

THE LAST MAN STANDING:  
CAUSES OF DAIMYO SURVIVAL IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY JAPAN

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## ABSTRACT

The Warring States period is often characterized as random and chaotic – an incomprehensible series of battles from which a victor finally emerged. While there was a degree of unpredictability in Warring States conflict, this thesis argues that the period followed a fundamentally comprehensible course. Emphasizing the chaos of battle obscures underlying factors which set the course of Warring States conflict, politics, and economics. By systematically examining geographic, political, economic, and military factors it can be shown that the Warring States period proceeded more logically than has been assumed.

This research identifies patterns in Warring States Japan and seeks to answer the question, “why did some daimyo survive while others did not.” I argue that survival during the Warring States period was more heavily influenced by geographic and political factors than by military and economic factors. Though touted as powerful warlords who controlled their own destiny, in reality, factors largely beyond the daimyo’s control were most responsible for his survival or elimination.

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## **Introduction: Daimyo Domains and Sixteenth Century Conflict**

In 1467, Kyoto was plunged into the most destructive war in its premodern history. Bands of warriors fought almost continuously in the streets for ten years. When the conflict finally abated, the city was reduced to a shadow of its former self.<sup>1</sup> Like its capital, the Muromachi shogunate was dealt a serious blow, one from which it would never recover. The years following the Ōnin War (1467 – 1477) witnessed a near complete collapse of central authority. The rise of local power which had been taking place for roughly a century accelerated, and Japan quickly lost virtually all semblance of central government. Regional magnates, or daimyo, came to dominate the political landscape of Japan, each controlling territory on their own authority. These military strongmen established control over local warriors and cultivators and then began to challenge one another for supremacy. The result was a period of protracted civil war lasting for almost 150 years.

Despite the disruptions caused by warfare, these years witnessed important developments at all levels of society.<sup>2</sup> The rise and maturation of daimyo authority was one of these developments and had far-reaching consequences affecting every aspect of society. The formation of daimyo domains stimulated economic growth and prompted social change. Political reorganization set the stage for the significant economic and demographic growth over the next century and a half from 1550 to 1700. Governmental techniques pioneered by Warring States daimyo, such as cadastral surveys, taxation of

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Elizabeth Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 20.

<sup>2</sup> William Wayne Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population: Famine, Fertility, and Warfare in a Transformative Age*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 189.

village units, and the relocation of vassals, endured as fundamental institutions of the Tokugawa system. Domains were effective enough as administrative units that they remained the basis of Japan's government for some 300 years.

Daimyo strove to make their domains self-sufficient. In the process, they created a geographically, politically, and economically integrated territory that acted in many ways as a small, independent "country." As conflict intensified in the mid- and latter half of the sixteenth century, daimyo domains became increasingly organized for war. All daimyo fought simply to survive, but many sought greater power and engaged in expansion. The maintenance of control within the domain and of an effective army abroad thus required the maximization of the domain's military potential. This need was the driving force behind measures that consolidated and solidified daimyo power.

Over the course of the Warring States period, hundreds of daimyo were eliminated. Competition was fierce, especially among the most powerful lords. Domain formation was no easy task, and the maintenance of control was even more difficult. Diverse groups, from Muromachi officials, to local warrior bands, to armed Buddhist monks, to peasant religious sects vied for power when central authority collapsed. Powerful warriors emerged from the struggle as the new lords of Japan, but only after long periods of fighting. Amidst this struggle, the fortunes of some rose dramatically while those of others plummeted to the wastelands of extinction. All daimyo faced the same fundamental challenges, yet some were able to negotiate the dangers of Warring States Japan more effectively than others. How and why were they able to do so? How did some daimyo survive the Warring States era, while others were eliminated? What

allowed certain daimyo to outlast their rivals through the intense warfare in the sixteenth century and continue into more peaceful times?

Ultimately, of course, a daimyo controlled his domain and repelled and eliminated rivals through military force. Yet an army could only be as strong as the resources at its disposal, and there was a myriad of variables that affected domainal resources. Far from being merely a question of military power, survival in the Warring States period was much more complex. Though integral, military power was not the most important determinant in daimyo survival. Often, daimyo with greater material resources were eliminated while those with modest means survived.

This thesis examines four factors that were most crucial for the survival and prosperity of a daimyo and his domain. Organized from those variables over which the daimyo had the least control to those that he could significantly alter, these categories include: the geography and ecology of his lands, his economic base, military organization, technology, and command, and political administration. These were the basic building blocks of daimyo domains. Naturally, each category was interconnected and there was considerable overlap among them. Nevertheless, these factors had a cumulative effect upon the nature of the domain and determining the relative influence of each category, and the relationship among them is crucial to understanding daimyo survival.

Roughly speaking, these categories resemble a series of concentric circles ranging from “rigid, unchanging factors” to “highly variable.” As illustrated in figure x.1, the first, outermost ring encompasses “geographic and ecological factors.” Geography and ecology largely determined a domain’s economic output, which in turn determined its military strength, and also affected daimyo politics. In other words, most other aspects of the

domain, its economic output, the military, and the political power of its leaders were dependent upon the physical realities of location, terrain, and ecology. There was nothing a daimyo could do to alter these fundamental factors.

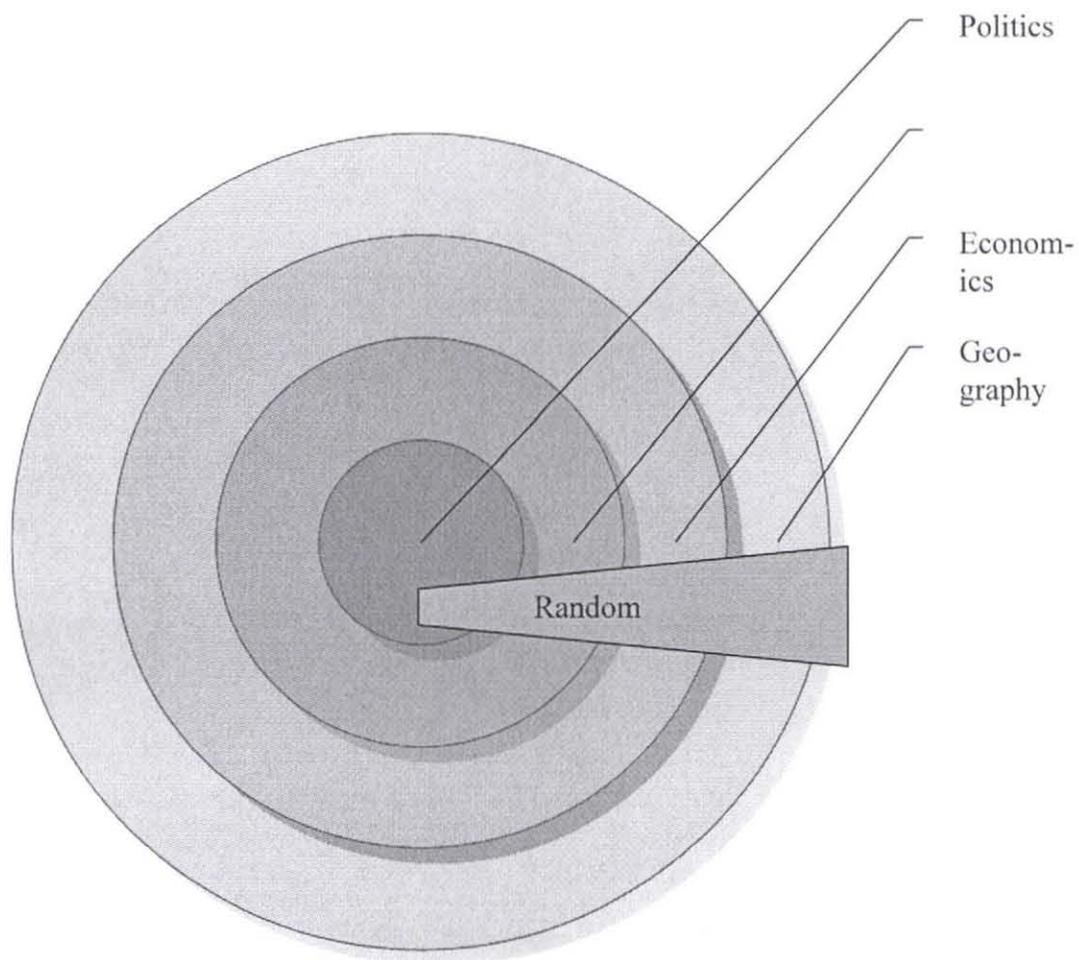


Figure x.1: Relationship among key components of daimyo domains

To a certain extent, a daimyo's chances for survival were predetermined geographically. Geographic factors included location as well as the physical attributes of the land. These realities could present either an enormous advantage or serious challenge. There were two main factors that affected a location's characteristics: the economic productivity of the land and the proximity and strength of hostile rivals. The quality of agricultural production, the taxation of which constituted the lion's share of most daimyo's income, and the level of trade and commerce in the region determined economic viability. There was a correlation between economic potential and the number of rivals in a given area. More lucrative areas offered greater resources but were also more hotly contested. Thus, being in a productive region could be both a blessing and a curse. Location affected more aspects of a domain's success than any other.

