



The Progress of Japan and the Samurai Class, 1868-1882

Harry D. Harootunian

The Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 28, No. 3. (Aug., 1959), pp. 255-266.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0030-8684%28195908%2928%3A3%3C255%3ATPOJAT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-7>

The Pacific Historical Review is currently published by University of California Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucal.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The Progress of Japan and the Samurai Class, 1868-1882

HARRY D. HAROOTUNIAN

[Harry D. Harootunian is a member of the history faculty in Pennsylvania State University.]

THE ROLE of the samurai in the Meiji Restoration has over the past few decades become the object of a substantial historiographical tradition in Japan and in the United States. Since the publication of Fujii Jintarō's short essay, "Samurai kaikyū to Meiji Ishin," to E. H. Norman's pioneer monograph,² historians on both sides of the Pacific have come to admit to the decisive, if not preponderant role played by the samurai class in bringing about the Restoration. For many Japanese historians, even today, this singular fact has accounted for the absolutistic nature of the Meiji regime; thus the samurai unfortunately occupy a fateful position in the mysterious but inexorable unfolding of *zettai shugi*. Despite the obvious overtones of this approach, these historians, together with others ill-disposed to dialectics, have unearthed a vast amount of material and have thrown considerable light on the complex relationship between the class and the establishment of the Meiji state. Yet nearly all of these writers, in tracing the Restoration into its early years, have allowed the samurai to pass away with other vestiges of the feudal order. With the possible exception of economic historians like Yoshikawa Hidezō and Azuma Tōsaku, who have dealt with the samurai solely as a problem in economic policy, few if any have recognized the continuing role of the class in the formative years of the Meiji period. Unless Meiji leaders found another source of leadership, it would seem that the samurai remained very much a decisive class in spite of the ambitious reforms which spelled out the end of Tokugawa feudalism. It is true that with every major reform or change announced, it became increasingly evident that the need for an official military class was ceasing to exist. No doubt the presence of a vast army of feudal retainers stranded in a society presumably geared towards divesting itself of all feudal fetters appeared as an anachronism of monstrous proportions, if not as a touch of sustained irony. The implications seem clear. What could have become a serious stumbling

¹ Fujii Jintarō, "Samurai kaikyū to Meiji Ishin (The Samurai Class and the Meiji Restoration)," in *Meiji Ishinshi kenkyū* (Studies in the Meiji Restoration), (Tokyo, 1936), 461-478. For a more recent Japanese account of the samurai role, see Seki Junya, *Hansei kaikaku to Meiji Ishin* (Clan reform and the Meiji Restoration), (Tokyo, 1959), 110-193.

² E. H. Norman, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* (New York, 1940), 11-103.

block in the path of change and 'modernization,' in effect became a powerful instrument with which the Meiji government could successfully execute its new policies. The skillful manipulation or conversion of this force of danger into a useful instrument was one of the outstanding achievements of the Restoration era, yet it has not received the attention or appreciation it deserves.

The samurai, at the outset of the Meiji period, constituted little more than 5 per cent of the nation's entire population; in the years between 1868-1882, their numbers, stated in another way, never exceeded 400,000 families or 1,900,000 people.³ Of all the classes in Meiji society, the samurai were required to make the greatest adjustments to the changing scene; the peasant continued to till the soil under conditions recalling past ages, while the merchant, as a result of a slow reponse of Western modes of capitalistic organization, preferred to pursue traditional avenues of commerce. Only the samurai, once deprived of their feudal moorings, were without apparent function.

As the mandate of rule and reform passed into new hands in 1868, it was apparent that the new leaders would count among their first acts the sweeping away of any obstacle to industrial growth. For these young men all effort and policy was to be translated into economic expansion; *fukoku kyōhei* (to enrich the nation, to strengthen the army) was to become both the watch-dog of the new state and the motivating impulse behind a controlled development of capitalism based on Western practice.⁴ It was also apparent that the traditional social and economic position of the samurai, one which had always been a deterrent to industrialization, would by necessity undergo fundamental adjustments. As a major by-product of the government's policy to uproot "feudalism," the samurai in the years following the Restoration experienced a gradual detachment from the socioeconomic position they formerly held. In 1869, to begin with, the feudal land registers (*hanseki hōkan*) were returned to the throne, thus placing the samurai of the several *han* under the direct jurisdiction of the central government.⁵ At the same time, the samurai pension system, a system that had been tottering since the eighteenth century, was substantially altered, resulting in pension reduction; a year later grants were once more reduced, and by 1873 the government was prepared to announce its plan calling

³ Azuma Tōsaku, *Meiji shakai seisakushi* (A history of Meiji social policy), (Tokyo, 1941), 13-14.

