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Lord-Vassal Relations during the Rise of the Kamakura Bakufu

At the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, due to changes in economic substructure and growth of lawlessness accompanied by militarization of the provincial society and provincial administration, the warrior class (*bushi*) had begun to take shape. According to Yasuda¹ from an economic point of view we can regard all its members as local land owners (*zaichi-ryōshu*). This class had a diversified character and included provincial magnates' families (*chihō-gōzoku* or *gōzokuteki ryōshu*) as well as medium size and small owners. In some cases local chieftains were connected with capital aristocracy, especially with the group of provincial administration superiors². Usually however, genealogical connections, that provincial clans had been so proud of, were either fictional or arose from marriage (an official from the capital married a daughter of the provincial chieftain) or adoption (an official adopted the local chieftain or his son). In reality the overwhelming majority of the late Heian period *bushi* class was never very far from the peasantry.

Weakness of the state power in remote areas made attainment of efficient protection for his territory a life or death matter for every single *ryōshu*. Commendation of the part of ownership rights to *kuge* (capital aristocracy) guaranteed reasonable safety from the taxes imposed by the state and protected against arbitrary officials. But protection offered by the *kuge* could not prevent seizure of land or plunder by neighbouring *ryōshu*. It was largely this situation that forced local owners to create relatively permanent offensive and defensive alliances between themselves known as *bushi* bands (*bushidan*). Initially they were moderate in size

¹ Motohisa Yasuda, *Bushi-sekai-no jōmaku*, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, Tōkyō 1973, p. 13.

² Aristocracy was divided into three groups according to the court rank. The most powerful were *kuge* (from the 1st, down to the 3rd rank). Aristocrats of the 4th and 5th ranks belonged to the medium group. The rest of the nobles was granted ranks from 6th down to the 9th. Parentage delimited a place in the social hierarchy and the possibilities of promotion. Governors came usually from the second group.

and were based on the closest relative and their servants, but the intensification of violence contributed to their rapid growth. Magnate families (clans) became the centers of those private protection systems (*shiteki hogo-sei*). Lord-vassal relations (*shujū-kankei*) were based on the rule „service for protection”. The rôle of the lord (*shujin*) was played by a magnate clan chieftain while the small owner looking for protection accepted the position of his vassal (*jūsha*).

We can single out three ways in which lord-vassal relations could be established³.

- a. a local owner could ask a local magnate family to give him protection
- b. a local magnate family could offer protection to a local owner
- c. a chieftain of the magnate family could force some of his relatives to accept the status of his vassal.

M a s s⁴ indicates that the term „*bushidan*” is not precise. It can be applied in the case of a small group and also to a great, dominating whole province *bushi* band. Dependent on whether the land under control of *bushidan* members belonged to the state (*kokugaryō*) or to a private proprietor (*shōen*), *bushidan* was dominated by the resident provincial officials strata (*zaichōkanjin*) or by officials of the *shōen* administrative staff, respectively.

Generally speaking, *bushidan* can be defined as a kind of a powerful military organization created by the *zaichi-ryōshu*, based on lord vassal relations. The hierarchy within a *bushi* band reflected class stratification of the eleventh century Japanese society. Authority relations were closely connected with the social status of a subordinate and his commander⁵. At least some of the Japanese scholars are apt to claim that we can trace the elements of the feudal relations in the structure of *bushidan*⁶.

The *bushi* band organization was that of an extended family type. In its inner structure we can point out three essential levels: real family (*ichizoku*), vassals (*rōtō*), and servants (*shojū*). All the members and relatives by blood of the magnate family belonged to *ichizoku*. In some cases related kinsmen (*inzoku*) and quasi-kinsmen (*giseiteki shinzoku*)⁷ were also included. Vassals were recruited from lesser

³ Ryō Ō a e, *Hōkenteki shujisei-seiritsushi-kenkyū*, Kazama shobō, Tōkyō 1967, pp. 168–172. According to T a k e u c h i the last case occurred when a loose confederation of the same family lines underwent changes caused by a rise of the strong hereditary chieftainship. T a k e u c h i calls it a „vassal system based on the dictatorship of the main line” (*chakusōdokusai-no shujū-sei*). Rizō T a k e u c h i, *Bushi-no tōjō*, Nihonno rekishi 6, Chūō-kōronsha, Tōkyō 1965, p. 68.

⁴ Jeffrey P. M a s s, *Warrior Government in Early Medieval Japan — A Study of Kamakura Bakufu Jitō and Shugo*, Yale University Press, New Haven–London 1974, 38.

⁵ T a k e u c h i, op. cit., pp. 86–87, also Y a s u d a, op. cit., pp. 19–20.

⁶ For instance Y a s u d a, op. cit., pp. 19–20.