For effective analysis, I have divided Japan into six broad regions. By examining the characteristics of these regions, it is clear how geography affected survival. Daimyo in different regions faced different challenges and enjoyed various advantages. Clever daimyo found ways to maximize their geographic strengths while minimizing weaknesses. Taking geography as the basic framework within which Warring States conflict existed, survival becomes much more comprehensible. This perspective is also suggestive for an examination of sixteenth-century unification. Although not the main focus of the chapter, I present a geographically oriented hypothesis which explains why unification took the course that it did.

Geographic and ecological factors were almost completely responsible for the economic potential of the domain. Economic resources, category number two and the next ring in figure x.1, in turn affected the size and quality of the force a daimyo could

field. Sixteenth-century conflict was not just a clash between rival armies; it was a contest that threw the entire logistical capacity of one domain against another.<sup>3</sup> Daimyo consistently strove to maximize economic output by encouraging agriculture, streamlining and reforming taxation, centralizing fiscal control, and attracting merchants and trade to the domain. Daimyo who were most successful in instituting such measures significantly increased their income. This bolstered political and military strength and was a central focus in domainal administration. However, although economic strength certainly increased a daimyo's chances for survival, it did not guarantee it. Surprisingly, there was not a great disparity between the survival rates of large and small daimyo.

The size and strength of a domain's army, category number three and the third ring, was determined not only by the resources at a daimyo's disposal. While economics was a most important factor in military power, there were significant aspects of the military that the daimyo could directly control. Furthermore, regardless of an army's logistical base, the unpredictability of combat meant victory could never be assured. Strategic, tactical, and technological skill were integral to the success of an army. The sixteenth century witnessed great change in the nature of warfare in Japan. Daimyo had to maintain an army equipped with the latest technologies, including firearms and gunpowder. Frequent combat and the increasingly large scale of military encounters necessitated the creation of a permanent, professional, and integrated army. Daimyo were also responsible for selecting top military officials and field commanders. It is clear that military factors were vitally important, because there were a number of cases where

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<sup>3</sup> Wakita Osamu. "The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth Century Japan: From Oda to Tokugawa." (*Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2), 354.

logistically superior armies were defeated. All these battles proved to be decisive, and some were of utmost significance in their historical impact.

Category number four, at the very center of the diagram, encompasses daimyo political administration. Being almost completely under the daimyo's control, politics was a wholly "human" category. Political factors could overcome military, economic, and even geographic predispositions in determining survival. Even if they enjoyed favorable conditions in the other categories, daimyo who made poor political decisions could be eliminated. Examples of fatal political mistakes are plentiful in the Warring States period, as is the converse. Many lesser daimyo, through political savvy, overcame modest resources and managed to survive the sixteenth century. Political administration more often than not separated successful daimyo from those who failed.

The essential aspects of effective political administration were firm control of military vassals within the domain and wise political alliances with other daimyo. A daimyo was really only as powerful as his vassals allowed him to be. The maintenance of a powerful, but more importantly *cooperative* vassal band could make or break the daimyo's army and drastically affect his fortunes. Perhaps even more important, however, were his external alliances. Even if a daimyo had achieved supremacy within his domain, he could still find himself facing overwhelming odds if challenged by a more powerful enemy or coalition of enemies. Thus, of the factors a daimyo could control, shrewd political maneuvering, wise alliances, and knowing when to compromise instead of fight were most important in determining survival.

Finally, there are also examples where neither geographic, economic, military, nor political factors were decisive. These cases show the influence of random factors. These

may include phenomena such as an untimely death, changes in the weather, or bad timing. Random factors could be crucial, at times negating the effects of the other categories. For this reason, it is not its own circle but a kind of “wild card” that cuts through the other four, exerting unforeseen influence. This final category is limited, however, and is utilized only when analysis of the other four appears to be inadequate.

Answering the questions posed above is of fundamental importance because they revise dominant interpretations of the Warring States period. Often portrayed by scholars as a chaotic, incomprehensible sequence of battles and betrayals, the years 1467 – 1600 have been reduced to a random crapshoot. This thesis attempts to show that this era of seeming mayhem had more order than is usually envisioned. In the vast majority of cases, daimyo survival can be logically explained. By doing so, trends emerge which show that Warring States conflict and the subsequent process of unification unfolded relatively predictably. Analyzing daimyo domains systematically from multiple perspectives reveals that, in the broadest terms, Warring States history followed a fundamentally comprehensible course.

**The Physical Component of Daimyo Rule:  
Regions and Survival (location, location, location)**

A daimyo's location was the factor over which he had the least control, but geographic factors affected every aspect of a daimyo's domain. Political, economic, and military actions were constrained or permitted by realities of space, location, and the physical attributes of the land. Daimyo could do little to alter these three fundamental factors. The impact of geography on daimyo survival is most visible in three areas which were directly determined by physical location. These were the economic viability of the land, the proximity and number of hostile rivals, and terrain.

For most daimyo domains, the economic viability of the territory was largely dependent upon the productivity of agriculture. Areas that had limited agricultural capacity were forced to rely upon other means of generating revenue, such as manufacturing or trade. But few areas outside of the capital region could offer daimyo significant non-agricultural income. Only the capital region had large-scale manufacturing capabilities, and along with northern Kyushu, it was one of the only major trading centers in Japan. This means that agriculture was the most important economic activity for the vast majority of daimyo domains. Regions that were not very productive agriculturally were at a serious economic disadvantage. In all parts of Japan, daimyo took various steps to improve agriculture, encourage trade, and attract commerce, but these depended upon natural and market forces were largely beyond his control.

A daimyo's location also determined who and where his neighbors were. Survival was more difficult in areas where there were more contenders for power, more powerful

daimyo, or both. The strength and number of hostile rivals in a region was linked to that region's economic viability. Not surprisingly, there was stiffer competition in more lucrative regions. These domains offered greater rewards, but also entailed much higher risk for daimyo located there. The only actions available to daimyo were to forcibly eliminate rivals, ally with them, or submit to their authority and thus surrender autonomy. However, none of these courses of action were always possible.

Terrain was a complex issue, as certain types favored production and the movement of goods, while others were more easily defended. In general, more productive agricultural lands were easier to access but harder to defend, while the converse was true for less fertile areas. There were marked differences between domains in mountainous regions and those lying in low hills or plains. Both locations offered advantages and disadvantages. Remote, inaccessible domains had the advantage of being difficult for invading armies to enter. This was one of the advantages the Takeda enjoyed. Kai province was very mountainous, and could only be entered through passes from Shinano in the north and Suruga in the south.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, inaccessible terrain often made it hard for the daimyo's own agents to enter the territory as well. It was difficult to extend control over provincial warriors in isolated regions. Regionalism proved to be the undoing of the Ogasawara, a small daimyo in mountainous Shinano province. Unable to establish control over isolated "men of the province (*kokujin*)," the Ogasawara were defeated by the Takeda when the latter invaded in 1548.<sup>2</sup> The Ōmura of Hizen province faced the same challenge. Their domain of Sonogi was intersected by numerous lakes and

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<sup>1</sup> H. Paul Varley, "Struggle for the East," unpublished manuscript, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

rives, creating natural pockets for tightly knit local communities. Lack of control over local warriors kept them relatively weak, although they were able to survive the Warring States period despite this disadvantage.<sup>3</sup>

The result was that domains in mountainous or otherwise hard to reach territory were comparatively fragmented politically. Domains in low mountain foothills and on plains were usually better suited to agriculture, and more profitable, but were also more accessible for hostile armies. On the positive side, it was easier for daimyo to establish and maintain local control in these regions. Ultimately, flatter, more fertile domains were more advantageous to survival. Yet aside from relocating, not much could be done to change terrain.