⁴ For an interesting account of the interplay between the slogan and Meiji economic policy see Maruyama Masao, *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* (Studies in the history of Japanese political thought), (Tokyo, 1954), 343-346.

⁵ *Hanseki hōkan* also implied the symbolic transfer of samurai loyalty, from domain and lord to central government and emperor.

for the voluntary commutation of pensions. Three years later the system was abolished. Similarly, in 1870 the *han* was reorganized, setting the stage for eventual abolition. A year later the *han* were replaced by prefectures. In both cases, reorganization and transformation, numerous offices formerly held by samurai were eliminated. Continuing in this vein, the government in 1873 announced its intention to establish a "popular" conscript army, thus discontinuing another traditional, if not the most preferred means of employment for the ex-warrior.

During the years in which the government was detaching the samurai from traditional means of support and livelihood, it also sought to strip the class of time-honored social privileges and status. Meiji leaders, despite their own class background, could no more allow the class to continue as an economic unit than could they permit them to retain a special position in society. Thus, the ostensible equalization of classes, the injunctions against sword bearing, the discontinuation of the old-style head dress (*chompage*) and garb, the rulings against vendetta and traditional legal privileges all constitute decisive aspects of this story. With every change announced by the government, the samurai, in short, witnessed a further deprivation of some age-old privilege and the ultimate dissolution of a society in which they had been the chief beneficiaries.

Despite the wholesale deprivation of traditional status and role in these early years, the samurai remained very much a class. Governmental edicts may have gone a long way to undermine their position in society, but it would not necessarily follow that such reforms drastically altered the fabric of values and the modes of thinking within the class. If a class had been destroyed, a generation of men possessing common experiences and a way of viewing the world took its place.⁶ And it was to the credit of Meiji leaders to recognize in the samurai settlement the inherent dangers and potentialities of this new situation. What seemed necessary, for many, was to offset this delicate balance and gradually to construct a program which would, with one bold sweep, make use of these potentialities and facilitate the absorption of the samurai into society.

It has often been observed that a commitment to industrialization will by necessity lead to massive bureaucratization at all levels of society. Max Weber, in this connection, noted that bureaucracy, resulting from the increased demands of an industrialized society to satisfy a desire for order and protection, could be established only where the

⁶ The concept of "generation" has been developed by Karl Mannheim, *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London, 1952), 276-322.

society provided an exploitable social stratum to fill the ranks of an expert officialdom.⁷ Weber went on to cite the conditions from which personnel for various classes of bureaucracy could be recruited, listing among them the "humanistically educated literati of China."⁸ In the case of Japan, it would not seem far afield to assume that the samurai, in the Meiji period, constituted this exploitable social stratum from which members of an expert officialdom could be selected. And that the class represented a vast pool of trained and uncommitted manpower was recognized by Meiji leaders and formed the basis upon which the samurai settlement was erected.⁹ Several prominent Meiji statesmen early indicated concern and anxiety over the samurai and also recognized in them an effective instrument in achieving the ambitious aims of the day. All of them, at one time or another, touched upon the samurai problem in memorials and petitions, suggesting full utilization of fellow clansmen. Yet of all the Meiji oligarchs it was Iwakura Tomomi, ironically a member of the court nobility, who showed the deepest concern over a samurai settlement.

As early as 1870, Iwakura proposed a plan whereby the government should actively encourage samurai and *sotsu* to enter fields of business and industry.¹⁰ His writings at all times show a keen awareness of the special character of the class and the contribution they could make to the emerging Meiji state. In urging the government after 1876 to adopt concrete measures, for example, Iwakura stressed the idea that the samurai were "a splendid race of men."¹¹ "During the Tokugawa period," he wrote,

... through the teaching of ethics . . . and loyalty, the samurai brought peace to the people of the nation. Because of their efforts, these samurai-educators have been responsible for the formation of the proper national character.¹²

After reminding his colleagues of the special character of the class, Iwakura, in a later memorial, once more evoked the lessons of the past to support his contentions. "For the past 300 years," he declared,

they have been the natural leaders in society; they have participated in governmental affairs, bringing to it a polished purity and virtue. Because of their military and literary accomplishments, this class alone possesses a character that is both noble and individualistic. It is for this reason that the 400,000

⁷ Max Weber: *Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1946), 268.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ It may be suggested that the samurai were also the only group in early Meiji society who could be effectively used in "reshaping" Japanese society.

