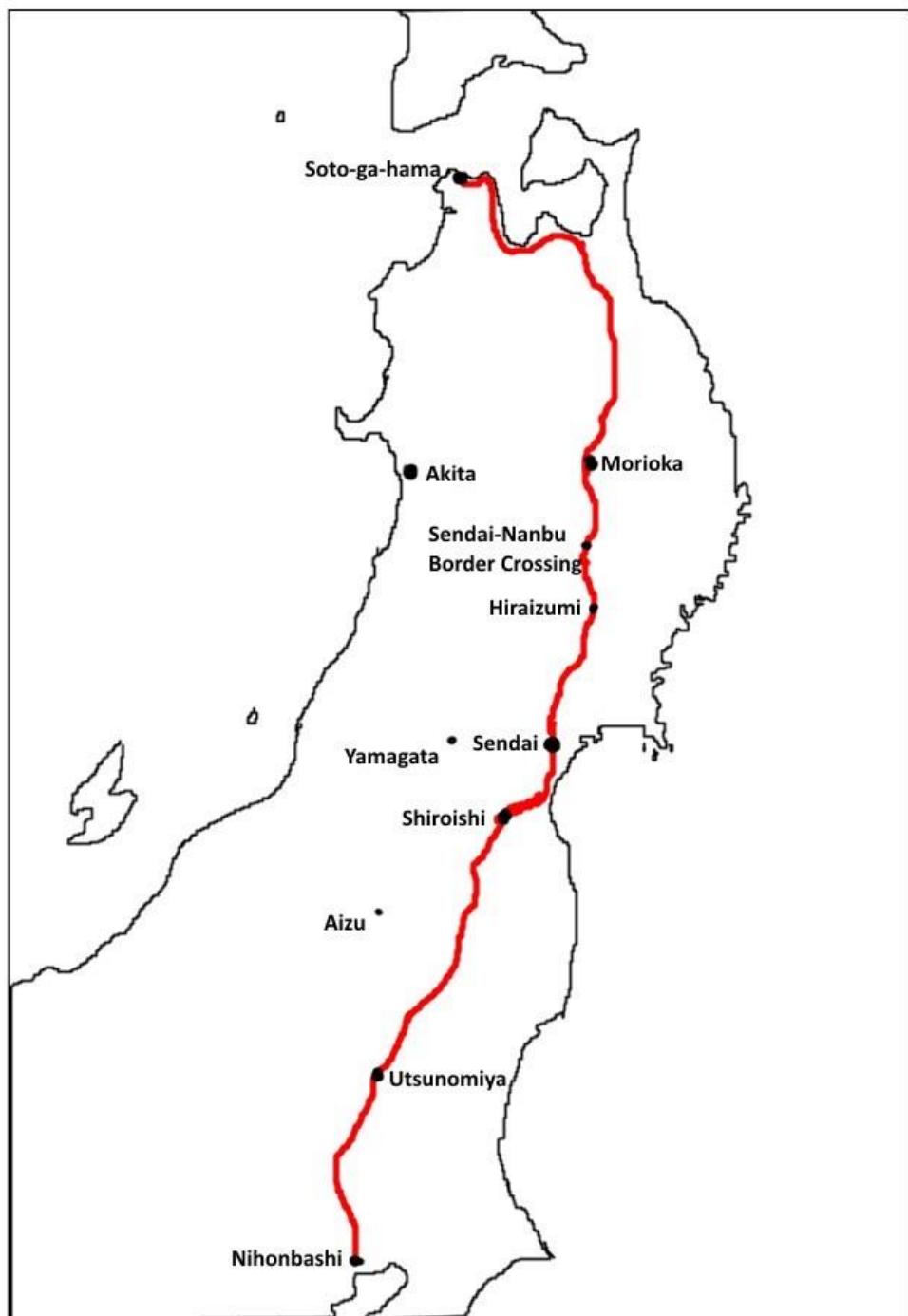


Figure 3 The Ōshū Highway

3.2 POLITICAL DIVISIONS

With a few exceptions, the Tōhoku region was beyond direct shogunal control. Yet by the same token, it did not have a single set of politics, be they pro- or anti-Shogunate. In what follows, I divide the Tohoku into four categories: (1) “outside” (*tozama* 外様); (2) “vassal” (*fudai* 譜代); (3) “cadet” (*shinpan* 親藩, also called *kamon* 家門) domains; and (4) *hatamoto* territories and shogunal house land, whether directly or indirectly administered. Breaking the region down into these divisions, enables one to develop a better understanding of it as having long been a patchwork of different political entities, rather than cut of whole cloth and answering to a single power, during the crisis year of 1868.

3.2.1 Tozama domains

By and large, *tozama* daimyo domains were the most numerous and powerful political entities in the region, twenty in total. Table 2.1 lists all *tozama* domains of Mutsu and Dewa Provinces as of the late 1860s.¹⁴⁵ The largest and most powerful of these was Sendai domain (*Sendai-han* 仙台

¹⁴⁵ Not included in this list is Matsumae Domain (*Matsumae-han* 松前藩), better known as the lone domain (of *tozama* type) in Ezochi (蝦夷地, modern Hokkaidō), with its castle at Fukuyama, in southern Ezochi. Its territory in Ezochi did not have an official *koku*-based income level, but vis-à-vis the shogunate, the Matsumae held the equivalent status of a lesser (10,000-30,000 *koku*) daimyo. As of 1855 it also held some detached territory in the Tōhoku region (Yanagawa in Mutsu, Higashine and Obanazawa in Dewa) at this time, at a total of 40,000 *koku*. Emori Susumu, “Matsumae-han,” pp. 29-84 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1976), p. 84.

藩), at approximately 625,000 koku.¹⁴⁶ Of all the region's daimyo families, the Date was one of the oldest, having first come to the Tohoku in the late 12th century as vassals of the Kamakura Shogunate.¹⁴⁷ Despite cordial Date-Tokugawa relations at the Edo period's onset, the family was still outside the Tokugawa clan's vassal base and only hesitantly trusted.¹⁴⁸ Smaller tozama domains also had daimyo families with similarly lengthy local history. For example, the Sōma of Nakamura domain (*Nakamura-han* 中村藩), 60,000 koku at its height and located on the Pacific coast, did not have power on Sendai's scale. But the family and its retainer band had resided in the same general vicinity for almost a millennium.¹⁴⁹ No domain of any type (outside, vassal, cadet, or *hatamoto*) in the Tōhoku came close to Sendai in size. The next largest domains,

¹⁴⁶ Date Munehiro, *Date Happyakunen no Rekishi emaki* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2007), p. 11. The domain was also known by its ruling family's name as Date domain (*Date-han* 伊達藩). Most of the domain's lands were in Mutsu and were contiguous, but there were small detached territories, barely 20,000 koku in total, that the domain held in Hitachi and Ōmi Provinces.

¹⁴⁷ Kobayashi Seiji, *Sengoku Daimyō Date-shi no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōshi Shoin, 2008), pp. 9-11.

¹⁴⁸ *Date Chike Kiroku*, Vol. 1, ed. Taira Shigemichi (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1974), pp. 444-447, Kobayashi Seiji, *Date Masamune* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966), pp. 108-110. Date Masamune, the Date lord at the Edo period's onset, allied himself to Tokugawa Ieyasu during the Sekigahara Campaign, but failed to follow the "letter of the law" regarding Ieyasu's expectations, and took more military initiative than Ieyasu wished him to have done. Masamune and Ieyasu's relationship remained cordial, if somewhat fraught with suspicion.

¹⁴⁹ Honda Hiroshi & Nomura Jinsaku, *Kita Ibaraki, Iwaki to Sōma Kaidō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), p. 37. The Sōma claimed descent from early Heian era Kantō-based strongman (and would-be new emperor) Taira no Masakado (平将門). Marriage and adoption links prior to the Edo period also connected them to the Date of Sendai. Kobayashi Seiji, "Sōma-han," pp. 55-82 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1976), p. 58.

Morioka (*Morioka-han* 盛岡藩) and Akita (*Akita-han* 秋田藩), were approximately a third of Sendai's size, as seen in the table below. The Nanbu (南部) of Morioka had a lengthy local history similar to the Date, while the Satake (佐竹) of Akita, forcibly relocated there from Hitachi Province by the victorious Tokugawa in 1602, did not.¹⁵⁰ Not too far behind them in size were Hirosaki (*Hirosaki-han* 弘前藩) and Yonezawa (*Yonezawa-han* 米沢藩) domains. The Tsugaru (津輕) of Hirosaki were former Nanbu vassals who, as we will later see, made a successful bid for independence in the 16th century, while the Uesugi (上杉) of Yonezawa were an old Muromachi-era daimyo family originally from Kasugayama, in neighboring Echigo Province.¹⁵¹ All other tozama domains in the region were well below the 100,000 koku

¹⁵⁰ According to the prevailing view, the Nanbu had their roots in the region as assistant stewards (*jitōdai* 地頭代) during the Kamakura Shogunate. Hosoi Kazuyu, *Nanbu to Ōshū Dōchū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2002), p. 89. The Satake did, however, have a lengthy history, albeit in Hitachi and its bordering provinces. Their 1602 relocation was in response to the Satake daimyo's disregard for Tokugawa Ieyasu's directives in the lead-up to the Battle of Sekigahara. Thanks to the Tokugawa family's forcible divesting of the Akita from their old lands, there would understandably be no love lost between the Satake and the shogunate. Imamura Yoshitaka, "Akita-han," pp. 119-171 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 121; Sasaki Junnosuke *et al.*, *Kita Akita to Ushū Kaidō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2000), pp. 63-64.

¹⁵¹ The Muromachi era was roughly 1337 to 1573. There are two conflicting versions of the Tsugaru family's roots, depending on whether one follows the Tsugaru or Nanbu version of the relevant records. Hasegawa Seiichi, *Tsugaru, Matsumae to Umi no Michi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001), pp. 9, 80-81. The Uesugi, who were survivors of a much larger extended family that held great power in the Muromachi period, held onto the remnant of a much larger domain from which they had been forcibly divested following their defeat against the Tokugawa family and its allies in 1600. Enomoto Sōji, "Yonezawa-han," pp. 357-394 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 359; Kobayashi, *Sengoku Daimyō Date-shi no Kenkyū*, p. 209.

threshold, ranging from 68,200 koku (Shinjō) on down to 10,000 koku (Shimotedo and Yonezawa-shinden). The *tozama* domains' antechamber seating at Edo Castle varied: the daimyo of seven domains (Sendai, Akita, Morioka, Yonezawa, Hirosaki, Nihonmatsu, and Hachinohe) had seating in the seniormost Great Hall, those of six domains (Ichinoseki, Tendo, Honjō, Kameda, Shimotedo, and Yonezawashinden) had lower seating in the Hall of Willows, and those of four domains (Shinjō, Nakamura, Miharu, and Yunagaya) still lower seating in the Hall of Emperors.

But *tozama* alone in the northeast, free to form whatever horizontal coalition they wished, represented a liability to Tokugawa interests. Thus, the *fudai* domains were placed in the northeast by the Tokugawa government, to counteract any potential insurrection and in order to monitor the *tozama* lords' activities.

Table 1. Tozama domains¹⁵²

Domain	Ruling family	Income level	Antechamber Seating
Sendai	Date	625,000 koku	Great Hall
Akita (Kubota)	Satake	205,800 koku	Great Hall
Morioka	Nanbu	200,000 koku	Great Hall
Yonezawa	Uesugi	150,000 koku	Great Hall
Hirosaki	Tsugaru	100,000 koku	Great Hall
Nihonmatsu	Niwa	100,000 koku	Great Hall
Shinjō	Tozawa	68,200 koku	Hall of Emperors
Nakamura	Sōma	60,000 koku	Hall of Emperors
Miharu	Akita	50,000 koku	Hall of Emperors
Ichinoseki	Tamura	30,000 koku	Hall of Willows
Tendō	Oda	20,000 koku	Hall of Willows
Hachinohe	Nanbu	20,000 koku	Great Hall
Honjō	Rokugō	20,000 koku	Hall of Willows
Kameda	Iwaki	20,000 koku	Hall of Willows
Yunagaya	Naitō	15,000 koku	Hall of Emperors
Shimotedo	Tachibana	10,000 koku	Hall of Willows
Yonezawa-Shinden	Uesugi	10,000 koku	Hall of Willows

¹⁵² All tables adapted from Onodera, pp. 127-128.

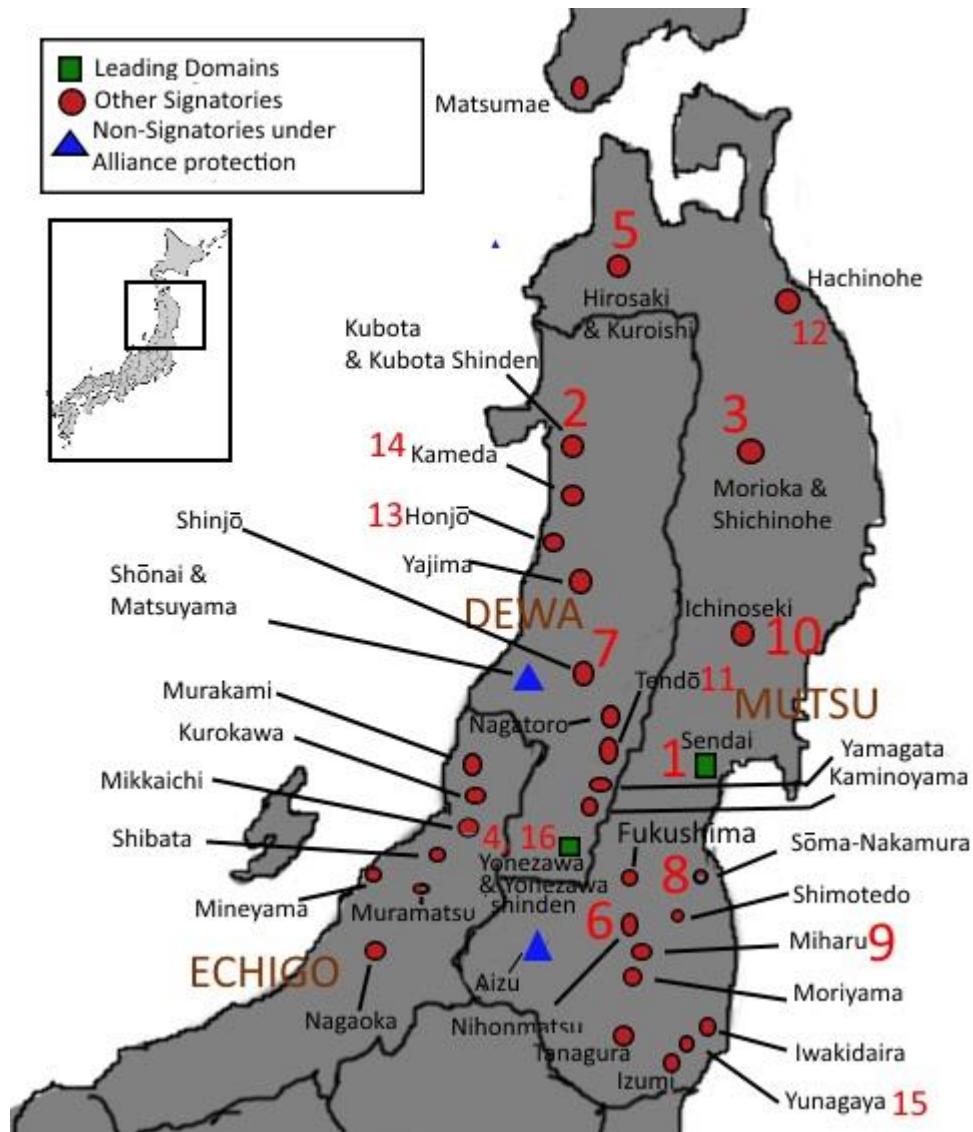


Figure 4: The Alliance's 16 *Tozama* Domains

3.2.2 Fudai domains

Fudai domains were ruled by daimyo who were at least nominally or traditionally Tokugawa vassals. They sat clustered in Mutsu's southernmost portion, in what is today Fukushima Prefecture. The others were scattered on the Sea of Japan coast, in what is now Yamagata Prefecture. The largest *fudai* domain was Shōnai (*Shōnai-han* 庄内藩), with a territory rated at 170,000 koku in central Dewa Province on the Sea of Japan coast.¹⁵³ The Sakai (酒井), its daimyo family, held significant political clout in the Tokugawa center as one of the chief Tokugawa vassals. Several Sakai, of this and other branches of the family, held high shogunate office and the Shogunate entrusted the domain with various duties.¹⁵⁴

The shogunate invested the Sakai with Shōnai following the great Mogami domain's late 17th century dissolution, and likely intended it as a military bulwark against both the Satake of Akita and the Uesugi of Yonezawa.¹⁵⁵ Tanagura domain (*Tanagura-han* 棚倉藩) in the southern Mutsu closely followed Shōnai in productivity, at 100,000 koku.¹⁵⁶ The *fudai* domains'

¹⁵³ Enomoto Sōji, "Shōnai-han," pp. 213-250 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 215.

¹⁵⁴ These duties included Edo city patrol duty in the 1860s, as supervisors of the patrol unit Shinchōgumi. Shinchōgumi was the lesser-known Edo analogue of the more famous Shinsengumi, which operated in Kyoto. Enomoto, "Shōnai-han," p. 242.

¹⁵⁵ Enomoto, "Shōnai-han," p. 218.

¹⁵⁶ Late in its history, the Abe (阿部) family of *fudai* daimyo ruled Tanagura. Its last daimyo, Abe Masato (阿部正外), held office as a senior councilor (*rōjū* 老中) in the Tokugawa administration. The Abe family was in the middle of a return to nearby Shirakawa (白河) when the war broke out; this left Shirakawa—a tempting, strategically

antechamber seating at Edo Castle was mostly in the Hall of Geese, with the daimyo of six domains (Tanagura, Matsuyama, Iwakidaira, Kaminoyama, and Fukushima) in that hall, those of two domains (Yamagata and Izumi) in the Hall of Emperors, a sole daimyo in the shogunal Councilors' Chamber (Shōnai), and finally, a sole daimyo in the Hall of Chrysanthemums (Nagatoro).

All other fudai domains in the region were under the 100,000 *koku* threshold, as seen in Table 2.2 below. But were the *fudai* always loyal to the Tokugawa cause? While they maintained a theoretical loyalty to the Tokugawa, as Harold Bolitho argued in *Treasures among Men, fudai*, by and large, they were first and foremost independent daimyo interested in their own material and political welfare, especially in the 19th century.¹⁵⁷ Those who not only invoked but acted upon their hereditary loyalty to the Tokugawa, even in the entire archipelago, were the extreme

critical target on the road north from Edo—unoccupied, and in the care of the Niwa of nearby Nihonmatsu Domain. Shirakawa would soon be the site of some of the Boshin War's stiffest fighting. Shōji Kichinosuke, "Shirakawa-han," pp. 195-223 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1976), pp. 218-219.

¹⁵⁷ Bolitho also argued elsewhere that the *fudai-tozama* distinction "though still occasionally used, has largely been discarded as a working concept by modern historians, who have discovered that it is no longer possible to assume that the attitude of any daimyo toward national political issues owed anything to the allegiance of his ancestors; indeed, more significantly, it is no longer possible to assume that any given group of vassals would necessarily be influenced by what their daimyo thought." While I consider this view valid in light of the evidence, the *fudai-tozama* distinction, with very few exceptions especially in the 1850s and 1860s, does hold weight with regard to whether or not a given daimyo and his retinue would have direct or indirect involvement with the Tokugawa government. Harold Bolitho, *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyo in Tokugawa Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press ,1974), p. 47, Harold Bolitho, "The Han," pp. 183-234 of *The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 4: Early Modern Japan*, ed. John W. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 187.

exception rather than the norm.¹⁵⁸ Thus, in a situation like that of early 1868, with the Shogunate dead and the region's leading tozama domain organizing a defensive alliance, it should not be surprising to find a *fudai* presence in the Alliance ranks.

Yet *fudai* alone were not the only ones whose installation by the Tokugawa family aimed to represent the family's regional interests. The Tokugawa also placed collateral branches, the domains known as *shinpan*, in the region.

¹⁵⁸ To my knowledge, only the Hayashi family of Jōzai domain (*Jōzai-han* 請西藩), on the Bōsō peninsula, invoked the fudai's traditional obligation to the Tokugawa family as its *causus bellum*. The Hayashi lord and retainers later fought in the Tōhoku region alongside Alliance forces. Nakamura Akihiko, *Dappan Daimyō no Boshinsensō: Kazusa-Jōzai hanshu Hayashi Tadataka no Shōgai* (Tokyo: Chūkōron-shinsha, 2000), p. 50.

Table 2: Fudai domains

Domain	Ruling family	Income level	Antechamber Seating
Shōnai	Sakai	170,000 koku	Councilors' Chamber
Tanagura	Abe	100,000 koku	Hall of Geese
Iwakidaira	Andō	67,000 koku	Hall of Geese
Yamagata	Mizuno	50,000 koku	Hall of Emperors
Kaminoyama	Matsudaira ¹⁵⁹	40,000 koku	Hall of Geese
Fukushima	Itakura	30,000 koku	Hall of Geese
Izumi	Honda	20,000 koku	Hall of Emperors
Matsuyama	Sakai	20,000 koku	Hall of Geese
Nagatoro	Yonekizu	11,000 koku	Hall of Chrysanthemums

¹⁵⁹ Though the Matsudaira of Kaminoyama were, indeed, a cadet branch of the Tokugawa shogunal family, they were classed as *fudai* rather than *shinpan* daimyo. Kaminoyama would later join the Shiroishi Council, which went on to form the Northern Alliance. Mori Kahei, *Iwate wo tsukuru hitobito: Kindai-hen jō-maki* (Tokyo: Hösei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1974), pp. 222-223.

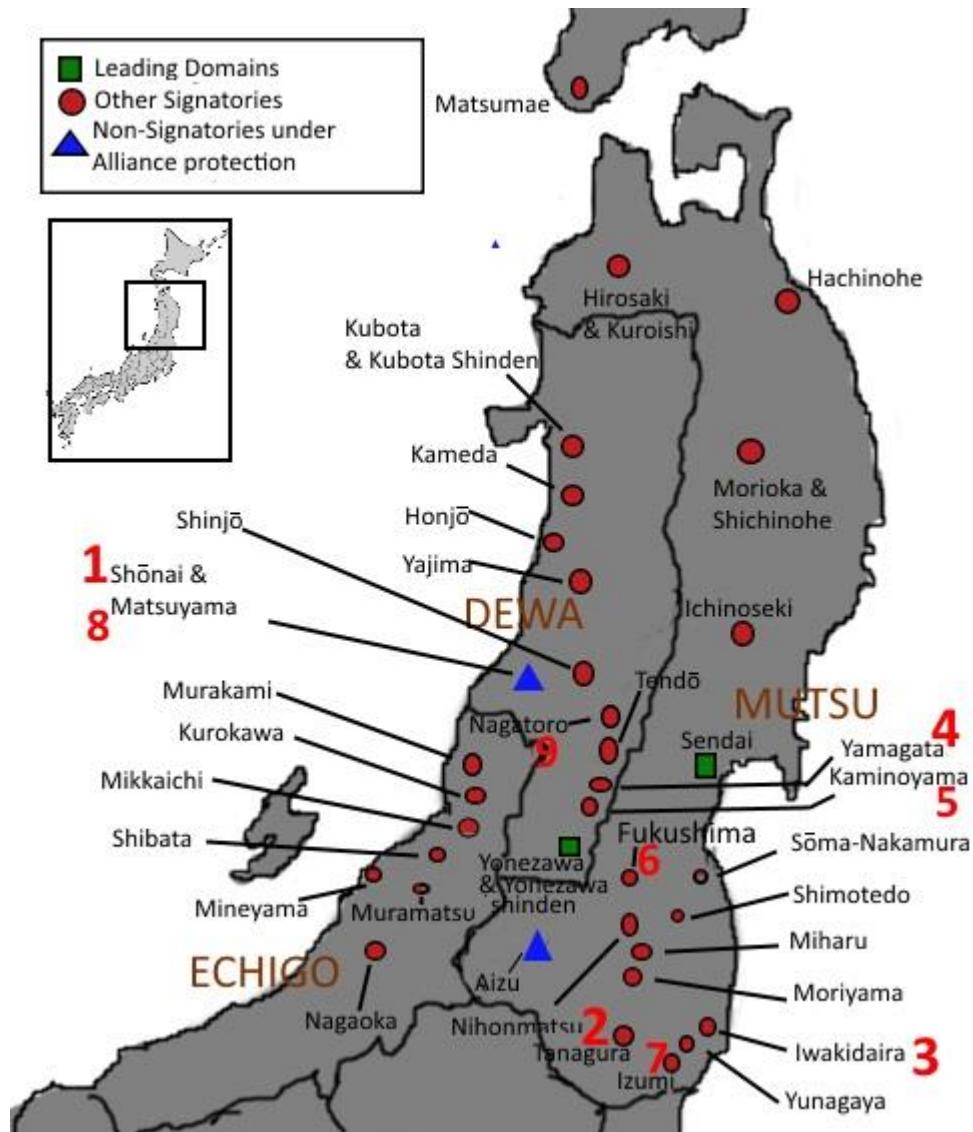


Figure 5: The Alliance's Nine *Fudai* Domains

3.2.3 Shinpan domains

There were only two Tohoku *shinpan* domains. Both of them—Aizu domain (*Aizu-han* 会津藩) and Moriyama domain (*Moriyama-han* 守山藩)—were in southern Mutsu. Moriyama, whose ruling Matsudaira family was a cadet branch of the Tokugawa family of Mito, was very small, at barely 20,000 *koku*.¹⁶⁰ Until 1868, its ruling family had the privilege of being permanently posted (*jōfu* 定府) in Edo. Consequently, the domain's officials and retainers did not reside within its boundaries, and the only administrative presence was a small cadre of district administrators who oversaw security and tax collection matters. Despite its limited resources and previous lack of military capability, the domain began military organization at the war's onset, forming a local militia and signing on to the Alliance pact. It stood largely uninvolved in military action and surrendered to the southwestern coalition without a fight.

¹⁶⁰Muraiso Eishun, “Tōhoku, Kita Kantō chihō no Shohan Ichiran,” pp. 425-440 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1976), pp. 446-447

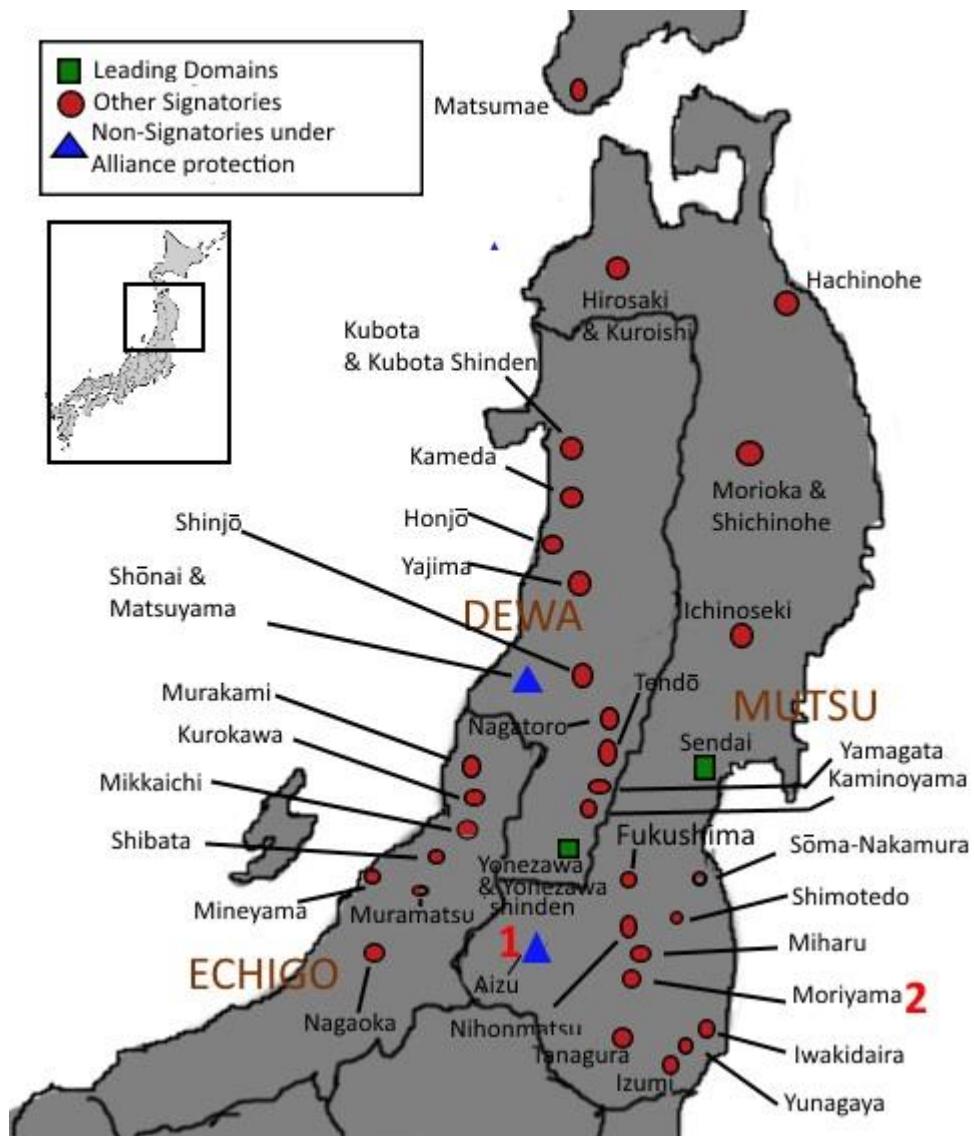


Figure 6: The Northeast's Two *Shinpan* Domains

Unlike the small Moriyama domain, which benefited from the prestige of its powerful parent family in Mito, Aizu was large, powerful, staunchly martial, and well-connected to shogunal politics.¹⁶¹ It was established in the 1640s under the rule of Hoshina Masayuki (保科正之), half-brother to the third shogun Iemitsu and regent—and thus *de facto* head of government--

¹⁶¹ Noguchi Shin'ichi, *Aizu-han* (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2005), pp. 54-55.

during the fourth shogun Ietsuna's minority.¹⁶² The Aizu daimyo family received use of the Matsudaira surname during the tenure of Masayuki's grandson Masakata.¹⁶³ Henceforth known as the Matsudaira of Aizu, the family held a hereditary seat on the shogun's advisory council (*tamari-no-ma* 溜之間).¹⁶⁴ Covering a swath of 230,000 koku in southern Mutsu, Aizu's capital was the castle town of Wakamatsu (若松).¹⁶⁵ The town, which became the modern city of Aizu-Wakamatsu (会津若松), sat in a valley at the junction of five roads. A *shinpan* domain at such a strategically important location had a military significance. One way or another, any potential anti-Tokugawa alliance among the northern *tozama* had to pass through Aizu and its neighboring *fudai* domains on the way southward to the shogun's capital at Edo and to the Tokugawa heartland in the Kantō plain. Thus, it would be the Aizu daimyo's duty to stop them first.¹⁶⁶ The Aizu leadership did not always agree with the Tokugawa government, or its directives, but this role as Tokugawa bulwark continued to recur over its history. The shogunate assigned Aizu forces to coastal defense numerous times during the early 19th century, both in the Bosō

¹⁶² Noguchi, p. 40. Masayuki is also remembered for his role as a patron of Neo-Confucian studies in the early Edo period.

¹⁶³ Noguchi, p. 56.

¹⁶⁴ Shōji Kichinosuke, "Aizu-han," pp. 147-194 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1976), p. 149.

¹⁶⁵ The shogunate raised this by 50,000 *koku* in 1864, for a total of 280,000. This, combined with then-lord Matsudaira Katamori's 50,000 koku Kyoto Protector office salary, was a significant boost in wealth available to the domain. Satō Masanobu, "Matsudaira Katamori Ryakunenfu," pp. 247-251 of *Matsudaira Katamori no subete*, Tsunabuchi Kenjō, ed. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1984), p. 249.

¹⁶⁶ Shimoda, p. 12. The Matsudaira of Aizu would later invoke this responsibility in attempting to turn down, albeit unsuccessfully, coastal defense assignments elsewhere.

Peninsula close to the shogunal capital, as well as in what is today parts of Hokkaido and Sakhalin Islands.¹⁶⁷ Later, Aizu troops would notoriously serve as the Tokugawa shogunate's peacekeepers in Kyoto during the 1860s, when the Aizu daimyo Matsudaira Katamori (松平容保) held the office of Kyoto Protector (*Kyoto Shugoshoku* 京都守護職).¹⁶⁸ It was the Aizu domain's activities in Kyoto which antagonized its future enemies from Satsuma, Chōshū, Tosa, and elsewhere, and planted the seed for the enmity that later exploded into full-on war in 1868.

The Aizu daimyo's seat at Edo Castle was in the Councilors' Chamber, as was that of the Sakai daimyo of Shōnai. The Moriyama daimyo's, like many great and small Tokugawa collateral domain lords' seating, was in the Great Hall. The *shinpan* and *fudai*, however, were not the only markers of Tokugawa presence in the northeast.

Table 3: Shinpan domains

Domain	Ruling family	Income level	Antechamber Seating
Aizu	Matsudaira	230,000 koku	Councilors' Chamber
Moriyama	Matsudaira (Mito)	20,000 koku	Great Hall

3.2.4 Hatamoto domains and shogunal house land

Though there were no cities in the Tohoku region under direct shogunal control, like Edo or Nagasaki, the shogunate and its non-daimyo banner vassals (*hatamoto* 旗本) maintained other

¹⁶⁷ Noguchi, pp. 145-153.

¹⁶⁸ Yamakawa Hiroshi, *Kyoto Shugoshoku shimatsu* (Tokyo, Heibonsha: 1965-66), p. 8. For more on Aizu domain's history in the 1860s, especially its activities in Kyoto, see also Kitahara Masanaga, *Shichinenshi* (Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1904).

forms of presence in the region.¹⁶⁹ There were comparatively few banner domains in either Mutsu or Dewa.¹⁷⁰ The largest, called Yajima (矢島) and held by the Ikoma (生駒) family, was an 8,000 *koku* territory in Dewa Province.¹⁷¹ Despite its modest size, Yajima participated in the conference that formed the Northern Alliance; the Yajima delegate also signed the treaty on his lord's behalf.¹⁷² As it was a very small domain, siding with its powerful neighbors was the only logical course of action. No other *hatamoto* joined the Northern Alliance.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ There were, however, locales under direct shogunal control in neighboring Nikkō (Kōzuke Province), Sado (Sado Province), Niigata (Echigo Province), and Hakodate (Ezochi). Sasama Yoshihiko, *Edo Machibugyō Jiten* (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1995), p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ Higher ranking *hatamoto* of *kōtai-yorai* (交代寄合) status were below the 10,000 *koku* threshold but came under the shogunal senior councilors' jurisdiction. *Kōtai-yorai* also performed alternate attendance on the shogun and held many of the same obligations and privileges as their over-10,000 colleagues. Ogawa Kyōichi, *Edo no Hatamoto Jiten*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2003), p. 103.

¹⁷¹ Muraiso Eishun, “Tōhoku-chihō no han ichiran,” pp. 395-402 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 402.

¹⁷² Yajima ultimately did not remain in the Alliance for long. When the tides of war turned against its allies, the Ikoma clan's opinion shifted, and it joined the southwestern coalition's forces. For this act, the Ikoma received an increase in territory which pushed their holdings over the 10,000 *koku* line and rendered them daimyo again. Muraiso, “Tōhoku, Kita Kantō chihō no Shohan Ichiran,” in *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 1, p. 402.

¹⁷³ There was, however, the curious case of Kitsuregawa Domain (*Kitsuregawa-han* 喜連川藩). This was a domain in the north Kantō, ruled by an offshoot of the Ashikaga family, who before the Tokugawa had held the title of shogun. At 3,500, the domain's income was under the 10,000 *koku* daimyo minimum, but it held the status of a 100,000 *koku* domain. It sent delegates to Shiroishi for the conference that gave birth to the Alliance. Muraiso Eishun, “Tōhoku, Kita Kantō chihō no Shohan Ichiran,” in *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1976), p. 435.

Certain parts of the Tōhoku were, at least nominally, under direct administration by the Tokugawa shogunate.¹⁷⁴ In practice, the shogunate either administered these lands directly, or alternatively, delegated all or part of this responsibility to local powers. For example, starting in the early 18th century, Aizu domain had custody over Minamiyama, a 50,000 koku tract of land in southern Mutsu immediately adjoining Aizu house lands.¹⁷⁵ Minamiyama was, for all intents and purposes, Aizu territory: there were shogunate intendants assigned there, but in practice, for much of the Edo period, the territory belonged to Aizu.¹⁷⁶ Another prominent area under direct shogunal control was Shindatsu 信達, land in what is now eastern Fukushima Prefecture that was scattered among the local modestly-sized domains. Shindatsu's wealth lay particularly in its sericulture.¹⁷⁷ There were still other territories scattered elsewhere across Mutsu and Dewa Provinces, but compared to other parts of the archipelago, where shogunal land was ubiquitous, these territories were few and far between.

But regardless of their differences in history and the specifics of their political ties vis-à-vis the shogunal government, the northern domains also had a long history of lateral and internal discord. It is to this discord that our discussion now turns.

¹⁷⁴ These are territories variously called *tenryō* (天領), also known as *bakuryō* (幕領) or generally as *chokkatsuchi* (直轄地). Their official name was *goryō* (御料). *Nihonshi B Yōgoshū* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2000), p. 132.

¹⁷⁵ Shōji, “Aizu-han,” p 193.

¹⁷⁶ Noguchi, pp. 41-43. Aizu held it five times for a total of 175 years, and the shogunate held it four times for a total of 54 years, until the shogunate officially granted Minamiyama to Aizu in 1863.

¹⁷⁷ Stephen Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 80-81. But what it had in sericulture it lacked in terms of rizoculture.

3.3 VENDETTAS AND DISTURBANCES: A HISTORY OF DISCORD

Some of the northeast's political divisions and conflicts were inter-domainal. Others took the form of recurring popular or samurai uprisings. But regardless of their specifics, all of them paint a picture of the Tōhoku as a region fraught with discord and often punctuated with violent revolt, both within retainer bands as well as by commoners. I offer some of the more salient examples below. Here, yet again, by appreciating the region's political complexities, we can understand it as anything but a borderless, unitary region at perfect peace. In this light, the fact that they would go on to stand together as allies, even for a brief historical moment, is an exception rather than a norm.