By breaking Japan into six regions, we can see how these three principle geographic factors affected the fortunes of Warring States daimyo. The regions are displayed in figure 1.1. Region 1 is the island of Kyushu, region 2 the island of Shikoku. Region 3 is labeled “western Honshu,” and stretches from Nagato in the west to Tajima in the east. Region 4 is the “capital region,” centered on Kyoto, from Tajima to Owari. Next is Region 5, or “eastern Honshu” which covers the large area from Mino to Shimotsuke provinces. Finally, region 6 includes the provinces of Dewa and Mutsu, traditionally referred to as the “Tohoku,” or northeast.

These regions were selected with regards to the general physical and economic characteristics of the domains they encompass, and the pattern of warfare. Each of these six areas is significantly different in terms of terrain and productivity and presented

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<sup>3</sup> George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 89.

specific challenges and opportunities to the daimyo who resided there. Daimyo in each region were primarily engaged, militarily and politically, with other daimyo from the same region. However, interregional conflicts did exist, and increased as the sixteenth century progressed, especially after Nobunaga took control of the capital. Nonetheless, daimyo were most immediately affected by their regional neighbors, making this a useful tool for analysis. The vast majority of daimyo who were eliminated by rival warlords were located in the same region as their conquerors.

My inclusion of Echizen, Mino, and Owari provinces in the eastern Honshu region may raise some questions. This area is traditionally considered the “*chūbu*” (middle section) of Japan, independent from the areas around the capital and the Kanto. It is more appropriate to include these provinces as part of eastern Honshu for several reasons. First, a separate “middle” region would not be an effective analytical tool. It would include only four daimyo: the Oda, Matsudaira, Toki, and Saitō, two of which did not fight each other. Second, this group of daimyo was very much involved in the conflicts and politics of eastern Honshu. Oda and Matsudaira forces repeatedly engaged daimyo in eastern Honshu such as the Imagawa, Kiso, Murakami, Anegakoji, and Takeda, and entered into an alliance with the Go-Hōjō. Furthermore, when Oda Nobunaga defeated Imagawa Yoshimoto, he was congratulated in letters from Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin, evidence that daimyo in eastern Honshu were keeping track of developments in Echizen, Mino, and Owari. It is safe to conclude that the eastern Honshu region as I have drawn it represents a coherent pool of daimyo.



### General Characteristics by Region

A quick survey of the general characteristics of each region shows which ones were more conducive to daimyo survival. Figure 1.2 displays the three main attributes of each region graphically. Economic viability, number of rivals, and terrain/accessibility, are estimated from low to high on a 1 – 5 point scale. “High” means highly conducive to survival, so while a “high” rating for economics denotes a highly profitable region, a “high” rating in the “rivals” category means a low number of rivals. A “high” rating for terrain denotes attributes that made it difficult for armies to invade, such as isolation or inaccessibility or both. The average of these estimates is displayed in figure 1.3, showing the region’s overall “survivability” rating.

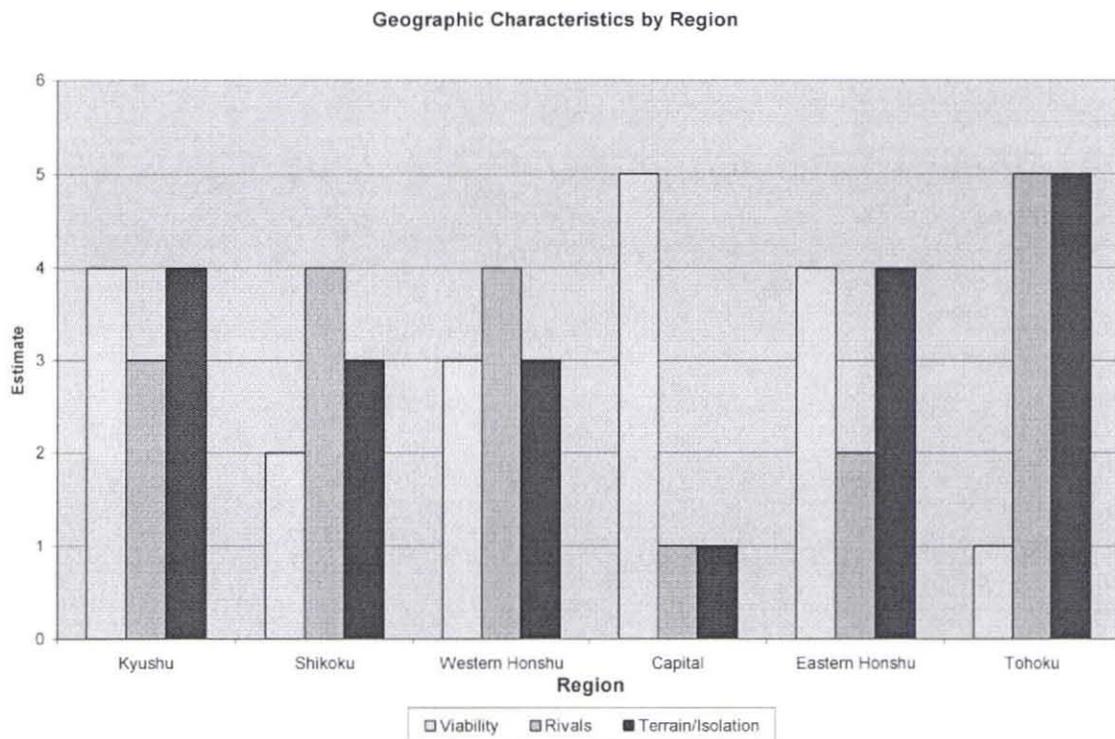


Figure 1.2: Summary Data

These values are simply for the purpose of establishing the relationship between regions. They are not based upon concrete calculations. Since, for instance, it is clear which regions were more economically profitable than others; they are simply ranked in that order. The number of daimyo in each region is also easily determined, yet terrain and isolation are slightly more nebulous categories. For my purposes here, this estimate is based upon the distance from the center of political and military conflict, which in this case was the capital region, and how difficult it was for invading armies to enter the region.

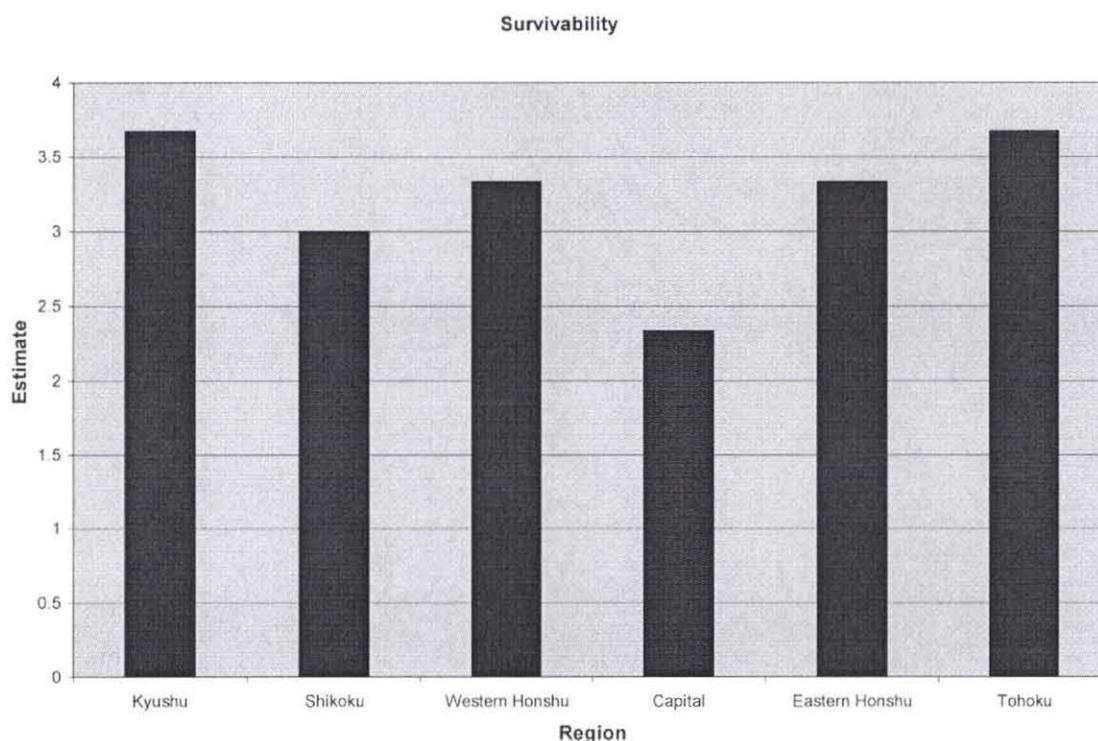


Figure 1.3: "Survivability" Estimate

Beginning with the region where daimyo had the greatest chance to survive, to where they had the least, the rationale for these estimates is summarized as follows. As

the charts show, region 6 (Tohoku) was most conducive for daimyo survival. This can be explained because the region was undesirable and as a result competition was relatively low. Tohoku was the least economically viable of the six regions, offering small returns from agriculture and virtually no trade revenue. In the case of the Date, located in Mutsu province, taxation of agriculture was insufficient to meet expenses, and they had to focus more efforts on extracting revenue from other sources including mulberry trees, silkworms, lacquer trees, and cotton. However, economic deficiency was offset by the advantages of isolation and low competition. Daimyo in the Tohoku were far enough away not to be threatened by the major conflicts of the Warring States era. These northeastern warlords seemed content to carve out their own spheres of influence. Conflict was minimal.