⁷ Ō a e points here out also adopted sons (*yūshi*) and *eboshigo*. (During the initiation ceremony a young male was given a headgear called *eboshi*. If the ceremony was not performed by his father, but by someone else, this person became something like „godfather” and the boy his „godchild”, literally „a son by eboshi”).

ryōshu and half independent peasants (*myōshu*). They were not related with *ichizoku* by blood, but joined the *bushidan* in order to gain protection. They were treated in the same way as the members of the real family. If the *bushidan* chieftain was granted a reward, vassals would participate, and if he committed a crime vassals were punished, too. *Ichizoku* and *rôtô* formed together a familial community (*kazokuteki kyōdōtai*) led by the main line of the real family, called *sōke*. The head of the main line was at the same time the chief of the *bushidan* and his family name served as the label for the whole band. *Shojū* were used mainly as the source of man power, but if necessary they could perform military functions⁸.

In the course of time the inner structure of the *bushidan* and connected units were subject to many changes. According to Hall⁹ at the turn of the Heian period a head of a familial community was designated *sōryō*, members of the closest family were named *ichimon* or *ichizoku* and collateral lines were called *shoshi*. Vassals connected by blood were known as *ie-no ko*, while the rest of the vassals were termed *kenin* or *rôtô*.

Sometimes, as in the case of Musashi province, specific geographical circumstances (valleys separated by mountain ranges) made it difficult to maintain close relations among the scattered habitations and resulted in that no line could gain supremacy. Such a situation gave birth to a kind of confederation consisting of many independent, loosely attached groups. The division between main and collateral lines was invisible, but because of their common origin all the lines jointly defended each others rights. Such a „familial *bushi* band” (*dōzokuteki bushidan*) was labelled as „tō”. The best known federation of this type was „The Seven Bushi Groups from Musashi” (*Musashi-shichitō*)¹⁰.

Such a rise of many differentiated small *bushi* bands marked the first step in the growth of a distinct *bushi* class. Its later development went in two directions. On the one hand, severe competition contributed to the elimination of weaker bands and to the rise of great *bushi* bands (*daibushidan*) at the turn of eleventh century. On the other hand, there emerged tendencies leading to the foundation of an extended vassal organization that include warriors from many provinces. Uniting rôle was played by clans of the so-called warrior leaders (*bushi-no tōryō*). To suppress frequent rebellions in the eleventh century the capital aristocracy made use of minor officials who proved to possess military talents and were at the head of powerful *bushidan*. The candidates had also to be originated at least from the lesser aristocracy.

⁸ Ôae, op. cit., p. 204.

⁹ John W. Hall, *Government and Local Power in Japan from 500-1700. Based on Bizen Province*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1966, pp. 135-136 also Matsumoto Shinhachirō, *Chūseihen 1, Nihon-rekishi-kōza 3*, Kawade shobō, Tōkyō 1954, pp. 6-7. For informations about the initial stage of *bushi* bands see: William Ritchie Wilson, *The Way of the Bow and Arrow. The Japanese Warrior in Konjaku Monogatari*, Monumenta Nipponica, vol. XXVIII No. 2, Sophia University, Tōkyō 1973, p. 186.

¹⁰ Yasuda, op. cit., pp. 30-32 and 38, Mass, op. cit., pp. 30-39.

In practice, the leaders of imperial armies could be chosen only from the members descended from emperor Seiwa (850–880) Minamoto clan (Seiwa-Genji), descended from emperor Kammu (731–806) Taira clan (Kammu-Heishi) and from the descendants of Fujiwara-no Hidesato (lived in the middle of the tenth century). An appointment to a commander-in-chief post during the military campaign allowed to carry out a mobilization of warriors on a large scale. During long campaigns superior status helped to make local *bushidan* chieftains (otherwise officially subordinated) accept the vassal status. Military forces, influence in the provinces and connections with the capital aristocracy were motive powers in the course of social promotion of *bushi-no tōryō*¹¹.

The first Minamotos to be known for their military skills were Mitsunaka (912?–997?), his son Yorinobu (968–1048) and his grandson Yoriyoshi (988–1075). The armies they commanded numbered thousands of men, but only a small number of warriors belonged to their private troops. The organization of the first wider vassal system is attributed to Yoshiie (1039–1106). He won his outstanding warrior reputation during a stubborn fight with Abe clan in Northern Japan (known as Early Nine Years War — Zenkunen-no eki) under the command of his father. Then, for almost twenty years he had been in service of the powerful aristocratic Fujiwara clan. In Autumn 1083 he was appointed the governor of Mutsu and left the capital. The stay in Mutsu gave him a unique chance to gain control over warriors from Northern Japan. That is why he zealously engaged himself in an inheritance dispute within the local Kiyohara clan. As a judge he was unfair to the expectant heir and provoked him to start a war. Heavy struggles lasted for three years, and they are known in Japanese history under the name of Late Three Years War (Gosannen-no eki). When the war was already in progress Yoshiie applied to Great Council of the State (Dajōkan) for the official order to destroy the rebellious Kiyohara. But Kiyohara clan regularly paid his taxes, so in the opinion of capital authorities there was no reason to place him outside the law. Unexpectedly for himself Yoshiie was forced to wage a private war in the enemy area and depend only on his own troops and resources. His fame as the first warrior in the realm (*tenka-daiichi-buyū-no shi*) helped him to gather many warriors even from remote areas. Because at least some of them had served Yoshiie's father Yoriyoshi before, or were sons and grandsons of Yorinobu vassals, Takeuchi suggests that at the end of the eleventh century one can already observe the existence of Minamoto clan hereditary vassals¹². After the successful pacification of Kiyohara, Yoshiie requested the Great Council to grant him and his men rewards, but his petition was refused. So Yoshiie had to reward his warriors from his own resources. According to Hall¹³, in 1088 when Yoshiie discovered that his exploits were to go unrewarded by the court, he took

¹¹ Yasuda, op. cit., pp. 5–9. Hall, op. cit., p. 136. Ōae, op. cit., pp. 210–212.

