

# The Samurai Bond of Loyalty: Transition from Blood Ties through Self-Interested Allegiance to Absolute Devotion

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## 1 Foreword

The Japanese people have always greeted foreign influences with great enthusiasm. In the first centuries AD the massive introduction of Chinese civilization deeply affected all aspects of Japanese culture. Writing, religion, architecture and arts, court titles and rank systems all experienced great development. Administrative, bureaucratic, and legal institutions from the continent were all used as models by the Japanese state during this time. Later, cultural interaction occurred with other Asian countries, but predominantly with China and Korea. During the middle of the sixteenth century, a ship of Portuguese merchants was wrecked on Tanegashima Island. Subsequently, Western traders and missionaries brought not only technological innovations such as firearms, but also ideologies and spiritual ideas such as the Christian religion.

In spite of their remarkable capacity for adaptation, the Japanese people have never compromised on the elements specific to their cultural background. An example of this phenomenon is the unquestioned sanctity and divinity of the Emperor—strongly connected with the *Shintō* religion—which remained a steady and unchanged feature until modern times. Chinese civilization was acknowledged for its excellence, however.

Genealogy has always been regarded highly by the Japanese people. Whilst the Chinese state examination system and the theoretical possibility of the lower classes aspiring to better social conditions had no equivalent in Japan (except for inferior appointments), the hierarchical social structure offered by Confucianism was undoubtedly an essential ideological basis for the establishment of Japanese political power. Titles and higher offices were always exclusive to both civil and military nobles.

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By analyzing historical events, ancient written works, and the spiritual and philosophical roots of Japanese civilization, the importance of blood ties and hierarchy in the legitimization of political power throughout Japanese history becomes clear.

After a brief note on ancient Japan, this paper deals with the Japanese warrior class. From blood ties to the abstract concept of absolute devotion to the lord, duty always was the keystone of samurai thought. While some aspects are connected with Confucian teachings, others are typically Japanese.

## **2 Uji clans and antecedents of the Japanese medieval era: blood ties as fundamental to the warrior group**

At the time of the *Uji* clans, during the Yayoi and Kofun periods, social prestige derived from descent from a tutelary deity and from family ties with the head of an *Uji*. As interaction among villages increased, and when the Yamato clan came to rule, the *Uji* increased their own prestige by having women of their clan marry members of the imperial *Uji*.

Development of the *shōen* estates during the Nara and Heian periods enabled the imperial and aristocratic clans to continue living in great luxury at the top of society even during periods of political laxity, when centralized power declined and authorities faced civil unrest. The imperial court was forced to charge *buke* (aristocratic warrior clan) leaders with the responsibility of suppressing rebellions in the provinces. These rebellions were instigated by other *buke* leaders, a situation that persisted until important warrior lords themselves took power at the end of the twelfth century.

In the eighth century warrior families in the provinces began to gather in groups under the leadership of clan heads of *buke* families. Groups of warriors usually included the sons of the lord, his brothers and relatives, members of side branches, and also some men not connected with the lord by blood ties, such as followers or servants. As for the internal hierarchy of the clan, the *ie no ko* (literally “sons of the household”), i.e. blood relatives, were ranked below the lord. They were followed by the *kenin* (vassals), who were not relatives, but treated as if they were; the *rōtō* (employees or servants), who served the lord in times of peace and followed him into war; and the *genin* (subordinates), or *shōju* (followers, squires, stablemen, and farmers), who took care of horses, equipment, and food. Loyalty to the lord was rewarded with material benefits: his men lived in his house and received war chests and the land taken from the enemy after a battle.

Loyalty bonds were essential within the group. Personal ties, not formalized by official ceremony, were deep and indissoluble and were restricted to the lord. Loyalty to the lord was so extreme that the warrior was even willing

to give his own life for the lord. Courage and honor (family reputation) were the guiding values of a warrior, while cowardice led to a dishonor only death could erase. An honorable death was seen as a warrior's natural destiny, and was idealistically accepted and pursued as the culmination of a life spent in service to the lord.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, as social unrest and disorder increased in the provinces, the warrior class became more and more involved in politics, taking on the highest positions in the provincial government. Leaders still belonged to the *buke*, which were branch families of the *kuge* (aristocratic class). Therefore, political power was strictly connected with genealogy (i.e. aristocratic lineage).

Later, perennial internal disorder led to local peacekeeping activity being assumed by local warriors who became officials of district or provincial governments. To increase the influence and power of their families, they eventually started holding office through inheritance.