3.3.1 Inter-domainal disputes

The long-running Tsugaru-Nanbu feud is still well known in the northern Tohoku region. The Tsugaru, once called the Ōura, were Nanbu vassals prior to the late Muromachi period. However, in the late 16th century, Ōura Tamenobu (大浦為信), who was steward over a territory that he administered from Namioka Castle and who later renamed himself Tsugaru Tamenobu (津輕為信), rose in revolt against the Nanbu in a bid for independence.¹⁷⁸ He took several of the Nanbu clan's northernmost districts for his own and successfully outmaneuvered his former masters by reaching out to the hegemon Toyotomi Hideyoshi and pledging fealty to him before the Nanbu could object.¹⁷⁹ Much as it must have chagrined them, the Nanbu, who also became Toyotomi

¹⁷⁸ Hasegawa, *Tsugaru, Matsumae to Umi no Michi*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷⁹ *Tsugaruhan Kyūkidenrui*, ed. Shimozawa Yasumi, et. al. (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1982), p. 18.

vassals, could not risk an attack on the Tsugaru, as this would have occasioned a swift and deadly response from their now mutual overlord.¹⁸⁰ So the two fiefdoms settled into what became centuries of simmering resentment. There were occasions when this resentment overflowed and assassinations or other sorts of incidents occurred. On the whole, the two clans were not friendly by any stretch of the imagination. Two of their particularly salient incidents were the Hinokiyama Disturbance (*Hinokiyama-sōdō* 檜山騒動) of 1712, which was a conflict over natural resources and boundary lines, a conflict eventually arbitrated in Tsugaru's favor by the shogunate, and the Sōma Daisaku incident (*Sōma Daisaku jiken* 相馬大作事件) of 1821, which was an assassination attempt on the Tsugaru daimyo by disgruntled Nanbu retainers.¹⁸¹

The Date and Uesugi houses also had an often strained relationship.¹⁸² That they would go on to form and jointly lead an alliance in 1868 is, in light of their mutual history, somewhat surprising. Following Date Masamune's pledge of fealty to Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1590, Hideyoshi shunted Masamune's fief to the coastal land immediately northeast, which took Masamune out of the old Date heartland in southern Mutsu and Dewa provinces.¹⁸³ The Uesugi

¹⁸⁰ Mary E. Berry, *Hideyoshi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 95-96.

¹⁸¹ Hosoi, pp. 112-113.

¹⁸² However, rather curiously, there was a brief interval during which Watari Sanemoto (亘理実元), Date Masamune's grand-uncle, was adopted into, and then returned from, the Uesugi family as a potential heir. He maintained use of the Uesugi sparrows-in-bamboo (*take ni suzume* 竹に雀) crest, which is to this day (albeit in modified form), better known as the Date family's main crest. In an ironic twist, the heir apparent to the main Date line, Date Yasumune, has copyrighted this appropriated crest. Kobayashi, *Sengoku Daimyo Date-shi no Kenkyū*, p.85.

¹⁸³ Kayaba Ujiaki, "Gogo no Date-kinu," pp. 3-18 of *Sendai Sōsho* vol. 8, ed. Taira Shigemichi (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1972), p. 5. Despite several moves in the vicinity, the Date family's main line had remained in southern Mutsu and

clan, who were also Toyotomi vassals and originally from neighboring Echigo province, soon received the old Date lands as part of their own expanded fief.¹⁸⁴ Though his new territory remained considerably large, this loss of the old lands did not sit well with Masamune, who eyed those Uesugi-held territories for nearly a decade. In 1600, the Uesugi sided against the Tokugawa, and the Tokugawa-allied Masamune saw his chance. As part of the eastern front of Ieyasu's Sekigahara campaign, Masamune joined the Tokugawa allied forces and attacked the Uesugi clan's northeastern outposts. Date forces captured an outlying Uesugi castle at Shiroishi and took a stretch of land in its vicinity.¹⁸⁵ Masamune's troops later faced the Uesugi forces again, this time in Dewa Province at Hasedō (長谷堂).¹⁸⁶ The jointly Mogami-Date led Tokugawa allies held out against a determined Uesugi force at the Battle of Hasedō, and thus secured Ieyasu's far eastern flank during the fight at Sekigahara.¹⁸⁷ Though Masamune's other actions during this campaign cost him what might have been deeper trust by Tokugawa Ieyasu and his heirs, Ieyasu allowed him to hold onto lands his armies had captured.¹⁸⁸

Much later, in the 1860s, the two domains nearly came to blows over influence on Yashiro, the district (*gō* 郷) that lay midway between their lands. Kaminoyama clan elders, and

Dewa since their 12th century arrival in the Tōhoku region. The move out of those lands was, thus, an abrupt break from a centuries-old *status quo*.

¹⁸⁴ Enomoto, “Yonezawa-han,” p. 359.

¹⁸⁵ *Date Chike Kiroku* Vol. 2, ed. Taira Shigemichi (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1974), pp. 434-438. Kazama Kansei, “Shiroishi-jō,” pp. 125-138 of *Sendaijō to Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai* (Tokyo: Meichō Shuppan, 1982), pp. 126-127.

¹⁸⁶ *Date Chike Kiroku*, Vol. 2, pp. 457-458. The battle is also known, after the era name and province, as the Keichō Battle of Dewa (*Keichō Dewa Kassen* 慶長出羽合戦).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 454-470.

¹⁸⁸ Kobayashi, *Sengoku Daimyō Date-shi no Kenkyū*, p. 210.

in particular Kaneko Yosaburō, successfully mediated this dispute, perhaps motivated by the inescapable reality that their small domain lay between the two much larger Sendai and Yonezawa domains, that is, in the path of any potential military action by either side.¹⁸⁹ By 1867, thanks to Kaminoyama mediation and a series of meetings between Sendai and Yonezawa officials that improved their inter-domainal ties, the two domains had moved from conflict to cooperation, having actively laid the groundwork for their joint leadership of the Northern Alliance.¹⁹⁰

The inter-domainal relationship between Sendai and Morioka, likewise, had a difficult history. The Edo period opened with fighting between the Date and Nanbu, during the Waga-Hienuki Uprising (*Waga Hienuki ikki* 和賀稗貫一揆).¹⁹¹ The 1590s had left many old small-time landholders, people whose territories hardly qualified them to be called daimyo, dispossessed and scattered around the Japanese landscape, either as guests of wealthier men or as homeless drifters. Waga Tadachika, former ruler of the eponymous Waga county in what by then was southern Nanbu territory, was one such man. Like the Date, the Waga and the Nanbu pledged fealty to Hideyoshi in 1590. Unlike the Date and the Nanbu, the Waga lost their territory entirely. Hideyoshi had divided the lands into two: the Nanbu clan held the north, including Waga County, and the Date held everything from neighboring Esashi County southward to

¹⁸⁹ Kurihara, p. 17. Kaminoyama was wedged between Sendai territory to the north and Yonezawa territory to the south.

¹⁹⁰ Kurihara, p. 28.

¹⁹¹ Tanaka Kitami, “Morioka-han,” pp. 173-211 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), pp. 180-182.

Rikuzen.¹⁹² Waga Tadachika lived as a guest of the Date family at Hirasawa, a town in nearby Isawa County. His former vassals were scattered on both sides of the still poorly defined Nanbu-Date border.

As he had done with the Date, Mogami, Satake, and others, Tokugawa Ieyasu ordered the Nanbu clan to deploy its army in the fight against the Uesugi in order to secure his own eastern flank while heading west to the battle at Seki-ga-hara. So in October 1600, while the Nanbu deployed their forces to that front and consequently left their border defenses at less than full strength, Waga Tadachika saw an opportunity to retake his old castle and land. But it is important to note that he did so at Date Masamune's instigation and with his logistical, material, and military support, though Masamune officially denied this, in a cleverly worded message to Nanbu Toshinao, his northerly counterpart.¹⁹³ The rebellion came to a bloody close in the spring of 1601, when the Nanbu clan rallied its troops and overran Waga's last defenses by brute force.¹⁹⁴

The end of fighting in Waga County was not the end of dispute between the Date and Nanbu houses. Another point of conflict was their lengthy border's precise path. The border meandered from the Ōū Range all the way to the Pacific coast. Because the border was new in

¹⁹² Takimoto Hisafumi and Nasukawa Itsuo, *Sanriku Kaigan to Hama Kaidō*. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004), pp. 71-72.

¹⁹³ In a brief message full of feigned innocence that bordered on the excessive, Masamune pleaded utter innocence and lack of involvement with the Waga rebellion. He also lectured Nanbu Toshinao on the importance of maintaining order in the Nanbu domains. However, despite Masamune's protestations of innocence, his involvement in prompting the rebellion was beyond question, and all attempts at further denial proved fruitless. The full text of his letter to Nanbu Toshinao is reproduced in Tanaka, "Morioka-han," p. 181.

¹⁹⁴ Tanaka, "Morioka-han," pp. 181-182.

the early 17th century, no one had ever clearly delineated it. As a defensive measure against Morioka, Sendai domain maintained a string of defensive fortifications in the vicinity, cleverly circumventing the Tokugawa restriction on multiple castles in a domain by classifying them as fortresses (*yōgai* 要害) rather than castles (*shiro* 城).¹⁹⁵ The border was eventually clearly delineated by roadside markers and mounds of earth set up in the latter half of the 17th century, but only after decades of negotiation. Though there was cross-border trade and some improvement in ties, close supervision of the border, in particular from the Date side and along the strategically important Kitakami River, would continue for decades.

3.3.2 Peasant Protests and Samurai House Disputes

Beyond inter-domainal discord, the Tōhoku also experienced its fair share of peasant uprisings, particularly in the Edo period's closing decades. Massive famine, like the Tenpō famine early in the 19th century, only deepened peasant discontent. Peasants mobilized against what they saw as corrupt wealthy merchants and corrupt domain officials. The 1866 uprisings in Shindatsu, the primarily silk-producing shogunal house lands of what is now east central Fukushima Prefecture, are an example of this. Angry peasants engaged in break-ins of government offices and wealthy

¹⁹⁵ The northern border, and waterborne transport along the Kitakami River as it ran into Sendai territory from Nanbu territory, was overseen on the Sendai side by fortresses like Mizusawa, where a cadet branch of the Date (the Rusu-Date) resided. Sappinai Yoshinori, "Mizusawa *yōgai*," in pp. 341-353 of *Sendaijō to Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai* (Tokyo: Meichō shuppan, 1982), pp. 342-343. Other, smaller fortifications like Hitokabe and Kamikuchinai, also held by high-ranking Date vassals, reinforced larger fortresses like Mizusawa.

people's estates that are often called "smashings" (*uchikowashi*).¹⁹⁶ Peasant uprisings in the region continued during the crucial war year of 1868, as the local population, already pushed to the limit by poor harvests, suffered further due to war,¹⁹⁷ and continued into the 1870s.

However, the peasant caste also used less violent means to rally against Shogunate or domain policies that they felt threatened their well-being. The Shogunate's decision to hand over control of Yashiro district from shogunal to Yonezawa domain control precipitated the peasant opposition that led to the Yashiro District incident noted above. The local population submitted a memorial to Sendai domain authorities, asking for intercession to return of the 30,000 *koku* Yashiro to shogunal control and, consequently, to the purview of shogunal laws.¹⁹⁸ But an even more dramatic example of this kind of direct opposition to government edicts was the peasant action during the planned three-way fief transfer (*sanpō ryōchigae* 三方領地替え) of 1840. Peasants of Shōnai domain directly petitioned shogunal officials in Edo, in early 1841, in the hopes of stopping the planned move of the Sakai daimyo family to Nagaoka, in Niigata Province.¹⁹⁹ Though they had broken Shogunate laws in their efforts to stop this transfer, the peasants were successful.

¹⁹⁶ Stephen Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 123-130.

¹⁹⁷ Vlastos, p. 163.

¹⁹⁸ Kurihara, p. 17. It is unclear to me why they would choose Sendai domain to intercede with the shogunate on their behalf, when Sendai was the shogunate's major potential rival in the northeast. That being said, Sendai and the shogunate had reasonably good relations.

¹⁹⁹ The Makino family of Nagaoka was to have moved to Kawagoe domain, and the Matsudaira family of Kawagoe was to have moved to Shōnai. William Kelly, *Deference and Defiance in Nineteenth Century Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 77-98.

House disturbances (*oie sōdō* 御家騒動), internal clashes among a domain's body of samurai vassals, were another manifestation of political dispute in the Tōhoku, though they had tapered off by the early 19th century. Often, but not always, they involved some measure of bloodshed. Of all the region's domains, these incidents occurred in the Sendai retainer band with the greatest frequency.²⁰⁰ The late 17th century Date house dispute remains one of the most well-known in Japanese historical and popular consciousness, though there were several later house disputes within Sendai domain.²⁰¹ Other house disputes in the northeast included the Mogami Disturbance (1617), the Aizu Disturbance (1634),²⁰² the Shōhō Incident of Tsugaru domain (1647), the Seven Families Disturbance of Yonezawa domain (1773),²⁰³ and the Hachiyanagi Disturbance of Shinjō domain (1814).²⁰⁴ Though they did not always involve bloodshed, these incidents shook the region's domains regardless of their size. The incidents also divided retainer bands from concerted action and from addressing their domains' needs effectively. In sum, these repeated episodes of internal and regional instability make the Alliance's existence all the more surprising.

²⁰⁰ For more on the 17th century incidents that are arguably the best known of them all, and the basis of many popular portrayals starting with *kabuki*, see *Miyagi Kenshi* Dai 2kan: Kinseishi. (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1966), pp. 404-420.

²⁰¹ Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, p. 151-161.

²⁰² Noguchi Shin'ichi, *Aizu-han* (Tokyo: Gendai shokan, 2005), pp. 29-32.

²⁰³ Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan*, p. 89.

²⁰⁴ Fukuda Chizuru, *Oie Sōdō* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 2005), pp. 92-94.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The Tohoku region, located as it is on the archipelago's northern edge, may be tempting to see as a monolithic and unchanging frontier or backwater to the Japanese political center. But in actuality, this was hardly the case. The north was a relatively well-connected region despite challenging topography and climate, which any traveler had to surmount. It was also divided along multiple intersecting political and historical lines. Finally, it was fraught with a history of internal disunity and discord that sometimes, though not always, resulted in revolt and even bloodshed. Given these longstanding realities, the trend in northern Japan does not suggest a situation that would be conducive to a broad, horizontal alliance.

First, different ruling families with different political standings and different resource levels divided the region into a political patchwork. Some, like the Date and Nanbu clans, did not have a historically close relationship with the Tokugawa shogunate but had very old and deep roots in the Tōhoku region. They also had enough power to frighten the Tokugawa into making contingency plans in the event of their potential revolt. Others were small domains that were remnants of other old, local powers, whose rulers, like the Date and Nanbu, were *tozama* daimyo. Still others were *fudai*, scattered among the potentially threatening *tozama* who acted as the Tokugawa shogunate's eyes, ears, and even roadblocks, in anticipation of the *tozama* revolt that never manifested. Finally, one major *shinpan*, Aizu domain, anchored the Tōhoku's southern end. Unlike its neighbors, both the domain and its ruling family were new, not as deeply rooted in the region; and its retainer band was also new, patched together from remnants of various warrior bands from various parts of Japan. Sprinkled among the daimyo domains were various parcels of Tokugawa house land, with varying degrees of integration with neighboring domains. Though the Shogunate installed the north's *fudai* and *shinpan* domains as a way of safeguarding

its regional interests, in practice the domains' leading cadres had their own interests in mind. When Sendai and Yonezawa domains formed the Northern Alliance, the *fudai* and *shinpan* saw an opportunity to do so, independent of their hereditary allegiances.

Second, some of the region's major political powers during the Edo period had a history of mutual antagonism, or at the very least, mutual suspicion. Most of these were rooted in Warring States-era hostilities, and some of them, like the Sendai-Yonezawa antagonism or the Nanbu-Tsugaru enmity, lingered into the 19th century. As noted, some cases of this political enmity came relatively late in the Edo period, as with the Yashiro District incident of the 1860s. These divisions continued to effect the north's attempt at unity in the late 1860s. In some cases, as with the Nanbu and Tsugaru, these differences would remain largely insurmountable, as we shall see. Against this backdrop, the fact that the North was able to cooperate at all is surprising.

Third, the region had its share of uprisings and protests, both peasant and samurai. Though there were "good times" in northern Japan—times when domains were peaceful and peasants were content—these were anything but long-term or constant. Be it the lashing out of starving peasants against corrupt landlords and officials, the antagonism of rival factions within retainer bands, or lobbying—against the law—intended to even countermand orders from the shogunate, this happened frequently. This hardly fits the image of a peaceful, unitary, unchanging hinterland. Again, this tendency toward instability makes the Alliance's existence all the more surprising.

With all of these points of division established, how did northeastern Japan's political powers come together to form an alliance? In order to better understand this, we need to analyze its nucleus -- the house of Date-- and its history and perception of itself. It is to the Date and that history that we now turn.

4.0 THE SPARROW'S DREAM

In the late spring of 1868, the following invitation circulated to the clan elders of northern Japan's domains:

Our lords Mutsu-no-kami²⁰⁵ and Danjō-daihitsu²⁰⁶ have been ordered by the imperial government to form the vanguard of the attack on Katamori of Aizu.²⁰⁷ Lord Mutsu-no-kami has been dispatched already, but as Katamori's retainers have come to his encampment with a petition of surrender and apology, we would like to invite group discussion on this. Therefore we ask that you send men from among your senior officials to Shiroishi as soon as possible.²⁰⁸

The invitation was signed by Uesugi clan elders Takemata Mimasaka and Chisaka Tarōzaemon, and Date clan elders Tadaki Tosa and Saka Eiriki, in the names of their lords Uesugi Narinori (Figure 7, left) and Date Yoshikuni (Figure 7, right). It was the call that gathered the delegates who soon thereafter formed the Northern Alliance. Yet despite the

²⁰⁵ Court title of Date Yoshikuni of Sendai.

²⁰⁶ Court title of Uesugi Narinori of Yonezawa.

²⁰⁷ Matsudaira Katamori, lord of Aizu domain. Aizu, as noted in Chapter 1, was one of the southwestern coalition's *bêtes noires*.

²⁰⁸ Text reproduced in Otokozawa Chisato, Itō Sukemasa, Yano Michisato, & Imamura Moriyuki, "Boshin Shimatsu," pp. 41-325 of *Sendai Sōsho Vol 12*. (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1974), pp. 161-162.

invitation being jointly issued, from its onset the Alliance, and all external interaction with the north, heavily favored Sendai domain and the Date clan. The delegates convened in Date lands at Shiroishi (see fig. 3.5), and when the southwestern coalition's new central government sent emissaries to the north, they focused their presence on Date lands, particularly the Sendai castle town. An early draft of the Alliance treaty also heavily favored the Date clan's authority over all others in the region.²⁰⁹ Why was this?



Figure 7: Uesugi Narinori (left) and Date Yoshikuni (right)

Having seen, in the preceding chapter, the factors that stood against the formation of a northern alliance, this chapter analyzes the underpinnings of why the Date clan and lands were such a focal point for the region in 1868. I argue that the Date clan was the inheritor of a mantle of regional authority stretching back a millennium to roots in the non-Yamato Emishi people and their “Yamato-ized” descendants who controlled a vast semi-independent polity from the northern city of Hiraizumi, during the late Heian era (794-1185).

The Date family, which saw itself as leading a coalition that was, at the very least, equal to the southwestern coalition that now called itself the imperial army, controlled the former

²⁰⁹ Hoshi Ryōichi, *Ōetsureppandōmei* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 1997), p. 33.

quasi-autonomous northern polity's geographic heartland. By 1868, the family and its dependents had resided there for three centuries. The Date family and the leadership of Sendai domain, which it ruled, were aware of this tradition, preserved its physical heritage, and claimed it—the tradition and the physical heritage—as their own.²¹⁰ Thus, I argue that setting the Date leadership of the Northern Alliance into that millennium of heritage will help better contextualize the alliance's formation with the Date family and domain as its senior partner and “center of gravity.”

4.1 WHERE THE ROAD ENDS

In 1689, the great haiku poet Bashō made the trip through northern Japan now famous because of his travelogue *Oku no Hosomichi*.²¹¹ While visiting Hiraizumi (平泉), in what today is Iwate Prefecture (*Iwate-ken* 岩手県), he penned the following verse:

*Summer grass
all that remains
of warriors' dreams.*²¹²

²¹⁰ In the paragraphs below, I use “Date domain” and “Sendai domain” interchangeably.

²¹¹ It has appeared in translation. See Matsuo Bashō, *Narrow Road to the Deep North, and Other Travel Sketches*, tr. Yuasa Nobuyuki. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1966).

²¹² *Natsukusa ya/tsuwamonomodo ga/yume no ato.* Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi : Buddhist art and regional politics in twelfth-century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 1.

Whose dreams? What Bashō saw beyond the fields and the two somewhat dilapidated but once great temples of Chūson-ji (中尊寺) and Mōtsū-ji (毛通寺) was merely a small, backwater town on the Kitakami riverbank, at the extreme northern territorial end of Sendai Domain (*Sendai-han* 仙台藩), the region's largest and most powerful political entity.²¹³ Beyond the grass, only the temples, partially reconstructed though they had been, offered any suggestion of Hiraizumi's past and of those "warriors' dreams." Five centuries earlier, the sleepy little town was a bustling capital from whence the part-Yamato, part-Emishi Northern Fujiwara clan ruled an affluent, quasi-independent domain in what the imperial court in Kyoto viewed as a barely subdued outback. Though it ruled a quasi-independent outback kingdom with trade links stretching both south to Kyoto and north to Hokkaido, the Kuriles, Sakhalin, and Eastern Siberia, the Northern Fujiwara ultimately ruled with the Kyoto court's blessing.²¹⁴ But the family also drew upon their Emishi roots as another source of legitimacy.²¹⁵ It was this source of legitimacy, strengthened and continued by them, that established a tradition that continued for a millennium.

²¹³ Sendai's official income in bales of rice (*koku* 石) was 625,800. Its nearest competitor for size was Akita domain, with 205,800 *koku*. Hiraizumi in the Edo period was north of Sendai's branch domain Ichinoseki and near Sendai domain's northernmost line of outposts and castles along the Kitakami and its tributaries, which guarded the border with the Nanbu of Morioka domain, sometime rivals of the Date of Sendai along a sometimes poorly defined boundary. For more on Mizusawa Castle, which anchored that defensive network, see Sappinai Yoshinori, "Mizusawa-yōgai," pp. 341-353 of *Sendaijō to Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai*, ed. Kobayashi Seiji. (Tokyo: Meichō Shuppan, 1982).

²¹⁴ Takahashi Tomio, "The Classical Polity and its Frontier," introd. And transl. by Karl Friday. pp. 128-145 of *Capital and Countryside in Japan, 300-1180*, ed. Joan Piggott. (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 141.

²¹⁵ Takahashi Tomio, *Hiraizumi: Ōshū Fujiwara-shi Yondai* (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1978), p. 27.

Northern Honshu, today known as the Tohoku region, was utterly beyond the Yamato state's control in the 7th century.²¹⁶ That state's northernmost frontier was Shirakawa Barrier (*Shirakawa-seki* 白河関), which it considered a barrier between the civilized and uncivilized worlds. It was so far from central Japan that "Shirakawa barrier" endured in later poetry as a term evoking physical or personal distance.²¹⁷ Beyond it lived the people whom the Yamato state (regardless of whether or not they were all one people) collectively called Emishi (蝦夷), the "hairy" barbarians to the north and east who stubbornly refused to submit to the Yamato aegis.²¹⁸ There is some debate as to whether or not the Emishi had a state like the Yamato, but from the latter's perspective it was foreign land regardless.²¹⁹ The state steadily expanded its regional control through force: armed colonization, combat, and a line of fortress-settlements that over the

²¹⁶ The Yamato state, that is, the state headed by what we now regard as the Japanese emperor. Hereafter, any reference to Yamato people refers to the people from inside the Yamato state's boundaries—that is, what we now regard as "mainland Japanese" (rather than Ainu or Okinawans). Takahashi Tomio, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1971), p. 34.

²¹⁷ Laura S. Kaufman, "Nature, Courtly Imagery, and Sacred Meaning in the *Ippen Hijiri-e*," pp. 47-75 of *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, ed. James H. Sanford *et. al.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 57.

²¹⁸ Takahashi, "The Classical Polity and its Frontier," p. 131. The Emishi had southern counterparts, the Hayato (隼人), who were subdued far sooner than the Emishi. Their land, once called "Hayato Country" (*Hayato no kuni* 隼人国), was also renamed to Satsuma Province (*Satsuma-no-kuni* 薩摩国), but the Emishi lands retained the names Mutsu and Dewa until 1871.

²¹⁹ Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, "Hakusan at Hiraizumi," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 1998:25 3/4, p. 261ff. An Emishi confederacy did, however, form during the late 7th century, in what are now Iwate and Akita Prefectures.

years pushed ever northward on both the island's Pacific and Sea of Japan sides, until by the late 8th century the northern provinces were governed from Fort Taga (*Tagajō* 多賀城), a government outpost and military installation just east of modern-day Sendai.²²⁰

Fort Taga was a provincial capital like the many others in Japan, but as Mutsu was the outback, it was also the headquarters for a special peacekeeping officer, the Commanding General for Pacification (*Chinju Shōgun* 鎮守將軍).²²¹ Together with Fort Taga's establishment, the court also divided that once wholly alien land into two provinces, Mutsu (陸奥) and Dewa (出羽), which endured, at least in name, until the institution of the modern prefecture system in the early 1870s.²²² Yet where the court gave other previously "foreign" lands in Kyushu new names, Mutsu and Dewa kept their names. In Mutsu's case, this was a condensed version of the name's older reading, "Michinoku," meaning "interior roads." More loosely rendered, it was a land that was beyond "where the road ends." This speaks to their enduring status as not quite

²²⁰ The Yamato state thus slowly increased both its military presence and agricultural reshaping of the region. See Takahashi, "The Classical Polity and Its Frontier," p. 138, Bruce L. Batten, *To the Ends of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), p. 84. For a table that traces the growing numbers of Yamato troops in the north from 701 through the late 9th century, see the chart on Suzuki, p. 52. Initially 6,000, the number peaked at 10,000 in 768; by the late 9th century it settled at around 8,000. For a map tracing that northward push, see Takahashi Tomio, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1971), p. 34. According to a stone marker at the site, the Yamato state built Fort Taga in 724. Yienpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 19.

²²¹ Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, pp. 36-39.

²²² Takahashi, "The Classical Polity and its Frontier," p. 133. However, both provinces were broken up into smaller provinces in late 1868: Mutsu into five (Iwashiro 岩代, Iwaki 岩城, Rikuzen 陸前, Rikuchū 陸中, and Rikuoku 陸奥), Dewa into two (Uzen 羽前 and Ugo 羽後). Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, p. 212.

Japanese, or as Takahashi Tomio observes, as lands simultaneously “inside and outside” Japan.²²³

Desperate to solve its 8th century financial problems, the Yamato court was ecstatic at the discovery of gold in Mutsu, which aided its finances; Mutsu gold would later also support the Northern Fujiwara state.²²⁴ Yamato soldiers, posted to the north as a deterrent against Emishi uprisings, also engaged in land reclamation.²²⁵ Horse-rearing and trading, as well as trade in locally produced ironware, were also profitable businesses in the north and remained so until well into the 19th century.²²⁶

But Emishi resistance to this foreign authority continued. Emishi murdered Kamitsukenu no Ason Hirohito, a Yamato official, in 720, and launched a rebellion.²²⁷ The court soon dispatched a punitive expedition and issued an edict ordering the cultivation of “wilderness.” As William Wayne Farris argues, “this should be seen as a step in bringing Mutsu under firmer

²²³ Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 28

²²⁴ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi* p. 21, Ōishi and Nanba, p. 110.

²²⁵ Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” p. 138.

²²⁶ For more on horse rearing and horse trading in Sendai domain during the Edo period, see Ōishi Naomasa and Nanba Nobuo, *Hiraizumi to Ōshū dōchū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), pp. 114-116. For Sendai domain’s trade in iron and ironware, see ibid, pp. 112-114. For late Edo period iron processing and early efforts at steel production in neighboring Morioka domain as led by Morioka retainer Ōshima Takatō 大島高任, who continued with steelmaking in the Meiji era, see Ōhashi Shūji, *Bakumatsu Meiji Seitetsuron* (Tokyo: Hakushinsha, 1991), pp. 275-332.

²²⁷ William Wayne Farris, *Population, Disease, and Land in Early Japan, 645-900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 78-79.

imperial control.”²²⁸ After further revolts in Mutsu in 774, and in Dewa in 777, in 780, Emishi rebels burned Fort Taga and killed local government officials in a revolt led by erstwhile Yamato ally Korehari no Azamaro (伊治皆麻呂).²²⁹ Azamaro had previously led Yamato-allied Emishi troops in support of action against unsubjugated Emishi in Mutsu.²³⁰ Michishima Ōtate (道嶋大盾), a local Yamato-born resident, apparently taunted Azamaro for his foreign ancestry, which reportedly provoked the revolt.²³¹ Azamaro’s men quickly murdered both Michishima and Ki no Hirozumi (紀広純), a court noble also antagonistic to Azamaro who was posted to the region. The rebellion raged for over half a year.²³²

Things only worsened for the Yamato court, culminating in the particularly large, late 8th century Emishi rebellion led by Aterui (阿亘流爲),²³³ who lived in Isawa, one of the Inner Six Counties (*Oku Rokugun* 奥六郡), where he commanded a significant following.²³⁴ The revolt

²²⁸ Farris, p. 79.

²²⁹ Takahashi Takashi, *Sakanoue no Tamuramaro* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1961), p. 149; Ōishi and Nanba, p. 59. Azamaro is sometimes called Iji (alternatively pronounced “Korehari”) no kimi Azamaro (伊治公皆麻呂). Fort Korehari was on land in what is today Miyagi Prefecture’s Ōsaki City.

²³⁰ Suzuki Takuya, *Emishi to Tōhoku Sensō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2008), p. 113.

²³¹ Batten, p. 106.

²³² Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 26. Clear birth and death dates for Azamaro remain elusive. However, he was, in all likelihood, executed by the Yamato state.

²³³ Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” p. 140, Ōishi and Nanba, p. 58, Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 26. According to Yiengpruksawan, Aterui might have been an Emishi “king.”

²³⁴ The “inner six” are Isawa (胆沢), Esashi (江刺), Waga(和賀), Shiwa (紫波), Hienuki (稗貫), and Iwate (岩手) counties, whose territory is now part of southern Iwate Prefecture. See the map in Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 42.

lasted for several years, until Aterui's defeat and execution in 802.²³⁵ That year, a Yamato army under Sakanoue no Tamuramaro (坂上田村麻呂) crushed further concerted Emishi resistance, secured Aterui's surrender and reasserted the court's authority in the Tohoku region.²³⁶ Tamuramaro's forces built new fortifications and also moved the regional government's seat from Fort Taga to Fort Isawa, in what is now southern Iwate Prefecture. Locally based Yamato forces soon built other, more northerly forts.²³⁷ Yet even this did not end the uprisings: another in 878 saw Yamato outposts in Dewa destroyed. Again, it was some time before Yamato forces were able to adequately respond and reassert their control.²³⁸

As the central government, newly ensconced in Heian-kyō (平安京, modern Kyoto), strengthened and solidified its control over the north, it divided the Emishi into two groups: *fushū* and *emishi*.²³⁹ The *fushū* (俘囚) were the “surrendered barbarians” or “captives,” The *fushū* were Emishi who submitted to the court’s authority and assimilated at least some of Yamato culture.²⁴⁰ But as Yiengpruksawan observes, they kept up a continuity with their non-Yamato roots, holding onto their lands and their gods for the next several centuries.²⁴¹ The *fushū*

²³⁵ Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” p. 140.

²³⁶ Suzuki, pp. 209-211, Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 27. Against Tamuramaro's objections, provincial officials took Aterui and his comrade-in-arms More (母禮) to Kyoto, where they were beheaded. A monument to both men stands in Osaka, on one of the sites where their remains are supposedly buried.

²³⁷ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 27.

²³⁸ Batten, p. 106. This uprising is sometimes called the Gangyō Rebellion.

²³⁹ Given such a long history of armed subjugation, the new city's name, meaning “Capital of Peace and Tranquility,” seems either wishful or ironic.

²⁴⁰ Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” p. 140.

²⁴¹ Yiengpruksawan, “Hakusan at Hiraizumi,” p. 263.

were, if only nominally, the court's regional allies, called upon to join military campaigns and contribute to building projects and government levies. Leaders of major *fushū* families could also hold the title of “*fushū* chief” (*fushūchō* 俘囚長); this recognized an Emishi leader's preeminence but brought that leader at least nominally into the Yamato government's political orbit.²⁴² The court continued to label Emishi those northerners who did *not* submit, and who remained outside the court's control and the Yamato cultural sphere.²⁴³

The northern peoples survived this cycle of uprising and subjugation, and continued to live in a liminal but thriving space on the Yamato state's outer edge. They were unable to shake off the growing Yamato presence, but asserted their agency by cultivating power in the local Yamato administration, though their non-Yamato roots were no secret. Their descendants continued to capitalize on this “inside yet outside” status and set in motion a very long tradition of local semi-autonomy.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” pp. 139-141.

²⁴³ Some prewar Japanese scholars believed in what Bruce L. Batten calls the “Emishi=Ainu” theory, that is that the Emishi were simply the modern-day Ainu people's ancestors. Batten argues that this is too simplistic. See Batten, pp. 102-105.

²⁴⁴ Takahashi Tomio, *Hiraizumi: Ōshū Fujiwara-shi Yondai* (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1978), p. 28

4.2 WARRIORS' DREAMS: THE NORTHERN FUJIWARA STATE

With the central government's hand in local affairs loosening across the archipelago, the 10th century found northern Honshu only nominally under the Kyoto court's control.²⁴⁵ Thus, *fushū* people of Emishi origin flooded the ranks of the Mutsu provincial administration. Eventually, the Kyoto court even appointed one of them as Commanding General for Pacification.²⁴⁶ No longer rebelling against the Yamato state outright, *fushū* leaders instead accumulated increasing amounts of power under that government's nominal auspices. Under the Fujiwara of Hiraizumi, who came from and openly claimed *fushū* descent, they reached the pinnacle of their political and military power during the 11th to 12th century existence of the quasi-independent Hiraizumi domain.

Yet this was not all. The Northern Fujiwara also further strengthened the precedent for later regional bids for political primacy and autonomy. They were “inside” the Japanese state and coopted its trappings, but were still “outside” the rest of Japan. They also established links to the Asian continent on their own terms.²⁴⁷ These realities are necessary to understanding the region’s later history, all the way to 1868. As we will see below, it was the Northern Fujiwara “mantle” to which Date Masamune (伊達政宗), leading northern daimyo and founder of Sendai domain, laid claim when he styled himself “king of Ōshū in the empire of Japan” in letters to Pope Paul V in

²⁴⁵ Takahashi, “The Classical Polity and its Frontier,” p. 141. The reason for this is complicated, but the rise of local military power across the archipelago was a major factor.

²⁴⁶ This, as we will see below, was Fujiwara no Hidehira. One wonders if they understood the irony involved in such an appointment.

²⁴⁷ Ōishi and Nanba, pp. 62-63.

1615.²⁴⁸ His family's careful restoration and preservation of the Northern Fujiwara temples at Chūson-ji and Mōtsū-ji over the two hundred-odd years of the Date tenure as Sendai daimyo, point to the Northern Fujiwara family's enduring presence in northerners' minds and hopes.²⁴⁹ Two and a half centuries later, in 1868, it was Masamune's descendant Yoshikuni, who had forgotten neither his ancestor's legacy nor the Fujiwara past to which he aspired, who led the Northern Alliance in 1868.

The Northern Fujiwara family was the progeny of two leading *fushū* families, the Abe (安倍) and the Kiyohtara (清原).²⁵⁰ The Abe held the title of *fushū* chief noted above, thereby solidifying their power with the Yamato court's blessing.²⁵¹ After a mid-11th century revolt, the Abe were supplanted by the Kiyohtara family. The Kiyohtara took control of Abe lands, but also fought the court's armies, albeit intermittently, from 1083 to 1087.²⁵² The court, with the help of other *fushū* led by Kiyohara no Kiyohira (清原清衡), suppressed the Kiyohtara revolt.²⁵³ Kiyohira, an Abe son raised in the Kiyohtara family, inherited all of both families' former lands,

²⁴⁸ In the original Latin, “*rex Voxu in imperio Iaponico.*” The mission is better known as the Keichō Embassy. Discussed in Kobayashi Seiji, *Date Masamune* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966), pp. 164-166. For more on Hasekura, see Gonoi Takashi, *Hasekura Tsunenaga* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003).

²⁴⁹ For more on Chūson-ji and Mōtsū-ji under Date rule, and especially concerning their role as preservers and performance spaces for a local Noh tradition, see Mihara Ryōkichi, “Nō,” pp. 549-713 of *Miyagi Kenshi*, Vol. 14. (Sendai: Miyagi Kenshi Kankōkai, 1958), pp. 668-671.

²⁵⁰ Yiengpruksawan, “Hakusan at Hiraizumi,” p. 268.

²⁵¹ Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, pp. 35-52.

²⁵² Yiengpruksawan, “Hakusan at Hiraizumi, p. 268.

²⁵³ Yiengpruksawan, “Hakusan at Hiraizumi,” p. 268.

and immediately set about strengthening and expanding his domain.²⁵⁴ His first seat was at Fort Toyota in the Abe home turf near Tamuramaro's old Fort Isawa.²⁵⁵ However, about 1095, he soon moved it to a new locale on the Kitakami River's south side, beside where Chūson-ji and Mōtsū-ji temples still stand today.²⁵⁶ Here he oversaw the construction of a new capital and estate. In what was either a nod to the family that reared him as an orphan, the family *kami* he worshipped, the numerous natural springs nearby, or a combination of the three, he called the new capital Hiraizumi, “spring of peace”²⁵⁷ In time, his capital would grow to rival both Kyoto and the warrior city Kamakura as one of the archipelago’s major cities.²⁵⁸ Late in his life he reverted his surname to that of his natal father, and became Fujiwara no Kiyohira (藤原清衡), by which he is most often remembered. He was the founder of the Fujiwara family of Hiraizumi, to which for brevity’s sake we will refer as the Northern Fujiwara.²⁵⁹

The Northern Fujiwara ruled from Hiraizumi for four generations.²⁶⁰ They were in the Kyoto court’s orbit, had Japanese names, and ruled with imperial sanction, but they and their lands were ultimately not the same as other local rulers and lands in the archipelago. They were a land apart, a people apart, and they were aware of it, which drove their actions as well as their

²⁵⁴ Ōishi and Nanba, p. 61, Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 40. His maternal uncles Sadatō and Munetō were senior Abe commanders during the Former Nine Years’ War.

²⁵⁵ Takahashi, *Ōshū Fujiwara-shi Yondai*, p. 56.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 207.

²⁵⁷ Ōishi and Nanba, p. 61.

²⁵⁸ Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 18.

²⁵⁹ Or as history remembers it by the shortened form of the province’s name, the Ōshū Fujiwara family 奥州藤原氏.

²⁶⁰ Three full generations, with the state’s demise during the tenure of Fujiwara no Yasuhira in the 4th generation.Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 26.

political administration. That being the case, we must ask: how did the Northern Fujiwara see *themselves*? How did others, especially elites in Kyoto and in the Minamoto headquarters at Kamakura, see them? And what legitimized their role as quasi-kings of an autonomous north?

The Northern Fujiwara made no secret of their Emishi heritage.²⁶¹ Kiyohira and his grandson Hidehira also understood that their land lay “inside” and “outside” the empire: they maintained connections with the court at Kyoto but each called himself “chief of the barbarians.”²⁶² Hiraizumi was not only in the *fushū* heartland of the Inner Six Districts, but also astride the Interior Great Road (*Oku-daidō* 奥大道), much of which later became the Ōshū Highway (*Ōshū kaidō* 奥州街道).²⁶³ As Yiengpruksawan writes, by looking at the amount of material wealth available for the Northern Fujiwara’s patronage of religion and the arts, one can assume that the Northern Fujiwara and not the Yamato state was the north’s principal revenue collector.²⁶⁴ Hiraizumi was also halfway between the north’s two major geographic edges: Shirakawa Barrier in the south and Honshu at its northernmost tip.²⁶⁵ Thanks to its Emishi roots, the Northern Fujiwara family was able to maintain lines of communication along this route, and even had some measure of actual control far further north than the Yamato state could manage. Thus, the city’s central location was one befitting of a capital that rivaled Kyoto in size and regional prominence. Clearly the Emishi thread had survived, albeit spun into new, part-Yamato cloth.