Region 1 (Kyushu), although not well-suited to rice agriculture, benefited enormously from trade, especially overseas trade. In addition, there were only a moderate number of daimyo on Kyushu, and its isolation made it more difficult to invade. As a result, conflict remained localized, and many daimyo were able to simply stake their claims and progress through most of the sixteenth century unchallenged. There were no real threats to Kyushu daimyo from off the island until Hideyoshi's invasion.<sup>4</sup>

Eastern Honshu, region 5, had an enormous potential for agricultural production, especially in the Kanto plain, but was underdeveloped in the sixteenth century. With the exception of the Kanto, most of this region is mountainous. Inaccessibility was advantageous for survival, but it also made the elimination of rivals more difficult. The

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<sup>4</sup> The Mōri did make some inroads into northern Kyushu, but it is unlikely they would have been able to dominate the entire island.

region contained many powerful daimyo in entrenched domains, making conquest very difficult. As a group, daimyo in eastern Honshu emerged as the most powerful. Not surprisingly, it was the last region to be pacified in the sixteenth century.

Region 2 (Shikoku), possessed a decent agrarian capacity, a moderate level of trade, and relative isolation. Like region 1 (Kyushu), it had a good balance of viability, rivals, and terrain. Daimyo on Shikoku took advantage of trade routes along the inland sea that supplied the commercial centers of Sakai and Osaka, and central Honshu around Lake Biwa. Much of the goods that flowed to the capital traveled from Kyushu, along the northern coast of Shikoku, to the port of Hyōgo (modern Kōbe), then on to Kyoto. As the only major production center, there was an enormous amount of traffic that moved along these routes into the capital region.<sup>5</sup> Militarily, there were not many contenders for power on Shikoku. The small number of daimyo allowed a single family to eventually dominate the entire region.

The characteristics of Shikoku were somewhat similar to western Honshu, which comprises region 3. Western Honshu was less profitable than eastern Honshu (5) agriculturally, but what it lacked there, it made up for through trade. As a result, like eastern Honshu, very powerful daimyo emerged there. But unlike the east, there were only a small number of daimyo. The result was that, like Shikoku, one family was able to dominate the entire region by the late 1570's – a process that would have taken much longer in eastern Honshu because of the larger pool of daimyo.

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre-Francois Souyri, *The World Turned Upside-Down: Medieval Japanese Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 159.

Finally, by far the most economically productive region, but also the most difficult to survive in, was region 4 (capital). The level of agricultural, commercial, and productive development in the capital region was unparalleled anywhere else in Japan. Daimyo in the Kinai had the luxury of extracting revenue from farmers harvesting two or even three rice crops per year. It was also the seat of many entrenched institutions, including the court and bakufu, the only two entities that had ever exercised any semblance of central control in Japan. Politically-active Buddhist temples complicated the power struggle further. Consequently, the competition in the capital region was extreme, with a high concentration of daimyo.<sup>6</sup> The terrain was not good for survivability, either. The area was easily accessible by land or sea, and had an extensive road system. Invading armies rarely had trouble moving around. Because of its political significance, this region also faced the most threats from outside. Conflict was not nearly as localized there as it was elsewhere. Eventually this region would become the base from which

<b>Region</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total Number of Daimyo</b>	12	6	8	17	24	11	78
<b>Eliminations</b>	4	4	6	16	15	3	47
<b>Survival Rate</b>	66.67%	33.33%	25.00%	5.88%	37.50%	72.73%	39.74%

Table 1.1: Survival Rates

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<sup>6</sup> And other contenders for power, including militant temples.

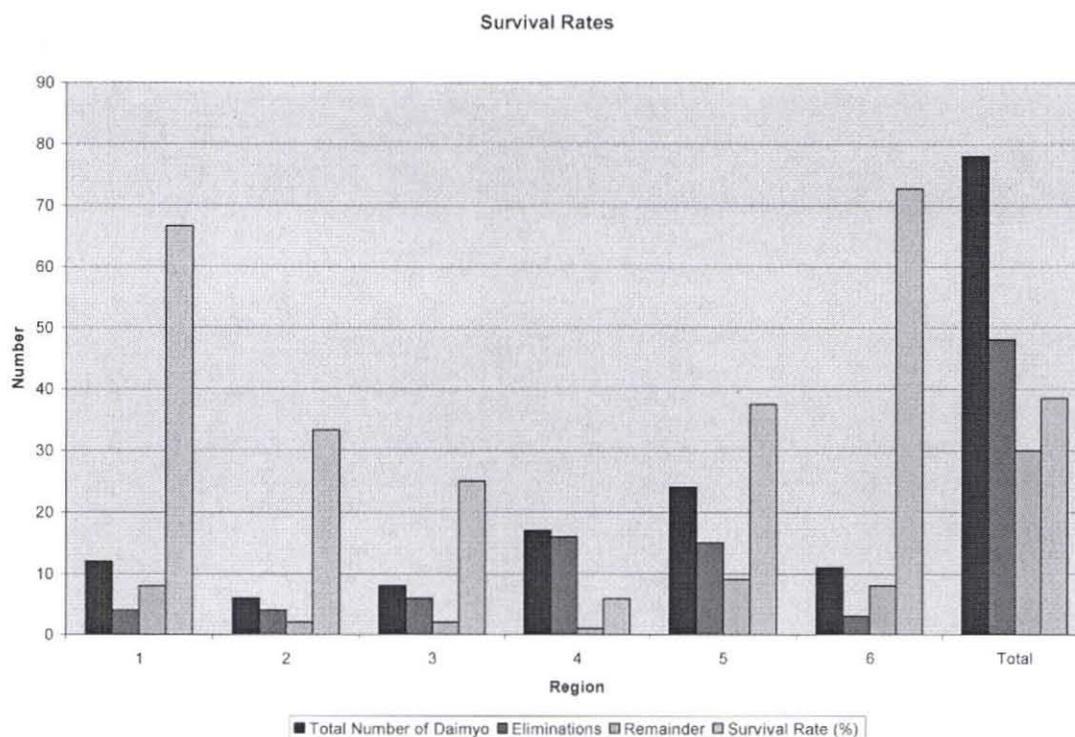


Figure 1.4: Graph of Survival Rates

Nobunaga and Hideyoshi launched their drives towards unification. All of these factors made survival in the capital region difficult, if not impossible.

Figures 1.2 and 1.3 suggest that the areas that were best suited to daimyo survival were Tohoku and Kyushu, followed by eastern and western Honshu, Shikoku, and finally, the capital. The actual survival rates, calculated from a pool of seventy-eight of the most recognizable daimyo in the sixteenth century, are shown in table 1.1 and figure 1.4.<sup>7</sup> This data is largely consistent with the estimates given in figure 1.3.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix for a complete list of daimyo used for this data.

### *Examining Survival Rates*

Survival rates were generally consistent with the estimates in figures 1.2 and 1.3, although the charts do not reflect the great variability between regions. Kyushu and Tohoku have by far the highest survival rates, one in the high sixties and the other in the low seventies. Next is eastern Honshu, with a survival rate slightly below forty percent. Then there is a significant drop to Shikoku, at around thirty percent, and western Honshu, at exactly twenty-five percent. Not surprisingly, the capital region had the lowest survival rate, but the discrepancy with the other regions is almost astonishing. Of course, it is important to remember that the “survivability” estimate is an approximation, based largely upon anecdotal evidence. Also, this data does not reflect a comprehensive list of all Warring States daimyo. However, it is a large enough pool of daimyo to be statistically significant. How can we account for this great regional variance? Why did some Regions have different survival rates when their estimated “survivability” was the same? Let us now explore these questions.