Meanwhile, some regional alliances of local warrior groups were formed when nobles were called on by the imperial court to quell rebellions by local bands of warriors that had become too powerful and were unwilling to submit to central authority. The chiefs of these regional alliances were of aristocratic origins as well.

In conclusion, until the twelfth century, ideological conflicts between the aristocracy and those who ruled did not occur, as the latter continued to serve the interests of court nobles. The Taira and Minamoto, the powerful warrior clans that were involved in political life at the turn of the century, were connected with the imperial family just as were the court nobles. Like local warriors in the provinces, they followed the "Way of the horse and bow." They regarded dying in battle as the highest honor; family reputation was of supreme consideration. Each clan's banner was carried into battle to assert the family name and to show prowess in the face of danger and death.

### 3 Kamakura Shogunate

The formation of political power at local and later regional levels gradually led to the establishment of a military government based in Kamakura (known as the *Bakufu* or Shogunate) by 1192. The regional power of Minamoto Yoritomo (1142–1199) was based on a network of personal ties that originally had no national validity. Actually, the loyalty bond between Yoritomo and his vassals required no legitimacy from above. By the end of 1190 Yoritomo had obtained imperial approval for the appointment of his *go-kenin* as *shugo* (military provincial administrators) and *jitō* (estate managers). Later, when he was appointed *Shōgun*, Yoritomo modeled the patriarchal structure of the new government on ancient clan organization and

superposition of the private and public spheres. Once the new government was established, *shugo* and *jitō* were officially placed under the *Shōgun*, both by virtue of their personal bonds with Yoritomo and because they submitted to public authority. In fact, their appointments were now legitimized at a national level.

Yoritomo strove to limit the number of *go-kenin* and to grant them elite status. The *go-kenin* swore allegiance to him and were often accepted amongst their followers through a process of adoption or marriage. Family ties with the head of the clan were more important than appointments. Collapse of the centralized power of the Hōjō clan took place over many years due to the weakening of family ties and to the partitioning of the private lands of the *go-kenin* into lots assigned posthumously to their heirs.

Nevertheless, supreme legitimacy was attained through family ties with the *kuge*.<sup>1</sup> These were still very strong in the Minamoto era. Thus, even if Kamakura officials gradually became more powerful in *shōen* internal affairs, such as dispute resolutions or tax collection, they did not replace imperial government officials but were appointed to the same posts and collaborated with them for some time. The *Bakufu* did not abolish most of the privileges and institutions of court nobles, but attempted gradually to limit their influence. The court was both a direct and indirect source of legitimacy since *Shōgun* were appointed by the Emperor and common ancestors had a divine origin.

Warriors were the new holders of political power; they began to feel the need to explain the reasons for, and to justify, their supremacy. In *gunki monogatari* (war tales), values such as the ability to administer land and to possess political expertise and knowledge of diplomacy were much less important than the art of the sword and samurai virtues. A few years after the end of the wars that led to the establishment of the Shogunate, the heroism and deeds of courageous warriors were recorded in the war tales, together with a strong sense of awareness of the brevity of life and of respect for the clan's name.

Political, economic,<sup>2</sup> military, and religious changes led to new social conditions under which a new segment of society came to threaten the estab-

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1 Ties between the military aristocracy and court nobles were very strong. As an example, when Yoritomo's second son, Sanetomo, was assassinated in 1219, the Minamoto line ran out. The Hōjō regents held power, but in 1225 a *kuge* was appointed *Shōgun* for the first time. This was Kujō Yoritsune (1218–56), who was related to the Fujiwara and Minamoto families.

2 Emergence of warriors on the political scene contributed to economic development. *Shugo*, *jitō*, and *go-kenin* were sent all over the country and created a wide class of consumers.

lished order. The rise of political participation at a lower level reflected not only the indifference of absentee landlords to land administration (later devolving into inability), but once again, to the spread of Chinese civilization. A renewed Buddhism<sup>3</sup> offered new ways to access truth and to explain and legitimize contemporary events and changes. Buddhism, which was a sophisticated and aristocratic religion in the classic periods, became accessible to the common people (e.g. Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren Buddhism), through simplified thought and minimized rituals. At a philosophical level, pluralism in ideas spread; instead of pursuing an overarching framework of doctrines, sects proliferated. The elaborate rituals and complex doctrines of classic Buddhism and the exclusivity of the Tendai and Shingon schools, which discredited themselves by being involved in political and military affairs, hardly suited the needs of the *bushi*. Therefore, during the Kamakura period, the latter adopted Zen Buddhism, which was congenial to a lifestyle based on discipline and self-control. To practice Zen meditation and follow Zen Buddhist principles, higher education and wealth were unnecessary, but mental vitality and strong willpower were. This was believed to enable reaching the innermost depths of the soul/mind to find truth, and to transform it into action. With Zen Buddhism, the samurai found a source of legitimacy for and within their actions.