¹² Takeuchi, op. cit., pp. 70–73 and 94; Yasuda, op. cit., p. 27.

¹³ Hall, op. cit., p. 139.

out of his own holdings land with which he rewarded his followers" and he argues that „an important new dimension was being added to the relationships between military leader and follower in the provinces. Authority relations based on kinship bonds, or contractual relations (as in the *shōen* system), or through the channels of provincial civil or military administrative commands, were essentially uni-directional. Obedience was expected as part of the requirements of the system itself. A new dimension was added to the exercise of authority when loyalty became a personal commitment rewarded by grants of land. The swearing of private oaths of loyalty and the reciprocal receipt of land grants become more common as the practices of patrimonial organization spread and particularly as military service became a prime reason for enlistment under a superior authority". Undoubtedly Hall stresses a very important factor. Also Sansom¹⁴ states that although traditions of the loyal service were strengthened during severe fighting, the problem of the material reward was of great importance. In Sansom's opinion rewards were based on the income from Yoshiie's holdings in the East. Takeuchi¹⁵ is very ambiguous at this point and remarks only that Yoshiie rewarded his followers from his private property. Anyway we lack any evidence to prove that he rewarded his followers with grants of land.

The military fame of Yoshiie, his relatively high position at the court and the warriors' confidence in him, induced many small owners to commend to him their land in order to obtain his protection. This had to be a large scale movement, because in 1091 the authorities prohibited such actions in all the provinces and the next year all the new *shōens* established by Yoshiie were proclaimed illegal. Thus the question arises if the Seiwa-Minamoto clan chieftain treated the reception of commendations as the starting point for building a vassal system. Mass¹⁶ argues that prohibition edicts were aimed not against his growing military force but against the growth of his economic power. On the other hand, provincial land owners were looking rather for protection from taxes and officers, than seeking a chance to take part in military alliance. And yet, the examination of documents connected with Minamoto followers' land rights shows that their lands were usually placed in the public sector (*kokugaryō*) or in the manors (*shōen*) belonging to *sekkanke*¹⁷ or Ise-daijingū. Only in but a few cases were the followers' lands located within the boundaries of the manors kept by Yoshiie. It seems that the authority over men did not include authority over their land.

Anyway, the principle of „swearing of private oaths of loyalty and the reciprocal receipt of land grants" as Hall puts it, was not introduced earlier than the end of the twelfth century. After Yoshiie's death the vassal system established by him

¹⁴ George Sansom, *A History of Japan to 1334*, The Cresset Press, London 1958, p. 253.

¹⁵ Takeuchi, op. cit., p. 73.

¹⁶ Mass, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁷ The main line of the Fujiwara clan. Only its members could be appointed to regent (*sesshō*) and chancellor (*kampaku*) posts.

soon fell into pieces. His heirs efforts to consolidate the Kantô warriors once more proved ineffective. It was his great grandson Yoshitomo (1123–1160), who made successful attempt to create a new organization. It was located in the South Kantô provinces: Sagami, Musashi, Kazusa, and Shimôsa. Yoshitomo's claim to leadership was approved by Yamanouchi and Miura bands of Sagami, Chiba of Shimôsa, Kazusa of Kazusa, and *Musashi-shichitô* of Musashi. The story of the dispute about *Sôma-no mikuriya*¹⁸ seems to throw some light on the methods used by Yoshitomo and the other *bushi-no tôryô* to make *bushidan* chieftains responsive to their claims to leadership. The Sôma area was the domain of Chiba-no Tsuneshige (lived in the first half of twelfth century), who moved to ensure his rights in two ways. In 1130 he obtained from the provincial administration confirmation of his hereditary district chieftain rights (*gunji-shiki*) and at the same time he commended Sôma to Ise Shrine and gained hereditary manager rights (*gesu-shiki*). But still in 1138 the governor of Shimôsa imprisoned him on the charge of failure to pay his duties. The governor's proxy imposed a fine, and made Tsuneshige and his son Tsunetane (1118–1201) resign in writing a part of their rights to disputable area. In 1143 Yoshitomo joined the dispute. At first, he extracted from Tsunetane resignation of his rights to the whole Sôma estate, thus wrecking the results of the governor and of his partisan actions. Next he commended the seized rights to Ise Shrine and kept for himself the *gesu-shiki*. In 1146 we are faced by an unexpected development. Tsunetane regained confirmation of his rights to Sôma and once more commended them to Ise Shrine obtaining the *gesu-shiki*. M a s s points out here two possible solutions. Forced by a new and mighty competitor, Tsunetane preferred to seek a compromise with the governor and bought out from him his own holding. The second possibility is that he pledged loyalty to Yoshitomo in return for withdrawal of the latter's claims. This can be backed up by a generally known fact that in the so-called Hôgen disturbances (1156) Chiba-no Tsunetane joined sides with Yoshitomo.