²⁶¹ Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 27.

²⁶² Takahashi, *Hiraizumi*, p. 27.

²⁶³ Ōishi and Nanba, pp. 68-70.

²⁶⁴ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 96.

²⁶⁵ See the map in Ōishi and Nanba, p. 68.

Trade routes also linked the Hiraizumi state with peoples who lived far to the north, both in eastern Siberia as well as the myriad islands (including Hokkaido and Sakhalin) that lay in a long arc between Honshu and Kamchatka.²⁶⁶ As anthropologist Mark J. Hudson writes, this trade connected those peoples with Hiraizumi while also spreading material culture from the archipelago northward.²⁶⁷ The source of the Fujiwara chieftains' preference for mummification rather than cremation upon death also derives, in all likelihood, from the funerary practices of those more northerly peoples.²⁶⁸ Those trade links also likely gave the northern Fujiwara a hand in Ainu ethnogenesis. This argues against the view of the Ainu people as an uncontacted Stone Age remnant that was fundamentally unchanged until later Yamato influence.²⁶⁹

Yet though they were *fushū*, the Northern Fujiwara were also Yamato in origin. They claimed descent from the same venerable Fujiwara lineage that bore their contemporaries and predecessors who ran the imperial bureaucracy in Kyoto.²⁷⁰ The Northern Fujiwara also

²⁶⁶ Mark J. Hudson, "Ainu Ethnogenesis and the Northern Fujiwara," pp. 73-83 of *Arctic Anthropology* Vol. 36 No. ½ (1999), pp. 76-78.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 75-77.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 78-79. Kiyohira, Motohira, and Hidehira's bodies remain at Chūson-ji, interred in the golden Konjiki-dō mausoleum pavilion, one of the few original structures remaining at the site. Forensic scientists examined the mummies in the early postwar era. See Takahashi, *Ōshū Fujiwara-shi yondai* pp. 78, 107 for pictures of Kiyohira's and Motohira's mummified remains.

²⁶⁹ Hudson, p. 80.

²⁷⁰ Their descent was from the *Hokke* (北家) branch begun by Fujiwara no Fusasaki (藤原房前). See the family tree in Takahashi, *Ōshū Fujiwara-shi Yondai*, p. 204. Curiously, the Date clan, who later took over the Hiraizumi state's geographic core, also claimed descent from the same Fujiwara branch. Kikuta Sadatoshi, *Sendai Jinmei Daijisho* (Tokyo: Rekishi Toshosha, 1974), pp. 678-679.

ultimately answered to the Kyoto court, though with the understanding that, at such a distance and with the Kyoto government's involvement on the local level dwindling overall, this did not need to be day-to-day obedience. During his 12th century tenure as imperial prime minister, Taira no Kiyomori (平清盛) ordered the Northern Fujiwara to march against his Kamakura-based adversary, the future *shogun* Minamoto no Yoritomo (源頼朝). While not overtly rejecting this order, the Northern Fujiwara instead chose to do nothing and kept their army of over 20,000 troops out of action.²⁷¹ They could afford to do so, as the extreme distance from Kyoto, slowness of communication and transportation, and the logistical difficulty of sending an army to force their cooperation made reprisal very unlikely, though not totally impossible.

The view from Kyoto held that the Northern Fujiwara were cultured, but also part barbarian. All Fujiwara lords starting with Kiyohira held some sort of court rank or office;²⁷² Fujiwara no Hidehira even received several relatively high court titles, including Commanding General for Pacification and Governor of Mutsu (*Mutsu no kami* 陸奥守). Some in Kyoto felt that this was improper because of Hidehira's Emishi heritage.²⁷³ Others feared the Northern Fujiwara as commanders of a barbarian horde that could spill over into the rest of Japan without warning. This fear was part of what precipitated the later Minamoto attack on Hiraizumi.²⁷⁴ This reputation of strength may also have been what attracted the young fugitive Minamoto no Yoshitsune (源義経) to flee north to Hiraizumi's relative safety, from the increasingly dangerous Taira-controlled Kyoto, where his family, defeated in war against the Taira clan during the Heiji

²⁷¹ Yiengpruksawan, "Hakusan at Hiraizumi," pp. 269-270.

²⁷² Takahashi, *Hiraizumi* p. 26.

²⁷³ Yiengpruksawan, "Hakusan at Hiraizumi," p. 269.

²⁷⁴ Yiengpruksawan, *op cit*; ___, *Hiraizumi*, p. 97.

Rebellion of early 1160, had become actively hunted *personae non gratae*.²⁷⁵ Northern Fujiwara military power went without major challenge for decades. As noted above, this was likely possible due to Hiraizumi's extreme distance and the high cost in logistics that any effort to subdue it would necessarily entail. After all, it was lost on no one, neither in Kyoto nor in Hiraizumi, that Hiraizumi was “beyond where the road ends.”

Regardless of their reputation in Kyoto as quasi-barbarians, the Fujiwara also saw themselves as patrons of the arts and the center of a Buddhist cultural sphere. Theirs was a syncretic Buddhism, one that incorporated Heian-era Shinto deities as well as old Emishi deities still worshipped in northern Honshu. Kyoto developed its own Buddhist culture, but Hiraizumi's was different. Chūson-ji, the temple that Bashō saw centuries later, was built on Kanzan, a hill where the Northern Fujiwara tutelary Hakusan Shrine also stood. Through the Hakusan Shrine, the family also kept up strong ties with Hakusan Temple in Kaga Province, which was a major political and military force in the Hokuriku region (modern Ishikawa Prefecture). The Fujiwara lords also patronized major temple and shrine construction projects throughout the northeast, as well as the artists and artisans necessary to bring those projects to fruition.²⁷⁶ The temple was built at Kiyohira's order, Mōtsū-ji likely by that of his son Motohira; other Fujiwara family members ordered the construction of other local temples.²⁷⁷ The family used temple and shrine

²⁷⁵ Yoshitsune's precise motives for fleeing to Hiraizumi remain unclear. Once there, however, Fujiwara no Hidehira treated him “like a son,” and before his death, had his own sons promise to continue sheltering Yoshitsune. Hidehira's heir Yasuhira and his brothers did not keep their promise to their father. Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 97.

²⁷⁶ Oishi and Nanba, p. 63.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

construction as a way not only of bolstering their prestige and temporal power, but also of strengthening spiritual authority and ties to the land.²⁷⁸ As historian Ōishi Naomasa wrote, the Hiraizumi Buddhist culture was “the pure land visualized.”²⁷⁹ The family and its warriors also believed that their gods marched with them into battle. As Yiengpruksawan argues, it is important to bear this in mind when studying the Hiraizumi state, as it gave the northerners “gods, a geography, and the potent formula of arms and religion.”²⁸⁰

Protected by politics, soldiering, and force of the dharma—charms, arms, and alms—the Northern Fujiwara state and society flourished until its sudden, violent destruction in 1189, before the still greater armed might of the armies Minamoto no Yoritomo raised from the Kantō region.²⁸¹ Yoritomo resettled loyal vassals in the north, securing it militarily and administratively for both his own administration as well as that of his sovereign, Emperor Go-Toba. The “pure land visualized” of the Northern Fujiwara had turned to ash and grass. But as we will see, it was not the end of semi-autonomous rule in the north.

²⁷⁸ Yiengpruksawan, “Hakusan at Hiraizumi,” p. 264.

²⁷⁹ Ōishi and Nanba, pp. 65-66.

²⁸⁰ Yiengpruksawan, “Hakusan at Hiraizumi,” p. 273.

²⁸¹ The Kantō is Japan’s largest plain, comprised of the former provinces of Musashi, Sagami, Kazusa, Shimōsa, Awa, Kōzuke, Shimotsuke, and Hitachi. Yoritomo’s power base was there. It is now, most notably, where Tokyo is located.

4.3 KAMAKURA HOUSEMEN TO 16TH CENTURY GENERALS

In the wake of victory in Hiraizumi against his half-brother Yoshitsune and Yoshitsune's Northern Fujiwara benefactors, the shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo set about the arrangements for a new system of administration in the northeast, which would obey his government, the Kamakura shogunate. Rather than rebuild Hiraizumi, Yoritomo instead chose Fort Taga.²⁸² On the advice of his right-hand man Kajiwara no Kagetoki, Yoritomo stationed the Isawa family there. The Isawa, who came from close to Yoritomo's power base in the Kantō plain, received the office of Mutsu Caretaker (*Ōshū Rusushoku*).²⁸³ The office was hereditary; the Isawa were ordered to thereafter oversee northeastern Japan on Kamakura's behalf.²⁸⁴ Despite the name, both this office and the concurrent office of Mutsu Chief Commissioner (Mutsu Sōbugyō) held authority also extending to neighboring Dewa, as had the Northern Fujiwara government that they had supplanted, and offices survived to the Kamakura shogunate's fall in 1333, though the position of caretaker ceased to have actual authority after 1250.²⁸⁵ Yet as Ōishi Naomasa and Nanba Nobuo argue, they continued the tradition of semi-autonomous northern governance in the wake of the Northern Fujiwara's destruction, as they still had charge of administration for a frontier province, despite any regular contact with Kamakura.²⁸⁶ As we will see, the Isawa also

²⁸² *Ōshū Amarume Kiroku*, pp. 17-40 of *Sendai Sōsho* 8, ed. Taira Shigemichi (Sendai:Hōbundō, 1972), pp. 19-20.

²⁸³ *Miyagi Kenshi*, vol. 2, p. 68

²⁸⁴ The Isawa held the office for so long that "Rusu" became their family name; they were later mediated into the house of Date as the Rusu-Date of Mizusawa. Kikuta Sadatoso, *Sendai Jinmei Daijisho* (Sendai: Sendai Jinmei Daijisho Kankōkai, 1933), p. 1120.

²⁸⁵ Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, pp. 92, 93, *Sendai-shi shi* Volume 1 (Sendai: Manyōdō, 1974), p. 21.

²⁸⁶ Ōishi and Nanba, pp. 62-63.

later openly claimed inheritance of the Northern Fujiwara mantle. Some of the north's local warrior clans also survived, continuing as Kamakura vassals.²⁸⁷ Thus, this was anything but a clean break with the past.

The posting of local representatives with semi-autonomous authority continued under the succeeding Ashikaga shogunate (1336-1573), with the posting of *tandai* (探題), commissioners. Under the Ashikaga, there only ever existed four *tandai* offices and of those four, only two covered individual provinces: the *tandai* in charge of Mutsu and Dewa.²⁸⁸ Clearly, then, the northeast continued in its tradition of semi-independent governance, or at least its tradition of unique forms of governance. In Mutsu, the Ōsaki family was sole *tandai* from 1400 on.²⁸⁹ It directly controlled a wide swath of land roughly in the province's center, including lands once held by the Northern Fujiwara. Not too long after this, an Ōsaki branch family called the Mogami claimed the title of Ushū (Dewa Province) *tandai*.²⁹⁰

As time went on, these Ashikaga offices lost any real power, but their prestige remained high. This would prove a useful tool, especially in the Ashikaga shogunate's waning days, for any local lord (of which the north had many) who could successfully hold that title. After all, it implied some measure of authority over either of Japan's two largest provinces. Here it is important to return to the Isawa. Despite having lost actual political authority over the north after

²⁸⁷ One example was the Shiraishi (later Shiroishi) family, which claimed Katta Tsunamoto, brother of Northern Fujiwara chieftain Fujiwara no Kiyohira, as its progenitor. Much later, the family was absorbed into the Date clan as a Date cadet branch. *Miyagi Kenshi* 2, p. 69.

²⁸⁸ *Nihonshi B Yōgoshū* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2000), p. 92.

²⁸⁹ *Miyagi Kenshi* vol. 2, pp. 26, 105-106.

²⁹⁰ Kikuta, pp. 1018.

1250, the Isawa family, which by the 16th century was called Rusu (*Rusu-shi* 留守氏), survived. The *Amarume Records of Ōshū* (*Ōshū Amarume Kiroku* 奥州余目記録), the Rusu family's official history, attempts to trace the family's claim to political legitimacy in the north. Rather importantly for the present narrative, the *Records* uses the term *tandai* for the north's early *fushū* rulers, which it then also applies to the Rusu and Ōsaki families.²⁹¹ This rather clearly draws a line from the Abe, noted earlier in this chapter, through the Northern Fujiwara, and on to the Rusu and Ōsaki, without interruption. But it was none of the aforementioned families who would be the major power in northeastern Japan in the decades to follow.

Among the men who marched north under Yoritomo's banner was Isa Tomomune, a man from Hitachi Province.²⁹² His descendants eventually spread both power and family ties, even carving out a strong relationship with the Ashikaga Shogunate. Though Tomomune's early descendants did not have the status that the Ōsaki could boast, they would eventually control a wide swath of land across both southern Dewa and southern Mutsu. They would even also absorb the Rusu family, who as discussed above claimed to be part of a succession of political legitimacy stretching back to the *fushū*. These descendants of Tomomune took their new name from the land grant in Date County that they had received from Yoritomo, and became the Date family. It was the Date family which, centuries later, would head the Northern Alliance. And it is to them that we now turn.

²⁹¹ “Ōshū Amarume-kiroku,” pp. 17-40 of *Sendai Sōsho*, volume 8 (Sendai:Hōbundō, 1972), pp. 19-20.

²⁹² There is some debate over the details of Tomomune's life: his existence, his dates, even his surname, which some sources note as Nakamura. For more, see Kobayashi Seiji, *Sengoku Daimyō Date-shi no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Koshi Shoin, 2008), pp. 8-11.

4.3.1 Date: Origins

The Date (originally Idate) clan, which would later become the leading power in the Tohoku region, was part of the army that destroyed the Northern Fujiwara.²⁹³ But who were they, and how did they interact with that legacy? This section examines their history through 1615 and the place of the Northern Fujiwara legacy in the Date domain.

There are several differing versions of the family's origins, but the most commonly accepted of these places the family's late Heian progenitor Isa (Nakamura) Tomomune as a resident of Hitachi Province in the second half of the 12th century.²⁹⁴ He was a Kamakura Shogunate vassal, and part of the army that attacked the Northern Fujiwara stronghold at Hiraizumi during the Kamakura Shogunate's Ōshū Expedition.²⁹⁵ After the war's end, Tomomune received land in the Tōhoku region in recognition of his military distinction. As the

²⁹³ Ibid, pp. 17-19. Idate, the old pronunciation that read both characters in the family name (伊達), fell out of favor by the 16th century, with the notable exception of Date Masamune's 17th century letters to Pope Paul V and the King Philip III of Spain, where he spells the name in Roman letters as "Ydate."

²⁹⁴ Kobayashi Seiji, perhaps the preeminent Date scholar of the 20th century, counted six different versions of the Date lineage. The Kansei 10 (1798) text *Gogo no Date Kinu* gives the most common version of the family's roots as Kamakura vassals who took part in subduing Hiraizumi; Kayaba Mokuhei, *Gogo no Date Kinu*, pp. 5-18 of *Sendai Sōsho* Vol. 8. (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1972). For more on the question of the Date clan's roots and the family's early history, see Kobayashi Seiji, *Sengoku Daimyō Date-shi no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Koshi Shoin, 2008), pp. 3-65. The Tokugawa family, which became the shogunal clan in 1603, also had multiple versions of its genealogy; an official one was adopted by Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1600. Marius Jansen, *Warrior Rule in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 149-150.

²⁹⁵ This is according to the Date lineage as written down in 1703. Ibid, p. 9, Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, p. 114.

land was in Date County, Isa Tomomune and his descendants took the county name and became the Date family.²⁹⁶

For the four centuries that followed, the Date family was a loyal vassal of the Kamakura and Muromachi shogunates. It was by no means the region's absolute power; as noted above, there were many forces whose political and military power was far greater, like the Rusu, Ōsaki, and others. Date branches also spread throughout the archipelago, as second and third sons received shogunate office elsewhere.²⁹⁷ Over the centuries, the Date established family ties to many of the north's leading powers, through both adoption and intermarriage: the Ōsaki, Rusu, Shiraishi, Iwaki, Satake, Sōma, Ashina, Nikaidō, Yanagawa, Kokubun, Tamura, Kasai, Watari, and Mogami families, all of whom had some measure of power, political clout, or both, in northeastern Japan, all had some measure of family ties to the Date by the early 16th century.²⁹⁸

Yet as noted, despite any ties to the shogunal government, the powers of northeastern Japan also had a great deal of latitude for independent action, located as they were on the island's periphery. This relative freedom of action only grew in the 16th century, as the Ashikaga Shogunate tottered toward collapse and much of the archipelago fell into patterns of internecine war known as the Warring States era (*Sengoku Jidai* 戦国時代). Under Date Terumune (1543-1585), the family emerged reunified from a period of major internal discord and began a steady

²⁹⁶ Kobayashi, *Sengoku Daimyo Date-shi no Kenkyū*, p. 8, Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, p. 114. The county still exists as an administrative unit, and is part of modern Fukushima Prefecture.

²⁹⁷ Kobayashi, *ibid*, p. 39.

²⁹⁸ Kobayashi, *Sengoku Daimyo Date-shi no Kenkyū*, pp. 79, 109. The Sōma later joined the Date as a signatory to the Northern Alliance pact.

expansionary drive in southern Mutsu.²⁹⁹ Masamune (1567-1636), Terumune's son, continued this drive. Both men's efforts were contemporary with the campaigns of reunification in central Japan under Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and his peasant-born successor Hashiba (Toyotomi) Hideyoshi (1536-1598).

By 1590, the Date, then headquartered in Yonezawa Castle, controlled a wide swath of territory across southern Mutsu and Dewa, from near the Sea of Japan in what is now Yamagata Prefecture, through to the Pacific Coast in what is now eastern Fukushima Prefecture. Though there were others beyond their reach, such as the Nanbu and Tsugaru clans, who resided to the north, the Date clan was now the preeminent power in the southern and central portions of the Tohoku region. However, any further unchecked attempts at expansion came to a halt in 1590, upon Hideyoshi's defeat of his last major rival in western Japan and his start of the siege at Odawara, near modern Tokyo. Masamune pledged fealty to Hideyoshi late in the siege.³⁰⁰ Hideyoshi then issued an order that guaranteed the holdings of all northern daimyo who had pledged fealty to him; any attack by one upon the other was a direct violation of Hideyoshi's orders and risked the entire archipelago's armed retribution.³⁰¹

Under Masamune, the Date spent the 1590s as a leading Toyotomi vassal family, well connected in the Toyotomi administration's political circles if only hesitantly trusted.³⁰² In that

²⁹⁹ Kobayashi, *Date Masamune*, p. 15.

³⁰⁰ Masamune arrived 6/5/Tenshō 18, and the castle was surrendered 7/5. *Date Chike Kiroku* volume 2, pp. 175-176.

³⁰¹ Kobayashi, *Date Masamune*, pp. 68-69.

³⁰² Among them was one of Hideyoshi's chief vassals, the daimyo Tokugawa Ieyasu, who later became the first Tokugawa shogun in 1603. As a sign of their ties, Masamune's daughter Iroha was even betrothed to Ieyasu's son Tadateru. Kikuta, p. 106. Until Hideyoshi's death, Masamune also maintained an Osaka estate, one of few daimyo who did so; Mary E. Berry divides the daimyo who lived close to Hideyoshi as either his political confidants or

capacity, Masamune was briefly involved in Hideyoshi's disastrous expeditionary campaign on the Asian continent: Date troops fought in a few battles in southern Korea during the Bunroku Campaign in 1593.³⁰³ However, they were soon withdrawn and did not participate in the return of Japanese forces to the peninsula during the Keichō Campaign of 1597.³⁰⁴

In 1591, on Hideyoshi's orders, the Date moved into part of what had been the Northern Fujiwara clan's core territories, which more recently were lands held by the Kasai and Ōsaki families, who finally fell from power because of their opposition to Hideyoshi.³⁰⁵ Thus the 1590s also saw the Date clan in control of a large swath of the Kitakami River basin, running well into what is now Iwate Prefecture. This included the aforementioned Hiraizumi's much humbler 16th century remnant, including Chūson-ji and Mōtsū-ji; as we will soon see, the Date were aware of its significance.

Siding with Tokugawa Ieyasu during the climactic battles of 1600, Masamune was at least a nominal ally when Ieyasu received the title of shogun from Emperor Go-Yōzei three years later. But the Date family was not a hereditary Tokugawa vassal clan and had shown ample proof of not necessarily being interested in Tokugawa goals: during the fighting in 1600, Masamune initiated hostile action without waiting for Ieyasu's orders.³⁰⁶ Though the Date family kept the

potentially dangerous rivals. She places Masamune in the second category, together with Shimazu Yoshihiro of Satsuma. Mary E. Berry, *Hideyoshi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 143.

³⁰³ Date forces arrived on 3/15/Bunroku 2. *Date Chike Kiroku* 2, p. 363.

³⁰⁴ Masamune and his troops returned to northern Kyushu by ship on 9/18/Bunroku 2. *Date Chike Kiroku* 2, p. 382.

³⁰⁵ Kobayashi, *Date Masamune*, pp. 88-91. On the Kasai-Ōsaki Uprising and control of those lands passing to Masamune, see Ōishi Naomasa & Nanba Nobuo, *Hiraizumi to Ōshū Dōchū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), pp. 84-86.

³⁰⁶ Kobayashi, *Date Masamune*, pp. 108-110.

lands seized through that action, Masamune and his descendants received “outside” (*tozama*) rather than hereditary (*fudai*) status. The Date domain as it now existed (see figure 8) kept the same borders through late 1868, though it had several small detached territories elsewhere.³⁰⁷ The shogunate did not trust the *tozama* lords, in particular, the Date. As noted in Chapter 2, starting in the 17th century, it placed *fudai* and *shinpan* lords at key locations in the northeast, in order to frustrate any possibility of a horizontal alliance in the region. One example of this was Yamagata domain, a small domain in the Ōshū mountains, the lordship of which the Shogunate constantly reassigned and which was intended to report regularly to the Shogunate about the northeast’s *tozama* lords, chief of whom was, of course, the Date.³⁰⁸

As seen in Chapter 2, *tozama* status kept the Date effectively disenfranchised from direct participation in the Tokugawa government. However, the family enjoyed great prestige as a province-holding (*kunimochi* 国持) daimyo family, which granted the ruling lord a seat in the Great Hall (*Ōhiroma* 大広間), the most senior antechamber at the shogunal castle for families not directly related to the Tokugawa family.³⁰⁹ However, in the early 19th century, the shogunate relied more heavily on the *tozama* lords of northeastern Japan for practical concerns. It entrusted the Date family and other northern *tozama* lords with coast defense in Ezochi during the early

³⁰⁷ As noted in Chapter Two, the Date domain was thus roughly 625,000 *koku* in size, and by early 1868 was the third largest domain in Japan, after the Kaga and Kagoshima domains. Kagoshima had over 700,000 *koku*, Kaga’s income was in the neighborhood of 1,025,000. *Edo Bakuhan Daimyōke Jiten*. Ed. Ogawa Kyōichi. (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1992), p. 395, 804.

³⁰⁸ For folklore associated with Yamagata domain’s espionage on Sendai domain, see the story related in Mihara Ryōkichi, *Kyōdoshi Sendai Mimibukuro* (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1982), pp. 107-110.

³⁰⁹ *Edo Bakuhan Daimyōke Jiten* vol. 1. Ogawa Kyōichi, ed. (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1992), p. 23.

19th century, in the bid to head off encroaching Russian presence in the region.³¹⁰ While the Date family itself maintained cordial relations with both shogunate and Imperial court through the mid-1860s, these cordial relations should not be misunderstood as unconditional support of the shogunate.³¹¹

As noted above, the Date controlled the old Northern Fujiwara heartland from the 1590s until the domain's surrender late in 1868. That significance was not lost on the Date, who extended their patronage in particular to key temples like Chūson-ji and Mōtsū-ji. Records of famous places within the Date domain's boundaries, such as Satō Nobuaki's 1741 text *Famous Places of Our Fief (Hōnai Meiseki-shi)* or Tanabe Marebumi's 1772 text *A Gazetteer of Our Domain (Hōnai Fūdo-ki)*, also include ample mentions of Northern Fujiwara and older *fushū*-related locations.³¹² That these places still exist at all is due in part to Date custodianship.³¹³

³¹⁰ Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, pp. 194-196.

³¹¹ For more on the cordial Date-Shogunate relations in the 1860s, see Takegahara Kosuke, "Genji gannen ni okeru Sendaihan no dōkō: Hanshu Date Yoshikuni to Ichimon Date Rokurō wo chūshin ni," pp. 27-40 of *Yonezawa Shigaku*, 10/2014. Perhaps it was a sign of the shogunate's weakening power that during the shogun's absence in western Japan in the mid-1860s, his government asked the Date family (on several occasions) to oversee part of the duty of ensuring public security in the shogunal capital of Edo. Otokozawa *et. al.*, pp. 52-54.

³¹² For example, Satō notes the site of Koromogawadate (衣川館), an estate built by the Abe clan during their primacy as *fushū* chiefs. Satō Nobuaki, *Hōnai Meiseki-shi*, pp. 189-379 of *Sendai Sōsho* vol. 8 (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1972), pp. 360-362.

³¹³ Though burned in the 13th century, the Date clan later rebuilt and maintained them. Today, Chūson-ji and Mōtsū-ji even have Internet homepages. "World Heritage Chūson-ji Temple," <http://www.chusonji.or.jp/en/> Accessed 19 October 2014, "Mōtsū-ji Temple," <http://www.motsuji.or.jp/english/> Accessed 19 October 2014; Ōishi and Nanba, p. 64.

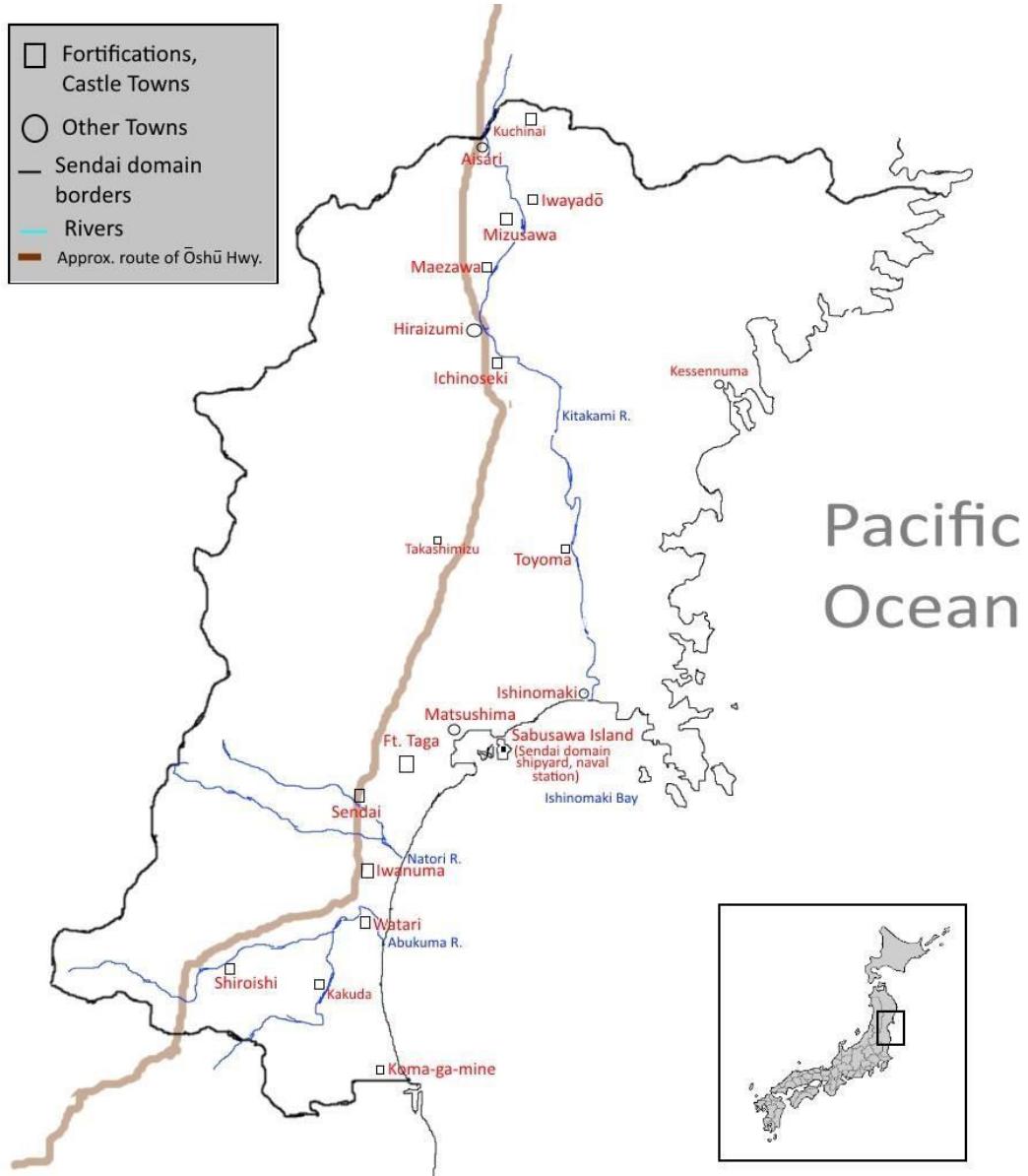


Figure 8: Sendai domain, 1600 to 1868

This was not all. In word and deed, Date Masamune firmly established his family as a successor to the Northern Fujiwara, as the north's center of gravity. The Date fief was the north's largest fiefdom. By dint of size and wealth, no one in the north could ignore the Date domain.

But in terms of regionally significant lineage, the Date under Masamune also acquired the north's 'bluest' blood. His family had adoption or marriage links to the region's Muromachi-era powers and illustrious families. Masamune actively brought many of those lineages into the Date orbit as cadet branches, or under the Date aegis as vassals. The former included the Rusu family, who just a few decades prior had themselves claimed (in the *Amarume Records*) to be heirs of the Northern Fujiwara mantle, as well as the Shiraishi family, whose progenitor was one of Fujiwara no Kiyohira's brothers.³¹⁴ The latter included the old Kamakura-era Tamura, Ishikawa, Misawa, Iwaki, and Yūki families, among many others.³¹⁵ Thus, be it as senior cousin or as overlord, Masamune now had seniority over many of the north's oldest names.

Furthermore, in two very visible respects, Masamune's new domain did not function by the same parameters as other domains did. Most notably, Masamune kept a network of castles across his domain's length and breadth, where he posted senior vassals.³¹⁶ These vassals, in turn, lived with their own retainers on the land and performed alternate-attendance on their master, residing for part of every year in the main Sendai castle town.³¹⁷ This was the same format of alternate-attendance that Masamune followed when he performed alternate attendance on his

³¹⁴ *Miyagi Kenshi* vol. 2, p. 69.

³¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 68-70. On the particularly notable case of the Tamura, see Kobayashi, *Sengoku Daimyō Date-shi no Kenkyū*, p. 118. The Tamura family is notable in that it was both independent daimyo family and Date vassal. For more on the Tamura, their retainers, and their castle's place in Sendai domain's defensive network, see Yamaki Kazuo, "Ichinoseki-jō," pp. 425-439 of *Sendaijō to Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai* (Tokyo: Meichō Shuppan, 1982).

³¹⁶ The major fortresses (*yōgai*) are analyzed at length in *Sendaijō oyobi Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai*, ed. Kobayashi Seiji (Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1982).

³¹⁷ *Sendai shi-shi* vol. 1, p. 110.

own lord, the ruling Tokugawa shogun, and resided for part of every year in the shogun's capital Edo.

Yet Masamune's boldest action, which hinted most clearly at his perception of his authority and his plans (however tentative) for the future, was his diplomatic overture to European monarchs and religious institutions in 1615.³¹⁸ At Masamune's order, a delegation sailed from the Date domain to Mexico (aboard the incongruously named *San Juan Bautista*, a Date-built Western style warship), crossed to the Atlantic Coast, and continued from there to Rome via Spain, carrying letters from Masamune seeking trade and diplomatic ties.³¹⁹ In my opinion, the fact that Masamune felt capable not only to do this, but also to shelter part of the Japanese Christian community within his territorial boundaries even as the Tokugawa Shogunate was increasing its anti-Christian policies, speaks to his regional autonomy and sense of authority.³²⁰ Some even held that he planned to overthrow the Tokugawa and rule all of Japan

³¹⁸ Alternate attendance was the system by which feudal lords from around the archipelago resided in the shogun's capital for part of every year, and was a means by which the Shogunate ensured that those lords were spending money on something other than military matters. *Nihonshi B Yōgoshū*, p. 133; Takahashi, *Miyagi-ken no Rekishi*, pp. 145-148. On Hasekura Tsunenaga, the delegation's leader, see Gonoi Takashi, *Hasekura Tsunenaga* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003).

³¹⁹ Kobayashi, *Date Masamune*, pp. 162-163, *Date Chike Kiroku* 2, pp. 596-597. The mission departed on October 28, 1613 (15th of the 9th month, Keichō 18).

³²⁰ The Date vassal ranks even included some Christian samurai, such as the famous Gotō Juan (1577-1638?). While some popular depictions have speculated over Masamune's feelings about Christianity, we can also confirm that he had some family ties to Christian lords, most notably his son-in-law (and Tokugawa Ieyasu's son), Matsudaira Tadateru of Takada domain. For a time, foreign, mainly Portuguese- and Spanish-born missionaries even freely proselytized in Sendai domain. For more on Gotō, the 17th century Christian community of Sendai domain, and the

himself. With all of this earlier regional history in mind, then, perhaps it comes as less of a surprise to read Masamune's self-introduction to Pope Paul V and to European monarchs like King Philip III of Spain, as "Ydate Masamune, rex Voxu in imperio Iaponico:" Date Masamune, king of Ōshū in the Empire of Japan.³²¹ With genealogy, regional political and military primacy, and even local heritage in his favor, this was hardly an empty boast.

Though his heirs would have to obey Shogunate edicts on Christianity and foreign relations, these were ultimately small concessions in the broader picture of the Date domain's political power and regional clout, for the Date primacy in the Tōhoku region remained otherwise secure. Over two centuries later, that primacy was still intact even as the clouds of war gathered on the horizon in the opening days of 1868, and guided political developments in the months that followed.

4.4 NORTHERN LYNCHPIN: DATE PRIMACY IN 1868

All of the above points to the centuries-old heritage that the Date family claimed in 1868. But it remained relevant, as events that followed the war's outbreak in late January prove that, yet again, the Date domain remained the north's center of gravity, a full thousand years after the days that *fushū* activity centered in the same lands. In my opinion, the actions of three groups or

domain's later suppression of that community, see *Mizusawa shi-shi* vol. 3, ed. Taira Shigemichi (Mizusawa: Mizusawa Insatsu, 1982), pp. 405-572.

³²¹ Ōishi & Nanba, pp. 62-63. The Latin text, in its entirety, is reproduced in C. Meriwether, "Life of Date Masamune," pp. 3-105 of *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Volume 21 (Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1898), pp. 66-68.

entities— the Kyoto-based imperial government, the northern domains, and the Date clan itself— prove this.

Time and again, from the war’s outbreak until well past the Alliance’s demise, the new Kyoto-based imperial government’s commands, actions, and strategies pertaining to the north centered on the Date fief or strongly favored it over other major domains in the region. This began with the contentious command to attack Aizu domain, referenced above in the message with which this chapter began.³²²

Katamori of Aizu has abetted Tokugawa Yoshinobu’s treacherous actions and fired upon the imperial banners.³²³ This is senseless treason and a punitive expedition must be dispatched at once. Your domain is forthwith to attack the Aizu castle singlehandedly. Do not be remiss in your strenuous martial exertion. Your obedience will be highly regarded. Thus you are ordered to swiftly bring this punitive campaign to a successful conclusion.

It is so ordered.

This order disproportionately privileges the Date domain by implying that the domain could handle an anti-Aizu campaign on its own. This was perhaps true in theory given its sheer size as well as its (very old) reputation for military strength, but was not quite as true in practice.³²⁴ Regardless, in having ordered the Date clan to do so, the Kyoto government expected

³²² There were several orders that the Kyoto government issued to Sendai domain in rapid succession, early in 1868 (2/8/1868, 2/10/1868, and 2/13/1868); this is one representative example, the order of 2/10. Text reproduced in Yamada, pp. 24-25.

³²³ “Katamori of Aizu” was the Aizu lord Matsudaira Katamori.

³²⁴ According to one estimate, its total retainer count in the mid-19th century, including direct Date retainers and rear vassals (vassals of vassals, J. *baishin* 陪臣), was approximately 33,800 people. However, as stated above, this

that it would take the lead in a campaign aimed at subduing Aizu. While the government issued orders to other large Tōhoku domains, such as Tsugaru, Morioka, or Akita, their language does not suggest that the government viewed those domains with the same precedence as it did Sendai and the Date family.³²⁵ This trend of giving Sendai precedence only continued, as later, seeking to establish control over the now defunct shogunate's Tōhoku house lands, the government issued an order commanding the Date domain to take sole custody of those lands on the government's behalf, at least until other arrangements could be made.³²⁶

This tendency of the Kyoto government also applied to its attempts at punishment and coercion of the northeast. When the northerners balked at attacking Aizu, the government sent a small military delegation there to oversee their compliance by force, albeit through relatively

should not be read as an indicator of military strength, especially after over two centuries of relative peace in the archipelago. *Miyagi-ken shi* vol. 2, p. 79.

³²⁵ Onodera, pp. 189, 195. The closest phrasing to the order given to Sendai was that of the order to Akita domain. On 2/9/1868, the government commanded Akita lord Satake Yoshitaka (1825-1884) to rally the northern domains and come to the aid of the main military effort intended to subdue Aizu domain: this was the campaign which the government, as noted, expected Sendai domain to lead. The government sent Akita a second order on 4/28. Ibid, p. 191.

³²⁶ One example is the custodianship of the then-vacant Shirakawa Castle. The Kyoto government placed Shirakawa under Date custodianship. It was vacant ever since Abe Masakiyo, its previous lord, was moved to nearby Tanagura domain by order of the Shogunate late in the preceding year. Previously, the Shogunate would've taken custody of vacant castles and unsupervised lands. These orders did not account for the Date family's ability to send a military force to take custody of such locations: Date troops were unable to take Shirakawa, which was instead managed by the Niwa clan of neighboring Nihonmatsu domain. While Date forces would eventually move into Shirakawa Castle, this only happened after the Northern Alliance opened hostilities against the Kyoto government's forces. Yamada, p. 219.

modest military means.³²⁷ Again, this delegation headed first for Date landsand remained headquartered at Yōkendō, the domain school in the main Sendai castle town, until the Alliance initiated hostilities late in spring 1868.³²⁸ Again, while the government and its delegation in the northeast did issue orders to other major domains, it gave disproportionate precedence to the Date fief. Even at the war's end, when Sendai domain had surrendered and, for a short time, ceased to exist, the imperial government used Sendai as headquarters for its forces in the region.³²⁹

Secondly, records of the war include messages from the lords of northern domains, especially small and midsized domains, to the Date. Most importantly to the present discussion, in those messages the domains regularly asserted a willingness to defer to Date arms and a desire to receive Date aid and political intercession.³³⁰ Later in the war, when small domains' castle

³²⁷ Sasaki, p. 75. The delegation's leaders were accompanied by a military force of a few hundred troops from various members of the southwestern coalition. While those troops could by no means face the entire military potential of the northeast, they were protected by their use of the imperial banners. Any hostile action taken against the bearers of these banners rendered that individual or unit a traitor deserving of neither pity nor mercy. This immunity might also explain why those troops felt they could engage in drunken and unruly conduct during their stay in the Sendai castle town.