Even a cursory look at Warring States history suggests that it was much easier for daimyo in the Tohoku to survive. Just by looking at a map of Japan, its isolation and sheer distance from the capital are apparent. Kyushu is the only other region that appears as isolated. Although the Tohoku is physically attached to the rest of Honshu, it is actually more isolated than Kyushu, because high mountains and poor roads inhibited travel, while sea transportation was readily available around Kyushu. Kyushu ports nearly monopolized overseas trade, making it a very important and profitable region economically. Tohoku had no such connection to the outside world, or indeed even the rest of the islands.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, there was a medium number (10-15) of daimyo in the Tohoku region. Most daimyo had medium to large sized domains, and there were a few with very large domains. Because this region was relatively stable, these characteristics persisted into the Tokugawa period. None of the major daimyo in the Tohoku (Date, Nanbu, Mōgami) were defeated or significantly reduced in power. These large landholders were isolated enough from outside threats that they were able to firmly entrench their authority over a large territory.<sup>8</sup> The terrain made it difficult to invade neighboring areas, and the region was too far away for any daimyo there to attempt to establish a central regime. Consequently, the larger daimyo remained content to consolidate their power and prey on the smaller warlords around them. There were no huge clashes between the top three daimyo in the region, giving it a high level (comparatively) of stability.

With a survival rate only slightly lower than Region 6, Region 1 exhibits some notable similarities. Like the Tohoku, Kyushu daimyo benefited from their physical distance away from other daimyo. Although not as isolated as the Tohoku, Kyushu was more difficult for invading armies to reach than other regions because of the logistical challenges it presented. Maritime traffic connected northern Kyushu to Honshu and Shikoku, but shipping in southern Kyushu was much more limited. The trade that did exist in the south was primarily oriented towards the Ryūkyūs or the Philippines. This meant that only northern Kyushu faced a real threat of invasion from daimyo on Honshu. Despite trading ties with the other Japanese islands, the Asian mainland, and Southeast Asia, Kyushu's location kept the island politically insulated. An interesting consequence

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<sup>8</sup> Date Masamune controlled almost all of Mutsu province when he submitted to Hideyoshi in 1590.

was that Kyushu retained the highest number of daimyo who had been former *shugo* or other officials under the Muromachi bakufu. Much like the Tohoku, there was relative stability in Kyushu.

An invasion from off-island was very difficult for most of the Warring States period. It was not until late in the sixteenth century that daimyo from Honshu were able to project their power onto Kyushu. The Mōri enjoyed some brief success in Buzen province, but their expansion there was checked by the Ōtomo. During their subsequent conflict with Nobunaga, the Mōri were unable to retain a presence in Buzen. The challenge that Kyushu's isolation posed to an invading army was illustrated in Hideyoshi's campaign against the Shimazu. No other Honshu daimyo had the logistical might necessary to expand into Kyushu until Hideyoshi, and it took him until 1587. The invasion was a major undertaking that involved an estimated 250,000 troops.<sup>9</sup> Hideyoshi was able to raise such an enormous force because he had come to hold sway over the entire rest of the country, minus a few eastern provinces. The campaign succeeded in bringing the remaining Kyushu daimyo under Hideyoshi's command, something that would have been impossible without the enormous logistical advantage he enjoyed.

Since Kyushu was strategically less isolated than the Tohoku, this would seem to account for the slightly lower survival rate. However, the difference lies elsewhere, for in neither of these regions were daimyo actually eliminated by hostiles from outside the region. Both Kyushu and Tohoku daimyo avoided outside intrusion until Hideyoshi's pacification, and were collectively confirmed in their domains after accepting his authority. According to the "survivability" rating, Kyushu and the Tohoku were equally

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 89.

favorable. Why then, was the survival rate different? Both regions had a similar number of daimyo, but domains in Kyushu tended to be smaller. Daimyo could maintain their power with less territory in Kyushu. Control over a single port, provided it was highly trafficked, might be all a daimyo needed. The Ōmura found themselves in this very situation, relying upon their control of the port of Nagasaki to survive the Warring States period.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, with no lucrative trading opportunities and poor agricultural capacity, daimyo in the Tohoku had to control a huge amount of territory to achieve the same level of economic competency.

Smaller domains were easier to attack. Kyushu daimyo were closer together, meaning they could invade one another more quickly and were less burdened by problems of supplying their armies. Daimyo in Kyushu also had much greater ability to utilize sea travel, facilitating the movement of troops and supplies. All things being equal, it was easier for a small daimyo to eliminate a rival of the same size than it was for two large daimyo to do the same. This fact is in part due to resources. Small daimyo could be knocked out in a single decisive encounter. The same could happen to a large daimyo, such as the Imagawa at the battle of Okehazama, but it was much less likely.<sup>11</sup> With larger armies and more resources at their disposal, large daimyo could avoid the knockout punch and had a much better chance of recovering from a battlefield defeat. Consider the Takeda in eastern Honshu. Their decisive defeat at Nagashino in 1575 is universally accepted as marking their downfall as a lineage. However, Takeda forces continued to clash with the Matsudaira and could not be eliminated for another seven years, after

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<sup>10</sup> Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 90. See chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of the Ōmura.

<sup>11</sup> The Imagawa suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Oda Nobunaga in the battle of Okehazama in 1560. The battle and the plight of the Imagawa are dealt with in chapter 3.

heavy fighting in which the Matsudaira relied upon Oda support. The generally smaller size of daimyo domains in Kyushu is why it had a slightly lower survival rate than the Tohoku.

Trade and the number of daimyo domains made Regions 1 and 6 slightly different, but ultimately, both regions emerged from the Warring States period in similar conditions. Kyushu started with a medium number of small domains, but like the Tohoku, ended up with a small number of large daimyo (Shimazu, Nabeshima, Akizuki). Kyushu warlords fought amongst themselves, and were content to carve out their own spheres of influence. Eventually, three major daimyo emerged on the island: the Shimazu, Ryūzōji, and Ōtomo. The other two families joined forces to eliminate the Ryūzōji, who were replaced by the Nabeshima, and this balance of power may have endured were it not for Hideyoshi. Following his Korean campaign, he dispossessed the Ōtomo, and awarded much of their territory to the Akizuki family. So, although conflict was somewhat more intense in Kyushu, the actual course of daimyo elimination was very similar to that in the Tohoku. It is no accident that these two regions were brought under the influence of an archipelago-wide hegemon late in the sixteenth century.

Surveys of Warring States history are very much focused in eastern Honshu. A casual look at sixteenth century history might lead the reader to believe that the only significant events took place there, where the most famous Warring States daimyo were located. The most acclaimed battles, the most famous instance of *gekokujō*, and the three “leaders” of unification all came from eastern Honshu.<sup>12</sup> With all of this action, one might expect eastern Honshu to have been the Mecca of daimyo elimination, but that was

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<sup>12</sup> As I have defined the regions.

not the case. While it is clear that the most powerful daimyo emerged in eastern Honshu, this did not translate into the lowest survival rate.

In fact, the large number of very powerful daimyo is precisely why eastern Honshu had the third-highest survival rate. This region had a large number of daimyo, but also had generally larger domains. Economically, eastern Honshu's agriculture was a developing resource for the daimyo to tax. Though not yet at its full potential, and commercially underdeveloped in the sixteenth century, eastern Honshu would eventually become Japan's most prosperous agricultural center. With the exception of the Kanto plain, much of the region is mountainous, which, combined with the large domain size, made invasion difficult. Neighboring daimyo were relatively isolated from each other, allowing them to become firmly entrenched in their own domains. A large number of firmly established daimyo who controlled large, hard-to-reach domains made eliminations in eastern Honshu difficult.

Eastern daimyo embarked on campaigns outside of their region more than any other group. Because many daimyo in the eastern Honshu had well-established domains, they were able to project their power outward more effectively. The level of competition was so high that lesser daimyo in region 5 were eliminated or absorbed into the vassal bands of the powerful early on in the Warring States period. For whatever reason, daimyo in eastern Honshu seem to have been the most ambitious. Not content to consolidate and rule their own domains, virtually all of the major daimyo in the region engaged in repeated campaigning, even against their most powerful rivals. The classic example is the

Takeda – Uesugi rivalry, which resulted in no fewer than five major battles.<sup>13</sup> While this pattern made for some spectacular clashes, no eastern Honshu daimyo had enough of an advantage to really dominate the region. Daimyo there were very strong. Several were eliminated prior to 1560, but only after Nobunaga had harnessed the economic power of the capital Region could many eastern daimyo be eliminated. As late as 1580, there were still major daimyo such as the Takeda, Uesugi, Maeda, Go-Hōjō, Asakura and Murakami on the scene. This is why eastern Honshu was one of the last regions to be pacified. Although their strength made them capable of launching massive attacks on one another, the large number of spread-out daimyo made eastern Honshu collectively more durable than Shikoku, western Honshu, and the capital region.