Yoshitomo's efforts to spread his authority beyond Kantô met several obstacles. First of all, about 1150 he had to return to Kyôto in order to promote his court career. On the other hand, his consolidation activity was delayed by animosity of collateral Minamoto lines. They were too weak to aspire to *bushi-no tôryô* status, but prestigious enough to win massive support in the country, and to stay aside from Yoshitomo's unification movement. After his violent death in 1160 his vassal organization was desintegrated¹⁹.

The next stage of vassal relations development is connected with the period of Ise Taira ascendancy (broadly speaking 1160–1180). The Ise branch of the Taira clan advanced in social hierarchy due to the skillful policies of Taira-no Masamori (lived at the turn of eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth centuries) and pro-

¹⁸ Special term applied only in the cases of Ise Great Shrine (Ise-daijingu) estates.

¹⁹ M a s s, op. cit., pp. 39–44 and 49–50.

tection of the abdicated emperor Shirakawa (1053–1129). Masamori's grandson Kiyomori (1118–1181) was already powerful enough to defeat Minamoto forces in Hôgen and Heiji (1159–1160) disturbances. Problems concerning organization of the Taira military forces and vassal system raised and still raise, many controversies among historians. The only fact that one can be sure about was the exceptionally durable bonds between the warriors from Ise and Iga provinces and the Tairas. Even many years after the final defeat of Taira forces at Dannoura there were rebellions caused by former Taira supporters in Iga. It is quite possible that Masamori's line originated from this very province and next its *bushidan* organization was spread over the other Taira branches scattered in Ise and Owari. Since the Taira blood relatives were the backbone of the whole system, vassal relations were doubled and strengthened by real kinship relations²⁰.

According to S a t ô, the Taira clan controlled the administrative structure of the state by placing relatives at key positions. A great number of proprietary provinces (*chigyôkoku*) and estates (*shôen*) created the economic base of its power. Military forces were organized through provincial administrative centers (*kokuga*). Besides, Taira chieftains promoted their vassals (*kenin*) to the stewards (*jîtô*) positions in their estates, so the *jîtô* system had significant military meaning²¹. Among the opponents of this view is Y a s u d a. He argues that military actions, such as pacifications of pirates, conducted under command of Taira leaders, played a much more important role than the bureaucratic proceedings of Taira governors. If we can draw a parallel to the Minamoto clan, it is obvious that Yorinobu, Yoriyoshi and Yoshiie gained support of many followers, while subduing rebellious provincial chieftains. We can expect a similiar development in the case of Taira. Pacifications of the Inland Sea area created the opportunity to subordinate local *bushi* bands. Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from a comparison of the provinces controlled by the Taira governors in the 1160–1180 period.

East Japan	West & Central Japan	Control period
Echizen, Wakasa		22 years
	Awaji	20 years
	Aki	18 years
Noto		18 years
Hitachi		17 years
	Kii	16 years
Owari		15 years
Musashi		10 years
	Izumi, Sanuki	10 years
Hida, Kaga		7–8 years
	Harima, Hôki,	years
	Chikuzen, Iki	7–8 years

²⁰ Y a s u d a, op. cit., pp. 95–96.

²¹ S a t ô Shin'ichi, *Shoki-hôken-shakai-no keisei*, in T o y o d a Takeshi ed. Shin-Nihon-shi-taiki 3, Chûsei-shakai, Asakura shobô, Tôkyô 1954, pp. 6–8.

1. While the Taira clan was called „Nishi-no Heishi” (Taira clan from the West (provinces)) in fact it controlled for an unexpectedly long time some provinces in the East Japan (especially in Hokurikudô). So the military forces based on *kokuga* should have been better developed in the eastern part of the country.

2. In 1180, the Minamoto partisans' movement assumed a most violent appearance in eastern Japan. Even in the provinces directly governed by the Tairas, like Wakasa, Kaga and Noto it proved impossible to check the progress of the rebellion. Central government proxies and local officials were either killed, or they run away, or joined the movement. If the Heishi military forces had been organized through the administrative centers (*kokuga*) in the provinces governed for twenty years by Kiyomori's supporters and relatives, the powerful official circles could not have been so easily and quickly brought to heel. Finally then, the vassal system of the Taira clan was not based on the provincial administration and the officials were not the Heishi vassals²².

The part played by *jîtô* in the Taira vassal system is as little known as the problem of military organization. The key passage here is from *Azuma Kagami* entry of 1185/12/21: „It has been declared that private domains in the various provinces shall come entirely under control of Kantô. Previously those who called themselves stewards (*jîtô*) were probably retainers of the Heike who had assumed the role without imperial approval. Or they had been given this title by the Heike and were stationed on the lands of the Heike. Also civil governors and lords of manors have been known to station stewards on their lands as a personal favor to their retainers. As a result the dominal lords of manors who had dispensed private favors are now empty handed and dismayed. Now that the control of the manors is uniform throughout the provinces, there need be no anxiety among lords of manors and legal guardians of the manors”²³.