¹⁰ *Iwakurakō jikki* (A true record of Prince Iwakura), ed. Tada Takamon (Tokyo, 1927), II, 545; see also Yoshikawa Hidezō, *Shizoku jusan no kenkyū* (Studies in the samurai rehabilitation policy), (Tokyo, 1943), 244.

¹¹ *Iwakurakō jikki*, II, 545-546.

¹² *Ibid.*

samurai of today are the most useful group in society and should be called the spirit of the state.¹³

He was confident that no task was beyond their reach, for it was they, he argued, who were responsible for the imperial restoration. In another petition, Iwakura identified the destinies of the new state with those of the samurai, suggesting that the utilization of them would be directly related to the rise and fall, peace and prosperity of the nation.¹⁴ Against this setting Iwakura warned that

if it is not recognized that the samurai molded the state, their work will remain incomplete, and the conditions of Japan will sink into a decay similar to that of China and Korea; if it were not for them, Japan would not have progressed as far as it has today.¹⁵

Besides conceiving of the samurai as the most useful group in Meiji society, Iwakura advised his peers that the work of the Restoration could be completed only by those who were responsible for it. "In order that we may compete with foreigners and create flourishing conditions . . .," he wrote in the closing years of his career as a statesman, it is a necessity of the first order to use the samurai. They alone can advance the affairs of the state; and since other countries of the world do not possess such a noble race of men . . . , Japan naturally has the level of capacity and talent . . . and an eagerness to progress which will take it to that time, in the not too far future, when it will be sufficiently able to compete with the nations of the West.¹⁶

Although Iwakura was the most persistent, if not the most eloquent, defender of samurai interests, he was not alone in this cause. In the remaining years of his eventful life, Ōkubo Toshimichi expressed similar concern over the problem of samurai rehabilitation. His concern was consummated in 1876 when, through his counsel, the government established a *jusan kyoku*, an agency devoted to the investigation of ways and means by which rehabilitation could be achieved. Kido Takayoshi was another oligarch whose awareness of the problem brought concrete recommendations. In a petition composed in 1870, entitled "Written Opinions on the Future or Direction of the Samurai," Kido outlined a rehabilitation plan, designed to be integrated with the gradual abolition of pensions. Here, and elsewhere, Kido showed an acute understanding of the problem, recognizing both the usefulness of the class and the necessity to exploit their special talents.¹⁷

¹³ *Ibid.*, 547.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 546.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 548.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Fukaya Hiroharu, *Kashizoku chitsuroku shōbun no kenkyū* (A study of the samurai pension system), (Tokyo, 1942), 264.

Against this backdrop of official opinion, the role of the samurai class in the Meiji period and their subsequent absorption into it assume a recognizable identity. This process of absorption, as it appeared, proved to be a compound of two distinct elements, natural and artificial. For the former, the expanding nature of Meiji institutions provided, over the years, a natural but limited outlet for those samurai who desired to take up occupations for which they had been traditionally trained. Such occupational media as administration, education, constabulary, military, and the like obviously offered the brightest prospects to the former retainer because they promised to utilize skills and training the samurai had already acquired. Yet the government, owing to the relative scarcity of coveted official positions, was compelled to adopt a highly selective means in its recruitment of personnel. To those who could not satisfy standards of recruitment, the bulk of the class, the problem of absorption was met by the creation of a program known as *shizoku jusan*, the samurai rehabilitation policy.

Of all the occupations which seemed to be the most attractive in drawing able samurai, government work was unequalled in its appeal. In the years following the promulgation of the Charter Oath, samurai numbers in the central government totaled 78.3 per cent of all office holders listed. Accordingly, the *Hyakkan rireki mokuroku*, recording important governmental offices and personnel for the years between 1868 and 1877, listed 450 important offices (*yōshoku*) of which 399 were held by samurai; the rest were filled by *kazoku*, court nobility, and commoners.¹⁸ Admittedly, 450 offices do not represent the totality of government offices in these years, yet the percentage cited can be verified by figures covering the period from 1876 to 1882. According to the *Teikoku tōkei nenkan* for the years 1876-1882, exact figures revealing the yearly number of offices and holders are readily available and do seem to support the aforementioned percentage. They are as follows:¹⁹

Year	Offices	Samurai-Officials	Percentage
1876	23,135	17,935	77.7
1877	23,694	17,529	77.7
1878	31,898	23,976	75
1879	31,624	23,305	74
1880	36,560	26,970	74
1881	78,328	53,033	68
1882	96,418	59,041	63

¹⁸ Quoted in *Shin Nihon rekishi, kindai shakai* (The new history of Japan, modern society), (Tokyo, 1954), 132. For another breakdown see *Ishinshi* (History of the Restoration), (Tokyo, 1944), VI, 1-121.