In Region 2 (Shikoku), there were only six major contenders for power in the Warring States period.<sup>14</sup> The small number of daimyo is one reason that this region had a lower survival rate. Domains were also small, an attribute that kept daimyo relatively weak, and made them easier to eliminate. To draw a comparison, the Chōsokabe were able to eliminate the Aki in 1569 with an estimated force of 7,000.<sup>15</sup> At this same time, daimyo in eastern Honshu were fielding armies of 20,000, 30,000 and even 40,000.<sup>16</sup> Shikoku clearly illustrates that it was easier for a small daimyo to eliminate another small daimyo than it was for two large daimyo to do the same. Because the island offered limited economic resources, the level of competition was not high, but Shikoku's daimyo

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<sup>13</sup> These being the series of clashes at Kawanakajima from 1553 – 1564.

<sup>14</sup> Marius Jansen, "Tosa in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan*, John W. Hall and Marius Jansen, ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 91. These are the same six daimyo counted in my survival data.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>16</sup> See Varley, "War in the Early Modern World," for estimates of army size for daimyo such as the Takeda, Imagawa, Uesugi, and Matsudaira.

fought among themselves and eventually a single family was able to dominate the entire island. Unlike eastern Honshu, daimyo in Shikoku did not have the space or resources to become firmly entrenched and resist one another. The compactness and ease of access on the island meant it was only a matter of time before a dominant family emerged.

Two Shikoku daimyo, the Hosokawa and the Miyoshi, were able to establish themselves on Honshu, both in the capital region. The Hosokawa were able to inject themselves into the capital political scene because of their position as *shugo* of Awa and Sanuki provinces, eventually claiming the title of vice-shogun (*kanrei*).<sup>17</sup> They were effectively transplanted into the capital region for much of the Warring States period, and were eventually able to acquire an enfeoffment there under the Tokugawa. The Miyoshi were not so fortunate. After being ousted from Yamashiro province by Oda Nobunaga in 1568, the Miyoshi returned to their traditional home in Awa. By this time, the Chōsokabe had established themselves as the premier Shikoku daimyo, and it was clear that they aimed for domination of the entire island. The Miyoshi were shortly overcome, thus failing as daimyo in two different regions.

No other Shikoku daimyo had any success off the island. Chōsokabe Motochika attempted an invasion of Mōri-held territory in Bingo province in 1585, but quickly realized he was overmatched.<sup>18</sup> Shikoku was very much a peripheral area in the Warring States period. Daimyo there had virtually no influence on central politics, and could really only hope for regional supremacy. It is not surprising that once the Chōsokabe achieved dominance on the island, there was little else they could do. Although the

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<sup>17</sup> This title is sometimes also translated as “deputy-shogun.”

<sup>18</sup> Jansen, “Tosa in the Sixteenth Century,” 92.

survival rate would suggest that the region was one of the most hotly contested areas, this was not the case. It was in fact the opposite. Because Shikoku had so little to offer, the small daimyo there were free to jostle one another until the last one was left standing.

The second to last Region, number 4 (western Honshu) was similar to Shikoku in at least one respect: it had a small pool of daimyo. This region had only a few more daimyo than Shikoku, and since it was only slightly larger, the density of domains was about the same. Hence, a large reason for western Honshu's low survival rate is because, like Shikoku, there was a small pool of relatively small daimyo. That is where the similarities end, however. Western Honshu was also more viable economically, and it was right next to the capital, making it strategically important to anyone who was attempting to control Kyoto. Keeping this in mind, the course of events in the late sixteenth century followed a logical progression.

From the small pool of small daimyo in western Honshu, a single family, the Ōuchi, became dominant fairly quickly. They never controlled the entire region, but by the mid 1500's, they were by far the most powerful daimyo there. But, internal strife plagued the Ōuchi and by 1551 they had been replaced by their former vassals, the Mōri.<sup>19</sup> The Mōri went on to conquer the entire region by 1572, and became quite powerful. So far, this was similar to the progression of events on Shikoku. However, western Honshu had much more to offer, and the daimyo who controlled that region had real economic, political, and military clout. Therefore, the Mōri were a serious threat to the aspiring unifier, Nobunaga, and were one of the first major daimyo he tackled. Had a

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Judd Arnesen, *The Medieval Japanese Daimyo: The Ōuchi Family's Rule of Suō and Nagat*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 218.

powerful daimyo emerged from western Honshu earlier, or even if the Ōuchi had had national ambitions, this region might have come to dominate central politics instead of eastern Honshu.

The final region, and the one with by far the lowest survival rate, was the capital region. With a survival rate of just over five percent, daimyo in the capital region were five times less likely to survive than those in western Honshu, and fourteen times less than those in the Tohoku. What accounts for this enormous discrepancy? First, it has to do with daimyo and density. In the capital region, there were a huge number of daimyo with small domains. While this meant that each individual elimination had a smaller impact on the overall survival rate, there were many, many more rivals that every daimyo had to engage. Small domain size made it relatively easy for them to attack one another, and with such a large number of rivals, daimyo in the capital were constantly defending themselves.

There would not have been so many contenders in the capital if the rewards were not so lucrative, and this was the main reason why the survival rate was so low. Region 4 was the political, economic, and productive capital of Japan. The Kinai was an extremely well developed and enormously productive agricultural area. Kyoto was the largest city in Japan, a major commercial center, and the seat of both the court and the bakufu – the only institutions that possessed genuine political pedigrees. And, virtually all manufacturing and goods production that took place in Japan in the sixteenth century was centered in the cities of Osaka and Sakai. The region offered huge benefits to whoever controlled it.

Because of its wealth, holding territory in the capital region also entailed the highest risk. This created a situation where there were many daimyo who were reasonably powerful because of the high level of economic development in the region. However, since there were so many competitors, domains tended to be small. Coupled with the fact that the terrain is not very treacherous and the region is crisscrossed by the best roads in Japan, there were few obstacles to invasion. It was absolutely the worst possible combination for survival. No daimyo could get ahead in the capital region. Even if he defeated a foe, he would likely have to face three more looking to take advantage of him before he recovered from his recent campaign. Daimyo in the capital simply succeeded in beating each other to death.

Whoever controlled the capital could make an attempt at establishing an archipelago-wide regime, and this was ultimately why so many capital region daimyo were eliminated. Several powerful daimyo in eastern Honshu aspired to make such a regime a reality, with Hideyoshi ultimately succeeding. Considering the conditions in the capital region, daimyo from eastern Honshu had a significant advantage if they could manage to launch an invasion from outside; their home base remaining unthreatened and intact. This is ultimately what happened, as Oda Nobunaga was able to take control of Kyoto, eliminate many of the smaller daimyo in the vicinity, and achieve supremacy.

### *Hypothesis on Unification*

If daimyo domains are analyzed from the standpoint used here, the course of Warring States history becomes much clearer. Not only does it help explain daimyo elimination, but it suggests that the process of unification followed a comprehensible

progression. The events that took place, as opposed to being “chaotic,” and “tumultuous,” were in fact quite logical. Upon close examination, it is clear that there were only several plausible alternatives to unification as it happened under Nobunaga – Hideyoshi – Ieyasu.

From roughly mid-century, there were daimyo with the wherewithal to begin entertaining aspirations for archipelago-wide dominance. Any attempt to establish such a regime would necessitate control of the capital.<sup>20</sup> The capital was the only area that could offer the combined political and economic clout necessary to establish a central polity. Daimyo understood this, which is why competition in the capital region was so intense. No daimyo in the capital region had a legitimate chance at dominating the region. Doing so required an independent power base outside the region that offered the logistical capacity necessary to conquer the region. It had to be far enough away to enable daimyo to avoid entanglement in the fighting around the capital, yet close enough for an invasion to be successful. Through a process of elimination, we can narrow down the pool of daimyo who might have had a legitimate shot at taking the capital region.

Daimyo in Kyushu and the Tohoku were too far away to impose their will in the capital region. Both regions were largely aloof of central politics, and it was prohibitively difficult militarily to conquer the capital region from so far away. Neither area was economically viable enough to produce daimyo with sufficient strength to invade and conquer territory so far from their own. The same could be said of Shikoku, although it was much closer to the capital region. The island was close enough to stage an invasion of the capital, but it was simply an insufficient logistical base for a campaign of that

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<sup>20</sup> Varley, “Introduction to the Sengoku Daimyo,” unpublished manuscript, 3.

magnitude. The only areas that offered the combination of logistical capacity and proximity necessary to make a run on Kyoto were eastern and western Honshu.