The second part of the entry suggests that at the turn of the Heian period there were some cases of using *jîtô-shiki* as a kind of reward. If the *Azuma Kagami* was right, the Taira chieftains could have possibly followed these practices. That is why many historians, among them the already quoted Satô, claimed that the Tairas rewarded their own vassals by *jîtô-shiki* grants. Mass strongly opposed this point of view. The entry from *Azuma Kagami*, he argues, is not backed up by the other sources. So we cannot exclude the possibility that the *Azuma Kagami* editors wanted to make us believe that the introduction of *jîtô* system was justified by the earlier precedents, and that it was by no means Yoritomo's innovation. In reality, the overwhelming majority of killed or dispossessed Taira supporters had many different kinds of land rights (mainly *gesu-shiki*), except *jîtô-shiki*. The documents dealing with Taira *jîtô* were connected only with Aki province. But also in this case, we

²² Yasuda, op. cit., pp. 95–105.

²³ Translated by Shinoda in: Shinoda Minoru, *The Founding of the Kamakura Shogunate, 1180–1185. With Selected Translations from the Azuma Kagami*, Columbia University Press, New York 1960, pp. 361–362.

have nothing to prove that *jitō-shiki* grants were invented to gain vassals. Mass claims that Kiyomori did not introduce any reward system that could encourage warriors to join his vassal corps²⁴.

Does this mean that Taira chieftains did not pay any attention to vassal recruitment? We cannot be completely sure of this. As far as we know, Kiyomori's principal vassals were to some extent involved in the recruitment of warriors. For instance, Saeki-no Kagehiro, thanks to close bonds with Kiyomori, became the most prominent and influential person in Aki province. Many local warriors were eager to become his vassals because they expected they would obtain Kiyomori's protection in this way. So the number of Taira supporters was gradually growing though Kiyomori was not aware of this fact. It is also possible that Taira forced Kantō warriors to perform guard duty (*ōban-yaku*) in Kyōto with the intention to develop the vassal system. The duty period was three years long, and picked up warriors were to meet all the expenses connected with the stay in the capital and the two-way journey. The enlistment order was decided by a special proxy called "Warrior Superior for the Eight Provinces of Kanto" (Kantō-hakkakoku-no samurai-bugyō)²⁵.

Anyway, one can have an impression that the Heishi were not especially interested in the development of a strong and coherent vassal system. It was the prompt advance of Yoritomo's rebellion, a total lack of provisions and reinforcements that made the Heishi chieftains look for new solutions. In 1181 Kiyomori's son Munemori was appointed to a *sōkan* post for Kinai²⁶, Tamba, Ise, Iga, and Ōmi. His main task was to check the rebellion and establish a vassal system in Central Japan. The *sōkan* had broad constabulary and punitive powers which were traditionally held by the provincial officials. At the beginning of 1182 Taira-no Moritoshi was designated "Gesu-in-Chief" (*sōgesu*). Presumably his duties included the levying of extraordinary taxes, coordination of confiscations and control over warriors. The retreat from the Central Japan, however, suggests that the new offices failed the expectations of the innovators. Taira chieftains were not able to call men to arms, and, by introduction of an adequate rewards system, encourage, to fight sufficient number of warriors²⁷.

Minamoto-no Yoritomo (1147-1199) approached the vassalage problem in a completely different way. Gaining the warriors support had in his case a paramount importance. His vassals derived first of all from the magnate *zaichi-ryōshu* and powerful *bushidan* chieftains families. Yoritomo accepted submissions even of his recent enemies. In return for the pledge of loyalty and faithful service the new vassal was granted a confirmation of his proprietary rights (*honryō-andō* or *shoryō-*

²⁴ Mass, op. cit., pp. 23-24, and 107-111.

²⁵ *Kamakura-bushi*, Nihon-no rekishi 4, Yomiuri-shimbunsha, Tōkyō 1959, pp. 27 and 44-49; also Hall, op. cit., p. 144.

²⁶ Equivalent for five provinces surrounding the capital: Yamato, Yamashiro, Settsu, Kawachi, Izumi.

²⁷ Mass, op. cit., pp. 28-30.

ando. The confirmation of vassal's residence and its immediate vicinity was called *hontaku-ando*). The granting of confirmations satisfied the most important desire of every provincial land owner. Lord-vassals relations were established during a solemn audience ceremony. Unfortunately, we lack detailed information about the character of the audience, we do not know even whether the pledge was submitted in writing or by word of mouth. The warrior accepted as a vassal was called *gokenin* (or „*Kamakura-dono-no gokenin*” — vassal of the Kamakura-Lord). Thus, put into existence the vassal relations were reciprocal. The vassal had already gained a confirmation of his rights and in future his loyal services could be repaid by new grants (*shin'on*). In return, he was expected to perform various duties (*hōkō*). As we can see the *gokenin* system (*gokenin-sei*) brought together elements of traditional, based on private protection, vassal relations and elements of economic benefaction system (*onkyū-sei*)²⁸.