¹⁹ *Teikoku tōkei nenkan* (Imperial statistical yearbook), (Tokyo, 1880-1882), I 639-640; II, 700-705; III, 883-886. See also Yoshikawa, *op. cit.*, 207-208.

These figures reveal two distinct features about early Meiji society: as the horizon of expansion broadened, governmental functions expanded in approximate ratio to meet the new demands; and in meeting these new needs the government recruited in overwhelming numbers members of the defunct samurai class. If the total population of the class is kept in mind, the picture is all the more impressive.

Similarly, the complexion of local government was decisively determined by samurai participation. The following citations are once more taken from the *Imperial statistical yearbook* and include offices at the prefectural level. Up to 1872 there is little reason to believe that local administration was in the hands of any group other than the samurai. Despite concerted efforts to streamline the *han* government and thus eliminate superfluous offices, the reins of local government unquestionably remained in samurai hands. Yet with the abolition of the *han* and the establishment of the prefecture, a new situation was ostensibly created wherein ability rather than class position would be the only standard used in administrative recruitment. In practice, however, the new prefectures were as dependent on samurai-administrators as was the central government. Between the years 1872 and 1877, over 70 per cent of all office holders at the local level were former samurai.²⁰ After 1877, and subsequent administrative reorganizations, the role of the samurai-administrator in local affairs was slightly lessened, but they still prevailed.²¹

Year	Offices (<i>fugun</i>)	Samurai-Officials	Percentage
1878	2,984	1,866	63
1879	6,245	4,075	65
1880	6,658	4,299	65
1881	11,567	6,889	59
1882	14,171	8,148	57

To round out the significance of these figures, it is well worth mentioning that most of these samurai officials had previously served in and derived experience from the old clan governments.²²

Samurai were also earmarked to staff the ranks of law-enforcing agencies. According to one writer, more ex-samurai were enrolled in police work than in government.²³ Since extensive figures do not appear to be

²⁰ See Harry D. Harootunian, *The Samurai Class during the Early Years of the Meiji Period in Japan, 1868-1882* (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1956), 141-161.

²¹ *Teikoku tōkei* . . . , I, 648-649; II, 711-712; III, 907-909.

²² Harootunian, 161.

²³ Chitoshi Yanaga, *Japan Since Perry* (New York, 1949), 135.

available, this estimate will have to remain apocryphal. Nevertheless, Kawajō Toshiyoshi, one of the first police superintendents of Tokyo, made it a firm policy to recruit only samurai for his force.²⁴ With the establishment of the *hasotsu*, the metropolitan police force of Tokyo, 2,000 men were recruited to fill the ranks; by 1874 the force was re-organized and its size was increased to 3,000. Of this number, 1,000 were Kagoshima clansmen, while the rest came from Chōshū, Echizen, Aizu, and Tokyo.²⁵ What seems important here is the complete absence of commoners in the ranks. Widening the angle of vision, there were approximately 30,000 policemen throughout the nation, during the decade of the 1870's, of whom 2,000 were officers. Although there is a lack of precise figures as to composition, there can be little doubt that many of these officers were lower-samurai carry-overs from former clan police staffs; indeed little adjustment was required of the Tokugawa *yoriki* and *sotsu* to assume these new positions. As for the remainder, Alfred Stead, in his turn-of-the-century account of the Japanese scene, sheds some light when he observed that "there was a time when thousands of young samurai had lost employment, and it was chiefly those who were enrolled in the police force."²⁶ In a most indefinite way, this statement receives support from the *Keishichō shikō* which claimed that all policemen in the decade of the seventies were recruited from among former clan soldiers and policemen.²⁷ Little probability exists, at any rate, that in the transition to a modern-type police force, Meiji officialdom experienced any great problem in recruitment, for samurai were admirably suited, by virtue of training and perhaps disposition, to assume such a role.