Already, the pool of potential “unifiers” can be limited to the top daimyo in these two regions. That list includes the Amako, Ōuchi, Mōri, Imagawa, Oda, Asakura, Takeda, Go-Hōjō, and later the Tokugawa. The Uesugi, although one of the strongest daimyo in eastern Honshu, did not have a real chance at taking Kyoto. Too many powerful daimyo stood between them and the capital, and comparatively, they did not have as firm a grip over their vassals as other leading eastern daimyo.<sup>21</sup> As it happened, the Ōuchi were destroyed by the Mōri, who in turn overcame the Amako, but then faced the Oda, who by that time had vaulted to archipelago-wide prominence through the spectacular defeat of the Imagawa. It is no coincidence that the first daimyo able to control the capital hailed from Owari province. Nobunaga was in the perfect location, as he was the closest eastern daimyo to the capital, yet still far enough away to be disengaged from its tumult. Once he took Kyoto, Osaka, and Sakai, subjugated the bakufu and court, and harnessed the material might of the region. It was only a matter of time before the remaining daimyo would have to submit to him. The capital region offered such a logistical advantage that Oda campaigns gained steady momentum. There were setbacks, and the pacification was not immediate, but the course was set by 1568. Even after his death, whoever was able to inherit the Oda regime would be in the best position to continue the drive towards unification. It happened to be the Oda general Hideyoshi, but again, his power derived from his control of the crucial capital region. By 1590, Hideyoshi had achieved political dominance over all of Japan.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 12.

The ultimate triumph of the Tokugawa was somewhat different because pacification throughout the archipelago had already effectively been accomplished. Ieyasu was able to establish a new bakufu because of the coalition he built between the years 1598 – 1600. By that time, he controlled such a vast amount of land, and the Kanto had reached a sufficient level of economic advancement, that he was able to shift the political center of gravity eastward. Sekigahara was not even close, and after that, no one could challenge the Tokugawa.

### *Conclusion*

Far from being an obscure era that defies explanation, the Warring States period unfolded more logically than it might seem. By examining the general characteristics of each region, it is easier to understand the varying survival rates. Regions with greater economic or political potential offered daimyo greater opportunities, but also came with significantly higher risks. A daimyo that controlled a lucrative region was automatically a target. Hence, competition was much more intense in advanced regions like the capital than the undeveloped Tohoku. Ultimately, eastern Honshu proved to be the breeding ground for the most powerful daimyo. The region combined decent economic potential with strategic isolation and space. Daimyo there were able to control large territories and amass great economic and military might. They were difficult to eliminate and could project their power outward into neighboring areas. Daimyo in peripheral areas managed to avoid the worst of Warring States conflict by not being as much of a target. These warlords had only regional ambitions, and more of them survived.

Geographic factors did much to shape daimyo survival rates from region to region. Much of a daimyo's political, economic, and military potential was determined by geographic and ecological factors. Keeping that context in mind, political and military events become much more comprehensible through the sixteenth century. However, there were certain variables and things that daimyo could control which affected his chances of survival. One important area that the daimyo exerted some, albeit limited, control was the domainal economy.

## **Domainal Economics: Resource Extraction and Logistical Support**

Japan underwent an economic transition in the sixteenth century. Advances in technology and a growing population resulted in growth in virtually every sector of the economy. Although it remained largely agricultural, Japan's economy was much more monetized, commercial, and urbanized in 1600 than it had been a century before. While there were many factors that contributed to economic development, agrarian improvements probably had the most significant impact. Better, more productive agriculture had widespread economic benefits.

In particular, irrigation technology improved greatly, allowing many acres of new and reclaimed fields to be brought under cultivation. Better water management also boosted productivity and made paddies more resistant to drought and flood. As the food supply increased, population expanded and the economy developed further. Greater specialization became possible, making services and goods cheaper, more available, and more efficient to produce. Traveling merchants made goods from all over the Japanese islands available in local markets, which sprang up roughly every ten miles by mid-century. Newly imported technology from China led to an explosion of mining.<sup>1</sup> For the first time, the abundant mineral deposits throughout the islands were accessible. Japanese silver was mined and traded for products from China, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Long cash-deficient, the abundance of silver streamlined commerce in Japan as locally minted

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<sup>1</sup> Kozo Yamamura and Tetsuo Kamiki, "Silver Mines and Sung Coins: A Monetary History of Medieval and Modern Japan in International Perspective," in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. J. F. Richards (North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), 343.

coins flowed out of the mines.<sup>2</sup> For a period of about 50 years, there was enough liquidity available that authorities could collect taxes in cash. Technological advancement also propelled expansion in a myriad of industries, including construction, ship building, masonry, smithing and iron-working, carpentry, and textiles.<sup>3</sup>

Daimyo strove to capitalize on these economic developments and did what they could to encourage further expansion. For daimyo, much of the focus of domainal administration was upon the economy. The majority of new policies and institutional reforms initiated by daimyo during the sixteenth century dealt with taxation, land tenure, regulation of resources, markets, trade, and production. It was obviously important for daimyo to have a strong economic base, yet despite the emphasis placed on the economy, it was largely out of the daimyo's control.

The principal reason why daimyo economic policy had limited effects was that agriculture was the basis of most domainal economies and remained the primary source of tax revenues. Agricultural productivity is more dependent upon physical characteristics than anything else. Terrain, soil, weather, and other geographic conditions determined what types of crops could be planted, the yield, and the number of harvests. Although various agricultural improvements were widely instituted during the sixteenth century, growing conditions could not be fundamentally altered. Furthermore, daimyo were not directly involved in agricultural production. Daimyo managed and governed the cultivator class, but did not enjoy autocratic authority over them. Extraction of agricultural surplus was a negotiation between the daimyo and the rural community.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Nagahara Keiji and Kozo Yamamura, "Shaping the Process of Unification: Technological Progress in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14, no. 1 (1988): 103.

Cultivators were not powerless to resist capricious tax demands, and thus had to be offered various concessions and incentives. To a considerable extent, daimyo were dependent upon peasant cooperation.

The non-agricultural sector of the economy was even less directly under daimyo control. Fishing, hunting, sake brewing, skilled craftsmanship and other non-agricultural trades were harder for daimyo to regulate. Artisans, largely clustered in and around Kyoto, could successfully resist tax demands due to their organization into guilds (*za*). With the exception of the capital region, most domains had little or no industry, making them dependent upon goods from outside and subject to prices set by Kyoto guilds. Traveling merchants were thus of vital economic importance. Without trade, most domains would not have been able to sustain themselves, and this placed the daimyo in a rather precarious position. Unless he was located along a well-traveled trade route or controlled a busy port, daimyo had to go to great lengths to attract merchants to his domain. Daimyo dependence upon the productive and commercial classes restricted the amount of influence he could exert over the domainal economy. They could do little more than supervise commercial activity.

Nevertheless, fiscal institutions and policies stimulated economic growth, and had a positive effect upon the domainal treasury. Overall economic development resulted in greater revenues; a principle not lost on Warring States daimyo. It was still important for daimyo to do everything possible, however limited the effects, to facilitate productivity and commerce. What were some of the ways that this was accomplished, and what were the economic effects? How did daimyo address the need to maximize resource extraction while simultaneously encouraging economic growth? And finally, to what extent was a

daimyo's economic base responsible for his survival? Answering these questions will give us a clear picture of domainal economics, its relationship to geographic and ecological factors, and its importance for daimyo survival.

### *Increasing Revenues – The Survey*

Warring States conflict stretched domains to the limit of their logistical capacities.<sup>4</sup> Policies that solidified Warring States domains and fundamentally altered systems of taxation, land administration, and justice, were primarily designed to strengthen the domain militarily. Maintaining a capable army required constant attention to maximize economic output. Thus, the management of economic resources was a major focus of a daimyo's government. Certain policies helped stimulate and direct economic growth, which was beneficial for both the political elite and the producing class.

As the basis of the economy and the chief source of tax revenues, it is not surprising that daimyo first looked for ways to increase income from agriculture. There were three basic ways that daimyo could augment agrarian revenue, and they attempted to do all three simultaneously. Although in each case the peasants did the actual work, daimyo instituted policies designed to: increase the amount of land under cultivation, increase the productivity of land per unit, and increase the number of producing cultivators. The essential mechanism that allowed them to enact these policies was the cadastral survey.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael P. Birt, "Warring States: A Study of the Go-Hōjō Daimyo and Domain, 1491-1590" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1983), 39.