#### **4 Ashikaga Shogunate and the Sengoku era: alliances and betrayals**

Soon after Yoritomo died members of the Hōjō clan became regents. Some generations later the bond of loyalty between the *Bakufu* and the vassals started to weaken. This was due to a number of reasons, such as division of land, increasing complexity of institutions, the emergence of new warrior clans, the appearance of many samurai of humble origins on the political scene, and particularly to regent government policy. The Hōjō actually favored the appointment of family members. Owing to poor administration, the Kamakura *Bakufu* was still indebted to many warrior families and priests, having been unable to pay them for their military and spiritual help during the invasion attempts of the Mongols in 1274 and 1281. Ultimately the Hōjō were unable to resist Emperor Go-Daigo's takeover of power, known as the Kenmu Restoration (1333–1336), which caused the end of the first shogu-

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3 The spread of Buddhism had considerable political and economic consequences. Schools run by Buddhist temples offered mathematics, religious, and moral education to many warriors and monks who needed a minimum of culture to fulfil their duties, and to merchants and village heads who needed to be able to read and write to run administrative affairs. Moreover, *Zen (Chan)* monks from China actively participated in trade by providing Japanese markets with products such as swords and luxury goods for the emergent warrior class.

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The Ashikaga *Shōgun* were unable to improve the situation. Like the Minamoto they tried to combine public authority and personal loyalty bonds by appointing their vassals as governors and officials. The *Shōgun* forced them to reside in Kyoto, the imperial capital, where they themselves lived, thus enabling the *Shōgun* to have more control over their actions. For over a century their power was based on a fragile alliance with the *shugo*, who tended to run provincial land autonomously and had no interest in overthrowing the Ashikaga since they served as a source of legitimacy.

The breaking point came with the Ōnin War (1467–1477). As the war spread throughout the country, it led to total decentralization and a shift of authority towards the local *élite*. While it was impossible for court nobles to attain power, families of the *shugo* and powerful clans fought for survival, land, and power in the provinces. This was achieved by making and breaking up alliances and supporting opposite imperial lines based on personal advantage, and by accepting local warriors among their bands. Meanwhile, many local squires rebelled against the *shugo* and appeared upon the political scene. Although they were subject to the authority of government officials, they had no personal ties to them, nor did they take an oath of allegiance. They created semi-independent fiefdoms and enlarged them at the expense of their neighbors. This process was called *gekokujō* (“the low overcomes the high”). Foot soldiers became essential, with palisades and castles becoming commonplace. In the sixteenth century, castle towns were built, protected by ramparts and moats and surrounded by vassals’ residences.

The *gunki monogatari* written in this period tell in a vigorous manner samurai ambition for power in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They are full of praise for military success and courage on the battlefield. They are similar to epic poems, yet differ from the first warrior tales in that no special attention is given to social status or noble origins. Success in battle alone gave moral sanction to samurai conduct, including actions that would now be considered betrayal.

Ambition for power and volte-faces became the norm. The Zen monk Takuan Sōhō’s (1573–1645) words on loyalty to the lord were useful at this time. Takuan wrote in the *Reiroshū* that to a samurai, the lord is *shijū ichinin*, “the same from the beginning to the end,” meaning that although he serves different lords, the idea of “lord” exists in the samurai’s mind, and is not tied to a specific individual.

Moreover, the sense of duty to one’s lord (*giri*) went beyond loyalty (*chū*) to the *Shōgun*, which was politically non-existent or not even considered. Ruth Benedict in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) wrote about a *daimyō* in the twelfth century who was ordered by a Minamoto *shōgun* to

hand over an enemy lord whom he had granted asylum. The *daimyō* replied with a letter in which he expressed his indignation over the offence against his *giri* duty. He added that public affairs did not depend on him, but that *giri* between men of honor was an eternal and indisputable truth. He therefore refused to be disloyal to his friends.