³²⁸ They arrived at Yōkendō on 4/15/1868; the Date lord made his first sofficial visit to the delegates on the following day. Yamada, p. 44; Sasaki, pp. 74-75.

³²⁹ Otokozawa et. al., pp. 44-45. The imperial government's Sendai garrison (*Sendai chindai* 仙台鎮台), one of five major garrisons nationwide, formed the nucleus of the later Imperial Japanese Army 2nd Infantry Division, when the garrisons were turned into divisions in 1888. *Nihonshi B Yōgoshū*, p. 201.

³³⁰ *Rakuzan-kō Ryakureki*, pp. 1-40 of *Sendai Sōsho Vol 12*. (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1974), pp. 28, 30, 31. Many of these messages acknowledge those domains' limited means and ask the Date for assistance in an emergency. As this was after the Boshin War's outbreak, the type of emergency implied in this message was presumably clear.

towns fell to the advancing imperial forces, their *daimyo* would pick up with their families and many of their vassals and flee to the presumed safety of a larger domain. On many occasions this safe haven was in Date lands though some fugitive *daimyo* fled to Yonezawa or another midsized to large domain that they felt would offer them safe haven.³³¹ However, as the war went on and imperial forces flooded the north, some of the same domains would eventually leave the Alliance altogether, relying on the much surer protection of the imperial forces that drew from a far larger pool of resources and personnel.³³² Unlike them, larger Tōhoku domains like Yonezawa, Morioka, and others, had their own interests and did not defer to the Date. Even so, they expressed a willingness for consultation and joint operations with the Date.³³³ Even bearing in mind the later betrayal by some of the Alliance's larger parties (e.g. Tsugaru), the fact remains that while *in* the Alliance, they were willing to cooperate with the Date, dispatch military forces in support of the Date, and establish a political presence in Date lands at Shiroishi, where the Alliance council convened.

Third was the Date domain's view of itself as the region's chief representative and the protector of its interests on the broader stage of archipelago-wide politics. In the months prior to 1868, as the Tokugawa Shogunate tottered on the brink of collapse, the Date representatives in Kyoto organized meetings between representatives of the northern domains then active in the city.³³⁴ As the imperial capital and the center of Shogunate politics throughout the 1860s, all eyes

³³¹ Otokozawa et. al., pp. 213, 228.

³³² Both major and minor domains left the Alliance, as we will see in Chapter Seven of the present work. Sasaki, p. 230, Onodera, p. 194.

³³³ *Sendai shi-shi*, vol. 10. Ed. by Sendai shi-shi hensan iinkai. (Sendai: Manyōdō Shoten, 1975), p. 167.

³³⁴ Kurihara, pp. 40-42, 69-71.

from across the archipelago were focused on it, especially as political uncertainty skyrocketed in the second half of 1867. These meetings were intended to deepen horizontal ties and political coordination between the northeastern domains. But as historian Kurihara Shin’ichirō has observed, this was not a chance meeting of northern delegates, but rather a case of Sendai domain having taken the leading role and having *gathered* northern delegates.³³⁵ But at the critical Maruyama council convened in Kyoto on 18 November 1867, which gathered delegates from across the archipelago, only Date men were present.³³⁶ As Kurihara has also observed, Date retainers felt that their domain was in a unique position of regional leadership, entitled to speak on behalf of the north and represent its political interests to the rest of the archipelago.³³⁷

Later, when the Kyoto government ordered the armed subjugation of Aizu domain, the Date lord and his officials, who at that point had no real stake in the southerners’ quarrel with Aizu, took it upon themselves to negotiate on Aizu’s behalf.³³⁸ While the Yonezawa domain also played an important role as a senior Alliance partner and organizer, it should be remembered that

³³⁵ Ibid, p. 41.

³³⁶ Ibid, p. 38.

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 71.

³³⁸ One of the many petitions submitted for government consideration was Sendai’s early summer petition requesting clemency for Aizu, which was submitted on 6/2/1868, and summarily rejected by Kujō on 6/7/1868. It was not long after that petition’s rejection that Sendai retainers assassinated one of the leading delegates, which served as a catalyst for the Alliance’s formal organization and its initiation of hostilities against the imperial government’s troops. The final domain count, after the six domains of neighboring northeastern Echigo province also joined as allies, was 31, with 25 in Mutsu and Dewa, and six in Echigo. Sasaki, p. 231; *Nihonshi B Yōgoshū*, p. 198.

it and Sendai had only overcome their enmity in the past two years.³³⁹ As Date officials regularly took the lead in these negotiations and other political matters, improved Sendai-Yonezawa ties should not be taken to imply that Sendai men's views on their domain's regional primacy had changed. They still felt their domain was the north's leading voice.

Thus, with all of the above in mind, we can better appreciate the above events of 1868 for what they are. Rather than an aberration, they represent a continuation, failed though it was, of a centuries-long trend.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Sendai domain and the Date family were the Northern Alliance's center of gravity as war approached northeastern Japan in 1868. But as the present chapter has shown, that status as northern center of gravity was anything but a new development. Rather, it was the culmination of over a millennium of precedent in local political legitimacy in northern Honshu, which from the beginning of Yamato interaction with it, was a land different than the rest of the archipelago: it was both "inside" and "outside" Japan. Understanding that precedent can help better contextualize why the Sendai domain and Date family were so central, even indispensable, to the Northern Alliance's formation and cohesion.

In as much as the early Yamato state tried to overwhelm the north by brute force, every time it did so, in Yiengpruksawan's words, it was as though "there rose a breakwater that sent

³³⁹ Uesugi Narinori, the Yonezawa lord, even made the trip to Shiroishi in person, and took a direct role in the deliberations that led to the Alliance's formation. Ishii, *Ishin no nairan*, p. 282.

wave after wave of Kinai pressure back upon itself.³⁴⁰ Its inhabitants, and the Yamato court that was eventually based in the city later known as Kyoto, both knew this. Yet where the *fushū* once rebelled against Yamato authority outright, later generations opted to aim for bids at maximum autonomy under nominal Yamato control. Thus, the northern “breakwater” survived, albeit in a new guise, and consequently the north retained some measure of self-determination.

This trend of regional autonomy and relative freedom of self-determination reached a 12th century zenith during the Northern Fujiwara’s rule from Hiraizumi of their quasi-kingdom in the north. As noted above, later generations of political leaders in northern Honshu, especially the Date clan in both the 16th and 19th centuries, looked to the Northern Fujiwara heritage as a local antecedent in their own bids for political autonomy. In my view, they set two precedents that are relevant to our discussion of 19th century Japan. First was the selective use of court sanction, rank, and other honors, as means of ensuring local primacy and autonomy, backed up by carefully cultivated ties with key courtly figures in Kyoto, as well as overwhelming military force at home. Second, was selective attention to some (but not all) Kyoto-issued directives. Cultivation of a good political relationship with key Kyoto players, as well as politically powerful monasteries like Hakusan-ji in Kaga Province, facilitated this for the Northern Fujiwara. So too did geographic isolation and a poor road network. For the political power that issued any given order from Kyoto, there were also the logistical difficulties inherent in forcing their compliance. However, with the road network’s development, as well as developments in transportation technology, this selective disobedience became increasingly difficult for later generations.

³⁴⁰ Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, p. 30.

Seven centuries later, the Date clan, would-be heirs to the Northern Fujiwara mantle, would disobey another set of Kyoto-issued military directives, and also rely on a new generation of sympathetic Kyoto nobility, some of whom were descended from the same aristocrats with whom the Northern Fujiwara kept such close ties. But in the vastly different political and technological circumstances of early Meiji Japan, geographic isolation and adverse weather only protected it for a few months before reinforcements, some of them carried by steam-driven warships, pushed through the winter cold and overwhelmed the Date clan and its allies. The victors of 1868 also swiftly silenced the Date family's would-be courtly allies in Kyoto and elsewhere, through imprisonment or house arrest, demotion in court rank, or various forms of exile.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ As we will also see in later chapters, the Date clan may have even set up its own claimant to the imperial throne, in the person of Abbot-Prince *Rinnōji no miya* Kōgen (輪王寺宮公現), the late Emperor Kōmei's adoptive younger brother (and thus, the young Emperor Meiji's uncle), who was the former abbot of the Tokugawa-affiliated Kan'ei-ji Temple in Edo. The prince fled northward after the temple's destruction that spring, when it had become a battlefield between the imperial forces and the pro-Tokugawa Shōgitai. After the Boshin War, the court recalled the erstwhile abbot to secular life, and after a brief time in disciplinary confinement for his involvement in the 1868 war, the court reinstated him as imperial prince, sent him to pursue military studies in Europe, and upon his return, allowed him to join the imperial army. As Army lieutenant general *Kitashirakawa-no-miya* Yoshihisa (北白川宮能久), he led Japanese forces in the invasion of Taiwan, where he died of malaria in 1895. Those sources that say he did become emperor in 1868 call him Emperor Tōbu (*Tōbu-tennō* 東武天皇 or *Tōbu kōtei* 東武皇帝), with a reign name of Taisei (大政). There is not enough evidence to conclusively prove that the prince was northern emperor, but as news of it even reached the New York Times, some historians consider it to have been likely. The *Times* claimed that he had only temporarily become emperor and would relinquish power upon the north's success, and loyally serve the young Meiji. See "JAPAN." *New York Times* (1857-1922): Oct 18, 1868; ProQuest Historical Newspapers

Minamoto no Yoritomo, fearful of the “barbarian” Northern Fujiwara who threatened his eastern flank, rallied Kantō warriors and led the destruction of both Hiraizumi and the Northern Fujiwara in 1189. The men who ruled the north on behalf of the Kamakura and later the Muromachi Shogunate were newcomers to the region, but were cognizant of the tradition of local autonomy and positioned themselves as successors to the Northern Fujiwara. It was into this political tradition that the Date family emerged as a rising local power in the 16th century.

The Date family built a large feudal domain, a formidable military force, and through adoption and employment tied itself into the north’s leading lineages from the 16th to the 17th centuries. Their lands included the core of the Northern Fujiwara territories. The family was aware of this history and took pride in preserving its physical heritage, especially in the form of religious institutions like the old Northern Fujiwara temples. Masamune, the reigning Date lord from the late 16th to early 17th century, positioned himself in correspondence to Europe as “King of Ōshū in the Empire of Japan.” In light of the Northern Fujiwara heritage into which he tied his family and the physical heritage which he controlled and helped to preserve, this is hardly an empty boast.

This position as the key power in the north remained secure two centuries later, when the Date family led the effort to organize the Northern Alliance in the early months of the Boshin War. Not only did the family see itself as the north’s focal point and, in some archipelago-wide contexts, the north’s voice, but the new central government also focused its communications to the north and its activities in the north on the Date domain, and favored the domain heavily over other major domains in the region. The north’s domains also either closely consulted with the

The New York Times (1851-2006), p. 3. For an historian who supports the Emperor Tōbu theory, see Ōishi, *Saka no Machi*, p. 46.

Date on political and military matters, or in the case of small domains, deferred to the Date aegis altogether. Again, all of this makes better sense in the context of the region's Northern Fujiwara heritage.

Yet despite its prestige and its history in the region, and even despite its attempt at rallying the northern domains under its aegis, environmental factors conspired against any Date attempt at adequately facing the Kyoto government's military campaigns in 1868. The most important of these environmental factors, though it was decades prior, was the Tenpo Famine of the 1830s. The famine's effects ravaged the Date fief and the north as a whole. But for further analysis of this, we must turn to the next chapter.

5.0 FAMINE AND UNREST

An old adage asserts that amateurs in military matters study tactics, while professionals study logistics. This is somewhat simplistic but it makes at an important point. It is good to understand the essentials of battlefield leadership, but those actions would not be possible without the logistics to make them possible and sustain them. That understanding is the intent of the present chapter. This chapter considers the influence of famine and depopulation on the northeast, in the decades leading up to 1868. I argue that well before that crisis year, famine and depopulation significantly northeastern Honshu. This affected the north's military capability in 1868. I begin from the Tenpo Famine of the mid to late 1830s, and continue through the subsequent crisis decades that rocked the region with continued crop failure and social unrest, hardly stable conditions from which to cultivate the economic, political, and military strength necessary to wage war.

The Tenpo famine and the subsequent decades of economic and social unrest in the north has not been previously linked to the Boshin War. But if we bear this reality in mind, the Alliance's 1868 defeat will come as less of a surprise. Rather, that defeat was the culmination of a much longer history of a region that was at a significant material disadvantage for years before the war. The lack of these resources, which were available in such abundance to the southwestern coalition, effectively sealed the north's fate in 1868.

5.1.1 Famine, Crop Failure, and Depopulation: The Tenpo Famine

The Tenpo Famine of the 1830s was one of the Japanese archipelago's four worst famines during the Edo period. Northeastern Japan, still reeling from the 1782-85 Tenmei Famine's aftermath, was dealt another crippling blow to both its economy and its population.³⁴² The famine affected much of the rest of the archipelago, with the notable exception of western Honshu and the island of Kyushu, with varying levels of intensity. However, despite its geographic extent, the famine affected northeastern Japan most severely.

In many places, the famine began in 1834. Even in the best of times, rice cultivation in northeastern Japan was a tricky endeavor, as rice was only marginally suited to that colder northern climate.³⁴³ A series of cold, wet summers in the mid to late-1830s disrupted that delicate balance was disrupted, and crop yields plummeted. As rice was the primary crop emphasized in Edo-era agriculture, this worsened a crisis that might have been mitigated with greater diversification of crops. Insect infestations further worsened this situation. The result of all this was not only a catastrophic crop failure, but subsequent massive starvation. As

³⁴² The other famines are the Kan'ei famine (1640-1643), Kyōho famine (1731-1732), and Tenmei famine (1782-1788), all named for the era names (*nengō* 年号) in which they occurred. The Tenpo famine was also named for its concurrent era. For an example of a northern domain response to an earlier famine, see Herman Ooms, *Charismatic Bureaucrat: a political biography of Matsudaira Sadanobu, 1758-1829*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), which includes a discussion of Matsudaira Sadanobu's response to the Tenmei famine while lord of Shirakawa domain. Shirakawa, which neighbored Aizu, saw almost all of its crop yields ruined in this famine. Sadanobu achieved renown far beyond his domain for his adept administration in the face of this crisis, with some going so far as to worship him as a deity, tribute to which he was not opposed.

³⁴³ Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 242.

northeastern Japan was a major exporter of rice to the shogunal capital of Edo and its surrounding Kantō region, this also affected rice prices and availability elsewhere in the archipelago, and as noted earlier, most of Japan with the exception of the northeast also suffered some measure of crop failure.³⁴⁴

The northeastern death toll during the famine was high.³⁴⁵ As Conrad Totman has observed, skepticism is warranted when dealing with overly specific death statistics. Even so, the death toll was staggering: in Tsugaru domain alone, on the northernmost tip of Honshu, 36,000 people died from 1833 to 1839 according to one estimate.³⁴⁶ The area now comprising Iwate Prefecture, most of which was part of what then was Morioka domain, had an estimated death toll of around 12,000.³⁴⁷ This death toll was due not only to starvation, but also to outbreaks of disease.³⁴⁸ Faced with destitution and starvation, many in the region, particularly among the peasant population, also turned to infanticide. The ruling class prohibited this practice, but that only drove it underground.³⁴⁹ Infanticide was frequent in Sendai domain even before the famine, and in one author's words, infanticide in Hirosaki domain was "routine."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁴ Totman, p. 242.

³⁴⁵ Though the Tenpo famine was severe, the death toll during the Tenmei famine was worse. As Conrad Totman notes, over a third of the commoner population loss of over 924,000 during the Tenmei famine was recorded in northeastern Japan. Totman, P. 240.

³⁴⁶ Totman, p. 241.

³⁴⁷ Yamashita Fumio, *Shōwa Tōhoku Daikyōsaku* (Akita: Mumyōsha Shuppan, 2001), p. 28.

³⁴⁸ Totman, p. 241.

³⁴⁹ Fabian Drixler, *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p. 78; Totman, p. 259.

³⁵⁰ Drixler, p. 78.

But as terrible as the north's condition was in the famine's wake, the region's crisis years were far from over. Crop failure and social unrest continued. The American incursion of 1853, which brought in its wake change, political dispute, and disorder, only worsened conditions in the north and across the archipelago. The northern domains naturally had to take action in the face of this challenge. We will consider the actions of several key northern domains in the section below.

5.1.2 Decades of Crisis, Efforts toward Domainal Response

Diminished tax income to domainal coffers was an especially significant outcome of the Tenpo Famine and the continuing years of crop failure, population crisis, and episodes of social unrest that followed. Severely reduced crop yields meant that tax payments suffered. With reduced tax income, the business of administering a domain a challenge. In a tumultuous era like the one the archipelago faced starting in the early 1850s with the country's "opening" to the rest of the world, it became still more challenging. The north's domains pursued various ways of dealing with these crises, but the countermeasures that they pursued only mitigated, but did not completely eliminate, the impact of these famines and crop failures. The discussion below explores some of these domainal responses by considering the actions of four major northern domains: Sendai, Morioka, Aizu, and Tsugaru.

The Tenpo famine hit Sendai domain hard. As with many domains, it was still recovering from the aftermath of the Tenmei famine some fifty years earlier. To quote Totman, the Sendai plain harvested "next to nothing" when the new famine struck.³⁵¹ Sendai in particular strongly

³⁵¹ Totman, p. 241.

emphasized rice production in newly reclaimed arable land. By engaging in land reclamation the domain's agricultural income had previously risen significantly, from its official level of 625,000 *koku* to an unofficial total which was estimated at approximately one million.³⁵² It was this overemphasis on rice worsened the famine's effects on the domain's economy. As the domain worked to respond to the crisis and subsequent budgetary shortfall, it borrowed an incredible amount of money, by one estimate over 700,000 gold *ryō*.³⁵³ This debt also led to new problems for the domain officials, as it put them in conflict with wealthy merchants in the commercial center of Osaka, who were the domain's creditors.³⁵⁴ The cash-strapped domain responded to this fiscal crisis by switching from Osaka-based businesses (chiefly that of Masuya Heiemon) to

³⁵² *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2 (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1966), p. 55. This was not disclosed in formal reports to the Shogunate, as a reassessed official income level, despite added prestige at the shogun's court, would also mean increased responsibilities for "voluntary" monetary contributions, coastal defense deployments, and corvee duty.

³⁵³ Taira Shigemichi, "Sendai-han," pp. 277-322 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 310. A *ryō* was a large currency denomination for the time.

³⁵⁴ *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 674. Most notable among these Osaka-based creditors was Masuya Heiemon, an abundantly wealthy Osaka rice merchant who also worked with many other domains. He had worked with, and loaned money to, Sendai domain since the retirement of the domain's preceding chief economic agent in 1800. Because of the domain's debt to him, Masuya had an overwhelming level of influence on its policies. He even went so far as, on one occasion, to claim "Masuya Heiemon is Sendai." (*Masuhei wa Sendai nari* 升平は仙台なり). The domain leaders terminated Sendai's business with Masuya in 1834, after the famine began and the latter refused to lend more money to the domain, which was already so deeply in debt to him that it had to reduce its budget to a sixth of its normal 625,000 *koku* level.

a consortium of Sendai-based businesses, led by Nakai Shinzaburō, to handle loans and other financial matters.³⁵⁵

Even with new loan managers closer to home, this running budgetary disaster was not a temporary crisis. Indeed, it came to be Sendai domain's new norm for the rest of its existence. Table 4.1 on the page below lists the domain's run of bad harvests from 1834 to 1867, makes abundantly clear the domain's dire economic straits: only 1839, 1840, 1848, and 1851 were good harvest years for Sendai.³⁵⁶ These prolonged failures coincided with years when the archipelago faced immense change and political upheaval, and thereby put the domain at a material disadvantage, which are discussed below.

³⁵⁵ *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, pp. 674-677. Nakai, like many wealthy merchants with domain affiliations active in eastern Japan, was a merchant with roots in Ōmi Province.

³⁵⁶ *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 647.

Table 4: Failed Harvests in Sendai Domain

Year (Japanese and Western)	Lost agricultural output in <i>koku</i>	Cause
Tenpō 4 (1834)	759,300 <i>koku</i>	Unseasonable weather
Tenpō 6 (1835)	733,522 <i>koku</i>	Storm and flood damage
Tenpō 7 (1836)	915,784 <i>koku</i>	Unseasonable weather, storm and flood damage
Tenpō 8 (1837)	632,300 <i>koku</i>	Unseasonable weather, manpower exhaustion
Tenpō 9 (1838)	826,000 <i>koku</i>	Same as above
Tenpō 12 (1841)	365,500 <i>koku</i>	Flooding in the fall
Tenpō 13 (1842)	393,400 <i>koku</i>	Unseasonable weather
Tenpō 14 (1843)	480,000 <i>koku</i>	Unseasonable weather
Kōka 2 (1845)	678,568 <i>koku</i>	Drought
Kōka 3 (1846)	395,560 <i>koku</i>	Flood damage
Kōka 4 (1847)	418,500 <i>koku</i>	Same above
Kaei 2 (1849)	540,700 <i>koku</i>	Same above

Kaei 3 (1850)	593,700 <i>ku</i>	Same above
Kaei 5 (1852)	536,600 <i>ku</i>	Drought
Kaei 6 (1853)	687,000 <i>ku</i>	Drought
Ansei 1 (1854)	520,000 <i>ku</i>	Flood
Ansei 2 (1855)	453,862 <i>ku</i>	Unknown
Ansei 3 (1856)	360,000 <i>ku</i>	Drought
Ansei 4 (1857)	707,380 <i>ku</i>	Storm and flood damage
Ansei 5 (1858)	606,300 <i>ku</i>	Unseasonable weather
Ansei 6 (1859)	701,370 <i>ku</i>	Storm and flood damage
Man'en 1 (1860)	545,500 <i>ku</i>	Same as above
Bunkyū 1 (1861)	513,500 <i>ku</i>	Unseasonable weather
Bunkyū 2 (1862)	543,500 <i>ku</i>	Same as above
Bunkyū 3 (1863)	569,800 <i>ku</i>	Same as above
Genji 1 (1864)	572,800 <i>ku</i>	Flood
Genji 2/Keiō 1 (1865)	590,000 <i>ku</i>	Flood and drought
Keiō 2 (1866)	863,000 <i>ku</i>	Same as above
Keiō 3 (1867)	550,000 <i>ku</i>	Same as above

Despite these budgetary shortfalls, the domain made a tentative effort to attempt new programs in military modernization and shipbuilding, following the American incursion in 1853.³⁵⁷ Starting in February 1857, under the auspices of chief clan elder Shibata Minbu, the domain also launched a massive project aimed at reclaiming arable land that had laid fallow since it were abandoned during the Tenpo famine and its aftermath.³⁵⁸ Under Nakai's leadership,

³⁵⁷ Rather notably, Sendai domain was an early leader in the new wave of advanced shipbuilding which quickly followed the American military-diplomatic incursion of 1853. The domain sponsored the construction, at the Yamazaki shipyard on Sabusawa Island, near the Sendai domain port of Ishinomaki, of the hybrid Japanese-Western style six-gun sail warship *Kaiseimaru*. *Kaiseimaru*'s construction was a joint project. It involved Sendai domain retainers led by Confucian scholar Onodera Hōkoku and domain school rector Ōtsuki Jukusai, local labor, and Shogunate-affiliated naval engineers summoned from Edo who were led by Miura Kenya. *Kaiseimaru* was launched in 1857, tested at short distances in Sendai Bay, and had one long-range cruise delivering rice to Shogunate officials in Edo. The other two domains to build western-style warships so soon after the American incursion were Satsuma domain and Mito domain. *Miyagi Kenshi* claims that it was the first western-style warship built in Japan. The vessel was intended as an experimental vessel, meant to test out new shipbuilding techniques, train a new wave of sailors, and prepare the way for later, still larger, heavily armed, steam-powered vessels, but the project and the vessel itself were scrapped following Tadaki Tosa's decision to slash Sendai domain's budget by five-sixths. *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 567.

³⁵⁸ Clan elders (often called *karō* 家老, sometimes called *toshiyori* 年寄 or *shukurō* 宿老, called *bugyō* 奉行 in Sendai) administered political affairs in Edo period Japanese domains. In theory the office was intended as a daimyo's cabinet and in wartime as his chief strategists and generals. In most cases in the Edo period, with weak or disinterested daimyo only fulfilling the ceremonial role of ensuring the survival of the family line, the clan elders were the domain's effective rulers. Regarding Sendai's depopulation, *Miyagi Kenshi* offers Kita Village in Monou County as an example of its extent. The village had a population of around 400 before the famine; per a record from only a few years later this had dropped to about 183. With this sort of depopulation as the norm, as it was all around the northeast, the overabundance of fallow fields even in 1857 is unsurprising. *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 656.

the Sendai-based merchants who had replaced the Osaka men were instrumental in funding this endeavor.³⁵⁹ The same years saw the printing of paper money, backed by the same Sendai merchants led by Nakai, as a way of further aiding the economic recovery.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, the domain also encouraged local industries, particularly those related to sericulture, by offering loans, again backed by the same powerful local merchants, to those willing to undertake their development.³⁶¹ Nevertheless, regional crop failures continued from the 1850s into the 1860s, and consequently, domain revenues did not rise. Furthermore, the reclamations Shibata oversaw did not have significant success, and the resources of Nakai and the other local merchants proved insufficient to support this program; a few short years later, the burden they had taken on for the domain ruined these local businesses. Between this and the opposition of conservative elements among the Date cadet branch lords, Shibata's efforts collapsed completely, and he was forced into retirement. Meanwhile, Date Narikuni, who had ruled Sendai amidst a seemingly endless procession of disasters since the Tenpo famine's beginning, died in the summer of 1841. He was succeeded by Date Yoshikuni, who would lead the domain through its wartime surrender in late 1868.³⁶² Quite unusually for daimyo, who were born in Edo and had more investment in life there, Yoshikuni was born in his domain, was invested in its politics and conditions, and issued

³⁵⁹ *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 678.

³⁶⁰ *Miyagi Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 684.

³⁶¹ A listing of the individuals who petitioned for these loans, who came from a wide variety of locations across the domain, is reproduced as a chart in *Miyagi Kenshi*, Vol. 2, pp. 680-684.

³⁶² Taira, p. 322.

many orders intended to alleviate the domain's still flagging productivity and dire financial straits.³⁶³

But despite the best efforts of this rare daimyo, who both personally invested in his domain and its affairs, the slump in tax revenues continued through the 1850s. Domain officials now led by Shibata's successor, Tadaki Tosa, sharply slashed the domain's budget in the early 1860s. Per orders issued by Tadaki in Yoshikuni's name in November of 1862, what on paper was still a 625,000 koku titan of a domain now functioned on the operating budget of a moderately sized 100,000 koku domain, smaller than that of Morioka, its 200,000 *ku* neighbor to the north.³⁶⁴ This interrupted many of the domain's educational, military, and technological reforms and research projects, though it did not stop them.³⁶⁵ The Sendai domain school,

³⁶³ Miyagi Kenshi Vol. 2, p. 661; Edwin McClellan, *Woman in the Crested Kimono* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 67. Shogunate regulations in place since the 17th century required that a daimyo's legal wife reside permanently at the domain estate in Edo. Thus, many, if not most, daimyo were born in Edo, regarded it as home, and often had contemptuous views of their colleagues and comrades who resided in the domain: Edwin McClellan notes that Edo-based men of Tsugaru domain, including its lord, called their hometown counterparts "mountain apes." This being said, there were no restrictions that dictated that a daimyo's concubines had to do the same. Thus, Yoshikuni was born in Sendai Castle, by one of his father Date Nariyoshi's concubines; Nariyoshi was an earlier lord of Sendai who immediately preceded Narikuni, whose death is mentioned above.

³⁶⁴ Miyagi Kenshi Vol. 2, p. 688.

³⁶⁵ Sendai domain also made an attempt, as did Satsuma and Chōshū in the same years, at sending a few of its samurai "abroad" to Yokohama, and overseas to America, to advance their studies. The domain was not, however, able to send as many people abroad as its southern counterparts had. Most notable of these Sendai men, albeit of then-extremely humble status as a mere Edo-based foot soldier, was Takahashi Korekiyo, future multi-term finance minister and prime minister, who was sent to San Francisco, where he resided with the family of Yokohama-based

Yōkendō, also initiated research projects into salt, western-style textile, and porcelain production, tea cultivation, and mining. The domain also eyed foreign markets, as it began to export locally produced goods via the newly opened international port at Yokohama.³⁶⁶

Yet the harsh budgetary situation still prevented the domain from having anything more than token military presence in the imperial capital of Kyoto during the 1860s, and maintaining its long-established presence on the coast of Ezochi, where it guarded against Russian incursion.³⁶⁷ Many other domains of widely varying political persuasions maintained sizeable

merchant and sometime diplomat Eugene M. Van Reed. Takahashi returned to Edo, by then already renamed Tokyo, after Sendai domain had lost the war and surrendered its wartime leaders to domiciliary confinement.

³⁶⁶ Naturally, the domain only did so after having petitioned for, and then received, Shogunate approval to export these items in 1859. The exported products included hair oil, raw silk thread, soy beans, copper nails, millet, and various other cereals.

³⁶⁷ Otokozawa et. al., “Boshin Shimatsu,” p. 49-55; Ōtsuki Gentaku, “Ōtsukike Kyūzō Ōbun Reiyōshu,” on Kotenseki Sōgō *Deetabeesu*, early 19th cent. http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko08/bunko08_a0262/index.html; *Miyagi Kenshi Vol. 2*, pp. 666- 669. Sendai troops were, despite their small numbers, present under Tokugawa Shogunate command for some of the battles fought against Chōshū forces in Kyoto in the bloody summer of 1864. The domain was more easily prepared to make shorter-range military deployments to Edo, which after the shogunate’s attention shift to the Kyoto area and the reform, and effective end, of the alternate-attendance system, had witnessed a significant drop in both its warrior and commoner population. With the Shogunate not as capable of policing its capital as it once had, it requested assistance in Edo based police duty from various domains. Sendai was one, though its tours of duty in Edo were comparatively brief and its presence comparatively modest; Shōnai, another northern domain ruled by a hereditary Tokugawa vassal, took the lead in Edo police duty, and oversaw the personnel of other domains as-signed to the same duty, like the troops of Kaminoyama domain mentioned later in this dissertation, who were present for some of the early fighting in Edo on the eve of the Boshin War. As Edo was not as politically important in the 1860s given the focus on Kyoto, this was also a politically safe and non-sensitive duty for Sendai domain to undertake. Far from alone in Ezochi, Sendai domain troops and officials worked alongside those

military contingents in or near Kyoto, and more than a few of them were thus drawn more deeply into picking sides in the decade's political maelstrom. Aizu domain, Satsuma domain, Chōshū domain, and many others all had a military presence in the area, and were drawn into political machinations that in part were responsible for precipitating the 1868 war. This was, perhaps, the proverbial silver lining of these incredibly negative circumstances in the early 19th century: Sendai domain, largely absent from the restive capital region, was able to keep clear of most political entanglements in this way. Ultimately, even on the eve of war, Sendai domain leaders were still working to address these lingering issues.

Just north of Sendai, Morioka domain faced its own challenges, some of which intersected with Sendai domain and its interests. Of all the famines that Morioka domain weathered during the Edo period, the Tenpo famine affected it the most severely.³⁶⁸ The domain saw major crop failures in 1834, 1835, 1836, 1838, and 1839.³⁶⁹ Its leaders managed to secure short-term relief by importing rice from other domains, and by printing and, albeit briefly,

of other domains to secure the island's coast. Thanks to its presence there, headquartered in what is today the town of Shiraoi, Sendai domain leaders developed a keen interest in Russia as well as in Russian language studies. In doing this they placed their domain ahead of even the Shogunate as an authority in Japan on Russia. In an outspoken view for a time better known for philosophies like “revere the emperor, expel the barbarians” (*sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷), some Sendai leaders, especially especially members of the scholarly Ōtsuki family who had taken the forefront in the domain’s Russian language studies, even advocated cultivating friendly relations with Russia.

³⁶⁸ Hosoi Kazuyu, *Nanbu to Ōshū Dōchū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2002), p. 150.

³⁶⁹ Tanaka Kitami, “Morioka-han,” pp. 173-212 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōrai-sha, 1975), p. 201.

circulating paper currency, but this only partially mitigated their troubles.³⁷⁰ There were also efforts in the domain aimed at spreading the cultivation of hardier crops, such as potatoes and buckwheat, particularly intended for consumption amidst widespread failure of the rice crop. Furthermore, the domain restricted, and occasionally banned, the production of *sake*, which used rice that could otherwise be eaten. Even with these new crops and restrictions, there was still the problem of population losses. As noted above, Morioka lost over 12,000 people by one estimate, which as in many other places in the north, affected agricultural productivity by drastically reducing the number of hands in the fields, which turned a considerable amount of once arable land fallow.

Yet despite its troubles even amidst the famine, Morioka domain continued with major coastal patrol duty and other monetary and personnel contributions to the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Morioka military had maintained a presence in eastern Ezochi since 1799, as the Shogunate ordered it, together with other domains, to establish a military presence there as a deterrent against rapidly increasing Russian naval encroachment from the north and northwest.³⁷¹ In 1808, Morioka's obligations to the Shogunate increased because the Shogunate granted the domain which was previously rated at 100,000 koku in agricultural productivity, the new status of a 200,000 koku domain. Increased prestige aside, in practical terms this meant that the ruling daimyo, then Nanbu Toshinori (1782-1820), now owed twice as much to the Shogunate in monetary contributions, coastal defense deployments, and corvee labor. Meeting such demands

³⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 202.

³⁷¹ The territory under Morioka domain's purview included the southern Kurile islands, now better known for being the object of a decades-long territorial dispute between Russia and Japan. The Morioka troops were in close proximity to the Sendai men mentioned above, who were also in eastern Ezochi. Ibid, p. 198.

would be a major undertaking even if it had a healthy budget under ideal circumstances.³⁷² Although the famine did not end, Morioka continued its contributions and Ezochi presence. On Shogunate orders, it even increased its Ezochi presence in 1855, with new duties in the island's southern coast stretching from Muroran to the major port of Hakodate, where the Tokugawa Shogunate maintained its political offices for Ezochi. To pay for these duties, the domain increased tax burdens on its people, even as it simultaneously worked to provide famine relief and advance recovery efforts. This naturally prompted discontent among the non-samurai population, which resulted in many peasant uprisings in the domain's final half-century of existence. The domain saw riots over the price of rice in Morioka port towns in 1833, peasant uprisings across its territory in 1836, and uprisings in Sanhei County, in 1847.³⁷³

An especially major incident of peasant unrest in Morioka domain during this period was the 1853 incident known as was its predecessor in the same space six years earlier, as the Sanhei Uprising (*Sanhei-ikki* 三閉伊一揆).³⁷⁴ The domain promised not to impose new taxes in 1847, but in 1853, it broke this promise and raised taxes. Angry at domain policies amidst such straitened times, over twenty thousand peasants of Sanhei County in southern Morioka domain attacked local tax intendants' offices and resisted all attempts at mediation by Morioka officials. Eight thousand of their number went over the border into Kesen County, which lay in Sendai domain, where they forcibly petitioned local domain officials for aid and intervention on their

³⁷² Ibid, p. 211.

³⁷³ Hosoi, p. 252.

³⁷⁴ Tanaka, p. 211.

behalf.³⁷⁵ The Morioka authorities responded with a major military mobilization to the border region, aimed at halting the peasants' southward flow out of their territory. Eventually, both domains reached out to the Shogunate for assistance. In the end, Sendai domain managed to arrange a negotiated peace on the condition that the uprising's leaders' lives would be spared. This ended the uprising.³⁷⁶

Like Sendai domain, Morioka domain also aimed at assisting recovery and improving local self-sufficiency by fostering the growth of local industry. Starting in the mid-1850s, the domain laid the groundwork for local iron and steel production, which in turn, helped with local weapons manufacture and domain defense: some of the rifles and cannon used by its forces in 1868 were locally produced.³⁷⁷ While this industry would only have limited production capability during the rest of the domain's years, it would be a fertile training ground for engineers involved in later, more advanced steel production. An especially notable figure in this industry in Morioka domain was Ōshima Takatō, who built one of Japan's first reverbratory blast

³⁷⁵ Tanaka, p. 205. Their petition requested that they be allowed entry into Sendai territory and to become peasants of Sendai domain, or alternatively for their territory to be made *into* Sendai domain territory if making it directly administered shogunal house land was impossible. In the end, though the uprising ended peacefully with Sendai domain's intercession, none of these points on their petition were granted.

³⁷⁶ Tanaka, p. 205. Though Sendai domain leaders in the area were indeed able to negotiate a bloodless solution to the uprising, Miura Meisuke, the second Sanhei Uprising's leader, was imprisoned by Morioka officials. He died while still in prison in 1864.

³⁷⁷ There were iron ore deposits in Morioka territory, and further north in parts of Tsugaru territory, which provided an abundant local source of raw material for this. The ore was also used for centuries in the production of Nanbu ironware, which was made in both Morioka territory and the northern portion of Sendai territory. Nanbu ironware, especially in the form of kettles, is still produced today. Hosoi, pp. 139-140; Tanaka, p. 202.

furnaces for the domain, at Kamaishi, with the financial backing of wealthy Morioka merchants.³⁷⁸ In the Meiji era, Ōshima continued his work in steel production as well as in the mining industry, in Iwate Prefecture and elsewhere.³⁷⁹

Aizu domain's situation was dire for the entirety of the first half of the 19th century. Indeed, though Aizu was well-connected to the Sea of Japan ports and elsewhere via rivers or roads, visitors already described its poverty *before* the Tenpo famine as extreme.³⁸⁰ Yet, while the famine certainly posed its own challenges, the domain's situation was worsened by the fact

³⁷⁸ Hosoi, p. 139.

³⁷⁹ Iwate Prefecture (*Iwate-ken* 岩手県) is the modern political entity whose geography encompasses most of what was once Morioka Domain and part of what used to be Sendai domain's northern third. Ōshima first worked in Mito domain under the auspices of one of the major branch families of the Tokugawa clan, where he built an earlier reverberatory furnace; only after his work in Mito did he return to Morioka, partly in order to have more immediate access to raw materials. For more on Ōshima's engineering work in Morioka domain during the late Edo period at the Kamaishi furnace, and his later work in Meiji-era Japan, see Ōhashi Shūji, *Bakumatsu Ishin Seitetsuron*, (Tokyo: Agune, 1991). Disappointingly for historians, little to nothing of detailed information survives regarding the particulars of Morioka's weapons production facilities or capability, partly because it impacted domain defense and was thus a top secret matter, largely entrusted to human memory rather than to paper. While some records did indeed exist, most of these were purposely destroyed along with a plethora of other sensitive domain records, when Morioka surrendered in late 1868. I have observed that this trend of records destroyed upon the Alliance's defeat, particularly with larger domains like Morioka, Sendai, or Yonezawa, seems to have been a frequent occurrence. There was a later wave of documentary destruction in World War II, when the United States military firebombed major Japanese cities and destroyed archives in the process. This was the fate of some of Sendai domain's official records, which were destroyed with the Miyagi Prefectural Library when Sendai was firebombed on July 10, 1945. While some of the library's collection had been evacuated in advance of the bombing, the domain records were left behind.