Another area of equal importance in which samurai found a new lease on life was education, for as the base of Meiji education expanded, increasingly more samurai found their way into schools at all levels. Tokyo Imperial University itself afforded a classic example when it enrolled in 1882 forty-eight samurai out of a total faculty of sixty-seven; the other nineteen were commoners. The national school system reveals an even more impressive picture. By 1882, according to the *Teikoku tōkei nenkan*, there was listed a total of 43,467 administrative and teaching positions of which 32,488 or 72 per cent were held by former retainers. Although this percentage dropped in succeeding years, samurai

²⁴ Nakamura Tokugorō, *Kawajō daikeishi* (Superintendent Kawajō), (Tokyo, 1933), 78-80.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Alfred Stead, ed., *Japan by the Japanese* (London, 1904), 506.

²⁷ Keishichō, *Keishichō shikō* (A documentary history of the police bureau), (Tokyo, 1928), I, 4.

still retained a dominant position in Meiji educational institutions.²⁸ Isolated examples at the local level, Okayama, Tottori, and Tsuyama, though certainly not typical, seem to add depth to the aforementioned figures.²⁹

In the field of military affairs Japanese historians have been quick to assume that samurai were recruited in droves to fill newly opened positions. Yet samurai preference could not be reconciled with the general aims of a conscript army. Admittedly, samurai were employed as officers, administrators, and for training purposes, but these services could not offer a very extensive field for samurai absorption. In the case of Okayama, for example, official prefectural records show that for the years from 1874 to 1880, the yearly number of recruits never exceeded 160 men out of which no more than eight were samurai.³⁰ Yamagata Aritomo, at the time of the Korean crisis, exclaimed that he was virtually drenched by a downpour of personal requests from samurai who were offering their services. In all cases, he referred these requests to the proper channels, indicating that the conscription laws had to be observed.³¹

For the remaining bulk of the class, those who were unable for one reason or another to find an outlet for their training and experience, a more demanding adjustment was required. Recognizing the need to aid these unemployed retainers and at the same time utilize their services, the government from 1870 on worked out a scheme designed to fulfill these two needs. But before the government could launch an effective rehabilitation program, it had to deal with the problem of samurai pensions. For financial and social reasons alike, the government felt it impossible to maintain a system of dole whereby former retainers received fixed pensions. To this end, the government up to 1876 addressed itself to the task of gradually abolishing the system. And within this context of pension abolition, the government at the same time strove to construct a program patterned to aid the former samurai to fill the financial void left by the commutation of pensions. Samurai rehabilitation (*shizoku jusan*) was the resulting solution. By linking rehabilitation to larger economic policies the government hoped to achieve several goals. Owing to the close relationship between rehabilitation and general economic policy, it is at times difficult to make precise

²⁸ Yoshikawa, 209. A few years later the samurai grip on educational institutions had dropped to 41 per cent.

²⁹ Harootunian, 166-167; see also *Okayama kenji kiji* (Political affairs of Okayama prefecture), (Okayama, 1939-1942, mimeographed), VI, 838-840.

³⁰ *Okayama kenji kiji*, VI, 536-547.

³¹ *Ibid.*

distinctions; yet four main lines may be drawn: (1) samurai were to be used in the management and assistance of large government reclamation projects; (2) samurai were to be employed in government operated railways, industries, etc.; (3) prefectural rehabilitation bureaus were to be established in order to coordinate the work of rehabilitation at the local level; and (4) the government would provide capital for those who desired to start businesses or agricultural enterprises.

Between 1873 and 1882 the government counted as respectable enterprises in which samurai could be engaged, reclamation of land, the colonization of Hokkaido, the establishment of commercial and business concerns, investment in the national banks, and agricultural pursuits. The encouragement of all these enterprises, it is well to remember, were part and parcel of larger economic considerations. On the surface, it may be seen that what the government offered was a reasonable alternative to poverty and rebellion. Yet in its attempts to relieve the class of the spectre of poverty and the frustration of unfulfilled expectations, the government was not always successful. Meiji chronicles in the 1870's and early 1880's abound in vivid testimonies of samurai failure in the new endeavor. For many samurai, traditionally ill-disposed to the life of the merchant and peasant, a paralyzing failure of nerve marred their best efforts. This was so much the case that contemporary accounts could report that among the samurai who entered business many failed, "either because of negligent partners or from a lack of experience."²² Similarly, in reclamation projects and subsequent agricultural adventures, many samurai were unable to make the proper adjustments, owing to a lack of desire, inexperience, or sheer inability to endure the rigors of a bucolic life.²³