The confirmations granted soon after the Fujikawa battle deserve a special attention. They dealt with the holdings of twenty four Yoritomo's major vassals (including Hōjō, Kazusa, Miura, Chiba and Sasaki). After the extermination of the Satake clan confirmations were granted to vassals from Musashi. Yoritomo's confirmations were not limited to land rights. He sanctioned also official posts held by his vassals in provincial administration (and connected with administrative, judicial and police powers and privileges) or in the *shōen* hierarchy. According to the *Azuma Kagami* account, first confirmations regarding official posts took place on the 23rd of the tenth month of 1180 and dealt with the vicegovernor post (*suke*) in Sagami province (for Miura-no Yoshizumi) and *shōen* official (*shōshi*) post (for Shimokōbe-no Yukihiro). Yoritomo did not loose anything because of these grants, for the rights he felt so free to distribute were by no means his property or his legal sphere of influence. Generally the source of the grants were rights confiscated from his enemies. For instance, after the pacification of the Satake their lands were divided among his most meritorious partisans. Sometimes confiscated lands were consigned to a trusted vassal. In some cases, holdings of the Taira supporters, who surrendered or were captured but eluded immediate execution, were placed under the control of a vassal designated as a custodian of the captive. After 1181, grants of the last two kinds came to an end²⁹.

Yoritomo attached great importance to the privilege of granting rewards and regarded it as a way of distinguishing and stimulating more zealous services. He jealously protected the exclusiveness of his privilege and treated with unusual severity those who accepted the court rewards without his approval and recommendation³⁰.

Since 1185 the most desired form of grant became the *jitō-shiki*. Until 1180 it was rather a rare title in the Kantō. First *jitō* appointment made by Yoritomo oc-

²⁸ Yasuda, op. cit., pp. 189–190; Ōae, op. cit., pp. 218–220; *Kamakura-bushi*, op. cit., pp. 56–57.

²⁹ Shinoda, op. cit., pp. 72–74.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 121.

curred on 1180/11/27. The first *jitô* appointment beyond Kantô did not take place before 1184. During 1180–1185 period there prevailed confirmations and grants of more traditional titles (mainly *gesu-shiki*). Why then did *jitô-shiki* become the main kind of reward and the certificate of *gokenin* status? From 1183 the warriors who were violating the rights of capital owners during the time of disorder sought legal fiction assuming *jitô-gesu* titles. An unusually large amount of these violations was committed under the pretext of Yoritomo's authorization. Along with the development of the rebellion, movement of the self-styled *jitô* spread over the central and western parts of Japan. The upshot of this activity was that in the eyes of the capital aristocracy and provincial warriors all the *jitô*s seemed to be Kamakura sent agents. Yoritomo very smartly made use of this phenomenon and swiftly moved to win complete jurisdiction (appointment, punishment and revocation of authorities) over legal and illegal *jitô*. If we can trust the *Azuma Kagami*, it happened at the end of the 1185. In the decades to come it was to be the most carefully protected prerogative of the *bakufu*³¹.

We can divide owners of the *jitô-shiki* into two categories:

1. Warriors, whose rights to hereditary holdings were confirmed as *jitô-shiki* or so called *honryô-ando-jitô*.

2. Warriors who were granted *jitô-shiki* as a reward or so-called *shin'on-jitô*.

To the first category belonged the majority of vassals from East Japan. Appointments to the *jitô* posts gave *shôen* manager-level officials a chance to win almost complete independence in the managed area. As to the state sector lands (*kokugaryô*), most of the Kantô provinces became Yoritomo's proprietary provinces (*chigyôkoku*). It is not clear to what degree levies were imposed there, and what extent of freedom was enjoyed by the officials. Beyond Kantô, confirmed *jitô* existed only in Kyûshû. Vassals from other parts of Japan were as a rule denied *jitô-shiki*. Later on it became a convenient pretext to question their *gokenin* status. *Shin'on-jitô* were derived mainly from the Kantô warriors, who were granted as a reward *jitô-shiki* in western or central Japan. The source of the grants were holdings confiscated from members of the Taira clan or its supporters, so-called *Heike-mokkanryô*³².

What were the *jitô*'s revenues? Circumstances especially favored the confirmed *jitô* who were *de facto* owners of the managed holdings. *Shin'on-jitô* were appointed in place of killed, missing or dispossessed warriors. Logically, their duties and

³¹ Mass, op. cit., pp. 111–119 and Masataka Uwayokote, *Gempei-no seisui*, Nihon-no rekishi-bunko 6, Kôdansha, Tôkyô 1975, pp. 234–236; For the description of Yoritomo's moves to win the jurisdiction over *jitô* see: Kyôhei Ôyama, *Mokkanryô muhonnin shotaiseiki jitô-no seiritsu*, Shirin 58/6, 1975.

³² Mass, op. cit., pp. 123–132. *Heike-mokkanryô* — in most of the cases there were not confiscated the whole estates (because they usually belonged to the aristocrats), but only *gesu* or *azukari-dokoro* (management level) rights. An appointment to *Heike-mokkanryô* meant a simple replacement of a previous manager by a Yoritomo's vassal.

revenues depended on local precedents. Generally, an essential part of *jitô*'s income consisted of *jitô-kyûden* (land granted to *jitô* as a salary in return for performing administrative duties, income from the levies belonged wholly to *jitô*) and *jitô-myôden* (called also *zômendén*, land granted to *jitô* exempted from all the taxes but annual rent (*nengu*) due to the owner of the *shôen*). The size of *kyûden* and *myôden* as well as the types and size of the other revenue sources can not be brought under any general rule³³.