³⁸⁰ Shimoda, pp. 10-11.

that apart from district administrators and local intendants who oversaw tax collection, its warrior population did not have much direct connection with the domain territory or the realities of its people outside the castle town's boundaries.

As historian Hiraku Shimoda has noted, the warrior population was far more invested in Aizu as a domainal institution than were the commoners, who often fled for better conditions elsewhere and could not be induced to remain and exert themselves for the domain, be it in land reclamation or anything else.³⁸¹ Aizu, Shimoda writes, "lived and died with mere 'guests,'" rather than a people truly invested in the domain and its fortunes.³⁸² The warrior caste's indifference to the domain's plight, and the increasing demands that the caste placed on the domain's productivity was a negative trend that continued through the domain's demise. No sooner had the domain managed a fragile balance, keeping up with coastal defense in Ezochi and maintenance of a coast battery near Edo, than its lord Matsudaira Katamori agreed to the shogunate's request in 1863 that he become military commissioner of Kyoto (*Kyōto Shugoshoku 京都守護職*).³⁸³ It bears noting that the lord's decision to accept this assignment was made over

³⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 26-32.

³⁸² Ibid, p. 39.

³⁸³ Tsunabuchi Kenjō, "Matsudaira Katamori: Hito to Sono Jiseki," pp. 9-34, in *Matsudaira Katamori no Subete*, Tsunabuchi Kenjō, ed. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1984), p. 17. Nakamura Akihiko, *Byakkotai*. (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 2001), pp. 14-15; "Kaigan Okatame Taihei Kagami: Izu, Sagami, Musashi, Awa, Kazusa Shimosa," on Kotenseki Sōgō Deetabeeesu, 1857.

http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko10/bunko10_08263/index.html; Noguchi Shin'ichi, *Aizu-han*, (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2005), pp. 145-151; Shōji, "Aizu-han," pp. 187, 194. Aizu's main coast battery was at Futtsu, in modern day Chiba Prefecture, on the opposite side of what is today known as Tokyo Bay, with an obligation to provide for forty cannon, 400 muskets, and 19 patrol boats. Aizu men also patrolled part of present-day

the protests of several key domain officials.³⁸⁴ While Aizu engaged in vigorous political and military activity in the Kyoto region from 1863 to 1868, it did so at the cost of wearing down the domain's productivity and the efforts of the domain's non-warrior population who drove its economy. Even the shogunate's granting Aizu income increases and monetary grants did not wholly alleviate this.³⁸⁵ This decision pressed a suffering population even deeper into destitution. While Aizu was able to put up a commendable fight across northeastern Japan during the Boshin War, often alongside its neighboring Alliance forces, this was, first and foremost, the warrior caste's fight, for which everyone else was simply pulled along. With its non-involvement or forced involvement, the Aizu peasant population was not particularly invested in the domain's desperate defense effort, much less in the more remote chance of Aizu's victory. Some Aizu

Hokkaidō's shores, and had an additional, even further presence on the southern tip of Sakhalin, known in Japanese, after its Ainu name (Karapto), as Karafuto (樺太). Aizu forces were also present as part of the major land- and sea-based security detail during the visits of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's American naval squadron in 1853 and 1854; they were deployed to Shinagawa, on the Edo side of the bay. Their presence (by their banners) was even noted by American observers, most notably Samuel Wells Williams.

³⁸⁴ Particularly notable and vociferous in their dissent were Saigō Tanomo and Tanaka Tosa, two Aizu clan elders, who immediately rode nonstop from Aizu to Edo upon receiving the news of this Shogunate assignment. They met with Katamori and protested his decision to accept the post as reckless and destructive: Saigō is famous for having compared it to “putting out a fire while carrying a load of firewood.” Their concern for the domain and its dire financial straits was apparently a minority view: both men were overruled, summarily dismissed from duty, and ordered to return to the domain. In a sense, this also foreshadowed Aizu’s later suppression and forced suicide of senior vassals who advocated unconditional surrender to the southwestern coalition, at the start of the Boshin War. Noguchi, pp. 158-159.

³⁸⁵ Shōji, p. 187. At its highest income level in its final decade, Aizu went from controlling 280,000 koku of territory to 450,000 *koku*.

peasants even chose to aid the imperial forces as road guides and as scouts for artillery positions.³⁸⁶ It is hardly surprising, then, that when the war ended and the imperial army deported the Aizu warrior population from the shattered castle town *en masse*, the domain's commoners greeted that departure with indifference, scorn, or in some cases violence.³⁸⁷ In the words of William Willis, a contemporary English observer present in the northeast at the end of the war, there was little pity or sympathy outside the "official class" for the vanquished Aizu men, and "even if Aidzu (Katamori) and his chief advisers received a free pardon, it would be impossible to force them again upon the people of their province."³⁸⁸

Tsugaru (Hirosaki) domain's response to these difficult circumstances, especially given the often deeply entrenched lines between castes in Edo period Japan, was more radical. Aside from famine, it also had to contend with the ruling daimyo Tsugaru Nobuyuki's years-long

³⁸⁶ These actions were the grounds by which ex-Aizu samurai undertook revenge killings against peasants after the war. One example was in the case of villager Ōdaira Hachirō, who was murdered by an Aizu samurai named Tanabe Gunji for his role in guiding the imperial forces at the start of the castle town siege. This incident is recounted in Hoshi Ryōichi, *Aizu-han Tonami e: Hokoritakaki Tamashii no Kiseki* (Tokyo: Sanshūsha, 2009), p. 113.

³⁸⁷ Shimoda, pp. 37-38, 45; Noguchi, p. 188. A major peasant uprising, remembered as the Aizu World-Rectifying Uprising (*Aizu Yonaoshi Ikki* 会津世直し一揆) or colloquially as the Yaa-yaa Uprising (*Yaa Yaa Ikki* ヤーやー一揆), broke out across Aizu territory on November 16, 1868, soon after Aizu domain's surrender on the morning of November 6. At its peak it involved 1200 households in 1100 villages. As it broke out so soon after the Aizu surrender, the imperial forces were still spread out across almost the entirety of Aizu territory; the imperial troops thus swiftly moved to subdue the rebellion, though their efforts were initially unsuccessful. Asking other domains (especially Ōmura and Shōnai) to relocate their administrations and populations to Aizu and attempt to govern it also proved fruitless. Martial law was thus a necessary tool for keeping order in Aizu at this time. In the end, the uprising was not quelled until January 13, 1869.

³⁸⁸ As quoted in Shimoda, p. 38.

inability to keep his own spendthrift habits under control, a habit which did not subside amidst this financial and human disaster.³⁸⁹ Between the lord's dissolution and the crisis posed by the famine, the retainer band split into factions and eventually, reformists forced Nobuyuki's retirement in favor of outsider and adopted heir Tsugaru Yukitsugu.³⁹⁰ In turn, Yukitsugu supported the efforts at fiscal retrenchment and political reform that his predecessor had staunchly opposed.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early-Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 147.

³⁹⁰ Tsugaru Yukitsugu was doubly an outsider: he was first adopted into a branch of the Kuroishi-Tsugaru, a branch family of the main line, from the Matsudaira family of Yoshida domain. He was then adopted from the branch family into the main daimyo family of Tsugaru domain. Meanwhile, after his resignation, Nobuyuki lived in modest retirement in one of the Tsugaru domain mansions in Edo, now excluded from most direct influence on the domain's politics. He died while still residing there, in 1862. McClellan, p. 74.

³⁹¹ Ravina, p. 148; *Tsugaruhan Kyūkidenrui* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1982), pp. 290-291. Nobuyuki was notorious for spending lavish sums of money on drinking, carousing with prostitutes while on duty in Edo, and engaging in many other expensive and unnecessary trips, building projects, and more, inside and outside his domain, which were clearly devoted more for pleasure than for business. Also notable among Nobuyuki's irresponsible and dissolute actions, albeit prior to the famine, was when he risked provoking the shogunate's ire when his retinue was delayed en route from Tsugaru to Edo for alternate-attendance duty at the shogun's capital. While his retinue paused for the night at an inn en route, the hapless lord decided to while away the night with drinking and debauchery, and could not be awakened the following morning for a timely departure to the next post station on the trip. This was hardly what a domain in such dire straits needed. Takakura Sagami, the senior vassal attached to Nobuyuki's entourage, could not convince his lord of the error of his ways, so in a final, desperate effort to remonstrate with his lord, he committed ritual suicide while the retinue was still en route, in Sendai domain's southern post town of Kōri, where he was also buried.

For Tsugaru domain, the Tenpo famine ran from 1832 to 1839.³⁹² Given the famine's effect on both population and tax revenues, the domain took the step of allowing its vassals to personally engage in farming.³⁹³ In order to encourage cultivation, anyone—first commoners, then samurai as well—who cleared some of the domain's 23,243 acres of post-famine fallow land at their own expense for cultivation was permitted to claim title to the fallow land that they had cleared.³⁹⁴ The domain also simultaneously imported rice from other domains to use for famine relief, and significantly reduced both its expenditures on the lord's household, as well as on retainer stipends, in order to further conserve funds.³⁹⁵ By setting the trend in restricting his own sumptuary habits, Yukitsugu was also able to enhance his credibility with the domain's reformist leaders who aimed to reduce samurai stipends. Between a lower budget and the effort to reclaim land, these measures promoted self-sustenance and alleviated burden on the domain, which still had to provide emergency aid for both its starving vassals and its remaining starving

³⁹² With the exception of 1836, when the domain's crops did not fail. Hasegawa Seiichi, *Tsugaru, Matsumae to Umi no Michi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001), p. 248.

³⁹³ This was radical, as for the most part, the samurai caste throughout the archipelago did not concern itself with agriculture. Most domains did not even consider the notion until after the Boshin War ended. That being said, Hirosaki domain did have an earlier wave of encouraging samurai land cultivation, following the Tenmei Famine. Kudō Mutsuo, “Hirosaki-han,” pp. 85-128 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), pp. 109-111.

³⁹⁴ Ravina, p. 151.

³⁹⁵ Ravina, p. 151; Kudō, “Hirosaki-han,” p. 127. Kaga (Kanazawa) domain, best known for being the largest domain in Japan at 1,025,000 *koku* in official agricultural productivity, was a major source of the 15,000 *koku* of emergency rice which Tsugaru domain imported in 1834.

commoners. Like Aizu domain, Tsugaru also suffered population loss due to death and flight.³⁹⁶ Some 33,000 people fled the domain in search of better conditions elsewhere, but by another estimate, the domain saw 47,000 people flee its boundaries between 1833 and 1839.³⁹⁷ The domain managed to improve its financial situation over the ensuing years thanks to improved fiscal policies. It also undertook the beginnings of military modernization. But its reduced population continued to pose a problem.

Finally, it bears noting that depopulation, whether it was through death or through departure for other parts of the archipelago, had a long-term effect on *all* domains in the northeast. The archipelago's total population, by one reckoning, dropped by 10 percent overall.³⁹⁸ Even as of 1868, the region's population had yet to recover to its higher 1700 levels.³⁹⁹ The population drop affected, first of all, the manpower available to work the fields, run businesses, and in general, drive the region's economy. This made recovery all the more difficult for the north. It also diminished the pool from which the domains could draw fighting men, be they samurai or non-samurai recruits. Meanwhile, the populations of the southwestern

³⁹⁶ Ravina, p. 147. Mark Ravina gives a figure of 80,000 for Tsugaru domain's population drop, with 47,000 people of that number fleeing the domain, and the rest of that number as fatalities.

³⁹⁷ Totman, p. 241. These Tsugaruites on the way exile, as with their other émigré counterparts from across the archipelago, did not always make it to Edo or other major cities: a considerable number died en route of disease.

³⁹⁸ Mark D. Hardt, *History of Infectious Disease Pandemics in Urban Societies* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), p. 64n.

³⁹⁹ Drixler, p. 12.

domains, which went on to win the 1868 war, did not have any such population drop. Even in sheer numbers, then, the south had the advantage.⁴⁰⁰

In sum, from the Tenpo famine through the late 1860s, the northern domains' leaders were considerably preoccupied with these local concerns well before the crisis year of 1868. While leaders in the above mentioned domains, and in many other places throughout the north, did their best to alleviate these challenges to their political stability and finances, the results were far from perfect, and depopulation hampered even the most successful of recovery efforts. As can be seen especially in the case of Sendai domain and its finances, major powers in the north had by no means fully recovered by the war's onset in 1868. While most of the Alliance domains made an effort in battle regardless of this, their effectiveness in battle was undoubtedly hampered by this steady, long-term crisis.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The famines, natural disasters, and depopulation that struck northern Honshu during the first half of the 19th century left its local governments reeling, its populations across all domainal lines agitated, and its already limited resources even more strained. This started from the Tenpo famine of the 1830s and continued unabated through 1868 with other crop failures and attendant episodes of social unrest, with only moderate recovery and a handful of good overall harvest years breaking this negative trend. While Sendai domain was especially hard-hit by this trend, all

⁴⁰⁰ As Totman observes, not only did the southwest have the advantage, it actually saw a population *increase* while the north's dwindled. Totman, p. 242.

domains in the north were affected. It would have long-term after-effects which would thus affect the Alliance's ability to wage and sustain a military campaign. The northern domains attempted any number of measures to counteract these challenges, from military deployment against peasant uprising, to sharply slashing budgets, to putting samurai at work in agriculture, to developing agricultural techniques and local production, to incentivizing land reclamation efforts. While these mitigated the problem, they did fully not solve it. Though the northern domains attempted projects of military and technological modernization and improved coastal defense systems in the years after the American incursion of 1853, these very local and immediate concerns all but ensured that any significant progress that they made in this realm, even if relatively successful, was still hampered.

Depopulation, be it due to starvation, disease, or infanticide was also a significant outcome of both the Tenpo famine and the difficult years that followed. While fertility did gradually recover after the 1830s, it did not totally compensate for these losses.⁴⁰¹ Depopulation hamstrung recovery efforts as it drained the manpower necessary for farmwork and commerce. It also left the north with a smaller pool of military personnel and peasant conscripts from whom to draw in wartime.

With this in mind, the Northern Alliance's loss in the 1868 war is not surprising, but fits in to a far broader context. These natural disasters ensured that the northern domains did not have the same level of resources, be they financial or otherwise, to undertake the sort of sustained efforts at military, and technological overhaul and modernization that southwestern domains like Satsuma had. Sendai itself, despite its wherewithal on paper, was still running on one sixth of its usual income even in the mid-1860s. As its military forces were the core of the

⁴⁰¹ Drixler, p. 78.

Alliance's military power in the *late* 1860s, these post-Tenpo limitations are directly relevant to any consideration of the Alliance.

In contrast to this long-running crisis in the north, the southwestern domains were unaffected by this trend of famine and depopulation. Consequently, they enjoyed a significant strategic and tactical advantage in 1868, and despite any challenges they may have faced in battle, their eventual victory in the north was all the more assured. Simply put, they had more resources with which to improve both their political organization and their military strength, and more personnel with which to bring that power to bear.

But despite the long-lasting effects of these natural disasters on the north's resources and its ability to accomplish its military objectives, the Alliance domains still made every effort with the limited resources at their disposal to pursue military modernization and strengthen external ties. They were by no means the stalwart arch-conservative warriors in medieval armor that some might assume them to be. This effort at global outreach and military modernization, some of which was an eleventh-hour endeavor, is the subject to which we will turn in the subsequent chapter.

6.0 GAIKOKU

One of the criticisms frequently leveled against the Northern Alliance, particularly by historians outside of Japan, is that it was conservative or reactionary, somehow out of touch with the worldwide political realities that only the victorious southwestern coalition was willing to accept and work to overcome. An example of this criticism is James Baxter's 2009 study, *The Meiji Unification through the Lens of Ishikawa Prefecture*, which in offering background on the years leading up to the new government's formation in 1868, described the Alliance as "shogunate diehards in the Northeast."⁴⁰² In an older work, *A History of Modern Japan*, Richard Storry argues that the members of the Alliance were "mindful of their allegiance to the heirs of Tokugawa Ieyasu."⁴⁰³ Yet when one analyzes the history of northeastern Japan more closely, the conservative label does not do justice to it, or to the complexities of its international interactions or its domains' interest in 19th century technological advances. As discussed above, it was anything but an isolated backwater. The region was an interface between the archipelago's heartland to the south, and the Asian continent and north Pacific islands to the north and northeast. Centuries later, across the first half of the 19th century, the region's awareness of and engagement with external developments endured, alongside the diversity of political interests

⁴⁰² James Baxter, *The Meiji Unification through the Lens of Ishikawa Prefecture*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 57.

⁴⁰³ Richard Storry, *A History of Modern Japan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 102.

and alignments among its political entities in the years leading up to 1868. Furthermore, the region's domains had many external ties, inside and outside the archipelago. Far from being a latter-day development, these ties and this external curiosity were the culmination of many years of engagement. The present chapter examines with those ties. Furthermore, if we are to speak of external ties, we must consider what constituted an "inside." In other words, we must ask what constituted "country" at that time.

The question of Japanese nationhood before the institution of the modern Japanese imperial state has been the subject of some study in recent years. What constitutes a "country" (*kuni* 国)? Does the Japanese archipelago as a whole, in the Edo period, fit that definition? It was, after all, governed by a loose central government which did not have full authority over the archipelago.⁴⁰⁴ As one scholar has argued, while there was an archipelago-wide sense of nationhood, this sense of nationhood has to be taken on its own merit and not taken as a precursor to modern Japan.⁴⁰⁵

One work of particular note on this topic is Mark Ravina's *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan*, which presents an image of Edo period (1603-1867) Japan as a "compound state," with a loose central government (the Tokugawa Shogunate) whose influence over local

⁴⁰⁴ It must be borne in mind, as historian Philip Brown has argued, that despite this local autonomy and selective obedience to the Shogunate's directives, the domains did not explicitly *challenge* the shogunate's authority and orders either. Philip Brown, *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 239. For more on the idea of the Edo period's "collective fictions," wherein the domains kept up the appearance of obedience and compliance while circumventing or ignoring the Shogunate's regulations and orders, see Luke Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012).

⁴⁰⁵ Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 212.

powers was ultimately limited.⁴⁰⁶ He argues that the archipelago was divided into domains that were local authorities and “countries” unto themselves, which exercised a great deal of power over their own affairs independent of the Shogunate.⁴⁰⁷ It was only through the systematic destruction of those *kuni* that the southwestern coalition’s leaders were able to create the modern, unitary state we know today as Japan.⁴⁰⁸ Albert Craig argued in *Japan in Transition from Tokugawa to Meiji* that this decentralization made it possible for the domains to care for themselves while the new central government put its own affairs in order in advance of its eventual liquidation of the domains.⁴⁰⁹ But prior to that phase, which came in the war’s wake, that decentralization and patchwork of countries in the archipelago made possible not only individual domains’ ability to care for themselves, but also the organization necessary for forming the war’s major regional alliances, north and south. And beyond inter-regional cooperation, the Alliance’s “countries” also engaged in overseas relations with the western powers—“countries” as the term is commonly understood today.

Thus, with that notion of “country” in mind, and juxtaposed against the modern, western conception of “country,” this chapter explores the overtures that the Alliance made to both types outside *kuni*: other domains (specifically, other domains in the immediate vicinity) which it

⁴⁰⁶ Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 194.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

⁴⁰⁸ Ravina, p. 15.

⁴⁰⁹ Albert Craig, “The Central Government,” pp. 36-67 of *Japan in Transition from Tokugawa to Meiji*, ed. Marius Jansen and Gilbert Roman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 62-63. For more on the fence sitting and self-preservationist mentality of even the most supposedly loyal Tokugawa *fudai* daimyo, see Harold Bolitho, *Treasures Among Men: The Fudai Daimyo in Tokugawa Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). This mentality was especially pronounced in 1868.

brought into its ranks, as well as European and North American countries. In the paragraphs that follow, I argue that in both cases, the Alliance's interest in and awareness of them long predates the crucial war months, and that factors beyond Alliance control neutralized any positive effect it might have otherwise gained from these external ties.

6.1 THE NORTH ECHIGO DOMAINS

Let us begin our exploration with other Alliance domains within the archipelago. Of the Alliance's immediately neighboring regions, Echigo Province was perhaps the most strategically important for its war aims. It immediately bordered Mutsu and Dewa to the west and south respectively and more importantly, in the days following the Alliance's formation and the fall of the former shogunal capital of Edo to the southwestern coalition, it offered a venue where the southwesterners had only made a few tentative inroads. Beyond the bolstering effect to military and political power that was inherent in increased Alliance membership, foreign trade was a key motivator of Tohoku interest in Echigo. Niigata, a deepwater port formerly under direct shogunal control, was one of the newest ports slated for opening to foreign visitation and residence as of 1868.⁴¹⁰ Access to an international port would, logically, considerably facilitate the Alliance war

⁴¹⁰ Niigata was to be opened in 1860, under the terms of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce (also known as the Harris Treaty or the Treaty of Edo) signed between the Tokugawa Shogunate and the United States government in 1858. This opening was postponed several times across the 1860s, and continued to be delayed in 1868. Before its time under direct Shogunate control, Niigata had been under Nagaoka domain control. Leonard Hammersmith, *Spoilsman in a Flowery Fairyland* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998), p. 70.

effort.⁴¹¹ This is also why despite the delays in its advance into Echigo, the southwestern coalition considered it essential to seize Echigo, and Niigata, quickly.⁴¹² Northern domains, especially inland domains like Aizu which were linked to Niigata by river, had a long-term vested interest in the port.⁴¹³ For sea traffic around the archipelago's Sea of Japan side, the port was important and frequently visited.⁴¹⁴ In the immediately preceding years there had even been plans to link the Aizu castle town to Niigata via steamboat on the Aga River, but these had not come to fruition as of 1868.⁴¹⁵ In the here and now, it was a potential conduit for reinforcement and aid. Furthermore, it was a potential liability, as anyone who seized Niigata, and Echigo as a whole, would have control of the river routes and mountain passes that crossed over into Mutsu Province (and specifically, Aizu domain territory).⁴¹⁶ The fact that Kaga domain had joined the southwestern coalition made that threat all the more palpable. Kaga was the archipelago's largest domain, the territory of which extended into Etchū Province, which bordered Echigo to the southwest. Thus, for all of these reasons, Echigo's domains were crucial to bring into, and maintain within, the Alliance fold.

The most direct action that the Alliance took was to deploy troops into Echigo. As Aizu domain held territory in the province's eastern corner, this was a relatively straightforward course of action. The ex-shogunate's order of 23 February 1868 which dispersed its house land

⁴¹¹ Harold Bolitho, "The Echigo War," *Monumenta Nipponica* 34, no. 3 (1979): p. 266.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid, p. 267.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, p. 266.

⁴¹⁵ Hoshi Ryōichi, *Bakumatsu no Aizu-han* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 2001), p. 178.

⁴¹⁶ Bolitho, p. 266.

in the province between the stewardship of Aizu, Yonezawa, Takada, and Kuwana domains gave Aizu all the pretext it needed to do so.⁴¹⁷ Sendai, Yonezawa, and Shōnai troops would soon follow in the Aizu men's wake. While the presence of Alliance forces certainly had coercive influence over Echigo's domainal politics, Alliance political lobbying also had an influence, as Aizu, Yonezawa, and Shonai officials made trips to the major Echigo domains to press for support.

The situation was not, however, one-sided; Echigo domains also had their say. Especially influential and militarily powerful among them was Nagaoka, located, as seen on the map in Figure 5.1, roughly in Echigo's center.

⁴¹⁷ Hoya, p. 205. Kuwana, whose main territory was in central Japan, had an exclave, and thus a vested interest of its own, in Echigo. The ruling Kuwana lord, Matsudaira Sadaaki (1848-1908) was also the Aizu lord's brother.

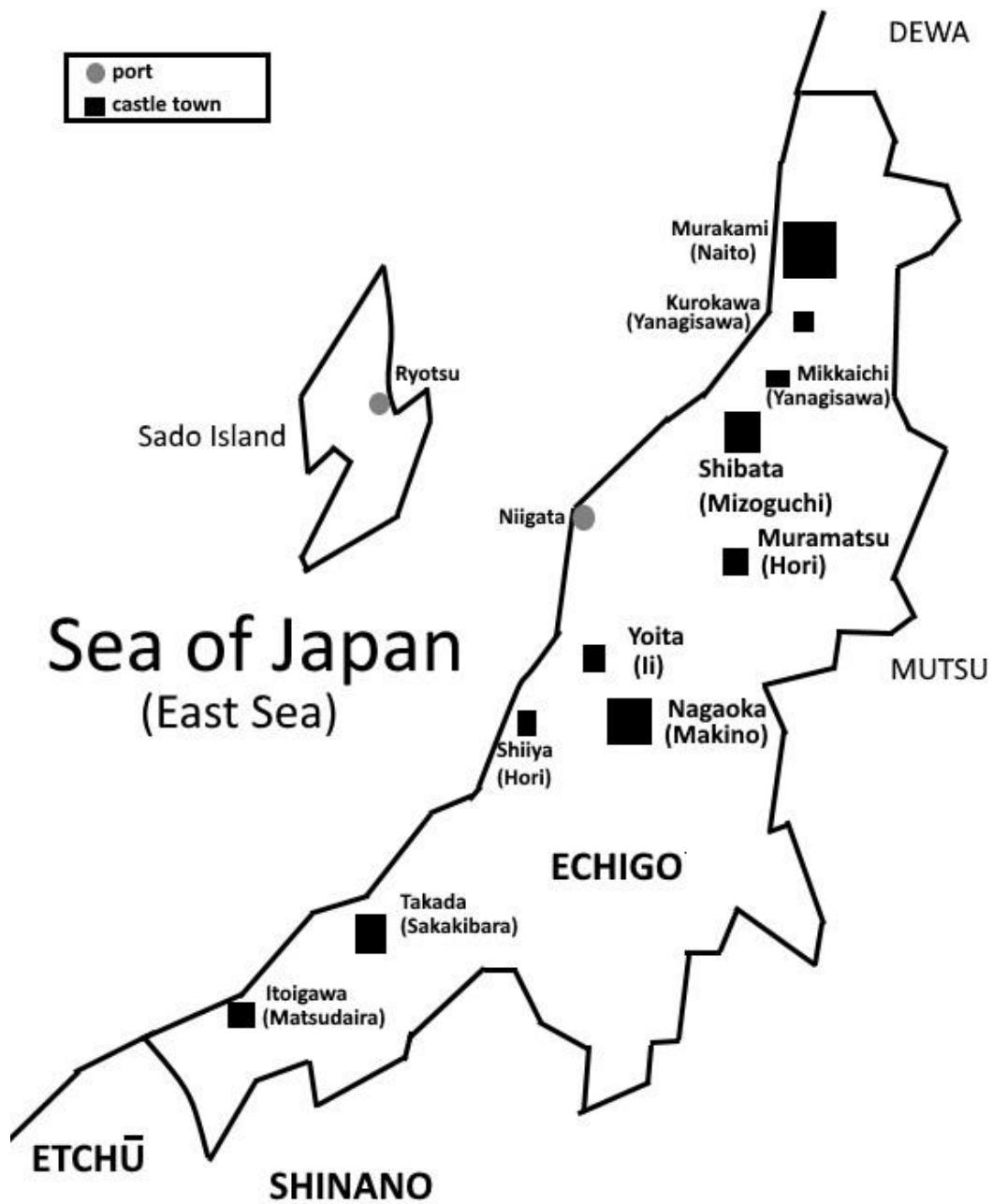


Figure 9: Echigo domains

At the war's onset, the Nagaoka leadership's initial aim was not Alliance participation, but rather, safeguarding its borders by a policy of armed neutrality following the model of

Switzerland.⁴¹⁸ Nagaoka's chief clan elder Kawai Tsugunosuke championed this policy. He hoped to ensure that neutrality through superior firepower. Kawai was no backwater politician: after many years in Edo, he was very familiar with political leaders from across the archipelago, as well as the newest developments in foreign studies in the wake of the U.S. Navy's incursion in 1853.⁴¹⁹ To accomplish his goal of armed neutrality, he sold his lord's family's treasures, art collection, porcelain collection, and other items to foreigners in Yokohama, and used the money to buy not only supplies but also the most modern weapons available, including brand-new cannons (two Gatling guns) and several hundred repeating rifles.⁴²⁰ All seemed to go according to plan for a time, as Nagaoka was able to avoid the fighting while troops reorganized along western lines and drilled with, and became more proficient at using, their new weapons. However, Kawai soon found his domain trapped between the southwestern coalition on the one side and the Northern Alliance on the other, with Aizu and other troops operating with impunity inside his domain's territory. In the interest of heading off a catastrophe from the southern side, Kawai met with Iwamura Seiichirō, a representative of the southwesterners who was unfamiliar with Kawai and had little experience in negotiation. He saw Kawai's attempt at negotiation as foot-dragging and thus summarily rebuffed the man's request for the southwestern coalition to withdraw from Nagaoka territory.⁴²¹ With Aizu and Alliance forces operating in the Nagaoka

⁴¹⁸ Hoshi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei*, pp. 83-84.

⁴¹⁹ Bolitho, p. 277. Kawai was one of the students of Sakuma Shōzan, a prominent and outspoken advocate of foreign learning in 19th century Japan.

⁴²⁰ Naramoto Tatsuya, *Nihon no kassen: Monoshiri jiten*. (Tokyo: Shufu to seikatsusha, 1994), p. 414; Bolitho, p. 276.

⁴²¹ Bolitho, pp. 272-273; Ike *et. al.*, p. 119.

vicinity and representing a potential threat should Kawai cast his lot with the southwestern coalition, Kawai felt he had no choice. He opted on the following day to oppose the southwestern coalition.⁴²² On the domain's behalf, he joined the Alliance, and cast his lot with his Tohoku neighbors instead.⁴²³ Kawai's decision also brought in five immediately neighboring domains, which for reasons of size and location felt that it was also in their best interest to cooperate with Nagaoka and the Northern Alliance.⁴²⁴

And so, while the Northern Alliance's constituents were overwhelmingly from Mutsu and Dewa, with Nagaoka's decision, several domains of neighboring Echigo Province, listed in the table below, joined it in signing the Alliance treaty.⁴²⁵

As seen in Table 5, the only domain larger than Nagaoka was Shibata, the largely coastal territory of which immediately bordered Niigata.⁴²⁶ Due to that proximity, whoever controlled the port also strongly influenced the direction of Shibata political affairs. But while Shibata did join the alliance, its leaders procrastinated over requests from Alliance leaders for military contribution to the front lines, most likely in a bid to wait while observing which direction the fortunes of war took.⁴²⁷ When the southwestern coalition landed at nearby Matsu-ga-saki on the

⁴²² Bolitho, p. 273.

⁴²³ Yamakawa Kenjirō, *Aizu Boshin Senshi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1933), pp. 385-387.

⁴²⁴ Bolitho, pp. 268-269, 274.

⁴²⁵ Vital information for the domains listed in table 5.1 comes from Kimura Motoi, Fujino Tamotsu, Murakami Takashi, eds., *Hanshi Daijiten Dai 3kan: Chūbu-hen I: Hokuriku, Kōshinetsu* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1989).

⁴²⁶ Komura Hajime, "Shibata-han," pp. 25-54 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 26.

⁴²⁷ Ibid, p. 49.

coast, Shibata forces were among the first to join them and to lead the way over the mountains and into Aizu territory. Hardly the actions of a domain fully committed to the Alliance's aims.

Ultimately, despite often skillful combat leadership, the Echigo-based allies were unable to secure victory. Like the fighting that took place on the front near the Pacific Coast, neither skillful nor even aggressive leadership could make up for the fact that the southwestern coalition, despite any internal disagreements among its members, had the advantage. It was bigger, stronger, and it benefited from frequently visited international ports, which allowed it to more easily import the weapons and other military materiel necessary to victory. Above all, the southwestern coalition had firmly in its possession the young Meiji Emperor, whose presence granted a *de facto* source of ultimate legitimization of that coalition's actions. Thus, faced with the southwestern coalition's overwhelming and growing force, the allies in Echigo were unable to continue mounting any effective resistance. Nagaoka Castle fell to the southwestern coalition on 15 September 1868 and Niigata port fell the following day.⁴²⁸ The small coalition partners in Echigo, like Mineyama and Kurokawa, saw which way the metaphorical wind blew and switched sides almost as abruptly as they had followed suit with Nagaoka and joined the Alliance. With little military power of their own, their decision for self-preservation in the midst of civil war can hardly be worthy of blame.

Troops from Echigo domains that wished to continue fighting were forced to withdraw over the mountain passes to the relative safety of Aizu territory. Their number included Kawai, who had been injured in one of the final engagements before the Nagaoka troops' withdrawal. As

⁴²⁸ Naramoto, *Nihon no Kassen*, p. 421.

he was unable to secure adequate treatment for his wound, Kawai developed gangrene, and died in Aizu territory mere days before the southerners entered it from the Pacific front.⁴²⁹

Thus, despite farsighted planning, skillful negotiation, and exceptional leadership, the war for the Echigo domains, and by extension, for the port that best connected the Alliance with the outside world, was over.

⁴²⁹ Yamakawa, p. 441.

Table 5: The North Echigo Domains

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Ruling Family</i>	<i>Income Level</i>	<i>Classification, Antechamber Seating</i>
Nagaoka	Makino	75,000 <i>koku</i> ⁴³⁰	<i>Fudai</i> , Hall of Emperors
Shibata	Mizoguchi	100,000 <i>koku</i>	<i>Tozama</i> , Great Hall
Murakami	Naitō	50,000 <i>koku</i> ⁴³¹	<i>Fudai</i> , Hall of Emperors
Muramatsu	Hori	30,000 <i>koku</i> ⁴³²	<i>Tozama</i> , Hall of Willows
Mineyama	Makino	11,000 <i>koku</i> ⁴³³	<i>Fudai</i>
Kurokawa	Yanagisawa	10,000 <i>koku</i> ⁴³⁴	<i>Fudai</i> , Hall of Emperors

⁴³⁰ Hoshi Ryōichi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei: Higashi Nihon Seifu Juritsu no Yume* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-shinsha, 1995), p. 80; Ike Susumu and Hara Naofumi, *Echigo Heiya, Sado to Hokkoku Hama Kaidō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2005), p. 83.

⁴³¹ Muraiso Eishun, “Kōshinetsu chihō no Shohan Ichiran,” pp. 437–450 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 448.

⁴³² Ike *et. al.*, p. 78; Muraiso, p. 449.

⁴³³ Muraiso, p. 448. By Shogunate order, Mineyama, a branch of Nagaoka domain, became an independent domain in 1863. Its daimyo and his family had permanent posting to Edo (*jōfu* 定府) status, like Moriyama domain, discussed above in Chapter 2. This meant that he resided in Edo and not Mineyama. This was also the year that alternate-attendance regulations requiring daimyo to reside in the shogun’s capital were significantly relaxed, thus Mineyama does not have an antechamber ranking.

⁴³⁴ Ike *et. al.*, p. 78. The Yanagisawa family of Kurokawa was founded in the early 18th century by Yanagisawa Tsunetaka, the fourth son of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, who held significant political clout as chamberlain and chief councilor to the fifth shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi.

6.2 OVERSEAS RELATIONS

Beyond its trans-regional relationships inside the Japanese archipelago, the Northern Alliance also engaged in what one would easily recognize today as modern-style foreign relations, with states and individuals from outside the archipelago. These relations can be broadly divided into the two categories: trade, in which the Alliance succeeded, and diplomacy, in which it failed. In both categories, the Alliance domains' interest in foreign relations and foreign technologies was no last-minute change. Again, it was the latest development in a long-running trend of interest and interaction.

Interest in foreign developments, foreign learning and the importation of foreign books and technology was nothing new in northeastern Japan even at the onset of the 1860s. This curiosity was driven in part by the region's decades-long involvement, at Shogunate behest, with coastal defense duty focused in the northern islands of Ezo (modern Hokkaido) and its northern neighbor Karafuto (樺太, now the Russian island of Sakhalin).⁴³⁵ These duties were meant to safeguard against Russian incursion on the Japanese archipelago from the north and northwest.⁴³⁶ It is noteworthy, given our present discussion, that Kudō Heisuke, a Kii domain-born doctor in Date family service, was one of the first voices in Japan to raise concern about the strategic threat that Russia posed.⁴³⁷ Eager to address this threat, in the 19th century's opening decades, the Tokugawa Shogunate reorganized the local administration of Ezo, Karafuto, and the southern

⁴³⁵ Noguchi Shin'ichi, *Aizu-han* (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2005), pp. 145-146.

⁴³⁶ Miyagi Kenshi, vol. 2 (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1956), pp. 666-667.

⁴³⁷ Kikuta Sadasato, *Sendai Jinmei Daijisho* (Tokyo: Rekishi Toshosha, 1974), pp. 327-328.

Kurile Islands, and the defense of their lengthy coastlines, was divided up among Sendai, Aizu, Akita (Kubota), Shōnai, Nanbu (Morioka), and Tsugaru (Hirosaki): all northeastern domains.⁴³⁸

This northern defense assignment sparked a curiosity in foreign studies, in part as a means to better understand and defend against foreign incursion. Sendai domain in particular established a program of Russian studies at Yōkendō, its domain school. This was a curriculum that put Sendai ahead of the entire archipelago.⁴³⁹ It was also an early leader in Western style medicine.⁴⁴⁰ Ōtsuki Bankei, an originally Edo-based Sendai vassal specializing in Dutch-style artillery who went on to serve as the domain school's rector in the 1860s, was one of the leading voices calling for an end to the shogunate's seclusion edicts, which for over two centuries had so dramatically restricted foreign trade and interaction.⁴⁴¹ The pace of these projects of study and modernization quickened after the American incursion of 1853, which so dramatically laid bare the areas of technological expertise and national defense in which the archipelago was lacking. The northern domains also remained mindful of the threat posed by Russian expansion north of

⁴³⁸ Noguchi, p. 194.

⁴³⁹ Russian, along with English, was on the language study curriculum at Yōkendō (養賢堂), the Sendai domain's main academy for the sons of its retainers. Among Sendai vassals who championed the importance of foreign language learning were members of the scholarly Ōtsuki family, including Ōtsuki Fumihiko (大槻文彦), better known for his later Meiji-era work in linguistics and dictionary compilation. See *Sendai Shi-shi* Vol. 1 (Sendai: Manyōdō, 1974), p. 338

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Irokawa Daikichi, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*. trans. and ed. Marius B. Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 78; Kikuta, p. 198.

the archipelago.⁴⁴² Sendai, Morioka, Aizu, and other northeastern domains expanded their western studies to include iron and steel production, textiles, shipbuilding, and more.⁴⁴³ Military reorganization was also explored, through the organization of experimental western-style

⁴⁴² This would prove to be no imagined threat, even in places other than the extreme north. As a case in point, in 1861, Russian naval forces actually landed in Tsushima domain, on the Japanese islands of Tsushima which lie in the strait between Korea and southern Japan, and established a base. Neither Tsushima domain nor the Shogunate were able to deal with the Russian incursion. It was only with the timely intervention of the British Royal Navy that the Russians were forced to withdraw. Yawata Kazuo, *Edo Sanbyakuhan Saigo no Hanshu* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2004), pp. 260-261.