In the sixteenth century a number of opposing parties entered the field. More solid defensive structures were built to defend against newly introduced weapons such as firearms. Many peasants were employed by *daimyō* to form armies of tens of thousands of temporary soldiers. The relationship between the lord and vassal changed. It was now based on personal investiture and on an oath of allegiance more than on family ties. In this period of political fragmentation, boundless ambitions flourished and a rich peasant or merchant could become a samurai.

With the gradual weakening of kinship ties, which involved allegiances not based on *chū*, written laws having official significance became necessary to formalize the relationship between lord and vassal. While defending the lords against restrictions from the government, legal codes provided legitimacy to the *daimyo*, who themselves had to respect them. Therefore these codes ensured that the lord would not be considered a dictator who exercised power by virtue of his military strength, but a defender of the established order.

In the Sengoku period the local power structure shifted from a kinship to an institutionalized level. The lords at war (*sengoku daimyō*) became local lords (*shōhoku daimyō*) who had absolute authority within their domains. By the end of the sixteenth century they had become pre-modern lords (*kinsei daimyō*). At the same time, samurai were forced to move from the fields and live in castle towns, despite resistance from minor samurai who were engaged in agriculture in peacetime (*jizamurai*). During the last decades of the sixteenth century *daimyō* tried to increase their power by adopting directions from the Shogunate in their domains, such as conducting censuses on population, weapons, land, and economic resources. Measures were taken to tie peasants to the land. Separated from the rest of the population, vassals were given salaries rather than fiefdoms, were expected to follow laws concerning their military forces, and were more strictly controlled. Since they were placed in the position of being unable to forge strong ties with their men, the occurrence of armed uprisings was partly prevented.

Many military households, including those created during the Sengoku period, established solid fiefdoms. Only a few were from *shugo* families; the majority were from medium and low level samurai. The *gunki monogatari* of this period celebrated acclaim derived from action and success. Nonetheless, the *buke* families of ancient origin always looked at “newcomers” with suspi-

cion, which is why sometimes a family came to “discover” its ancient *buke* origins.

## **5 Unification of Japan and the Tokugawa Shogunate: a legitimacy issue and the sublimation of loyalty**

Lineage was an obstacle to Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Though they became the most powerful men in the country they did not descend from the Minamoto clan and therefore could not be appointed *Shōgun*. In need of legitimacy, they both boasted of their descent from other lines of the imperial family. But this was not enough. Oda received the most important appointments within the court nobility, but after rejecting them all he used the concept of *tenkafubu* (dominate the world through weapons) to create an autonomous legitimacy for his power. Toyotomi had very humble origins, since he came from a peasant family. His rise to power was enabled by his adoption by Konoe Sakihisa (1538–1612), who descended from Fujiwara Michinaga (966–1027) through appointments within the nobility. He also became imperial regent (*kanpaku*) through descent from the Toyotomi family. Vassals swore allegiance in 1588 by the *Jurakutei* oath. To prevent others from following his path and emulate his incredible rise to power, he ordered the separation of samurai and peasants and disarmed the latter through the sword hunt (*katanagari*).

Tokugawa Ieyasu, in contrast, boasted of descent from the Minamoto clan, asserting that he was related to Nitta Yoshisada (1301–1338), the warrior leader who destroyed the Hōjō. Therefore, he had no reason to aim at appointments within the court nobility and found legitimacy within the shogunal institution itself. After he was appointed *Shōgun* he imposed laws that gained official significance. Vassals swore allegiance at Nijō Castle in 1611. Oaths of allegiance to Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu had official significance; they ended the relationship between the *Shōgun* and his vassals based on personal bonds. Legal codes in the Sengoku period, and laws and oaths in the Tokugawa period served as evidence of the existence of *daimyō* authority and were also a source of legitimacy.

Ieyasu’s political establishment was based on a rigid bureaucratic structure rather than on personal relationships between the *Shōgun* and his *daimyō*. Marriage and adoption policies were implemented to ensure the endurance of clans, and their “right” to run the country. Other measures were undertaken by the Shogunate in order to ensure *daimyō* loyalty to the *Shōgun* and to prevent them from making “dangerous” alliances or becoming too powerful. Firstly, the Tokugawa shogunate accepted clans that submitted to the Shogunate structure (*tozama*, the “non-Tokugawa” or “outside” *daimyō*), and allowed sub-government autonomy in fiefdoms (*han*), whilst at a national level



they only appointed traditional vassals (*fudai*) to positions related to the Shogunate. Secondly, *Laws for the Military Houses* (*buke shohatto*) were issued from 1615 to provide instructions to *daimyō* on their lifestyles and duties. Thirdly, standardized practices, such as the “alternate residence” system (*sankin-kōtai*), were adopted to allow better control over *daimyō* and to set limits on their incomes by forcing them to use some of their economic resources for the journey to Edo and back to the fiefdom, for the second residence, and for services to the *Shōgun*.