Performance of vassal duties (*gokenin-yaku*) was the precondition qualifying to enjoy economic privileges. Military service was the basic duty. *Gokenin* were expected to appear with their followers when summoned by Yoritomo and die fighting if necessary. A vassal who failed to respond was excluded from the *gokenin* group. During more peaceful times, vassals had to set guards in Kamakura and to protect Yoritomo and his residence. The number of guardsmen and the duty period were not defined by any rules. *Gokenin* accompanied Yoritomo during trips, pilgrimages and ceremonies held in Kamakura. They had also to take part in different forms of military exercises such as hunting games or archery tournaments. Sometimes purely economic services were demanded. *Gokenin* could be requested to entertain Yoritomo and his retinue. Ōba-no Kageyoshi was in charge of Yoritomo's residence construction and met all the expenses. When Yoritomo decided to order reconstruction of Tōdaiji that had been burnt to the ground, his vassals collected 10,000 koku of rice, 1,000 ryô of gold and 1,000 hiki of silk³⁴. At the beginning of the thirteenth century guard duty was gradually gaining importance. Warriors set guards in the imperial palace (Kyôto-ôban-yaku), in Kamakura (Kamakura-ban-yaku), in the shôgun's palace (shôgun-gosho-naiban-yaku) and they protected the streets of the capital during night hours (Kyôto-kagariya-ban-yaku). Vassals designated for the guard duty had to bear the costs of maintaining followers and horses while in service. Moreover, *gokenin* could be summoned to perform extraordinary guard duty (*rinji-ban-yaku*) and to man post stations on the capital — Kamakura route³⁵. Finally, it seems necessary to describe shortly the vassal system based on these rules. According to Mass, there were two features of Eastern Japanese society that especially contributed to the immediate success of Yoritomo's action. Firstly the *bushi* (*zaichi-ryôshu*) clans sought more safe and permanent guaranties of economic rights than those which the capital aristocracy could offer. Yoritomo gave them a twofold security guarantee: by the independence from the capital centered authority and by the provincial centered military alliance. Secondly, Yoritomo's action was favored by the fact that the provincial administration was staffed by local

³³ *Kamakura-bushi...* op. cit., pp. 91–92.

³⁴ *Koku* = 1801 kg of rice, *hiki* = 15–18 m, *ryô* = 40 g; Shinoda, op. cit., pp. 78–80.

³⁵ H. Paul Varley, *The Ōnin War. History of Its Origins and Background. With a Selective Translations of the Chronicle of Ōnin*, Columbia University Press, New York and London 1967, p. 8; Eiji Nitta, *Seiji*, in: *Kamakura jidai*, Nihon-bunka-shi-taiki 6, Shôgakkan, Tōkyô 1958, p. 55.

warrior families. At the cost of confirmation of official titles and posts, Yoritomo could take over the acting administrative apparatus³⁶.

From the beginning of the rebellion (eighth month of 1180) Yoritomo was making efforts to win control over the great „official” (*zaichōkanjin*) clans like Chiba, Miura or Kazusa. In the Kantō, *zaichōkanjin* played a major role as the majority of land still remained in the state sector. Yoritomo usually started by sending the local magnates orders to eliminate capital authority proxies, and after taking over control of the province to report with all their followers. If in the province in question there had been no family that could be summoned (like for instance in Awa), a Genji chieftain assumed authority personally but was careful not to use any official titles. If *zaichōkanjin* opposed his summons, they were put to obedience by faithful warriors from neighbouring provinces. This basic model (establishment of a vassal system through *kokuga*) was generally observed also beyond the Kantō. Usually, actions followed like this:

1. At first, Yoritomo's proxies found out what was the most powerful warrior family in the given province.
2. Next, by the grant of an official title and the command over all the local warriors, its chieftain was encouraged to accept vassal status.
3. Thus established bond was strengthened by granting him a confirmation of his rights.

As a result, Yoritomo easily won the allegiance of the most prominent *bushi* clans from Iwami, Wakasa, Iyo and the other central and western provinces. The recruitment was carried out on a large scale in spite of the hardships caused by unknown area and remoteness from Kamakura³⁷.

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Since the turn of the tenth century the rapid decline of the civilian state made the search for protection of one's rights the fundamental requirement of the period. A protection against the over-zeal of officials on the one hand and tax exemption on the other could be obtained through participation in the clientage system. The key figures of the system were, living in the capital, aristocrats of the highest ranks — *kuge*. Security for life and property, that is to say, protection against other local landholders attacks, could be won first of all by providing with arms one's own family and next by the attachment to a band of similarly armed local owners. Such a military alliance was as a rule concentrated around the most powerful local clan, boasting of aristocratic or even imperial origin. In many cases the role of unification agent was played by families that occupied prominent posts in provincial administration. All these *bushi* bands were permanently in the state of war with

³⁶ Jeffrey P. Mass, *The Emergence of the Kamakura Bakufu*, in J. W. Hall and J. P. Mass ed. *Medieval Japan. Essays in Institutional History*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1974, p. 135.