⁴⁴³ Sendai domain included all of the above topics in the western studies curriculum at its domain school. It also experimented with building Western-style warships after the Shogunate's restriction on building large oceangoing vessels was lifted, following the American incursion in 1853. Sendai domain completed one such vessel, *Kaisei-maru* (開成丸), a two-masted sailing ship mounting six cannons. *Kaisei-maru* was built at the Yamazaki shipyard on Sabusawa Island, where Sendai domain maintained a naval station. In completing the vessel, Sendai domain was ahead of any other domain in the Japanese archipelago in modernized naval construction. However, this project proved to be too much for its straitened finances to handle in any sort of sustained manner. *Kaisei-maru* was scrapped after a single long-distance voyage, and the plan to build other vessels of its class, including steam-powered upgrades, was abandoned. It also bears noting on this point that *Kaisei-maru* was the second western-style warship built by Sendai domain. The domain built a Spanish-style galleon, the *San Juan Bautista*, for use in the Date diplomatic mission to Mexico and Rome in the 1610s. *Miyagi Kenshi* vol. 2, pp. 674-675. For a period map of *Kaisei-maru*'s 1860 test voyage from Sabusawa Island to Edo, see "Kaiseimaru kōro-zu," http://www.museum.maritime.kobe-u.ac.jp/maritime_museum2/lime/n187.html, accessed 3 November 2015. Morioka domain's major project was in iron and steel production, and was spearheaded by Morioka vassal Ōshima Takatō, who remained active in the steel industry for decades to come. See Ōhashi Shūji, *Bakumatsu Meiji Seitetsuron*. (Tokyo: Agune, 1991), pp. 275-303.

infantry companies.⁴⁴⁴ Though any foreign military threat was still relatively contained, it was considered best to strengthen the archipelago to better prepare for the possibility of invasion.

All of this makes quite clear that the northeastern domains, far from being a set of conservative diehards with their heads buried in the proverbial sand, were aware of international developments and were willing to change in the interest of keeping up. It was instead, depleted finances in the wake of the Tenpo famine that hamstrung these efforts. Similar efforts in southwestern Japan, which had evaded the famine's effects, continued unabated. But the crisis situation that was the opening months of 1868 provided the northeastern domains an added impetus, despite the condition of their finances, to speed up these projects in the interest of self-defense.

6.2.1 Fear and Loathing (and Heavy Weaponry) in Niigata

In trade through Niigata, especially the weapons trade, the Northern Alliance had some measure of success. As noted above, by the terms of the American-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce signed in 1858, Niigata was slated for opening to foreign trade and residence. The treaty's terms stipulated that port was supposed to open in 1860, but this was beset by delays.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ Sendai domain, in the autumn of 1855, was the earliest in the region to implement even experimental units organized along western lines, when Date vassals Ōtsuki Bankei and Ōtsuki Reisuke organized and drilled two platoons of the domain's Edo-based hereditary foot soldiers. This reorganization was eventually expanded to more of the domain's forces. By contrast, Aizu domain, which reorganized its military force in 1868 into four regiments, was the latest. One of these regiments, the Byakkotai, included the nineteen young troopers whose suicide attained such great renown. *Miyagi Kenshi* 2, p. 673; Noguchi, p. 170.

⁴⁴⁵ *Victorians in Japan: In and Around the Treaty Ports*, ed. Hugh Cortazzi (London: A&C Black, 2013), p. 169.

In 1868, the Alliance attempted to honor the agreement and open the port, perhaps in hope of attracting foreign visitors; it even set up its own management of the port.⁴⁴⁶ However, if the Alliance hoped for trade at Niigata on par with trade at the busy ports of Nagasaki or Yokohama, it was sorely disappointed, as Niigata was an isolated and infrequently visited port. By the fall, the Alliance lost control of Niigata altogether. The imperial government would only officially open Niigata to foreigners in 1869.⁴⁴⁷ Yet even after the imperial government did so, foreign visitors to Niigata were infrequent and only a handful of them took up residence there.⁴⁴⁸ Further, they complained of high prices and, more importantly, of inaccessibility and a harbor that did not allow for vessels to come within five miles of shore in safety.⁴⁴⁹ All of these factors made trade through Niigata difficult, but not impossible. It also bears noting that Niigata was also on the Sea of Japan, and thus considerably more difficult to reach for European and American vessels than those ports on the China Sea or the Pacific coast. Yet despite a less than stellar performance in trade overall, the foreign trade that Niigata brought to the Alliance in greatest quantity was weaponry and other military materiel. Central to this hurried project of armament for several key northern and Echigo domains were two Prussian brothers, Heinrich and Edward Schnell, who operated through Niigata.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Yonezawa domain supervised the port on the Alliance's behalf, and security duties were rotated, chiefly between Yonezawa, Shōnai, and Aizu domains. Sasaki, *Boshin sensō*, p. 230.

⁴⁴⁷ *Victorians in Japan*, p. 169.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴⁴⁹ *House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents: 13th Congress, 2d Session-49th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), p. 48.

⁴⁵⁰ Ishii, *Ishin no Nairan*, p. 280. There is, however, some confusion over whether or not the brothers were Prussian or Dutch; Ishii, cited here, calls them Dutch, while other sources refer to them as Prussian.

The Schnell brothers, whose precise background remains a mystery, had been residents of Japan for several years prior to the war.⁴⁵¹ Once part of the Prussian diplomatic legation, they then went into business selling clocks with a Swiss watch merchant named Francois Perregaux.⁴⁵² Most importantly to our discussion, their relationship with the northeast began in the mid-1860s, when they first cultivated ties with Aizu domain, the region's lone major *shinpan* domain introduced above in Chapter Two. The Schnell brothers were not alone in this regard, as Aizu officials also contracted with Nagasaki-based Prussian merchants Karl Lehmann and Oskar Hartmann.⁴⁵³ Aizu developed wide-ranging plans with the Lehmann-Hartmann Company covering everything from mining to shipbuilding for the domain, and even arranged for a major weapons purchase (via credit) of 4300 Snider-Enfield breech-loading rifles from the company in 1867.⁴⁵⁴ Yet in 1868, with Nagasaki far beyond its reach and in hostile territory, it was the Schnell Brothers, rather than the Lehmann-Hartmann company, who worked with Aizu domain.

⁴⁵¹ The earliest document I have been able to secure, a map of the world made in Yokohama and dated to 1862, which bears Edward Schnell's name. "Bankoku Kokaizu," http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru11/ru11_00866/index.html Accessed 1 November 2015.

⁴⁵² Kobiyama Rokurō, "Matsudaira Katamori Kankei Jinmei Jiten," pp. 198-211 of *Matsudaira Katamori no Subete*, ed. Tsunabuchi Kenjō (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1984), p. 200. For more on Perregaux and his brothers in the watch trade in east and southeast Asia, see Andreas Zanger, *The Swiss in Singapore* (Paris: Editions Didier Millet, 2014), pp. 28-29.

⁴⁵³ Hoshi, *Bakumatsu no Aizu-han*, pp. 178-180.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 181; "Ōkura-shō yori Doitsukokujin Reiman Harutoman shōkai yori kyū Aizu hanshi tōji unnun," *Jacar.go.jp*, accessed 26 October 2015. These were brand new weapons at the time. Yet by the time the weapons arrived in Nagasaki, the Boshin War had begun and the port was in (from Aizu perspective) enemy hands, so the domain was unable to either take delivery or make payment. In March 1875, former Aizu officials were summoned

At the war's outbreak, the Schnell brothers, who had decidedly north-leaning sympathies, joined the northern troops who were then in the process of evacuation from Yokohama and nearby Edo, and escaped by ship to Niigata, where they arrived on July 1, 1868.⁴⁵⁵ In Niigata they established themselves as gun runners and military consultants for the Northern Alliance.⁴⁵⁶ They also aided in fortifying the port's defenses through the construction of coastal artillery batteries.⁴⁵⁷ By war's end, Heinrich in particular had made himself enough of a regional fixture that by order of Aizu lord Matsudaira Katamori, he received an estate in the Aizu castle town as well as a stipend and the status of clan elder (*karō* 家老), along with the right to wear two swords, a privilege restricted to samurai.⁴⁵⁸ Heinrich Schnell also received a Japanese name from the Aizu lord, and thus became Hiramatsu Buhe'e (平松武兵衛), one of a mere handful of westerners in all of Japanese history to have received name, rank, and stipend from a Japanese feudal lord.⁴⁵⁹ He also held high status in Yonezawa domain, whose chief clan elder Chisaka Tarōzaemon recruited him as an advisor.⁴⁶⁰ In their function as gun runners, the Schnell brothers shipped weapons from Shanghai and Hong Kong to Niigata, from whence the weapons were

by the Japanese government's Ministry of Finance in conjunction with sorting out the Lehmann-Hartmann company's unpaid bills.

⁴⁵⁵ Ishii, p. 280.

⁴⁵⁶ Kobiyama, p. 200.

⁴⁵⁷ Hoya, p. 206.

⁴⁵⁸ Hoshi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei*, pp. 63-64. The elder Schnell's appearance in Japanese garb and weapons, and with Japanese name, stunned Yonezawa clan elder Chisaka Tarōzaemon, who commented "the times are changing, and shockingly so."

⁴⁵⁹ Kobiyama, p. 200.

⁴⁶⁰ Hoshi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei*, pp. 63-64.

distributed to a number of northern domains, most notably Aizu, Yonezawa, and the much closer Alliance domains of Echigo.⁴⁶¹

Meanwhile, one of the Alliance's individual contacts who was active on the Pacific Coast was Eugene M. Van Reed. A Pennsylvanian who came to Japan as a merchant and established his business first in Yokohama, Van Reed is perhaps best remembered today for his controversial role in the early Japanese settlement of Hawai'i.⁴⁶² In the closing months of 1867 and on into early 1868, Van Reed also functioned as consul-general in Japan for the Kingdom of Hawaii, though he lost this position due to his involvement in illicit trade.⁴⁶³ But most relevant to the present discussion is Van Reed's relationship with Sendai domain. Starting in the early 1860s, Van Reed, whose business was based out of Yokohama, interacted with several Edo-based Sendai retainers who had an interest in relations with the foreign community present there. Of particular note among their number was Owara Shindayū (大童信太夫), the senior Sendai domain officer who functioned as the domain's *charge d'affaires* (rusui-yaku 留守居役) in Edo.⁴⁶⁴ Van Reed arranged for several Edo-based Sendai vassals to further their exposure to foreign studies, first in the foreign settlement at Yokohama and later in the United States.⁴⁶⁵ One of those students, whose eventful time in the United States included getting sold into indentured

⁴⁶¹ Bolitho, p. 266.

⁴⁶² John E. Van Sant, *Pacific Pioneers* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 99-112.

⁴⁶³ *House Documents*, p. 42.

⁴⁶⁴ Owara took office as charge d'affaires in 1859. Richard J. Smethurst, *From Foot Soldier to Finance Minister: Takahashi Korekiyo, Japan's Keynes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 17.

⁴⁶⁵ Smethurst, p. 21.

servitude against the provisions of the recently passed 13th Amendment, was future multi-term Finance Minister and Prime Minister Takahashi Korekiyo (高橋是清).⁴⁶⁶

Given his history with Sendai domain, and no compunctions about breaking the rules, it is perhaps unsurprising that Van Reed, like the Schnell Brothers, saw no problem in violating the foreign community's official neutrality declaration (to which we will turn below) and supplying weapons to the north. While Van Reed was unable to operate on the same scale as did the Schnell brothers, he did travel to Sendai and supply some weapons and military equipment to Sendai domain on at least one occasion, as seen in the transcribed receipt below, dated 8 February 1868.⁴⁶⁷

*Received from Prince of Sendai
officers for
Sixty Rifles at \$14 \$840
300 Knapsacks C 1.50 450
 \$1,290*

*One thousand two hundred
And ninety Dollars
Van Reed*

Thus, though large-scale trade activity came to naught, the Alliance did manage to sustain its war effort, to some degree, through its role as a client in the region's international weapons trade. But weapons alone would not suffice for the northerners to achieve victory. Thus, the Alliance also made an effort at securing more overt political and military support from foreign powers.

⁴⁶⁶ Smethurst, pp. 24-35.

⁴⁶⁷ From color page appended to *Sendai shi-shi* Vol. 1 (Sendai: Sendai City Government, 1996).

6.2.2 Overtures and Foreign Opinion

Along with its efforts at military modernization, the Northern Alliance also attempted formal international overtures, in the hopes of securing foreign recognition and perhaps more direct aid in the form of military intervention. To be sure, some foreigners in Japan had northern sympathies. But unlike the success with gun running noted above, the Alliance's international overtures were not as successful.

At the war's onset, the consuls of foreign nations then resident in Japan met at Osaka to confer on the appropriate action to take in the face of civil war. With the Tokugawa Shogunate's collapse, there was no internationally recognized government in Japan. The ex-shogun's assurances to foreign diplomats did little to allay the latter's fears.⁴⁶⁸ Thus, until the war could be fought out and a new government both formed and capable to exercise authority across the archipelago, the foreign legations agreed to a declaration of neutrality. It was announced by simultaneous declaration on 18 February 1868.⁴⁶⁹ While the specifics of each country's declaration varied, all of them covered the basic points set forth in the American Minister-Resident Robert B. Van Valkenburgh's announcement, which was as follows:⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Takano Kiyoshi, *Tokugawa Yoshinobu: Kindai Nihon no Enshutsusha* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1994), p. 261.

⁴⁶⁹ Sasaki, p. 232; Ishii, p. 284.

⁴⁷⁰ Text as reproduced in *Papers relating to foreign affairs, Part 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), p. 672. Van Valkenburgh strenuously maintained that neutrality until nearly the war's end, though this became increasingly difficult with the arrival of the ex-Confederate ironclad ram *Stonewall*. The *Stonewall* had been bought by representatives of the Tokugawa Shogunate, but by the time it arrived in Yokohama, crewed by U.S. Navy personnel after a worldwide cruise, the Shogunate was no more, and there had yet to come into being a government

Having been officially informed that war exists in Japan between his Majesty the Mikado and the Tycoon, and being desirous of taking measures to secure the observance of a strict neutrality on the part of citizens of the United States of America, I give notice to such citizens that active participation in this war, by entering into service, the sale or charter of vessels of war or transport ships for the transportation of troops, the transportation of troops, military persons military dispatches, arms, ammunition, or articles contraband of war, to or for either of the contending parties, and similar acts, constitute according to international law, a breach of neutrality, and may therefore be treated as hostile acts.

Persons in such military service would subject themselves to the rules of war, while ships and other means of conveyance engaged in a breach of neutrality would render themselves liable to capture and confiscation, which rule may extend to cargo belonging to neutrals.

Such breaches would also involve the citizen and vessel in the danger of forfeiting claim to the protection of their government as well as the rights and privileges granted by the treaty between the United States and Japan.

Despite the foreign powers' neutrality declaration, the Alliance attempted to solicit their support. One of its early, explicit aims was notifying the representatives of those powers of its existence and its goals, and arguing for its legitimacy vis-à-vis the government which the southwestern coalition had organized around the Emperor in Edo. Several messages were dispatched to Yokohama with this aim in mind, like the message which the American legation received on 12 September 1868.⁴⁷¹ Aside from notifying the foreign representatives of its formation, the Alliance representatives also informed them that:

which controlled the entirety of the archipelago and could thus claim to be a legitimate national government. Both the Imperial Navy and the Tokugawa Navy pressed for Van Valkenburgh to surrender the *Stonewall* to each party. However, Van Valkenburgh kept the vessel in Yokohama under American colors, and placed it under the off-the-record command of prominent naval officer and Civil War veteran Lt. Cmdr. William Barker Cushing. For more, see Julian R. McQuinston, *William B. Cushing in the Far East: A Civil War Naval Hero Abroad, 1865-1869* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2013), pp. 100, 154.

⁴⁷¹ *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Volume 1* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1869), pp. 817-818.

It is supposed that the representatives of foreign countries have observed the state of affairs and clearly comprehend it, though it is difficult to convey in writing the true meaning of this confederation of Daimios, as it is sometimes to distinguish between right and wrong. Honesty and perverseness may not be apparent. Criminals may pretend to issue the orders of the Mikado, and in this matter be enabled to confuse order with disorder.

It is from apprehension of this that the liberty is taken to submit the foregoing with respect. The undersigned now appeal to the representative's love of truth to credit them with the sincerity of their announcement. They simply wish to clearly define their position, being aware, also, that this may have an important influence on the future intercourse between the two countries.

Yet despite these efforts, the foreign legations firmly maintained their official neutrality policy. American minister-resident Van Valkenburgh, in a tersely worded reply that he hoped would meet the approval of Secretary of State William H. Seward, informed the Alliance that while the United States and its representatives lamented the current state of war in Japan and hoped that peace would swiftly be restored, it also had no choice but to strictly maintain the neutrality declaration.⁴⁷²

Was the world beyond Japan aware of the Alliance's existence? As seen in the paragraphs above, the foreign community, especially individual members of the foreign community then resident in Japan, was indeed aware of it. Formal declaration of neutrality notwithstanding, the foreign community even had, depending on country of origin, its favorites among the warring parties. Britons, for instance, favored the southwestern coalition, and secretly supplied it with arms in contravention of the neutrality order.⁴⁷³ The French, who had invested so

⁴⁷² Ibid, p. 819.

⁴⁷³ The Jardine Matheson Corporation, founded by Britons in Hong Kong as one of the original Hong Kong trading houses, was one of the major weapons suppliers to the southwestern coalition. As of 2015 it is still extant and still operates primarily in East Asia. For more on Jardine Matheson in 19th century Japan, particularly with regards to its

much time and money in training and modernizing the shogunate's newly organized army, supported the Tokugawa remnants. French military advisors then present in Japan to train the Tokugawa Army even joined its recalcitrant elements in their northward escape that ended with a last stand in Ezochi (modern Hokkaido).⁴⁷⁴ It was the American expatriate community that favored the Northern Alliance, as can be seen in the following diary entry from Samuel Pellman Boyer, an American naval surgeon assigned to the U.S. Navy squadron then present in Japanese waters.⁴⁷⁵

It appears that one Northern Prince, Aidzu by name, although all the rest of the Tycoon's favorites have acknowledged the power of the Mikado as being in the right, declares that he has a contract for fighting, and fighting it shall be to the bitter end. The Mikado has declared him an outlaw. Thus far Aidzu has flogged the troops of Satsuma in every engagement. From all accounts the cause of Aidzu is not a bad one. We are all anxious to see him win the day and replace the Tycoon in power...The Northern Army has more money, men and food than the Southern or Mikado crowd. The Mikado is trembling in his boots, and well he might. This fighting by contract, as Aidzu calls it, rather astonishes the Mikado. Go in Aidzu, say we all of us. Everyone is an Aidzu man now.

agent Thomas B. Glover who worked particularly closely with the southwestern coalition, see Michael Gardiner, *At the Edge of Empire: The Life of Thomas Blake Glover* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008).

⁴⁷⁴ The seventeen person military mission, under the command of Captain Charles Sulpice Jules Chanoine, arrived in 1867. One member of the French delegation who is frequently discussed in histories of the Boshin War is Jules Brunet, then a captain in the French Army's horse artillery corps. He was especially trusted by the Tokugawa military officers who escaped to the north and made their last stand at the port town of Hakodate, in southern Ezo. Returned to France after the war, the French government pardoned Brunet against Japanese government requests that he be punished, and reinstated him to active duty in the French Army. He served until 1899. Gōda Ichidō, "Juru Buryune: Enomotogun de tatakatta ishoku Furansu shōkō no Kishidō," pp. 163-182 of *Hakodate Sensō Meimeiden, ge* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2007), pp. 174-181.

⁴⁷⁵ Samuel Pellman Boyer, *Naval Surgeon: Revolt in Japan, 1868-1869* Elinor Barnes and James A. Barnes, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), pp. 29-30, 48-49. Boyer had been in Japan since early April, as acting assistant surgeon of the American warship USS *Iroquois*.

Diplomatic communiques from the foreign legations meant that those governments that maintained a diplomatic presence in Japan were aware of the war and of the Alliance. But non-governmental readers of major newspapers were also aware. For example, I consider this rather direct reference to the Northern Alliance and the war in northeastern Japan was this article from *The New York Times*.

*The most important item of political news from Japan is the election by the Northern or Tycoon faction of a new Mikado, Ooeno Mia Sama, one of the high priesthood. By this action there are now two Mikados in Japan, the former Mikado still holding power in the South. The Japan Gazette says: “The explanation we receive of the appointment of a new Mikado is, that it is not absolutely to displace the other, but as an authoritative chief to direct the action of the Northern combination, who still, if we understand aright, consider the original Mikado as the true head of the country. Ooeno Mia Sama, is his uncle. It is he, and not Arisugawa Mia Sama, who first came to Yedo to arrange matters for the new Government; but who, when he saw the real state of feeling among the people, upheld the right of the Tokugawa, and originated the demand on the Mikado that he should return to Kiota [sic] and confine himself to his proper functions. We do not quite clearly comprehend all explanation given us, but it seems to be the opinion of Japanese who are well educated and generally well posted in the politics of the day, that he will act independently-- issuing orders and conferring dignities and appointments, but that when all is attained for which the Shin Kanguns fight, he will again become simple Mia and place all the power in the true Mikado’s hands.*⁴⁷⁶

Here one can see not only an awareness of the factional divisions in Japan, but also an understanding of imperial politics, in its focus on “Ooeno Mia Sama,” the imperial prince and former abbot *Rinnōji-no-miya* Yoshihisa, who after the Battle of Ueno in the spring of 1868, escaped north to take refuge in Sendai domain. The Alliance’s leaders appointed the runaway prince as alliance chief (*meishu* 盟主), an office that was more than a simple sinecure. Prince *Rinnōji-no-miya* participated in Alliance deliberations, issued orders, and traveled to different

⁴⁷⁶ See “JAPAN.” *New York Times*, Oct 18, 1868, p. 3. I am unable to ascertain the Japanese spelling of “Shin Kangun,” but the two alternatives are True Imperial Army (真官軍) and New Imperial Army (新官軍), either of them a direct challenge to the southwestern coalition’s legitimacy.

domains in the southern Tohoku, exhorting their leaders to continue the fight. As the prince was the young emperor's uncle, he thus provided the north with a powerful rallying figure. As seen in the *Times* article quoted above, this was clearly a development that commanded overseas attention. Though it is clear that the *Times*' (and its source the *Japan Gazette*'s) understanding of the details was limited, nevertheless, these major news outlets had a working grasp of the situation in northeastern Japan.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Though the Alliance domains have been called conservative, the evidence presented above makes clear that this was not the case. Far from having their heads buried in the sand, the Alliance's domains, especially its major domains, were well aware of political developments far beyond their borders, both inside and outside the archipelago. Beyond the borders of their own "countries," the Alliance domains reached out to other "countries," most immediately in neighboring Echigo province, in the interest of both short and long-term strategic goals.

Mutsu and Dewa domains' interest in Echigo, as a neighboring territory, was longstanding. They held some territory there and were connected to it by river routes that led to deepwater ports on the Sea of Japan coast. They also wasted no time in deploying their own troops there in the war's early months. In many cases, although vastly overpowered, if not directly coerced, by the much larger Mutsu-Dewa domains, the Echigo domains, especially those closer to Mutsu and Dewa, had no choice but to join the Alliance. Later, when the imperial forces gained the advantage, It is clear that that loyalty was fickle, aimed more at survival than out of any genuine commitment.

The Alliance domains' ties beyond the archipelago were not the result of last-minute efforts, but were rather the culmination of years, even decades, of interest, interaction, and cultivation. Involvement in defense against Russian incursion to the archipelago's north kept the Tohoku domains keenly aware of the need to keep up with foreign language, political developments, and technology.

Yet, despite its best efforts and the presence of individual foreign merchants, no foreign powers came to the Alliance's aid. Furthermore, any advantage that the alliance gained from the outreach to, and fighting in, Echigo Province was soon negated, by the enemy's overwhelming and growing force. It is perhaps a testament to the skill of Alliance leaders and the core Mutsu and Dewa domains' unity, that it was able to make any sort of headway in Echigo at all. It is the extent and history of that unity, and the conduct of the Alliance in war, that Chapter 6 examines.

7.0 THE NORTH UNITED

As noted above in Chapter One, the Battle of Toba-Fushimi began on 27 January 1868, on the southern outskirts of Kyoto.⁴⁷⁷ This three-day clash was the first battle of the Boshin War. As the conflict was fought between the nascent imperial government and the remnants of the Tokugawa Shogunate at its outset, the northern domains (with the exception of Aizu) were not represented on the battlefield and were initially politically neutral. While political alliances between domains were illegal under the shogun's aegis, the northern domains had already taken the first steps toward alliance during the 1860s, amidst the shogunate's increasingly weakened authority. The eventful months that followed Toba-Fushimi would see the northern domains' alliance, attempt at resistance against the imperial armies, and ultimate defeat.

Building on the foundation laid by preceding chapters, this chapter aims to analyze the alliance's formation and the reasons for its failure. The argument in the following pages is that the alliance failed because northern unity was a relatively new notion, and that without a powerful unifying figure like the one the southern coalition had in the emperor, northern unity's newness counted against it. This chapter also demonstrates that, despite the tradition of northern semi-autonomy the Alliance was almost immediately hamstrung. First, by two major opposing perspectives of how northern unity was to work: the Date family wanted a north that followed its

⁴⁷⁷ Ōishi, *Shinsengumi*, p. 178.

orders, where the smaller allies wanted decision-making by consensus. This created problems in its chain of command, which made its military actions ineffective. Finally, by the defections from its ranks starting in the late summer of 1868, that disunity doomed it. In the end, political or military disunity is anathema to any successful alliance.

Political unity in northern Japan was relatively recent as of 1868. The north had a plethora of separate domainal jurisdictions, several of which had histories of rivalry or of discord. Yet this was not a unique situation to northern Japan. During its two hundred-odd years of existence, the Tokugawa Shogunate took many measures to ensure the archipelago's peace. This regime of "Pax Tokugawa" included measures intended to impoverish and order the domains, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that domains did not engage in potentially threatening horizontal political ties independent of the shogunate's scrutiny.⁴⁷⁸ While the domains *did* interact with each other, especially during their lords' enforced periods of residence in the shogun's capital, any sort of coalition among them would naturally have run afoul of the Shogunate.⁴⁷⁹ However, as the Shogunate progressively weakened over the course of the 1860s, domains were emboldened to take independent action, including the formation of private alliances that would have been unthinkable but a few years previously. Satsuma and Chōshū domains, which were the core of the southwestern coalition, entered into alliance in the spring of 1866; Satsuma and Tosa signed their own treaty in the summer of 1867.⁴⁸⁰ But while political

⁴⁷⁸ Sources of Japanese Tradition, Abridged Part 1: 1600 to 1868, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 12-13.

⁴⁷⁹ For more on domains' tours of duty in Edo during their lords' required alternate-attendance period there, see Constantine N. Vaporis, *Tour of Duty* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).

⁴⁸⁰ Ishii, *Ishin no Nairan*, p. 286.

alliances were a new phenomenon in the 1860s, as noted earlier, the southwestern coalition had other means that helped it avoid the northern alliance's ultimate failure. Most notable and powerful of these since the closing weeks of 1867 was its firm, military-ensured possession of the young Meiji emperor, who like his ancestors for century upon century, represented the ultimate source of political clout in the archipelago. This was one advantage that the Northern Alliance never possessed.

Despite these limitations, the north also had a local thread of political legitimacy stretching back to the Northern Fujiwara and their forebears, to which the Date family of Sendai domain could lay claim. Even without the Northern Fujiwara heritage, the fact of the matter remained that Sendai domain was the north's largest and most powerful political entity. As noted in Chapter Two, it was three times the size of the region's next smaller domain. The actions that it took affected the entire region, whether its neighbors agreed with it or not. Thus, in the face of political uncertainty in the leadup to the Boshin War, it makes logical sense that the northern domains reached out to the Date of Sendai.⁴⁸¹ Smaller domains, which had only modest resources and little or no military power, looked to the Date for aid and political intercession.⁴⁸² Larger domains, while perhaps not interested in deferring to the Date aegis, nevertheless voiced their eagerness for joint action with the Date, and for consultation in the face of what seemed an increasingly thorny political situation.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ As seen above in Chapter 5, this is the same pattern which the Echigo domains followed, siding with the neighbor who was either the most powerful or who represented the greatest threat if opposed.

⁴⁸² *Rakuzan-kō Ryakureki*, pp. 1-40 of *Sendai Sōsho Vol 12*. (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1974), pp. 28, 30, 31.

⁴⁸³ *Sendai shi-shi*, vol. 10. Ed. by Sendai shi-shi hensan iinkai. (Sendai: Manyōdō Shoten, 1975), p. 167.

This move for coordination with Sendai as a regional nexus was also the result of developments and efforts over the preceding years. As noted in Chapter Two, the modestly sized Kaminoyama domain mediated the mid-1860s territorial dispute between Sendai and Yonezawa domains that centered on control over Yashiro, the district (*gō* 郷) that lay midway between their lands. Though Yonezawa was nowhere near Sendai in size, with income rated at 150,000 *koku* it was still one of the north's top ten domains. Kaminoyama, at a mere 40,000 *koku*, did not have the economic or military wherewithal to deal with a potential clash between the two much larger domains. Thus, its clan elders, particularly the well-connected Kaneko Yosaburō, mediated the dispute.⁴⁸⁴ Though Kaneko was killed in fighting on the eve of the Boshin War, his mediation opened channels between the two domains and thus helped lay the groundwork for the Northern Alliance.⁴⁸⁵

The nascent imperial government *also* treated Sendai as the north's nexus and lynchpin. From the war's outset, its orders regarding the north disproportionately favored Sendai over any other domain. Then, two months after Toba-Fushimi, the imperial government sent a military envoy, court noble Kujō Michitaka, who held the title of Governor-General for Pacification of

⁴⁸⁴ Kurihara, p. 17. Kaminoyama domain, like the lands of nearby and contentious Yashiro county, was sandwiched between Sendai's and Yonezawa's lands. Kaneko's connections were personal ties with fellow Confucian scholars in the northeast and elsewhere. These scholars included both Sendai and Yonezawa men.

⁴⁸⁵ Ravina, *The Last Samurai*, p. 145. Kaminoyama domain troops, under the command of Shōnai domain forces, joined in the raid on the Satsuma domain estate in Edo in early 1868. This was in reaction to Satsuma's having sponsored, and sheltered, arsonists who had rampaged around the Edo area setting fire to buildings and harassing police in the weeks before the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. Kaneko, who had command of the Kaminoyama contingent under Shōnai auspices, was severely wounded in the raid, and died the following day.

the North (*Ōu Chinbu Sōtoku* 奥羽鎮撫總督), to oversee the north's subjugation.⁴⁸⁶ Again, this delegation's itinerary favored Sendai, as it headquartered itself first in the Sendai castle town, at the domain's official academy for its retainers.⁴⁸⁷ Ensconced in such close proximity to the Date political leaders, the delegation issued a steady stream of orders aimed at rallying the northern domains to raise their armies and march on Aizu, which as noted in earlier chapters, was the southwestern coalition's *bête noire* for its support of the Tokugawa Shogunate's Kyoto-based political and military presence during the 1860s.⁴⁸⁸

While the Date clan acceded to the imperial government's orders and deployed its own troops against Aizu on 3 May 1868, it did not do so without reservations, as Sendai domain itself did not have the same bad relations with its neighbor.⁴⁸⁹ And as it was now faced directly with the imperial delegation's demands, the Date clan, together with the Uesugi of Yonezawa domain, sent out a message to the northern domains inviting them to send delegates for joint consultation on the military and political situation which faced the north.⁴⁹⁰ The delegates were to meet at Shiroishi, Sendai domain's second castle town, which was located in the domain's southwestern corner and was also a military nerve center for the domain. Aizu lay a relatively short distance over the mountains beyond, and the fighting under the imperial aegis continued while the

⁴⁸⁶ Kujō was accompanied by Sawa Tamekazu and Daigo Tadayuki, two fellow court nobles. The three men were accompanied by a small detachment of troops. Nomura Jūsaburō, *Kugyō Jinmeijiten* (Tokyo: Nichigai Associates, 1994), pp. 271, 329, *Meiji Ishin Jinmeijiten* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1994) p. 552.

⁴⁸⁷ Sasaki, p. 75.

⁴⁸⁸ Yamada, pp. 220-222.

⁴⁸⁹ Onodera, p. 73.

⁴⁹⁰ Otokozawa et. al., "Boshin Shimatsu," pp. 161-162. My translation of this invitation appears above in Chapter Three.

delegates gathered. This gathering of northern delegates at Shiroishi, who first sat in council on 1 June 1868, can be described as the Northern Alliance's foundation.⁴⁹¹

Sendai domain also simultaneously took the lead in lobbying the imperial delegation for a cessation of hostilities against Aizu in the interest of a negotiated peace. Even amidst the fighting against Aizu, Sendai officials continued to keep in unofficial contact with Aizu leaders, and continued to work with them in lobbying for leniency.⁴⁹²

Over the weeks that followed, the council debated the course that the north ought to take, while the fighting against Aizu continued unabated a short distance away. The nascent alliance was initially pro-imperial and critical of the Satsuma-Chōshū domination of the court's decisions and actions.⁴⁹³ In the interest of solidifying the north's own locus of power as an alternative to this, the delegates aimed at formalizing a local alliance and, as part of this, they deliberated over a treaty draft.

The treaty's first draft was as follows (translation mine).⁴⁹⁴

The domains of Mutsu and Dewa, presently gathered at council in Sendai domain, communicate the following to the government-general for pacification. Having cultivated this covenant, we desire to follow the path of fairness and justice, to engage in unanimous cooperation, to revere the imperial court above and comfort the people below, and by preserving the imperial land, to set His Majesty's heart at ease. Therefore our rules are as follows.

ITEM: The allied domains shall visit punishment on those who rely on [brute] strength, pressure the weak, and take advantage of emergencies.

⁴⁹¹ Ishii, p. 282.

⁴⁹² Hoshi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei*, p. 27.

⁴⁹³ This is a fact often forgotten by histories which refer to Sendai domain, and the Alliance, as pro-shogun: after the start of war in the northeast and until it turned against the imperial army, Sendai domain went into battle bearing the same imperial banners as Satsuma, Chōshū, and others of the southwestern coalition. Yamada, p. 219.

⁴⁹⁴ Hoshi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei*, p. 33.

ITEM: Let those who plan for private gain, leak secret matters, or leave the Alliance be visited with punishment.

ITEM: Let those who needlessly exhaust men and horses, and do not consider the plight of the common people, be visited with punishment.

ITEM: Major matters shall be decided with all the domains in council, but in cases of military matters, detailed deliberations are unnecessary, and the orders of the larger domains are to be followed.

ITEM: Let those who slaughter innocents, plunder money and grain, and do other things which violate just cause, be swiftly be given severe punishment.

While this draft addresses many of the points relevant to the business of any successful alliance, it privileges large domains. There was widespread opposition to this, as it effectively ensured that Sendai domain would be in charge of any action.⁴⁹⁵

While the delegates in Sendai domain continued to deliberate, the imperial envoys and their subordinate officers continued to move among the northern domains, exhorting them to take more aggressive action against Aizu. Meanwhile, Governor-General Kujō of the imperial delegation rejected Sendai's final petition for a negotiated peace on Aizu's behalf on 7 June.⁴⁹⁶ Though the northern domains did cooperate with Kujō's orders for troops and for military action—Sendai domain itself offered some of its own troops to imperial command as late as 9 June—the northern domains moved too slowly for the envoys' liking, and often were not especially committed to the fight at all. Despite the fact that there were, even at this phase, actual battles and actual casualties, accounts of this phase of the Boshin War are full of stories of Sendai troops firing blanks at each other, drunk Aizu pickets, and nominally imperial northern forces deliberately leaving supplies and ammunition in the battlefield, then retreating to allow the

⁴⁹⁵ Hoshi, *Ōuetsureppandōmei*, p. 34.

⁴⁹⁶ Sasaki, p. 231.

Aizu men to pick them up.⁴⁹⁷ With the delegation's patience for this state of affairs nearing its limits, one of its senior officers, a Chōshū man named Sera Shūzō, penned a letter to his Kyoto-based superiors in the imperial forces. Sera called for the imperial armies to come north and forcibly subjugate the entire "vulgar" northeast, because "everyone in Mutsu and Dewa Province are enemies."⁴⁹⁸

Unfortunately for Sera, this letter fell into the hands of a samurai from Sendai domain, from whose possession it circulated among other Sendai men, who decided that this could not stand. Thus, a group of them hunted Sera down. They found him hung over and sleeping in Kanazawa-ya, a Fukushima brothel.⁴⁹⁹ After a short fight there, they promptly overpowered and murdered him on the night of 10 June.⁵⁰⁰ In the wake of Sera's death and the failure of the Sendai petition, the northern delegates relocated to the Sendai castle town in order to further deliberate the terms of an alliance treaty.⁵⁰¹ The alliance's treaty draft, composed by Sendai vassal Wakō Bunjūrō and as finally agreed upon by the delegates gathered at the Matsunoi Estate near Sendai Castle, read as follows (translation mine):⁵⁰²

The domains of Mutsu and Dewa, presently gathered at council in Sendai domain, communicate the following to the government-general for pacification. Having cultivated this covenant, we desire to follow the path of fairness and justice, to

⁴⁹⁷ Yamada, pp. 104, 108.

⁴⁹⁸ Yamada, p. 153.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 156.

⁵⁰⁰ Hoshi, *Ōetsureppandōmei*, p. 33; Yamada, pp. 158-159. Sera's severed head was soon brought to Shiroishi. Tamamushi Sadayū, a senior Sendai vassal present for the deliberations, simply said "throw it in the toilet."

⁵⁰¹ Yamada, p. 166.

⁵⁰² Ibid, p. 167.

engage in unanimous cooperation, to revere the imperial court above and comfort the people below, and by preserving the imperial land, to set His Majesty's heart at ease. Therefore our rules are as follows.

ITEM: Extending great justice to all the country as our goal, we shall avoid trivialities.

ITEM: As though traveling across the sea in the same boat, we will be with trust and move with justice.

ITEM: If there is a case of emergency, neighboring domains are to promptly provide assistance and notify the government-general.

ITEM: Let none rely on brute strength or bully the weak. Let there not be plans for private gain. Let there not be leaking of secret matters. Let there be no one who leaves the Alliance.

ITEM: Though fortifications are built and provisions transported, even though it is inconvenient, the peasants are not to be made to toil and suffer pointlessly.

ITEM: Major incidents shall be decided with the deliberation of the entire Alliance, with intent to return to a principle of fairness. By virtue of the agreement being solid, the details will naturally fall into place.

ITEM: Plans with other provinces or troop deployments to neighboring borders, must be done with notification to the entire Alliance.

ITEM: Let there not be slaughtering of innocents. Let there not be plundering of money and grain. Those who follow the path of injustice shall be met with severe punishment.

In the case that these rules are disregarded, let the Alliance, gathered in council, visit severe punishment [on the offender].