During the Tokugawa period the values associated with “the Way of the Warrior” (*Bushidō*) were formalized and a sense of unselfish duty was emphasized. The philosopher and military strategist Yamaga Sokō (1622–1685), alongside other scholars, drew upon elements from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintoism in order to create a philosophy that supported *Bushidō* and create legitimacy for the warriors’ supremacy over the population. Since none of the Tokugawa *shōgun* could achieve the same great military deeds as Ieyasu, he was deified so as to legitimate the office of his heirs.

At a lower level the bond between the *daimyō* and his samurai within the fiefdom was less personal than before. Since *daimyō* were appointed by the *Shōgun* there were no kinship ties with his men. Moreover, the *sankin-kōtai* system was an obstacle itself, because it kept the *daimyō* and his family permanently away from the fiefdom and its population. This was true in theory. Actually, the samurai, being confined to their fiefdoms, often developed a very deep affection for their *daimyō*. An oath of allegiance became a formal act, though it was still sincerely felt. A famous example of this extreme sense of loyalty is found in Yamamoto Tsunetomo’s (1659–1721) *Hagakure (The Book of the Samurai)*, in which the author expresses a strong gratitude for the opportunity to devote his entire life to his lord. The stage play *Chūshingura* is another well-known example of this unreserved devotion. It deals with the true story of forty-seven *rōnin* who avenge their lord when he was forced to commit suicide after reacting to an injustice.

## **6 The Bakumatsu period and national *bushidō* in the Meiji: the Emperor as unique lord**

*During the Bakumatsu period the Shōgun* lost the support of many *daimyō*, who accused him of being unable to accomplish his mission to protect Japan from Westerners. Their support of the restoration of the Emperor’s political supremacy was, of course, due to their ambition to gain power as well, and to actively participate in the politics of the country. Internal disorders included feuds aimed at destroying the Shogunate (this was especially true of the Satsuma and Chōshū clans), along with the incursion of foreign ships and residents. At the end of the civil war Yoshinobu (1837–1913), the fifteenth

and last Tokugawa *Shōgun*, delivered the Shogunal capital Edo into the hands of the Emperor's partisans. Imperial power (*Ōsei fukko*) was re-established in January 1868. During the Meiji restoration (*Meiji ishin*), Japan rapidly became a modern country, politically, economically, and militarily. However, modernization came at a cost. A sacrifice was asked of the samurai, too, and with the social reform of 1872 they lost their privileged status.

Nonetheless, many warrior family members maintained continuity in regional administration and through employment in business activities that contributed to the persistence of some of the principles of the warrior tradition. Moreover, the latter were "adopted" by the government at a national level in order to increase the sense of loyalty to the lord. The contemporary lord was personified in a society renewed, in the company employer, or in the office boss, or the village head, but ultimately in the Emperor. The Japanese sovereign was actually to be considered a god on earth and the source of protection for all Japanese. A distance was put between him and his subjects because of his quality of being divine, so that it was impossible for common people to even know what his face looked like. However, in contrast with his role in the Tokugawa era, he was to be remembered by each individual at all times. The Meiji oligarchy's purpose in creating an ideology that supported government policies of national modernization and strengthening was to ensure that Japanese subjects carried out their duties with utmost effort and lived with the consciousness that sacrificing action and life to the Emperor was good. At the end of the Meiji era examples of extreme devotion to the Emperor were no less meaningful than those we find in the Shogunate period. The well-known *seppuku* of General Nogi Maresuke (1849–1912), and of his wife, who sacrificed her life soon after him by committing *jigai* at the death of the Meiji Emperor, are certainly examples of this.

Samurai revolts against the new social establishment and loss of traditional values due to modernization (westernization) occurred in the first years of the Meiji era. However, it is interesting to note that some of the revolts were expressly conducted in the name of the Emperor.

## 7 Conclusion

### **Loyalty to the lord: an external value or of indigenous origin?**

From their origin to their later manifestation in the Meiji era, warriors maintained a sense of allegiance to the lord that was central and somehow compulsory, a duty inwardly felt. Loyalty to the lord, and the blood ties that were closely related to it, were considered of great "value." In the distant past heroic deeds determined merit and glory. Merit itself was transmitted to heirs through blood lines as an inner quality. In times of disorder and war, when low level warriors managed to impose themselves on the political scene (e.g.