³⁷ Mass, op. cit., pp. 80–89 and 93–102 also *Emergence*, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

each other, so in the course of time it provided for the elimination of weaker competitors, militarization of local authority organs and further intensification of fights. The economic frame of social and political life constituted the private and public lands (the so-called *shôen-kokugaryô* system). Theoretically, land could be possessed legally only by a capital aristocrat of high rank, by a shrine, temple or the imperial family. At the local grade, however, there existed numerous layers of illegal or half legal landholders. The reciprocal dependence of both groups assumed the form of complicated, multifarious hierarchy of ownership rights, which resulted in the creation of a specific Japanese form of divided property. Local owners (at the same time *bushidan* chieftains and the manager level officials in the private holdings or provincial administration) were in charge of a considerable military force. The aristocracy depended on their economical and military power and on their management services. Along with the rise of violence in the provinces, and even in the capital, *bushi* chieftains were gradually gaining importance in social hierarchy and at last one of the province derived clans — Taira from Ise — reached for hegemony. But still, ownership rights of local warriors were very poorly protected despite their undisputable armed force. Even the Taira, although so powerful in the capital, could not free themselves from the limitations imposed by the cliental system and local owner's status. May be that is why Minamoto-no Yoritomo's program — establishment of a local based government and granting local authorized confirmations of ownership rights, was applauded enthusiastically by the warriors. Eventually, after five years of fighting (1180–1185) for the first time in Japanese history there emerged an independent local government.

Minamoto-no Yoriyoshi and his son Yoshiie were the learders of probably the first larger vassal system. A long period of activity in the Kantô area, the aristocratic origin and broad enforcing authorities resulted in the creation of a strong bond with the Kantô warriors. Fighting carried on in extremely difficult circumstances taught their followers the lesson of obedience and discipline and promoted further strengthening of vassal bonds. Did Yoshiie really reward his men by land grants? A satisfactory answer has not been found yet. Even if that was so, why should we attach such a special importance to this problem? Until the times of Yoritomo no one tried to follow this practice, so we cannot regard it as the decisive point in the development of feudal type vassal relations.

Research works on the vassal system during the Taira ascendancy are terribly complicated by the almost total lack of documents signed by Kiyomori. Some historians, for instance I s h i m o d a S h ô, try to explain it as a result of the relatively slow evolution of the Taira clan private administration in comparison to the rapid rise in social hierarchy. They suggest that Kiyomori issued his directives and commands through the private office (*in-no chô*) of retired emperors, so it is impossible to identify them now. Y a s u d a ' e s s and M a s s' views can be summarized as follows: the Tairas made no effort to build a vassal system. Their fast progress in the capital was not followed by an equally fast development and consolidation of their economic and military provincial base. In reality, their military

forces stopped at the level of the local *bushidan*, based on Iga and Ise warriors. This explanation of the Taira attitude towards vassal system is very convincing, but the fact that the Tairas made warriors perform a guard duty and designated special proxies to the provinces in order to pick up warriors for service, leaves much room for doubt and speculation.

Were then the feudal type lord-vassal relations established at the beginning of Kamakura-*bakufu*? European feudal vassal relations were founded on reciprocal, voluntary agreement. The lord granted to a new vassal an economic grant (usually a fief) and guaranteed its safety. In return the vassal was expected to remain loyal to his benefactor and to perform duties specified in the agreement (first of all, the military service). Also, in the conditions existing at the turn of twelfth century in Japan the vassal status was in principle accepted voluntarily. We can hardly neglect the importance of such agents as: the attitude of neighbouring warriors towards Yoritomo, inner and outer familial rivalries, or even the possibility of pressure on Yoritomo's side. The relations between Yoritomo and the *bushidan* chieftain were reciprocal. The Kamakura Lord (Yoritomo) accepted the pledge of loyalty and faithful services. In return the warrior was granted a confirmation of his rights. For loyal service he could ask for new grants. Anonymous authors of the war chronicles were apt to suggest that the warriors wanted to fight and even die purely because of the sense of duty and honour, but the authenticity of such images is highly doubtful. Entries from the *Azuma Kagami* testify that the warriors openly demanded their rewards.

The novelty of Yoritomo's conception consisted in the replacement of the double (capital derived and *bushidan* derived) guaranties by the promise of complete safety, thanks to autonomy and military power of his authority. Another interesting point was the stress on economic elements. Unlike his predecessors Yoritomo initiated a reward program that stimulated local *bushidan* chieftains to accept the vassalage. Considering all these points it seems justified to regard the relations between Yoritomo and *gokenin* as the feudal type lord-vassal relations.

But still we should keep in mind that the relations of this very kind were typical only for the top strata of the warrior class and bound together only few warriors. On the other hand, every *gokenin* was the head of a small, medium or large *bushidan*. Lord-vassal relations within the pale of a band preserved its uni-directional and patriarchal nature. This type of relations dominated and defined the inner structure of the contemporary warrior society.