Rather than have the smaller domains follow Sendai domain's orders, this version of the treaty ensured that the Alliance's actions would work by deliberation and consensus among the domains, whether large or small. This approach, while certainly admirable and egalitarian in theory, complicated the more urgent business of conducting the war. Decisionmaking by deliberation across any alliance is a challenge. For the Northern Alliance, which was about to plunge headlong into war against an enemy that could command the troops and resources of three quarters of the archipelago, it complicated matters still further. Then as now, deliberation on every issue meant using time that a hard-pressed alliance could ill afford. Even *with* the support of the Date aegis and the accession of six domains of neighboring Echigo, the Alliance's viability, and flexibility under pressure, was undeniably tenuous. Under the pressure of direct

military action from the imperial armies, and of its members shifting political aims and loyalties, it would grow still more tenuous. In sum, the Alliance was bound to form around Sendai domain, as the latter was the region's most powerful political entity. However, even if Sendai domain was a center of gravity for the northeast, and even if the house of Date could lay claim to the old Northern Fujiwara mantle of regional primacy, there was far more that weighed against a cohesive, effective alliance from its very foundation. These drawbacks, and their impact on the Alliance at war, are what we will consider next.

7.1 THE ALLIANCE AT WAR

Ironically, by having provoked Sendai men, Sera's accusation came true after the Sendai men murdered him. With its fighting men having murdered one of the imperial officers, the northern domains, which first formalized the Alliance in Shiroishi a mere two days after his death, went from a nominally pro-imperial government coalition to a local defensive alliance fighting against the imperial armies.⁵⁰³ Having grown out of such relatively recent roots, and having negotiating a treaty that emphasized a model of decentralized consensus rather than a unified command structure, how did the Alliance fare in its trial by fire?

At the outset, the Alliance enjoyed an advantage against the imperial troops, as the latter were otherwise preoccupied, bogged down in the area despite their triumphant entry into Edo, and the city's and castle's peaceful handover from Tokugawa officials. Discontented Tokugawa

⁵⁰³ Initially called the Shiroishi Alliance, it became the Mutsu-Dewa Alliance on 6/22, and the Mutsu-Dewa-Echigo Alliance on 6/25. Sasaki, pp. 231-232.

vassals roved the city and caused trouble for its new imperial governors. Meanwhile, between Edo and northern Honshu, decamped elements of the Tokugawa army attacked domains nominally siding with the imperial government.⁵⁰⁴ The imperial commanders in Edo, with their hands this full, could not take many direct, effective actions in the north. The Edo environs were only pacified following the imperial forces' victory over the pro-Tokugawa unit Shōgitai, which was formed from those bands of disaffected Tokugawa vassals who gathered in the city's east and based themselves in the neighborhood of Kan'eiji, a Tokugawa funerary temple.⁵⁰⁵ The imperial forces defeated Shōgitai on 4 July 1868, just over three weeks after the Alliance was formed.⁵⁰⁶ The imperial government also secured a major psychological victory by effectively buying off the Tokugawa family with a substantially sized domain just west of Edo.⁵⁰⁷ With this, the ex-shogun's vassals could no longer complain of their master's family being cut adrift without rank or title or income. This gesture satisfied many, but not all, in the Tokugawa vassal band's ranks. That did little to mollify the northern domains, which were after all ruled by independent feudal lords who were not themselves Tokugawa vassals. With the final challenge to their authority in Edo dispatched, and their eastern base of power thus secured, they were now able to focus fully on the fight in the north.

⁵⁰⁴ Kikuchi Akira, *Shinsengumi 101 no Nazo*. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2000), p. 217; Yamakawa Kenjirō, *Aizu Boshin Senshi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1933), pp. 232-236.

⁵⁰⁵ Nihon no Rekishi 10: *Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1963), pp. 152-153.

⁵⁰⁶ Sasaki, p. 232.

⁵⁰⁷ This was Sunpu domain, headquartered in what is now Shizuoka city. It was over 700,000 *koku* in size, just shy of Satsuma's income and slightly greater than that of Sendai domain. Sasaki, p. 60.

After initiating hostilities against the imperial forces, the alliance had to move quickly to secure itself against the imperial army's approach. Its most immediate concern was the seizure of Shirakawa Castle, a strategic fortification, which anchored the Ōshū Highway as it turned south toward Edo. By the time the Alliance formed in the summer of 1868, Edo was under imperial control and, with the eastward movement of the imperial troops and leaders, was thus the army's eastern nerve center.⁵⁰⁸ Shirakawa would ordinarily have been the possession of a local lord, but its last lord had moved to another domain the preceding year and, in 1868 the castle was otherwise empty.⁵⁰⁹ Were the imperial forces to seize Shirakawa, it would afford them a foothold by which they could threaten both the Alliance's southern flank, as well as Aizu domain, which lay a short distance away. This was also vulnerable territory for the northern allies because, as noted in Chapter 2, their smaller allies were largely clustered in this region.⁵¹⁰ They would necessarily rely on the greater military power of Sendai, Yonezawa, and other major domains to come to their defense in the event of direct combat. Ultimately it was Aizu troops that seized

⁵⁰⁸ The main body of the Tokugawa army slipped out of Edo in the evening of 5/2/1868. The following morning, imperial forces from Satsuma, Chōshū, Sadowara, Omura, Bizen, Higo, and Owari domains, took possession of Edo Castle, former residence of the Tokugawa shogun. In the Tokugawa army's retreat, it almost entirely cleaned out the castle of any usable military hardware and war materiel. Sasaki, p. 56; Hoya , p. 305.

⁵⁰⁹ Its last ruling family was the Abe, a daimyo family of *fudai* classification. As noted in Chapter 2, ruling daimyo Abe Masakiyo was moved by Shogunate order to nearby Tanagura domain. The Abe family, having petitioned ex-shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu for approval in early 1868, was in the midst of preparing to move back to Shirakawa in the war's second month. The archipelago's worsening political situation, and then the fighting itself, interrupted this. Shōji, "Shirakawa-han," p. 218; Otokozawa *et. al.*, "Boshin Shimatsu," pp. 88-89.

⁵¹⁰ Sasaki, p. 231.

Shirakawa first on 10 June, with Alliance troops soon joining them.⁵¹¹ Yet while Shirakawa was the first and perhaps the most obvious strategic objective, there is no evidence that the northern allies had any coherent and detailed battle plan beyond a vague aim at slowly moving on imperial forces in Edo.⁵¹² By contrast, the imperial forces had a clear battle plan: strike at Aizu, which was at the center of its struggle in the north.⁵¹³ With Aizu out of the way, the northern war's swift end, as well as the means to deal with Sendai domain and its allies, would soon follow. This "fierce urgency of now" worked strongly in the southwestern coalition's favor.

Lack of a clear battle plan notwithstanding, over the course of the battles waged during the ensuing months, Alliance troops fought hard and, at times, did well. This was especially the case with units that focused on guerilla warfare.⁵¹⁴ However, despite significant efforts on the

⁵¹¹ Kitajima Masamoto, "Ōuetsureppandōmei," pp. 15-26 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 21; Nakamura Akihiko, *Byakkotai*, (Tokyo: Bungei-shunju, 2001), p. 50

⁵¹² Onodera Eikō, *Boshin Nanboku Sensō To Tōhoku Seiken*. (Sendai: Kita no mori, 2005). The allies hoped to engage in a two-pronged encirclement of Edo, with one prong heading directly southward along the Ōshū Highway, the other more circuitously moving through Echigo, south through Shinano, and then southeast toward Edo. Plans for Edo's takeover were deferred to a later time, since Edo was physically easy to take but at the time was well-defended by the imperial army.

⁵¹³ As noted by Itagaki Taisuke, a senior commander in the field at this time, if northern Honshū was a tree, then Aizu was the trunk and Sendai and Yonezawa were merely the branches and the leaves. Striking at Aizu would make Sendai and Yonezawa "wither away." This direct action was also vital as many of the imperial troops, whose core came from the warmer southwestern domains, were not used to life (or fighting) in colder climates. As quoted in Shiba Gorō, *Remembering Aizu: The Testament of Shiba Gorō* tr. Teruko Craig (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), p. 14.

⁵¹⁴ Yanagi Toshiyuki, *Kikō Ōu Sensō*. (Tokyo: Bungeisha, 2000), p. 17; Richard J. Smethurst, *From Foot Soldier to Finance Minister* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 21. A particularly effective Alliance guerilla unit,

technological side of military modernization, the conduct of many Sendai troops in particular plainly exposed a fatal flaw in the domain's military organization, which in turn negatively affected the Alliance's broader fortunes in battle. As noted in Chapter Three, Sendai domain was very large, and unwieldy to manage from one or two castles, as most other domains were managed in the Edo period. Thus, the Date family posted senior vassals to these castles across the domain's length and breadth, where they managed local affairs, resided with their own direct retainers, held income from their own sub-fiefs, and performed alternate attendance on the Date lord, just as the Date lord performed alternate attendance on the Tokugawa shogun.⁵¹⁵ This was a system the Date had used for centuries, dating back to before the Edo period's onset in the 17th century. With Date vassals, who provided a good deal of the domain's military force, following this ultimately decentralized and very old system, a smoothly organized and centralized chain of command was impossible. Thus, Sendai domain was ensured of any attempt at fighting a then-modern war turning into an uphill battle, equipped as it was with a 16th century (and earlier) command and control system by which it aimed to fight, and presumably to win, a 19th century

composed of gangsters and hunters and led by low-ranking Sendai samurai Hosoya Jūdayū (1839-1907), was especially feared by the imperial troops. Hosoya's force was based out of a brothel; its members dressed in dark blue and usually attacked the imperial forces by cover of night. Though it was not aimed at guerilla warfare, Gakuheitai was another successful unit. It was an infantry unit of about 800 people uniformed, organized, and equipped along western lines, and commanded by Sendai samurai Hoshi Juntarō (1840-1876). Hoshi was a Sendai vassal who once worked in Yokohama for American merchant and diplomat Eugene M. Van Reed, and studied both the English language and British military methods while there. Hoshi and his men continued north with the Tokugawa Army and Navy after the Alliance's demise, and fought in the war's final phase in Ezochi (modern Hokkaidō).

⁵¹⁵ For more on this system, see *Sendaijō oyobi Sendairyō no Shiro, Yōgai*, ed. Kobayashi Seiji (Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1982).

war. It bears noting that this was not a uniquely Sendai problem. In the southwestern coalition, Satsuma domain, which in many respects resembled Sendai domain in age and size, also had a similar system of military organization. However, by 1868, it had phased out that system in favor of a more westernized and streamlined system of military organization.⁵¹⁶ Thus, it was able to work effectively where Sendai, despite its size and its increasing use of cutting-edge military technology, was not. Some battles saw Sendai troops who were rear vassals of the Date daimyo often refusing orders from the daimyo's officials, resulting in entire units standing idle and leading to defeat after defeat for the Alliance.⁵¹⁷ This helps explain why, when faced with stiff combat, the answer of many Sendai troops was simply to withdraw.⁵¹⁸

Despite its drawbacks, the Alliance proved somewhat adaptable as well, as it frequently incorporated new external elements, whether in the form of political entities or individuals. We

⁵¹⁶ In the wake of the Royal Navy's shelling of its castle town in 1863, and with control of domain affairs gradually entering the hands of younger, more radical leaders who were lower in the domain's traditional hierarchy, Satsuma domain had an added impetus to further driving its project of top-down military modernization as well as the leadership that would ensure that the project was followed through. Andrew Cobbing, *The Satsuma Students in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 22-25; D. Eleanor Westney, "The Military," pp. 168-195 of *Japan in Transition from Tokugawa to Meiji*, ed. Marius Jansen & Gilbert Rozman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 171.

⁵¹⁷ For discussion on Sendai domain's command chain issues, see Hoshi Ryōichi, *Sendai Boshin Senshi* (Tokyo: Sanshūsha, 2005). This problem was also compounded by internal dissent among the domain's senior leadership: pro-Alliance leaders in Sendai domain chose to dismiss from duty and imprison dissenters. Oka Senjin, more famous for his work in the ensuing era, was one of them. Onodera, p. 199.

⁵¹⁸ Because of this tendency, the contemporary derisive nickname for Sendai troops was the onomatopoeia *dongori*. Every time the cannons went off (with a sound of *don*), the Sendai samurai would run five *ri* (around 12 miles). Hoshi, *Sendai Boshin Senshi*, p. 163.

have already seen some of this in Chapter Five, in the form of its outreach by force to the Echigo domains. Even if those domains were coerced and thus not wholly committed to the cause, they were political entities beyond (though near) the northeast and, despite the coerced entry, were nonetheless alliance members in their own right.

Other external elements that the Alliance incorporated included remnants of the Tokugawa Army and administration.⁵¹⁹ In the wake of the imperial army's takeover of Edo, they had fled northward, either individually or in entire units, and usually headed for Aizu.⁵²⁰ Noncombatants from Edo also joined the wave of refugees heading north.⁵²¹ Thus, with this surge of ex-Tokugawa population in the area, ex-Shogunate forces were present in many of the Alliance's battles. But this incorporation of ex-Tokugawa Army elements proved to be a drawback, as the Alliance, from its very inception, emphasized a decentralized model based on deliberation and consensus. The diversity of opinion in the north was wide enough. With the addition of the Tokugawa men, who were not affiliated with any northern domain, came with their own opinions on the war's aims and what they were willing to do. In the wake of the imperial government's "buyout" of the Tokugawa family, some of them found it harder to

⁵¹⁹ Ex-shogunate senior councilors Ogasawara Nagamichi and Itakura Katsujiyo were particularly high-profile ex-shogunate men who served as Alliance staff officers (*sanbō* 参謀). As senior officers of the old Shogunate they were personae non gratae with the imperial government, and thus they escaped north with a small detachment of their vassals to at least nominally friendly territory. As daimyo and as vigorously active political figures in the defunct Shogunate, they brought solid administrative expertise honed over the preceding decades. After the Alliance's demise, they and their vassals escaped north to Ezochi with the Tokugawa army and navy remnants. Ōyama, *Boshin no Eki Senshi*, vol. 2, p. 7.

⁵²⁰ Hoshi Ryōichi, *Tonami ni ikita Aizu no hitobito*. (Tokyo: Rekishi Shunjūsha, 1983), p. 41.

⁵²¹ This included, interestingly, an entire Edo fire brigade.

rationalize further resistance, but others remained implacably opposed to the new government and willing to oppose it at any cost.

Most potent of those external elements incorporated by the Alliance, albeit not connected to the Tokugawa clan, was Prince Rinnoji-no-miya Kōgen. He was the erstwhile abbot of Kan'ei-ji, a temple affiliated with the Tokugawa family and traditionally headed by an imperial prince who would take the tonsure and serve as abbot.⁵²² Kan'ei-ji became a battleground in the summer of 1868, and it was effectively destroyed during the final round of fighting in Edo that summer.⁵²³ Rinnōji-no-miya, despite his priestly role, was the reigning emperor's uncle.⁵²⁴ Faced with the worsening situation in and around his temple in the weeks prior to the final round of fighting there, the prince slipped out of the city just before the battle's end, and fled north to the relative safety of Sendai domain and the wider northeast.⁵²⁵ Like the delegates who gathered at Shiroishi, the prince was also unhappy with what he saw as Satsuma and Chōshū's disproportionate influence in the new imperial government's affairs. At that point in the war, as with so many other political refugees fleeing the Edo area, the north was the only safe place left for him to seek refuge.

The Emperor, who since December was firmly in the southwestern coalition's control, represented the ultimate source of political clout in the archipelago. With the arrival of Prince

⁵²² Paul Waley, *Tokyo: City of Stories* (Boulder: Weatherhill Publishing, 1991), p. 124; Yui Suzuki, *Medicine Master Buddha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 74.

⁵²³ This ended on 7/4/1868 in victory for the imperial side. Sasaki, p. 232; Edward Seidensticker, *Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the earthquake*. (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 27.

⁵²⁴ Yoshihisa-shinnō Jiseki. ed. Tōinkai. (Tōkyō: Shun'yōdō, 1908), p. 1.

⁵²⁵ Yamada, p. 223.

Rinnōji-no-miya, the north possessed an instrument by which it could have clout, which was not as strong as that afforded by the emperor, but nonetheless unarguably and inextricably tied to imperial legitimacy, and reasonably powerful in its own right. Any accusations of anti-imperial activity would be harder to argue, given the support of an imperial prince.

Soon after his arrival in the north, the prince was appointed alliance chief (*meishu* 盟主).⁵²⁶ The evidence suggests that the office was no mere sinecure: he traveled throughout the alliance, issued his own orders, distributed funds, rallied political leaders to action, and personally presided over Alliance councils.⁵²⁷ Yet in an act that received worldwide attention, the new alliance chief also declared himself emperor of the north. News of his self-enthronement reached even North America. Thus, along with the Alliance's military liability vis-a-vis the imperial government, Prince Rinnōji-no-miya, the would-be Emperor Tōbu, represented a political liability as well. In an era when Japanese leaders were so concerned with weakness in the face of the encroaching foreign powers, a rival claimant to the imperial throne was not in the archipelago's best interest. Furthermore, even in the worst of times, the imperial court had only once been challenged by a rival claimant, during the 14th century "era of northern and southern courts" (*Nanboku-chō jidai* 南北朝時代). A new, potentially decades-long standoff like that of the 14th century was something that the imperial government could ill afford.⁵²⁸ Yet the influence

⁵²⁶ Sasaki, p. 230.

⁵²⁷ Yamakawa, p. 350, Sasaki, p. 131.

⁵²⁸ The brief but tumultuous Northern and Southern court era, which spanned 1334-1392, saw the imperial court divided into two rival camps, with one backed by the Ashikaga Shogunate and ensconced in its usual place in Kyoto, and the other set up by Emperor Go-Daigo and sheltering south of Kyoto in the hills of Yoshino, around the old city of Nara. Mediation settled the dispute, and by government decree in the early 20th century, the southern line was

of one wayward prince, even if he was the reigning emperor's uncle, was limited. In the face of the Alliance's myriad shortcomings, it ultimately did little in the way of significant change. After his Date benefactors' defeat, the hapless prince was imprisoned and stripped of his status as a member of the extended imperial family.⁵²⁹

Another point of the Alliance's weakness was the wave of defections that it faced rather quickly after its organization. As noted, the north did not speak in one voice and the region's political differences remained even during the war. While the domains formed the Alliance together under Sendai auspices, they did so while it was still recognized as working on the imperial government's behalf. Though some domains stayed in the Alliance until the end, others began to reconsider their place in it. These differences hastened the Alliance's disintegration as the war wore on. Akita and Hirosaki are the most powerful and highest profile examples of dissenting domains. Even while they were signatories to the Alliance treaty, Hirosaki maintained back-channel communications with the imperial court by way of the Konoe family, to which the ruling Tsugaru family claimed relation by ancestry and by intermarriage.⁵³⁰ The retainer ranks

retroactively recognized as the legitimate one. This did not, however, prevent at least one particularly notable 20th century claimant to the southern lineage, Kumazawa Hiromichi, from denouncing the northern court-descended Emperor Hirohito as a pretender. *Nihon no Rekishi 5: Nanchō to Hokuchō* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1963), pp. 280-281.

⁵²⁹ He would later regain imperial status, and as General Prince Kitashirakawa-no-miya Yoshihisa, go on to greater fame as a military leader. See *Yoshihisa-shinnō Jiseki* (Tokyo: Tōinkai, 1908), for an early 20th century treatment of the prince's life. This biography omits mention of his accession as northern emperor.

⁵³⁰ These ties were again strengthened the following year, when the ruling (and final) daimyo, Tsugaru Tsuguaki, married Konoe Nobuko, daughter of court noble Konoe Tadahiro. See *Tsugaruhan Kyūkidenrui* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1982), pp. 94-95.

were divided on cooperation with or opposition to the Alliance.⁵³¹ Its vassals met and deliberated on the domain's future course of action, on 11 August, as the war passed the six-month mark.⁵³² Its leaders then decided against further resistance against the imperial government and, in short order, finally left the Alliance on 1 September.⁵³³

As for Akita, the domain helped shelter Kujō Michitaka and his fellow wayward imperial delegates not long after the Alliance's formation.⁵³⁴ Unlike most of the north's ruling families, its daimyo and retainers did not have the same, longstanding roots that most of their neighbors possessed.⁵³⁵ As with Hirosaki, Akita's retainers were also divided as to their domain's future with the alliance. In the interest of reaching a decision, there was a meeting of senior Akita retainers on 20 August.⁵³⁶ At this time, following up on Kujō's flight and shelter in the domain, a small delegation from Sendai, under the leadership of Shimō Matazaemon, sought the court nobles' handover to Sendai custody.⁵³⁷ Akita officials denied their request, then had the men

⁵³¹ Kudō Mutsuo, "Hirosaki-han," pp. 85-128 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi*, v. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 119.

⁵³² They debated an eight item agenda exploring options for the domain's future in the war, which considered multiple alternative eventualities which the domain leaders anticipated. Kudō, pp. 119-120.

⁵³³ Miyagi Kenshi 2 p. 708.

⁵³⁴ Yamada, p. 225. The imperial delegation continuously moved from point to point during the Alliance's heyday, and while its members' lives were never under *direct* threat, they nevertheless received only perfunctory courtesy until their arrival in Akita domain.

⁵³⁵ Imamura, "Akita-han," p. 132.

⁵³⁶ Onodera, p. 193.

⁵³⁷ Yamada, p. 182.

murdered in their lodgings early the following morning on 21 August.⁵³⁸ Akita sealed its departure from the Alliance when its lord reported to Kujō the following day and pledged his forces as vanguard in the fight against the Alliance.⁵³⁹ Yet Tsugaru and Akita, though now nominally under the imperial government's aegis and a part of its armies, were at a distinct disadvantage, as with now hostile neighbors to the south, they were only able to sustain any form of reinforcement or resupply by ship.⁵⁴⁰

For the domains that remained part of the Alliance, these major defections to the north meant the addition of a second front, where there had once been fighting only to the south and west. As Tsugaru and Akita's options for reinforcement were limited, Alliance troops, fighting alongside the soldiers of Shōnai domain, enjoyed overwhelming success against their erstwhile allies, even occupying two thirds of Akita domain by war's end.⁵⁴¹ Morioka domain almost single-handedly stood against Tsugaru, fighting until the day before its surrender. But this success was only due to Akita and Tsugaru's relative isolation and it was only temporary. As the Alliance disintegrated in the midst of this wave of success, the victories against the two northernmost defector domains were, in the long run, pyrrhic.

Major domains aside, the smaller domains' defections in particular are understandable from a simple perspective of resources. When faced with the overwhelming military power of the imperial army nearby, it was only sensible for a small domain to defect. To have done

⁵³⁸ Ibid, p. 181.

⁵³⁹ Sasaki, p. 230.

⁵⁴⁰ Yamada, p. 182.

⁵⁴¹ The Alliance domains which joined Shōnai in the attack on Akita included Sendai, Ichinoseki, and Morioka. Kōri Yoshitake, *Akita Shōnai Boshin Sensō*. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2001), pp. 34-50.

otherwise would mean severe punishment if not outright annihilation. The Echigo domains fell in line with either the Alliance or with the imperial forces based on this logic, and it was by this logic; that smaller Alliance members defected in the early fall. This was the course that Moriyama domain, a tiny 20,000 koku entity with barely a militia, took when it surrendered without a fight on 2 September 1868.⁵⁴² Miharu domain, over twice Moriyama's size at 50,000 koku but still unable to offer effective resistance against such numerically superior odds, took the same action on the same day, and immediately offered its forces' services to the imperial army as local guides.⁵⁴³ This did not necessarily mean safety, as in the case of Shimotedo domain. Shortly after its surrender, Shimotedo's domain offices were torched in retaliation by Sendai troops before the latter's withdrawal.⁵⁴⁴

As the Alliance continued to crumble, the imperial army's strategy to strike at Aizu in order to facilitate victory in the north was successful. Aizu and the Alliance made one last stand at Bonari Pass, on Aizu's eastern border, on 6 October 1868.⁵⁴⁵ The imperial army, under Tosa

⁵⁴² Ōyama, *Boshin no Eki Senshi* Vol. 2, p. 901. Moriyama did not have much of a political or military infrastructure within its territory at all, as it was administered via an intendant for almost all of its history. The Moriyama lord, who as noted in Chapter Two headed a cadet branch of the shogun's family, permanently resided in Edo. He thus did not have the obligation to perform alternate attendance, and almost all of his retainers resided with him in Edo. Thus, its easy surrender should come as no surprise.

⁵⁴³ Miyagi *Kenshi* Vol. 2, p. 708.

⁵⁴⁴ Ōyama, *Boshin no Eki Senshi* Vol. 2, p. 904. In my opinion, this devastation may have been part of the impetus behind the domain's relocation across the archipelago to the ruling Tachibana family's major territorial enclave at Miike, on the island of Kyushu, after the war's end.

⁵⁴⁵ *Shinsengumi Nisshi* v. 2, Ed. Kikuchi Akira, Itō Seirō, Yamamura Tatsuya. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1995), p. 223.

retainer Itagaki Taisuke's command, soundly defeated them and, after a rapid advance through the mountains and into the Aizu basin, arrived at the Aizu castle town two days later.⁵⁴⁶ His efforts were greatly facilitated by the imperial army's victories in Echigo and those forces' advance from the Sea of Japan coast, over the mountains, and into the Aizu basin from the west. The ensuing Aizu siege lasted a month. Meanwhile, other elements of the imperial army advanced along the Pacific Coast, moving north toward Sendai. The invaders won a major battle at Koma-ga-mine, a fortress on the Sendai border, on 26 September, the week before the Battle of Bonari Pass.⁵⁴⁷ Soon after, Sendai officials arranged a final Alliance council at Sendai Castle and attempted frantically to devise a plan by which the Alliance, and the war effort could be saved.⁵⁴⁸ To that end, they invited senior officers from the Tokugawa Navy, whose warships, fleeing from Edo, had embarked Tokugawa Army survivors and which now took shelter at Sabusawa Island off the coast near Sendai.⁵⁴⁹ Tokugawa vassal Hijikata Toshizō, still remembered in 21st century popular culture as vice-commander of the paramilitary group Shinsengumi and at the time highly regarded as a military leader, came with the Army and Navy officers to Sendai Castle on 18 October.⁵⁵⁰ Alliance officials, well aware of his reputation, asked him to serve as a field commander in charge of Alliance forces in the Fukushima area.⁵⁵¹ Hijikata agreed to their request, but on the condition that his orders be obeyed without question and that

⁵⁴⁶ Nakamura, p. 142.

⁵⁴⁷ *Sendai Shi-shi* vol. 1 (Sendai-shi: Sendai Shi-shi Hensan Iinkai, 1974), p. 468.

⁵⁴⁸ Ōishi, p. 223.

⁵⁴⁹ Sasaki, p. 230.

⁵⁵⁰ Two French Army officers who had been part of the military mission to Japan intended to train the Tokugawa Army, and had followed that army northward, were also present for this meeting. *Miyagi Kenshi* vol. 2, p. 709.

⁵⁵¹ Ōishi, pp. 223-224.

he be given the power to punish the disobedience of anyone, even a senior officer or clan elder, with death.⁵⁵² As seen in the paragraphs above, a centralized command and control system was something the Alliance distinctly lacked and to which some in the Alliance, like some of the Sendai domain rear vassals, were opposed. As such, the Tokugawa delegation left Sendai Castle, and after taking aboard provisions and anyone who wished to continue fighting, headed for points further north.⁵⁵³

Between a loose treaty, battlefield indecision, issues of command structure, and defections, the Alliance barely survived into its fourth month of existence. Of its two leading domains, Yonezawa domain surrendered first, on 19 October 1868, and quickly joined the imperial army's siege at the Aizu Castle town. Finally, on 30 October, with the imperial army having crossed its southern border via the newly surrendered Sōma domain, Sendai domain surrendered.⁵⁵⁴ Other steadfast Alliance members, such as Morioka, surrendered over the ensuing week, but with Sendai domain's surrender, the Northern Alliance effectively ceased to exist.⁵⁵⁵ The Boshin War was far from over, and only came to an end with the Tokugawa land and naval

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ōyama, *Boshin no Eki Senshi* Vol. 2, p. 916. They went to the fortress of Hakodate on the southern tip of Ezochi (now Hokkaidō), quickly took the island, and declared the establishment of an “Ezo Republic” (*Ezo Kyōwakoku* 蝦夷共和国) on 11/15/1868.

⁵⁵⁴ Naramoto, *Nihon no kassen*, p. 429.

⁵⁵⁵ Sasaki, p. 230; Saitō Shōichi, “Shōnai-han,” pp. 410-429 of *Hanshi Daijiten* Vol. 1: Hokkaidō, Tōhoku-hen. Ed. Kimura Motoi, Fujino Tamotsu, Murakami Tadashi. (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1988), p. 419. After one last major battle at Noheji on November 7 against ex-Alliance domain Hirosaki, Morioka domain surrendered on November 8. It was the last Alliance domain to surrender. Shōnai domain, which was not in the Alliance but fought alongside its troops especially in the fighting against Akita, surrendered on November 9.

forces' surrender at Hakodate, a city in southern Ezochi, late in the following June.⁵⁵⁶ But for northern Honshū, the war was over.

7.2 CONCLUSION

The Northern Alliance was doomed from the outset. As discussed in Chapter Four, its constituents were still reeling from famine, natural disaster, and depopulation during the decades that preceded the 1868 war. When compared to the resources available to the southwestern coalition, the core constituents of which were largely unaffected by the natural disasters that affected the rest of the archipelago, this put it at a material disadvantage well before the war's first shots were fired. Also against it was the relatively recent resurgence of horizontal alliances in the archipelago, alliances made possible by the steadily weakening Shogunate that was too preoccupied with an endless stream of crises to enforce its own centuries-old internal regulations. Although the southwestern coalition also faced this issue, it had other advantages that counteracted any drawbacks of this relatively new institution. Most important of these was its control of the Meiji emperor, who represented the ultimate source of clout in the archipelago. Though the Northern Alliance claimed to be working in the emperor's interest, and would even have its own emperor in the form of the erstwhile abbot-prince turned would-be northern emperor Rinnōji-no-miya Kōgen, it never gained control of Kyoto, much less of the Meiji emperor.

⁵⁵⁶ Yamada, p. 230.

The alliance might have had some measure of success had its treaty's first draft, that gave priority to larger domains' orders, been adopted. But the treaty which the northern delegates finally approved stipulated decision-making by deliberation and consensus across the entire alliance, large and small domain alike. This slowed its reaction time and its ability to take concerted action, which would have been vital assets to an alliance like this one, which itself immediately faced with war.

After it took action against the imperial armies, the Alliance did not fare well in the face of war against them. Already at a material disadvantage, its major members' old-style forms of feudal military organization were ill suited to a 19th century war, even if its combatants were equipped with present-day weaponry. This resulted in far too many battles involving idle units or units that simply retreated without firing a shot. While the alliance began as an ostensibly strong regional coalition, its turn against the imperial government alienated some of the allies, who later opted to abrogate the treaty, though they were at a distinct strategic disadvantage until the war's end. Other smaller allies, including many who had joined by coercion, left the alliance when imperial forces drew close. From the simply logical standpoint of sheer resources, this siding of small domains with the most powerful, be it Sendai domain at the start of the war or the imperial forces at the end, made sense.

One of the Alliance's strengths was its ability to incorporate external elements, be they other domains, renegade foreigners, or freebooting ex-Shogunate officials and military units. But with a weak treaty and internal dissent plaguing even its core members, these external elements had only limited efficacy in aiding the Alliance's efforts.

The Alliance's disintegration also makes sense in light of its shift in political affiliations and aims. What had started as a regional coalition under imperial auspices took a sudden turn for

the rebellious thanks to Date leadership. Several key domains could not abide by that after the war moved north in earnest. Akita and Hirosaki were the largest of the defectors. Their action opened a second front in the war, draining already strained Alliance resources. However, they were at a severe disadvantage, as they were bordered entirely by now hostile domains. Though the Alliance enjoyed great success against them, that success was pyrrhic, as it happened almost simultaneously with the crumbling of the southern front and the leading domains' surrenders. Inasmuch as they could congratulate themselves on having sided with the victors, Hirosaki and Akita still both paid a price in blood and treasure as had their neighbors.

Faced with the growing might of the new imperial government, dismembered by defections and antiquated systems of command, and opposed by the imperial army's swift action, the Alliance's demise was simply a matter of time. But the war's end was not the end of the story for the archipelago's vanquished north. Those who survived the war faced the daunting tasks of reconstruction, recovery, making sense of what happened in the war they had lost, and how they were to fit into the victors' new political and social landscape. It was a set of challenges familiar to any vanquished party throughout history. It is to the story of the north in the aftermath of the Alliance's defeat to which we now turn.

8.0 AFTERMATH TO RECOVERY

The story of northern Honshu in the Boshin War does not simply end with the Alliance's collapse in the autumn of 1868. Rather, far from an eschaton which ended everything, the northern domains survived largely intact even in defeat, and their people gradually came to grips with life in the southwestern coalition's new order, which the Alliance had ultimately failed to thwart. Ironically, in defeat, northern Japan found a measure of the unity and voice that it had been unable to bring to bear in the crisis year of 1868. While the southwesterners who overwhelmingly led the now national government abolished domains in the early 1870s, the old domain-based networks persisted. They continued to sustain the war's survivors in their postwar efforts at mutual aid, assistance, historical preservation and authoring of revisionist works, and rehabilitation of the region's image on the national stage. The role of the southwestern dominal cliques in government and military circles has been well studied, but the northerners' networks have received less scholarly attention. This concluding chapter explores the political repercussions in the post-Boshin War period and the northern survivors' response to the new era in the broad categories of reaction, networking, and rehabilitation. It was through these processes that the north picked up the pieces in the war's aftermath, rehabilitated the image of its actions and its war dead, and put forth a competing, local alternative to the victors' narrative of the 1868 war. These historiographically rehabilitative efforts aimed to recast the Alliance through the lens

of imperial loyalty, and thereby reduce some of the political stigma that the region earned in defeat.

Studying the aftermath is a necessary postscript to discussion of the war in a northern context. Sasaki Suguru's book *Boshin War* (*Boshin Sensō* 戊辰戦争) has the subtitle *The Losers' Meiji Restoration* (*Haisha no Meiji ishin* 敗者の明治維新), and the dichotomy it implies applies to the ensuing era as well. Modern Japan's new era was different for the people who entered it in defeat: to them, it was, especially at its outset, a darker parallel to the victors' bright new age. But even amidst that darkness, the people who lost the war exercised a significant amount of agency in finding a niche for themselves in the new Japan.

8.1 REACTION AND POLITICAL REORGANIZATION

The nascent imperial government led by the southwestern coalition was quick to mete out punishment in the wake of the Alliance's surrender. Its most severe terms were against Aizu, the domain that the Alliance had tried in vain to defend. All Aizu lands were immediately forfeit, reorganized first under an Office of Civil Administration, then into a new prefecture under direct government control that was named Wakamatsu Prefecture (*Wakamatsu-ken* 若松県) in 1869, after the devastated castle town.⁵⁵⁷ The lord and his family were placed in government custody in Tokyo, and the warrior population deported, some were imprisoned in Tokyo and elsewhere, and

⁵⁵⁷ Aizu domain ceased to exist as a political entity as of 11/6/1868, the day of its surrender. Sasaki, *Boshin sensō*, p. 230; Shimoda, p. 41.

even temporarily deprived of its caste status as samurai.⁵⁵⁸ Any bodies of Aizu troops killed in battle were also forbidden to be buried, as punishment for their treason in resisting the emperor's soldiers.⁵⁵⁹ However, this harsh punishment was soon mitigated when, late in 1869, the survivors of the Aizu warrior class were pardoned and restored to warrior caste status. Then, early in 1870, they were granted a new, tiny territory with poor agricultural potential in the northernmost extreme of Japan's main island, under conditions that effectively amounted to exile.⁵⁶⁰ But exile though it may have been, this allowed the ex-Aizu samurai to start anew, and most of them joined their lord in the trek to the new Tonami domain (*Tonami-han* 斗南藩), where despite their best intentions many of them starved, between their inexperience in agriculture or trade and the region's inhospitable climate.⁵⁶¹ The Aizu samurai once renowned for their martial prowess and stubbornness were derided by the local non-samurai population as “caterpillars” or “pigeon

⁵⁵⁸ Shōji, “Aizu-han,” p. 188.

⁵⁵⁹ The government's stance on this issue eased over the subsequent year, and while restrictions on the type of funerary inscription persisted given the Aizu men's political status, the government finally allowed for Aizu dead to be buried, under the supervision of ex-Aizu clan elder Machino Mondo and a handful of former Aizu samurai who remained in the area. Shimoda, pp. 83-89.

⁵⁶⁰ The pardon came 11/1/1869, and the new land grant on 1/16/1870. Itō Tetsuya, “Saitō Hajime Nenfu,” pp. 223-243 of *Saitō Hajime no Subete*. Kurahashi Saburo, ed. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Oraisha, 2003), p. 237; Miyazaki Tomihachi, “Matsudaira Katamori to Shutsuji to Sono Ichizoku,” pp. 35-76 of *Matsudaira Katamori no Subete*, Tsunabuchi Kenjō, ed. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Oraisha, 1984), p. 148.

⁵⁶¹ Where Aizu domain had been 280,000 *koku* in size, Tonami was a mere 30,000 *koku*. Muraiso Eishun, “Tōhoku Chihō no Shohan Ichiran,” pp. 395-402 of *Shinpen Monogatari Hanshi* 1 (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1975), p. 400. For more on the war's aftermath, the formation and dissolution of Tonami domain, the Aizu samurai population's effective exile, and the severe poverty, starvation, and adverse weather which made life in the territory challenging in the extreme, see Adachi Yoshio, *Aizu Tonami Ōrai* (Aizuwakamatsu: Rekishi Shunjusha, 1989).

“samurai” for their desperate consumption of any available food source beyond the usual range of human consumption, including tree bark, ground kelp, and tofu dregs.⁵⁶²

When it came to the Alliance domains themselves, the government’s measures were from the beginning far more lenient than the measures taken against Aizu. Its punishment of Sendai domain, for instance, simply dispossessed the Date family of roughly two thirds of its prewar income, forced the retirement of the daimyo Date Yoshikuni, and requested the token ritual suicides of a handful of domain officials responsible for having prosecuted the war.⁵⁶³ But that was the limit of the government’s retribution against the Alliance’s former leading power. For most Alliance domains, large or small, the government’s punishment followed the same parameters, though the scale of income reduction varied from domain to domain.⁵⁶⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly given their change in allegiance, those erstwhile Alliance member domains like Akita, Hirosaki, and Miharu, who switched allegiance during the war and joined the imperial

⁵⁶² Shimoda, p. 58. Tofu dregs (*okara*), a byproduct of tofu production, were usually reserved for consumption by horses in that era. This is, however, no longer the case in the 21st century: they are currently sold as a cooking ingredient.

⁵⁶³ Sendai domain surrendered 10/30/1868. Sasaki, p. 230. Sendai, Aizu, Morioka, Yamagata, Murakami, Muramatsu, Yonezawa, Shōnai, Tanagura, Nihonmatsu, and Nagaoka, plus Yūki and Sekiyado, two non-Alliance domains of the north Kantō region that had been involved in the fighting prior to the war’s active theater shifting northward, were all ordered to present clan elders for ritual suicide. Of a total of 21, 10 were already dead, whether killed in action, dead of war wounds, or having committed suicide in defeat. Ōyama, *Boshin no Eki Senshi* Vol. 2, pp. 874-875.

⁵⁶⁴ Compared to the Date loss of 315,000 koku out of 625,000, the Nanbu clan of Morioka lost 70,000 of 200,000 koku, the Uesugi of Yonezawa lost 40,000 of 180,000, while the Itakura family of Fukushima domain lost only 2,000 out of 30,000. A full list of these income reductions appears in Ōyama, vol. 2, pp. 872-873.

forces, were not punished.⁵⁶⁵ Yet even these domains still paid a heavy price, in lives lost, resources expended, and agriculture and trade disrupted by battle.