*Sengoku jidai*), there was great need for blood-legitimacy. The importance of the hierarchical order in Japanese society finds its origins in the distant past (Yayoi era, ca. 300 B.C.–ca. 300 A.D.). Undeniably, Chinese Confucianism lent support to the Japanese system of social relationships, especially when the latter were particularly rigid. Under the Tokugawa Shogunate, for example, the *mibunsei* status system of Neo-Confucian inspiration legitimized the prohibition to change status.

However, in the “peaceful” Tokugawa era the supremacy of the samurai was questioned owing to the dissatisfaction of other classes with being dominated by an oppressive class that had lost its natural warring role. Discussions on Confucianism took place throughout this period. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such discussions examined the legitimation of the new order dictated by the Tokugawa, and later the legitimation of the warriors’ domination over Japanese society. The Shogunate especially emphasized Chu Hsi’s orthodox Neo-Confucianism regulating the relationship between the sovereign and the subject. However, at the end of the seventeenth century some philosophers began referring to the Ōyomei school of heterodox Neo-Confucianism that emphasized interiority, mind, and intuition. Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) and Ishida Baigan (1685–1744) were the two main figures in this debate. Other intellectuals, such as Yamaga Sokō and Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) tried to bridge the gap between the samurai ideal and reality in order to allow the warrior to claim a prestige that derived from righteous and noble behavior. The way to this ideal was through the purity of the indigenous tradition. Warriors in the Tokugawa era were actually encouraged to follow ancient samurai virtues to gain self-legitimizing power.

In the Meiji era devotion to the Emperor, promoted and imposed by the government oligarchy, reproduced at a national level the samurai sense of loyalty toward their *daimyō* at a local level. While this ideal was necessary to justify the acts of rebellious *daimyō* against the Shogunate during the *Bakumatsu* period, it became a national ideological structure glorifying the uniqueness of the Japanese imperial system, people, and country.

More than half a century ago, Ruth Benedict pointed out (1946) the two terms that express Japanese ideas of duty, *gimu* and *giri*. The first derives from gratitude for being born in this world (cfr. Confucianism and Buddhism); the second from a series of feelings, ranging from gratitude for a favor received to a dishonor to avenge. *Giri* necessarily requires the return of a debt (*on*) in order to restore equilibrium. Within the warrior class duty was towards parents, name (clan) and, above all, the lord. Until the Tokugawa era, a samurai had a duty towards his *daimyō* for giving him employment, i.e. a means to earn a living for his family. Takuan Sōhō expresses this concept with the following words:

[...] from the time one has been taken into a daimyo's service, of the clothes on his back, the sword he wears at his side, his footgear, his palanquin, his horse and all of his materiel, there is no single item that is not due to the favor of his lord. Family, wife, child and his own retainers—all of them and their relations—not one can be said not to receive the lord's favor. Having these favors well impressed on his mind, a man will face his lord's opponents on the battlefield and cast away his one life. This is dying for right-mindedness. This is not for the sake of one's name. Nor for gaining fame, a stipend and a fief. Receiving a favor and returning a favor—the sincerity of the core of the mind consists solely of this. (*Reiroshū*, translation by W. Scott Wilson 1987:22)

In conclusion, the heart of the discourse may be found in the quality of being “natural” in the sense of loyalty to the lord, as was true for blood ties and divinity of the Emperor and the country. This quality corresponds to being autochthonous. Attempts were made to generalize and universalize duty towards the lord in periods of disorder (convenient loyalty or treachery) and the Tokugawa era (service to the lord's successor after the lord's death, keeping in mind the idea of the lord). Nonetheless, loyalty in Japan appears to possess an inner quality that is necessarily directed to one particular individual. This naturally led, in the Meiji era, to the whole population being seen as indebted to the Emperor. Though the influence of philosophical and social systems of Chinese origin is undeniable in Japanese society and the warrior class,<sup>4</sup> one is tempted to analyze how deeply Japanese intellectuals and samurai considered this influence. How they tried to limit Chinese influence to a corroboration of values already existing in Japanese society, as can be seen in the strong tendency already extant in the Tokugawa era to consider the country and features of Japan, will be the subject of further study.

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4 *Daimyō* were instructed to study Chinese works on strategy. These instructions are found in the Shogunate *Buke Shohatto* and in private letters (wills) of *daimyō* to their heirs. Cf. *Itakura Shigenori*