Whether the program accomplished what its designers intended is still open to question. Yet in spite of the despairing accounts of samurai failures, for which, in many cases, they were not entirely responsible, impressive figures can be marshaled to show the breadth of the program. From 1876 to 1882 nearly 200 individual samurai business organizations of one sort or another were established as a direct result of governmental loans and encouragement,²⁴ and approximately 100,000

²² Nakayama Yasumasa, ed., *Shimbun shūsei Meiji hennenshi* (A chronological history of the Meiji period compiled from newspapers), (Tokyo, 1935), VI, 70; see also *Iwakurakō jikki*, III, 650, and Yoshikawa Hidezō, "Meiji seifu no shizoku jusan" (The Meiji government and samurai rehabilitation), in Honjo Eijirō, ed., *Meiji ishin keizaishi kenkyū* (Studies in the economic history of the Meiji Restoration), (Tokyo, 1931), 604.

²³ Yoshikawa, "Meiji seifu no shizoku jusan," 594.

²⁴ Estimates based on tables in Yoshikawa, *Shizoku jusan no kenkyū*, 553-567; see also Azuma, 145-160.

samurai participated in the formation of these organizations.³⁶ If the government did not provide the samurai with a satisfactory financial settlement, it is enough to say that the program successfully induced absorption because the government had allowed *shizoku jusan* to dwindle to a shadow of its former size in the closing years of the decade of the eighties.

It could be, however, that a more enduring result of the government's rehabilitation efforts was in fact a by-product of it. Without overstating the case, there seemed to be a very real relationship between the program and the general growth and development of the Meiji economy. There were well determined aspects of the economy which apparently profited from *shizoku jusan*; reclamation obviously opened up a certain amount of arable land; promotional loans and official encouragement induced samurai to take up businesses, industries, and banks based on Western practice; usage or employment of samurai at the level of management and labor in these Western-type establishments marked the beginnings of a Japanese labor force (one author in this connection has estimated that by 1882 one out of every three laborers was a samurai³⁷); and, samurai, armed with capital, provided the impetus in transforming native industries into large-scale operations. It would be misleading to assume, however, that samurai rehabilitation was wholly responsible for the development of an industrialized economy. What we are suggesting is that Iwakura's admonitions were applied and, in the main, realized.

Several things can be said of the samurai role in the early years of the Meiji period. For one, samurai were not only absorbed into the warp and woof of Meiji society, but in the process they played a dominant role. The samurai obviously left their mark on the formation and growth of certain institutions like administration, police, and education; indeed, in many cases such institutions were little more than private preserves for former retainers. The remaining bulk of the class, without demonstrating any great protest, filtered through the offices of *shizoku jusan* into the realms of agriculture, commerce, and industry.

If Meiji society revealed in its formative years a remarkable degree of resiliency, a large measure of it was due to the orderly fashion in which the former samurai were absorbed. In comparing Japan's response to the West with China's, the presence of the samurai suggests

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Horie Yasuzō, *Nihon shihonshugi seiritsu* (The formation of Japanese capitalism), (Tokyo, 1948), 188-189; for a discussion of this see also Okōchi Kazuo, *Reimeikai no Nihon rōdō undō* (The dawn of the Japanese labor movement), (Tokyo, 1954), 19-24.

a dramatic and decisive difference. No such analogue existed in Ch'ing society. The Chinese gentry, a stumbling block in the path of change, were not only steeped in the values of tradition, but based their power and wealth on position and land. With this basis of power they could effectively oppose any attempt to undermine the traditional order. For the Japanese, however, the samurai by 1868 had long been removed from the realities of land-based power and the legal relationship to it; they no longer possessed the necessary weapon with which to oppose change in the old order. Unlike their Ch'ing confreres, the Japanese samurai were virtually forced to abandon the narrow demands of the *t'i yung* formula, and existentially commit themselves, as it were, to the strong currents of change and modernization. In this sense, the samurai provided Meiji Japan with the exploitable social stratum from which recruitment for change could be made. And it may be, then, that the rapid transformation of Japanese society in the Meiji era was in large measure achieved because of the tools, training, education, leadership, and experience brought to it by members of the former feudal class.³⁷

³⁷ Recently, a most interesting account of how the samurai have shaped modern Japanese society has been written by Fukuchi Shigetaka, *Shizoku to shizoku ishiki* (The samurai and the samurai consciousness) (Tokyo, 1956).