With the exception of Aizu domain, then, the imperial government altered borders in the north but left its ruling powers otherwise intact. With the war's end in the early summer of 1869, any major military challenge inside the archipelago was over, but there were still limits to what the imperial government could accomplish through the application of inflexible, direct force.⁵⁶⁶ After all, one must bear in mind that, as of 1869, it was ultimately still an unsteady, hybrid entity formed through resources and personnel forwarded to central control by the winning domains. One might also conjecture that the new government was following the precedent set by its predecessor, the Tokugawa Shogunate, which from its 17th century beginnings had used attainder

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid. None of the domains which left the Alliance appear in the income reduction list.

⁵⁶⁶ However, there was one final and major samurai-centric uprising against the central government, the Seinan War (sometimes called the Satsuma Rebellion) of 1877. This was, perhaps ironically given the context of this dissertation, an uprising of (mostly) ex-samurai from Satsuma domain led by Saigō Takamori, one of the southwestern coalition's top-level leaders mentioned in Chapter 1. At the peak of their success, the rebels advanced as far north as Kumamoto, about midway up the western side of the southern island of Kyushu. Vanquished northern survivors of the Boshin War, especially from Aizu and Sendai, who were eager to engage in what they felt was a well-deserved chance at exacting revenge, enlisted in the Imperial Army in large numbers, and took part in the campaign against the Satsuma forces. Ex-Aizu samurai in particular enlisted in both the Army and police forces in large numbers, were at the forefront of many battles, and because of this, sustained a higher than average number of casualties. Rather notably, one of the senior officers in the imperial army was an ex-Aizu clan elder, Yamakawa Hiroshi. Ordered to hold a defensive position with his brigade, Yamakawa instead led the unit in a charge through enemy lines and relieved the major government garrison at Kumamoto Castle. Hiroshi was the older brother of Yamakawa Kenjirō, who is discussed later in the present chapter. Naramoto Tatsuya, *Nihon no Kassen: Monoshiri Jiten* (Tokyo: Shufu to seikatsusha, 1994), pp. 438-448; Shimoda, pp. 72-76.

and income reduction as a punitive tool while leaving feudal lords and their retainer bases otherwise intact.⁵⁶⁷ Direct action at the war's end by the imperial government, as with the Tokugawa Shogunate before it, would involve a great deal more direct effort than would be worth the reward of totally uprooting all extant powers in the region and leaving behind an utter political vacuum.

Thus, humbled in defeat and faced with a region still, in some cases, reeking of death, the northern domains set about reconstruction and political reorganization under the new government's aegis. This was especially pressing in Sendai domain, where the Date clan had to engage in a dramatic restructuring and reorganization of a retainer force that was now two thirds larger than the domain's reduced income could adequately afford.⁵⁶⁸ In response to this, the domain severely reduced all stipends of its direct retainers and reorganized its administrative structure to better suit the domain's new, smaller purview under the nominal leadership of

⁵⁶⁷ That said, the rate of attainders imposed by the Tokugawa Shogunate dropped from the late 17th century onward. Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey, *The Dog Shogun* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), p. 208.

⁵⁶⁸ The Date family of Watari, who were elite Sendai domain retainers and a Date cadet branch that once held an income of 23,400 *koku* on par with many small-time independent daimyo, were now reduced to a paltry 65 *koku*. The family itself could live on this, but clearly it was far from enough to support the family's now destitute approximately 1300 direct retainers. The Date of Iwadeyama, another cadet branch of the Sendai daimyo family, held 14,600 *koku* and supported about 700 retainers, were also reduced to 65 *koku*. Their own direct retainers were in a similarly difficult situation. Those senior retainers and vassal bands who lived in the confiscated sections of the former Sendai domain also had to hand over their houses and contend with relocation to the Sendai castle town or elsewhere. Date Munehiro, with Date Kimiyo, *Sendaihan Saigo no Ohimesama: Kita no Daichi ni Haseta Yume* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2007), p. 26.

Yoshikuni's two year old son and successor Kamesaburō.⁵⁶⁹ There were also major changes in administrative locations and procedures, a frenzy of activity amidst the major nationwide political and societal changes.⁵⁷⁰ Other domains in the northeast followed a similar trend of administrative restructuring, usually in the wake of downsizing and while also dealing with recovery from wartime devastation. Tonami domain, the resurrected and significantly reduced remnant of Aizu domain now relocated to barren land on the far northern tip of Honshu noted above, bore little resemblance to its earlier incarnation beyond certain individuals in leadership positions.⁵⁷¹ In *all* cases, the northern domains remade themselves to fit in with the new order,

⁵⁶⁹ Date Kamesaburō was also known by his adult name of Date Munemoto. Yamada, p. 230. Of course, adult administrators and regents, including two adult heads of Date cadet branch lines, ran the new diminished domain in Munemoto's name. If the direct Date retainers had retainers of their own (rear vassals from the perspective of the Date lord), they were deprived of income and status altogether under the new system. Faced with defeat and a sudden loss of income, many leading Date vassals, including some of the family's cadet branches, went north to the island of Ezochi—now renamed Hokkaidō—accompanied by their now former vassals, and assisted in colonization and land reclamation. One Date cadet branch lord, Date Kunishige of Watari, the family's seniormost cadet branch, led almost all of his retainers to Hokkaido. By working in land reclamation they both secured their livelihood and established the community that became the modern city of Date. Other Date vassals and their retainers were instrumental in the establishment of Sapporo, which remains a major city on that island. The Date vassals' earlier experience in Hokkaido on coastal defense duty for the Tokugawa Shogunate against Russian incursions, together with their acclimation to colder climes honed in their hometowns, no doubt facilitated their readiness for these efforts. Date Munehiro, *Sendaihan Saigo no Ohimesama: Kita no Daichi ni Haseta Yume* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2007), pp. 26-33.

⁵⁷⁰ Otokozawa et. al., "Boshin Shimatsu," p. 43.

⁵⁷¹ Like Date Munemoto of Sendai domain, Tonami domain's new lord, Matsudaira Keizaburō (also known by his adult name Matsudaira Kataharu), was also under two years of age. This followed a well-established tradition of

but despite these changes, there remained a surprising amount of continuity in the ranks of their political leadership.

While the extant domains busied themselves with this, new political entities also came into being amidst this reorganization, especially in the wake of the imperial government's income reductions of the northeastern domains. These swaths of territory newly stripped from the control of the Date or Uesugi or other families, now passed into the central government's control. While the central government was still unable to directly administer these lands, it assigned them to the administration of other domains, most of which came from outside the northeast.⁵⁷² Control of these territories, which like Wakamatsu were some of the earliest prefectures in the archipelago, then passed to appointees by the central government.⁵⁷³ This set the pattern for central oversight of top-level prefectoral leadership until the post-World War II Japanese constitution took effect. The old domain vassals remained a fixture of even those new apparatuses, as they had the history, experience, and ties that the new appointees sent up from Tokyo and hailing from a plethora of other locations across the archipelago did not.

infant succession to daimyo families. Yawata Kazuo, *Edo Sanbyakuhan Saigo no Hanshu* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2004), p. 199.

⁵⁷² This action follows the Tokugawa shogunate's model of delegating administration of certain of its territories to domains in their vicinity. Aizu domain was one such domain, which oversaw administration of the Minamiyama territory just south of its border on the Shogunate's behalf. In the 1860s, Minamiyama went from being Shogunate territory administered by Aizu, to being Aizu territory outright. In a few cases, the confiscated swaths of territory went to domains in the north, such as the southern third of Sendai domain, which was to become the new domain of the Nanbu clan of Morioka. This move was, however, abandoned midway. Shōji, "Aizu-han," p. 193; Date, p. 26.

⁵⁷³ This was specifically the purview of the Home Ministry. The Home Ministry was abolished after World War II. Steven R. Reed, *Japanese Prefectures and Policymaking* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1986), p. 44.

Yet these administrative and income-related changes in the northern domains were not to last very long. The domains' administrative apparatuses were again altered by government order in 1869, which made their lords governors by imperial fiat after the archipelago's feudal lords (following the example set by the lords of the winning coalition's leading domains) surrendered their domain registers to the central government *en masse*, thus officially ceding their claim to independent or semi-independent political authority.⁵⁷⁴ Two years later, in 1871, the central government abolished the domains altogether, opting instead for a new system of prefectures ruled by the government's own appointees.⁵⁷⁵ The lords, and their retainers were thus effectively bought out by the government, when it converted their former stipends to one-time payments in the form of government bonds.⁵⁷⁶ This measure, paired with new legislation restricting weapon ownership and reforming the four-tier caste system into a three-tiered system of nobles, warrior

⁵⁷⁴ This handover of registers took place nationwide on 7/25/1869. Sasaki, p. 229.

⁵⁷⁵ This is the same system of prefectures (*ken* 県) still in use in Japan today. The three hundred and two newly formed prefectures, most of which were ex-domains, were gradually consolidated with their neighbors and subjected to subtle boundary tweaks. After the first wave of consolidations the prefectures' number dropped to 72, and then after another round of consolidation, to the modern number of 47 in 1888: 43 prefectures, two urban prefectures (Kyoto and Osaka), one "circuit" (Hokkaido), and one metropolis (Tokyo). Incidentally, the diminished post-1868 geographic entity that was the revived Date domain survives today, largely unaltered, as Miyagi Prefecture (*Miyagi-ken* 宮城県), with its capital still located at the former castle town of Sendai. Sasaki, p. 229; *Nihon no Rekishi 10: Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1963), pp. 174, 284.

⁵⁷⁶ *Nihon no Rekishi 10*, pp. 167-168. The only alternative to these payments, which would've seen the government continue to pay samurai stipends *ad infinitum* in place of the defunct Shogunate and disestablished domains, would have been too expensive.

descendants, and commoners, effectively (to borrow one late 20th century author's words) "disestablished" the samurai.⁵⁷⁷

In sum, then, there was continuity rather than total disjuncture in the wake of the Northern Alliance's defeat. Rather than totally erase the political boundaries and entities of the prewar north, the imperial government redrew and coopted them. Aside from a few token vassals offered up as sacrifices, the central government even let their leaders live.⁵⁷⁸ Simultaneously, the imperial government also set up new political entities and administrative apparatuses in the north, which presaged the prefectoral system that followed. While often under the operational control of officials from other domains outside the region, these nonetheless presaged the system of prefectures that soon replaced the domains throughout the archipelago. Again, there was continuity here rather than wholesale disjuncture. New administrations notwithstanding, the expertise and ties of longstanding residents in the region was necessary to aid these newly conceived entities in the conducting of their business. This continued following the domains' total abolition and replacement with prefectures in 1871. Despite defeat and a totally new political system now in place, there was still use for that expertise.

Yet although their status and the political entities to whom they had once owed allegiance were now dissolved or disestablished, the vanquished ex-samurai in northeastern Japan did not

⁵⁷⁷ See Sakeda Masatoshi and George Akita, "The Samurai Disestablished. Abei Iwane and His Stipend," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 10/1986, Volume 41, Issue 3; *Nihon no Rekishi* 10, p. 161. The four tiers of caste were in descending order of privilege: warrior, peasant/townsman, and merchant. This was replaced by a three tiered system, with the former lords and court nobles forming the preponderance of hereditary peers (*kazoku*), samurai becoming former warrior families (*shizoku*), and everyone else becoming commoners (*heimin*).

⁵⁷⁸ Yamada, p. 230; Miyazaki Tomihachi, "Matsudaira Katamori to Shutsuji to sono ichizoku," pp. 35-76 of *Matsudaira Katamori no subete*, (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Oraisha, 1984), p. 67.

simply vanish into thin air. They remained politically active, both inside and outside local government circles, in some cases still serving as mayors or administrators of the very places they had once governed or helped to govern. Their efforts in and for political rehabilitation of the region also continued, and their interpersonal networks would persist into the 20th century. We will now consider the development and aims of some of those networks.

8.2 NETWORKING

Japan's feudal domains, both victorious and vanquished, ceased to exist by government order in 1871. But as with the political reorganization discussed above, there was also a continuity of warrior community ties in this new postwar era. The old feudal ties endured, albeit in altered form adapted to suit the new era's different needs. This was for the northerners partly motivated by a drive for survival. In the wake of defeat that had cast them as rebels, and then after the domains' dissolution, the first and most reliable group of people that northerners, especially those who were ex-samurai, could rely on was themselves. Through the Meiji era, some of them dispersed to the new capital Tokyo, or to other parts of Japan. They had, after all, no feudal ties of obligation that required them to remain in their old home territories. But their old feudal ties took on a new character, functioning as interpersonal networks that facilitated mutual aid and kept their old community ties alive even in exile. The focus below is on the networks of ex-Aizu and ex-Sendai retainers: Aizu, as the southwesterners' *bête noire* of the war, and Sendai, as the Alliance's leading entity and rallying force.

Aizu people, who had been so harshly punished in the war's immediate aftermath, had a particularly strong and active network that persisted into the early 20th century, that is, for the

rest of the surviving Aizu warriors' lifetimes.⁵⁷⁹ They gradually moved out into the rest of the archipelago, especially to Tokyo. In some cases, they emigrated. Eventually, some of them also returned to the old Aizu territory, once the imperial government permitted it. The ex-Aizu samurai faced an uphill battle in finding their way amidst the new era. The war had thoroughly ravaged their home territory, and the war's aftermath saw the samurai population uprooted and deported wholesale. Thus, they did not have the resources or territorial continuity that almost every other northern domain possessed.

The ex-Aizu warriors did their best to cope with these circumstances. Be it in Tonami, Tokyo, or elsewhere, they did their best to offer housing or employment to compatriots in need. They also forged connections with officials in the government and military, which helped doubly with securing employment and building a new reputation in the new era. This had a cumulative effect, especially after Aizu people's participation in the Seinan War of 1876 as Imperial Army soldiers and members of the Army's police reinforcements. Here, too, the ex-samurai community stuck together, recruiting from its own ranks and often joining units in large groups. Fighting and dying for the new order brought with it a certain prestige, even for *personae non gratae* like the ex-Aizu samurai.⁵⁸⁰ They also built a reputation in education: Aizu natives of ex-samurai roots had a hand in the foundation of Kyoto's Doshisha University, and in the development of the

⁵⁷⁹ One might, perhaps, loosely compare this with the far more formally organized Grand Army of the Republic, a contemporary organization of American veterans who fought for the Union in the Civil War, which lasted until Albert Woolson, the last of its own members, died in 1956.

⁵⁸⁰ Unlike the Aizu men who were killed in action in 1868, the Aizu men killed in action on the imperial side during the Seinan War were included in the government's official shrine to war dead, which still survives as the infamous Yasukuni Shrine, in Tokyo.

Tokyo Women's Normal School. Ex-samurai from Aizu were also involved in educational missions to the United States in the 1870s.⁵⁸¹ They thus managed, over the Meiji years, to establish themselves as loyal subjects of the empire, by developing work- and battle-forged ties to powerful patrons and allies in the ranks of the men against whom they had fought in 1868. This gradual improvement in their fortunes and their social standing also made possible increasingly vociferous attempts at historiographic rehabilitation of their fallen comrades. We will see more on these efforts in the section below.

Like the Aizu community, the ex-Date vassals also maintained their ties and often kept in close proximity. It bears noting that, perhaps given the former domain's size, the ex-Date retainer network was flexible in its inclusivity. Multi-term Finance Minister and Prime Minister Takahashi Korekiyo was a case in point of this. He was born in what became Tokyo, and was the adopted heir of a family of Sendai domain foot soldiers who were permanently stationed there.⁵⁸² He never set foot in his lord's now former castle town until decades into the new era. Nevertheless, he was part of this network and even served as an adviser to the Date family later in life.⁵⁸³ The domain's post-1868 restructuring meant that many people in the warrior population were left without income. The Date men were, however, not as impoverished as the Aizu samurai. Faced with this crisis, many Date samurai, including some cadet branches of the

⁵⁸¹ *Takamine Hideo Senseiden*, ed. Takamine Hideo Sensei Kinen Jigyōkai (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1987), pp. 32-58.

⁵⁸² Richard Smethurst, *From Foot Soldier to Finance Minister: Takahashi Korekiyo, Japan's Keynes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 12-15.

⁵⁸³ According to Professor Richard Smethurst, who is acquainted with Takahashi's descendants, the family also aided the Date in business dealings, including in Hokkaido. The Takahashi family still owns the former Date ranch in southern Hokkaido.

Date family itself, went north to Hokkaido with most of their own vassal bands and engaged in land reclamation efforts.⁵⁸⁴ This colonial endeavor kept large segments of the Date population together, albeit transplanted into a new region. It also aided in the rehabilitation of their image as loyal imperial subjects, by their taking part in the government's imperial project in Hokkaido, which had only newly been annexed to the empire following the war's end. Through their activities in Hokkaido, the Date men became indispensable and rooted anew in the new land. Their influence remains visible today even in place names, most notably the city of Date in southern Hokkaido. Like the Aizu samurai, Date retainers also forged their own connections with the elite in the new Japan, though they did not face the same challenges that their Aizu counterparts did in doing so. The former Sendai castle town was an important center of the imperial government's activities in the north, and the domain did not have the same negative history with the new era's architects that Aizu possessed. Sendai people, many of them former Date vassals, joined the police force and Imperial Army during the Seinan War, as Aizu people had. Again, like the Aizu troops, this aided in further cementing a new reputation as loyal imperial subjects in the new Japan. People with old domain ties even rose to high prominence in the imperial government. These included two prime ministers, Saitō Makoto and Takahashi Korekiyo, both of whom retained active ties to their provincial samurai roots.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ The Watari-Date and Iwadeyama-Date went to Hokkaido, as did the similarly high-ranking Katakura of Shiroishi and Ishikawa of Kakuda. Date, p. 99.

⁵⁸⁵ This being said, I freely acknowledge that Takahashi's were provincial roots by extension, as he was the son of another family adopted *in* to a Date vassal family, and one which was permanently posted to Edo/Tokyo rather than resident in the domain. Even so, he was not uninvolved with the ex-samurai community from Sendai, as I discuss elsewhere in the present work.

Once again, in the case of these networks, one can see that there was continuity rather than disjuncture after the war. Rather than simply wither away, the old feudal ties endured and changed, adapting to the new era and the demands of a community that needed to reinvent itself in the wake of loss in battle and political disestablishment. But mutual aid for out of work samurai was not all that these networks accomplished. They were also the vehicles by which the war's survivors drove efforts at historiographic rehabilitation. It is to a consideration of these efforts at revisionist history that we will now turn.

8.3 HISTORIOGRAPHIC REHABILITATION

As noted in the Introduction, the victors of the Boshin War wrote the war's earliest histories. As the victors and the founders of the new political order, they were, perhaps unsurprisingly, interested in casting themselves in as positive a light as possible. In particular, they were invested in portraying themselves as the emperor's loyal vassals, and the vanquished northerners and all other opponents as traitors. Humbled in defeat though the north's war veterans were, they obviously had their own version of the Boshin War's events. They did not leave the victors' historiographic perspective unchallenged. In the decades beyond 1868, northern survivors of the war worked to rehabilitate their home regions' historical reputations. A recurring theme that they pursued was underlining their imperial loyalty. Here, I will consider two forms of that rehabilitation, in the form of revisionist history and political rehabilitation from the stigma of traitor to the throne. Once again, the focus will be on Aizu and Sendai as regional exemplars. The networks discussed in the section above drove these projects.

Efforts at rehabilitating Aizu domain's reputation in the 1860s have often focused on the person of its last daimyo Matsudaira Katamori. That rehabilitation has centered on his conduct in Kyoto, as the shogunate's military commissioner (*shugoshoku* 守護職) for the city and its environs. His service and loyalty to Kōmei, Emperor Meiji's father and predecessor, is particularly emphasized even today in Aizu-focused works.⁵⁸⁶ The argument is that if Katamori was so loyal to Kōmei, then labeling him as a traitor to the throne is incorrect. Loyalty, more broadly, was another point emphasized in such works, and a prime example of this in Aizu was the domain's military unit called Byakkotai. This unit, composed of early teenaged samurai sons, was one of Aizu domain's four major military units organized by age. A small detachment from Byakkotai committed suicide on the slopes of Mount Iimori on the first day of the Aizu siege. In the decades that followed the war, their story was retold and altered as an example of loyalty even unto death. Regardless of the cause for which their lord stood, this *post facto* depiction was appealing both in Japan and abroad. Even World War II era Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini learned of this story and used it for his own political ends.⁵⁸⁷

A good example of a major Aizu-born revisionist author who led these efforts is the physicist and educator Yamakawa Kenjirō. Yamakawa is best known for being the first Japanese person to be a physics professor, but he was born in Aizu before 1868, as the son of a high-

⁵⁸⁶ Kobiyama Rokurō, "Matsudaira Katamori Kankei Jinmei Jiten," pp. 199-211 of *Matsudaira Katamori no Subete* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1984), p. 203. Katamori wore letters from Emperor Kōmei, packed inside a bamboo tube, on his person for the rest of his life.

⁵⁸⁷ Mussolini sent an original Roman column from Pompeii to Aizu, where it was erected beside the graves of the Byakkotai soldiers who committed suicide on Mount Iimori. The column still stands there today. Janice P. Nimura, *Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2015), p. 282n.

ranking samurai family there.⁵⁸⁸ Though he was still in his early teens at the time, Yamakawa fought in the Boshin War and was a survivor of the Aizu siege, where several members of his extended family were killed.⁵⁸⁹ In addition to his duties as an educator and later as a university president, Yamakawa was also an historian of Aizu's history in the 1860s. He collaborated with others in the writing of histories from an Aizu perspective, including his brother Yamakawa Hiroshi and Aizu samurai turned Nagasaki mayor Kitahara Masanaga.⁵⁹⁰

In his role as local revisionist historian, Yamakawa's own *magnum opus* was *Aizu Boshin Senshi*, an account of the Aizu domain and its actions in the Boshin War, up to its surrender in the late autumn of 1868. Though he was, doubtlessly, motivated by a desire to tell a vanquished fiefdom's side of the story, he chose words that would sidestep the issue of loyalty to the emperor. Yamakawa refers to the imperial army as the western army (*seigun* 西軍), and to those who opposed them, variously, by what they actually were. So the ex-shogun's army was "the former shogunate army" (*kyū bakugun* 旧幕軍), Aizu troops were "the Aizu army" (*Aizu-gun* 会

⁵⁸⁸ Watanabe Masao, *The Japanese and Western Science*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 6.

⁵⁸⁹ Hoshi Ryōichi, *Byakkotai to Aizu bushidō* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2002), p. 168. Yamakawa was part of Byakkotai; this was the same unit as the nineteen Byakkotai troops who went on to worldwide renown for their group suicide on Mount Iimori at the siege's outset. For more on the Yamakawa family's actions and losses during the Boshin War, on the Yamakawa family's actions and reputation in the Meiji era, and especially on Yamakawa Kenjirō's American-educated sister Ōyama Sutematsu, see Kuno Akiko, *Unexpected Destinations: the poignant story of Japan's first Vassar graduate*. Trans. Kirsten McIvor. (Tōkyō: Kodansha International, 1993).

⁵⁹⁰ Kitahara wrote another one of the early revisionist works on Aizu's 1860s era history, while it was still somewhat risqué to do so, especially for a politician. For more, see Kitahara Masanaga, *Shichinenshi*. (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 1972).

津軍), and the Alliance forces were “the alliance army” (*dōmeigun* 同盟軍). By avoiding the use of the “imperial army” label, Yamakawa removed the issue of imperial loyalty from consideration. The dead could thus be rehabilitated as loyal subjects of the imperial order, though no one could dispute that regardless of their feelings about the emperor in 1868, they had fought against the imperial armies.

Compared to Aizu, Sendai in the Meiji era did not have as far to go in its effort at historiographic rehabilitation. Unlike the ruling Matsudaira family of Aizu, the Date of Sendai had century upon century of northern roots, and plenty of pre-1868 accomplishments and clout to which its rulers and their now former vassals could now rightfully lay claim. Also unlike Aizu, the warrior class in Sendai had a much longer and stronger tie to the land and its non-warrior people, as discussed earlier in this work. The Date family was, after all, resident in the region since the 12th century, and during the Edo period, its population lived in all parts of the domain rather than the castle town alone, and were far more acquainted with the non-samurai population and its conditions. Some of the domain’s heritage, like local physical heritage, Date Masamune’s national reknown and overseas overtures, as well as early 19th century pioneering work in foreign language and technical studies, we have explored in earlier chapters.

Viewed from this perspective, the 1868 war was a relatively small blemish on an otherwise long and storied history of accomplishments. Furthermore, as Sendai city was, and remains today, the region’s largest city and, consequently, the central government used it as a base for its major political and military representatives for the region.⁵⁹¹ This presence carried

⁵⁹¹ The imperial government chose Sendai as headquarters for the Sendai Garrison (*Sendai Chindai* 仙台鎮台), a major military formation which was later expanded into the Imperial Japanese Army’s 2nd Infantry Division. Sendai’s garrison was one of six such garrisons nationwide, including others at Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Hiroshima,

with it an associated prestige that mitigated some of the stain of 1868. Problematic though Sendai's actions in 1868 had been from the Meiji government's perspective, as a regional headquarters for the government, Sendai's day-to-day reputation was decent. Coupled with its status as a major local and now international port, it was also safe from falling into obscurity and spared the hard times like those experienced by the former Aizu Castle town. In part because of this, it remains to this day the region's largest and busiest city.⁵⁹²

However, despite their city's and former domain's good fortune in this regard, the Sendai veterans and their colleagues killed in action still bore the stigma of traitors. Like the Aizu men, the war dead from Sendai were also excluded from the government's new shrines meant to honor the war dead.⁵⁹³ Elsewhere, the northern graves of war dead from the southwestern coalition bore inscriptions that described them as having been felled by traitors. The ex-domainal community, eager as was Aizu's ex-samurai community at rehabilitating their fallen comrades' names and posthumous image, moved steadily to address this. In some cases, their actions took the form of very blunt and destructive measures, such as vandalism of inscriptions which described the north

and Kumamoto. The garrison, and later the division, was headquartered in the remnants of Sendai Castle, and was thus part of the reason behind the aerial firebombing of central Sendai during the closing months of World War II.

Nhon no Rekishi 10, p. 179.

⁵⁹² That being said, in 21st century hindsight Sendai's importance as a political, transport, and military hub seems to have all but assured its destruction during World War II, while Aizu-Wakamatsu, nestled deep in the mountains and far off the beaten path, survived the war essentially unscathed.

⁵⁹³ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 45.

in those negative terms.⁵⁹⁴ But like the Aizu men above, the Sendai men's efforts, too, focused on rehabilitating the dead in the context of imperial loyalty, or again, more broadly, in the context of loyalty.

Ōtsuki Fumihiko was a leading voice among the ex-samurai community of Sendai into the opening years of the 20th century, and his life offers a good example of a defeated northern warrior "made good" in the new era. Ōtsuki is better known today for his work in linguistics and dictionary compilation and for being one of the first Japanese people to have earned a doctoral degree.⁵⁹⁵ But in his youth, Ōtsuki was a Date retainer, one who came from a family which was particularly active in medicine and education.⁵⁹⁶ He was also active in Date political circles in 1868, and was a proponent of the Northern Alliance together with other members of his family.⁵⁹⁷ But in the decades after the defeat he was especially active in the writing of history and in preservation efforts. Rather notably, it is thanks to Ōtsuki that lesser-known texts and records from the old domain, from before its foundation to the end of its existence, were collected, typeset, and reprinted into *Sendai Sōsho*, offering an invaluable resource to future historians, including the present author.

⁵⁹⁴ The grave of imperial officer Sera Shūzō, whose wartime murder by angry Sendai men was described in Chapter Six, had one such funerary inscription, which was defaced by a local. This was related to me by the family with whom I briefly resided in the area, in 2005.

⁵⁹⁵ Kikuta Sadatoshi, *Sendai Jinmei Daijisho* (Sendai: Hōbundō, 1933), p. 198.

⁵⁹⁶ Kikuta, pp. 195-201. The large and well-connected Ōtsuki family was active both in Sendai domain educational circles as well as in Tokugawa Shogunate offices in Edo. As noted in earlier chapters, several rectors of the Sendai domain school also came from this family, and were advocates of foreign study, especially in Russia.

⁵⁹⁷ Ariyama Teruo, *Kuga Katsunan* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007), p. 22.

The approach of Ōtsuki and others like him is plainly obvious in the language their works employ. The Sendai-born editors of “Boshin Shimatsu,” a compilation of records and letters from the crisis year of 1868, make clear their rehabilitationist aims in editing, expanding, and republishing these documents in the work’s introduction. Its final paragraph reads:

But the most valuable part of this book is the list of names for those officers and foot soldiers under Sendai domain command, killed and wounded during the fighting in support of the Mutsu-Dewa-Echigo Coalition. This is something that neither the book *Sendai Boshin-shi* nor the book *Sendaihan Boshin-shi* possesses, so we feel our inclusion of it is particularly valuable. These fallen and wounded men, who served so loyally, ought to be esteemed. Their deaths should be pitied. Thus, though it was sixty long years ago, we naturally cannot forget their names.⁵⁹⁸

The passage appeals to emotion rather than the technicalities of imperial loyalty or disloyalty. As Wert observes, this is a hallmark of the Meiji era reinterpretation of the 1860s and the motivations of its political and military actors. In time, it would bear fruit.

The historiographic and political situation that the northerners faced was dramatically different by the 1920s. These decades of effort at rehabilitation, as well as decades of activity by northerners in all parts of life in the new Japan, had visibly borne fruit. Northerners had made their way into the ranks of Japan’s highest political circles, with the most prominent example at the time being the Prime Minister at the decade’s opening, the “commoner prime minister” Hara

⁵⁹⁸ Otokozawa et. al., “Boshin Shimatsu,” p. 42.

Takashi.⁵⁹⁹ Decades ago, as the young son of a high-ranking samurai family of Morioka domain, Hara had witnessed the Boshin war, the Alliance's defeat, and the hardships and political change that followed.⁶⁰⁰ He used the advantages of high government position to bring about a change in at least some of the language used by the imperial government with regards to the Boshin War. Part of a diary entry by Hara during his tenure as home minister and chief commissioner for the enthronement ceremony of the Meiji Emperor's son (the soon-to-be Emperor Taishō) illustrates how Hara put that high position's influence into action on behalf of his natal region:

Afternoon. When I attended the commissioners' conference and we discussed a number of matters, I was annoyed to see that certain banners to be displayed at the enthronement ceremony bore titles such as 'Used in the suppression of the northeast at the time of the Restoration,' or 'Designed after an imperial standard entrusted to the commander-in-chief during the subjugation of Ou province.' It was agreed that today, when we are all grateful subjects of the emperor, expressions usually used to describe foreign conquest were improper, and I had them removed.⁶⁰¹

"When we look back," Hara later wrote, while speaking at a memorial in his hometown, about Morioka domain's war dead, "how could any Japanese subject of olden days, any more

⁵⁹⁹ Hara served as prime minister from 1918 until his assassination by a far-right radical named Nakaoka Kon'ichi in 1921. He was the first of several Japanese prime ministers to be assassinated in the years leading up to the Second World War. The ensuing two decades also saw the murders of Inukai Tsuyoshi (while in office, in 1932) and Takahashi Korekiyo (after having held office, in 1936): while Hara was assassinated by a lone radical, Inukai and Takahashi were murdered by rogue military officers.

⁶⁰⁰ Oka, pp. 85-91.

⁶⁰¹ Quoted in Oka, pp. 85-86.

than now, draw his bow against the emperor? The Restoration was simply a conflict of political views. At the time, there was a popular song, “Winners—the imperial army; losers—rebels.” That accurately describes the situation in 1868. But now all subjects share in the radiance of the emperor’s gracious favor, as is clear to all. So be at rest!”⁶⁰² Again, like Yamakawa Kenjirō before him, Hara also made a point of removing the issue of imperial loyalty from debate. Thus couched in a new language of imperial loyalty, the north had, at long last, found a place in modern Japan, and recognition from even the highest levels of the imperial government.

Aizu’s, and the North’s, rehabilitation into the new Japan and the new imperial order symbolically culminated with an imperial wedding in 1928. Matsudaira Setsuko, granddaughter of the last Aizu domain lord, was approached with a proposal of marriage from Prince Chichibu Yasuhito, younger brother of the then newly enthroned Emperor Hirohito.⁶⁰³ While it may be tempting to view this event as single-handedly bringing about that rehabilitation, it was but the culmination of decades of effort on the part of the war’s survivors. The history of 1868 was still well known in the 1920s, but the decades of increasingly vociferous and high-profile efforts discussed above had been indispensable and had, over the years, borne fruit. Though Setsuko herself was not born in Aizu and did not visit it until the leadup to her marriage, she nonetheless became a symbol of Aizu, especially after she assented to the proposal and the marriage

⁶⁰² Quoted in Oka, pp. 86-87.

⁶⁰³ Chichibu Setsuko, *The Silver Drum*, trans. Dorothy Britton. (Kent: Global Oriental, 1996), pp. 56-63. Hirohito, who had functioned for a time as his father Yoshihito’s regent, was enthroned in 1926; the marriage proposal came to the Matsudaira family, then in America during Setsuko’s father Tsuneo’s tenure as ambassador to the United States, in 1927.

preparations moved forward.⁶⁰⁴ Even if the marriage itself was but a culmination, in Aizu and elsewhere the prevailing sentiment was that the stain on Aizu's name was symbolically lifted. Thus, nearly three decades into the 20th century, by way of an ex-daimyo family's new marriage ties into the imperial line, Aizu and the broader north were at last "restored" as loyal subjects.

While the north, and northerners, continued to experience discrimination and be the butt of derisive regional humor well into the 20th century, at least some of the stigma of 1868 had finally passed. Today, the north continues to face challenges, particularly issues of recovery in the aftermath of natural and man-made disaster that followed the 2011 tsunami, earthquake, and nuclear disaster. But thanks in no small part to the efforts of its own people since the Meiji era, its niche as part of the new Japan has long stood secure.

8.4 CONCLUSION

Though the Meiji era was a time of great change in all aspects of Japanese society, it was not initially a positive experience for the northern survivors of 1868. They entered the new era humbled in war, often bereft of status and income, and with their lands broken and poisoned. Furthermore, they were cast as the backward country villains in the victors' narratives. Yet as we have seen in this chapter, that state of affairs did not last—and the situation was different for

⁶⁰⁴ In fact, Setsuko was not born in Japan at all, but rather in the London suburb of Walton-on-Thames, during her father Tsuneo's tenure as third secretary of the Japanese embassy there. Years later, Matsudaira Tsuneo would return to the United Kingdom as Japanese ambassador. Finally, as Tsuneo did not hold a peerage despite his birth into an ex-daimyo family, Setsuko had to be entered in the family register of her uncle, Admiral Viscount Matsudaira Morio, for the marriage deal to proceed. Chichibu, pp. 1, 65.

different regions within the northeast. But regardless of where it was in the northeast, the war's survivors exercised a considerable degree of agency, be it in political involvement, in local organization, or in historiographic rehabilitation of their deceased comrades' reputation. Though the adage regarding victors' authorship of history is indeed true, the vanquished were far from silent and inactive.

The north was politically reshaped from both inside and out even before the fires of war had been fully extinguished. The war's victors swiftly meted out penalties against Sendai, Yonezawa, and other Alliance domains, carving off sections of those domains and placing them under first delegated, then direct, control of the central government. Elsewhere, the reduced northern domains did their best to reorganize and adapt to a new reality under the imperial government. But even amidst this reorganization, amidst defeat, there was continuity. The war's survivors continued to be involved in the reshaping of their region. In a sense, the victors had no choice but to allow this, as the vanquished possessed the local experience and ties they did not. This lingering tie to the old order persisted well into the opening decades of the new.

There was continuity also in the networks of ex-samurai and their former lords' families, some of whom remained in the region, some of whom left for Tokyo, Hokkaido, and elsewhere. Especially in the case of the ex-samurai of Aizu, these networks were essential, since they functioned as mutual aid societies for a population that, though already stigmatized, was also suddenly destitute, dispossessed, and status-deprived. In Hokkaido, entire groups of senior Date retainers and their vassals set up residence and engaged in land reclamation, laying the foundation for several major cities on the island, including Sapporo and Date. The old samurai communities thus persevered, though they were in some cases transplanted to new places. The ex-Sendai retainer network also included those with domain affiliation who had no geographic

tie to the old domain, such as Takahashi Korekiyo, erstwhile Sendai domain foot soldier based in Edo, who was an advisor to the Date family well into the Meiji era. Old domainal ties continued to persist in subsequent generations as well: organizations of domain vassals' descendants even persist at the time of this writing, halfway into the 21st century's second decade.

Finally, there was also a wave of northern revisionist historiography by which the war's survivors pushed back against the victors' narrative of the war that cast the region and its people as treasonous. While this was driven first by survivors, later, others followed. A frequent point in revisionist works was the intention to rehabilitate the northerners by depicting them as loyal imperial subjects, usually by removing from question the issue of imperial loyalty altogether. Aizu efforts at rehabilitation often focused on the person of the last daimyo Matsudaira Katamori and his 1860s-era actions in Kyoto, in support of the Meiji emperor's father, Emperor Kōmei, as a means of proving his loyalty to the imperial house. Doing so made it possible to begin redeeming what might otherwise have seemed like an irredeemable leader and his vanquished followers. This revisionist effort was made possible by the samurai networks noted above, networks that initially worked at a disadvantage, as their population was significantly scattered and impoverished, after such crushing defeat in war. But over time, Aizu revisionism gained momentum, and reached broader and broader audiences especially by the early 20th century. By the 1930s, even people far beyond Japan were aware of Aizu's 1868 actions, particularly by way of the Byakkotai youths' group suicide. Some, like the Italian Fascists under Mussolini, also attempted to use that history for their own political ends.

By contrast to the Aizu case, Sendai men did not have to face the same sort of challenge, due in part to their former domain's lengthy and positively regarded history, as well as to the benefit of prestige their former castle town derived as a major nerve center for the imperial

government's political and military presence in northeastern Honshu. They also benefited from having gained some measure of respectability under the new imperial system through their participation in colonization efforts on the empire's new northern frontier. However, like the Aizu men, they too faced the stigma of 'treason' for their actions in 1868. In response, some of them engaged in revisionist historiography and the preservation and republication of old records and histories. Again like the Aizu men, the revisionist works coming out of Sendai also emphasized imperial loyalty as being unquestionable. By the 1910s and 1920s, these efforts by people from Aizu, Sendai, and elsewhere had borne fruit. Revisionist works were published with increasing frequency, and even high government officials, like Hara Takashi, changed stigmatizing rituals and argued against the victors' exclusionary language. Regardless of the political aims that motivated the Alliance, those who survived the war were able to rehabilitate themselves and their fallen comrades by couching their motivations and mentalities in the language of imperial loyalty. This took time, but it eventually bore fruit.

Seen as the culmination of this long process, the marriage of the last Aizu daimyo's granddaughter Matsudaira Setsuko to imperial prince *Chichibu-no-miya* Yasuhito in 1928 is less of a surprise or a singular event responsible for the north's "restoration." It is but the postscript to a long process by which Aizu, Sendai, and the rest of the north carved out a niche for themselves as part of the new order in modern Japan. Despite the demise of the Japanese empire with the end of the Pacific War, and despite new concerns over the region's future borne out of the tsunami and earthquake of 2011, northern Honshu remains secure in its niche as part of the new Japan.

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