The economic significance of the survey can hardly be understated. The cadastral survey was a crucial tool that Warring States daimyo used which revolutionized the domainal economy, especially in taxation and land tenure. Surveying made resource extraction much more efficient, regular, and complete. In some cases, daimyo were able to double or triple their income over the course of several years.<sup>5</sup> Increased income obviously benefited the daimyo, but as we will see, more streamlined systems of taxation proved advantageous for cultivators as well. This in turn spurred more productivity as peasants gained confidence in the solvency of the daimyo's government and could expect regular taxation. In this way, surveying helped initiate a cycle of increased agricultural production, which led to more surplus, causing more spending, and thus stimulating overall economic growth.

Cadastral surveys have been the focus of many studies of sixteenth century Japan, so their operation and effects have been well-documented. It is clear that daimyo in eastern Honshu (region 5) conducted the most effective and thoroughgoing surveys. The Oda, Matsudaira, Takeda, Imagawa, GoHōjō and Uesugi all implemented similar survey systems. Among these, the Go-Hōjō surveys are widely recognized as being the most effective, and offer the clearest examples of the process and its results. Beginning in 1502, the Go-Hōjō daimyo conducted the first systematic measurements of agricultural land. The effects of the survey were dramatic, and for the first time the Go-Hōjō had fairly accurate figures on the amount of land under cultivation and the yield that could be expected. Tax policy was adjusted accordingly to fully take advantage of the available surplus. Early surveys were so successful that the Go-Hōjō began resurveying all land

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<sup>5</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 106.

upon the accession of each new daimyo to the family headship. Each assessment almost always resulted in increased tax revenues.

The survey allowed the Go-Hōjō to initiate several administrative policies that streamlined taxation. Prior to the ascendancy of daimyo, much (50 – 60%) of Japan's arable land was administered through the *shoen* (estate) system. In *shoen*, several different parties enjoyed rights to agricultural surplus which were "layered" on top of one another. At the top was the proprietor, usually a wealthy temple, aristocrat, or bakufu official. After proprietors received their rents, what was left over was divided up among absentee landlords, on-site managers, and finally the rural community itself. Complicated by the deterioration of the Muromachi bakufu and shifting local power relations over the past half century, by the sixteenth century, the estate system was a haphazard tangle with a bewildering array of tenurial rights and privileges. The Go-Hōjō, and other daimyo, were able to do away with estates and establish themselves as the sole fiscal authority in the domain.<sup>6</sup> First, they set the village as the basic administrative unit and registered the number of cultivators, measured land area, and assessed its productive capacity. Using this baseline figure, all taxes that had existed under the estate system were abolished and replaced with a single, yearly tax that the village paid directly to the Go-Hōjō daimyo.<sup>7</sup> By combining various levies which had been owed to separate parties into one that went to a single source, daimyo achieved greater concentration of the surplus in their own hands.

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<sup>6</sup> How daimyo were able to assume supremacy, a process of politically subjugating rival sources of authority, is dealt with in chapter four.

<sup>7</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 75.

Year of the Survey	Province	Administrative Unit (Village)	Assessment Increase (%)
1506	Sagami	Miyaji	40.4
1542	Musashi	Iwama	13.6
1542	Sagami	Nukumizu	133
1543	Sagami	Ishida	202.2
1543	Sagami	Funagao	101.8
1543	Sagami	Hase	201.9
1543	Sagami	Nakahara	295.8
1543	Sagami	Ono	214.6
1543	Sagami	Aina	558.9
1543	Sagami	Asō	133.7
1543	Izu	Nagamizo	17.1
1543	Musashi	Ōta	13.9
1555	Musashi	Imanari	83.8

Table 2.1: Increases in Tax Revenues Resulting From Cadastral Survey in the Go-Hōjō Domain.<sup>8</sup>

Simple administrative techniques like the consolidation of taxes were just one aspect of the survey. Each time the Go-Hōjō conducted a survey it almost always resulted in higher assessments, further augmenting daimyo income. In 1518, the Go-Hōjō decreed that any such increase would automatically be surrendered to the daimyo.<sup>9</sup> Table 2.1 shows that Go-Hōjō surveys consistently resulted in higher assessments, suggesting a steady increase in daimyo income over the years.

These figures are striking; doubling and tripling of a village's tax rate was common, especially around mid-century, and one village, Aina, witnessed an incredible six-fold increase in its assessment. Before accepting these figures as representative of the overall increase in daimyo income, it is important to keep several factors in mind. First, while the table shows a significantly higher tax burden, the net effect was not always so

<sup>8</sup> Data from Nagahara Keiji and Kozo Yamamura, "The Sengoku Daimyo and the Kandaka System," in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. John Hall, Nagahara Keiji and Kozo Yamamura (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

substantial an increase over previous assessments. Villages had various ways of resisting enormous tax increases, their main weapon being the threat of absconding.<sup>10</sup> Rather than risk total income loss, instead of forcing astronomical and sometimes impossible tax hikes on peasants, daimyo softened the blow by phasing in new rates over several years and by granting deductions. When combined with these various “rebates,” the imposition of new taxes did not have a crushing effect on cultivators. For example, a village called Madarame-no-gō in Sagami province, whose total assessment amounted to 211 kan 252 mon, received deductions for several reasons from the Go-Hōjō daimyo in 1569. These included “special exemption in the year of the survey – 18 kan 295 mon,” “stipend for the daimyo’s agent – 1 kan 200 mon,” “stipend of the *myōshu* – 1 kan 500 mon,” “costs of the festival of the local shrine – 1 kan 200 mon,” and for “miscellaneous taxes – 50 kan 409 mon.,” amounting to 74 kan 604 mon in total.<sup>11</sup>

Second, it is unlikely that the survey resulted in such dramatically higher assessments for every village under Go-Hōjō jurisdiction, or that such increases were sustained year after year. Villages with enormous rate increases, like Aina, were probably rare and the result of an explosion of population since the last survey. This scenario is not unlikely, as some areas witnessed dramatic expansion in arable acreage, and cultivators were no doubt enticed to settle there.

In spite of these two points, daimyo income rose significantly as a result of the survey. It would be unfair to characterize cadastral surveys and the imposition of new

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<sup>10</sup> Kozo Yamamura, “Returns on Unification: Economic Growth in Japan, 1550 – 1650,” in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. Hall, 350.

<sup>11</sup> Keiji and Yamamura, “Daimyo and the Kandaka System,” in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. Hall, 45

taxes by daimyo as a “spectacular failure” as historian Phillip Brown has done.<sup>12</sup> In addition to figures such as those cited in table 2.1, several other trends support the notion that surveying increased revenues. One is the fact that daimyo continued to conduct surveys. Had they not been profitable, or regularly resulted in higher tax assessments, it is unlikely that daimyo would have continued to implement surveys with such vigor and frequency. Also note that daimyo political power continued to grow during the sixteenth century, a point which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Domains became increasingly centralized as daimyo were able to expand their influence over more and more areas of society. Clearly increased economic power, especially vis-à-vis provincial warriors, contributed to greater political power. The fact that it was the strongest daimyo (including the Go-Hōjō, Takeda, Imagawa, Matsuudaira, Ōuchi, Mōri, Ōtomo, Oda, Uesugi, Asakura, and Toyotomi) who carried out the best and most frequent surveys supports this inference.<sup>13</sup> Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, the size of armies continued to increase during the sixteenth century.<sup>14</sup> How could daimyo afford to raise larger and more expensive armies if the tax system was a “spectacular failure?” It is safe to conclude that the implementation of cadastral surveys was one way a daimyo could improve his economic standing.

### *Maximizing Production*

The most important effect of the survey was more efficient and complete systems of taxation. Surveying brought a greater portion of agricultural production under taxation

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<sup>12</sup> Phillip C. Brown, *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kaga Domain*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 246.

<sup>13</sup> Berry, *Hideyoshi*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> The subject of the military is explored in chapter 3.

than ever before, and reasonably accurate figures on the amount of land under cultivation increased the tax base. Daimyo simultaneously instituted policies to encourage creation of new fields and bolster productivity. In what may seem contradictory, daimyo accomplished this by offering various incentives to cultivators which actually resulted in *less* direct control over agricultural communities.

By the late sixteenth century, many daimyo discontinued enfeoffment and had removed local landlords. This is often cited as one of the most important steps towards the “liberation” of agricultural communities, which brought about a new era of prosperity.<sup>15</sup> Villages were allowed to allocate fields and tax dues independently, resulting in smaller, individualized landholdings. Small-scale cultivators essentially came to own the land they worked, obviously giving them a greater stake in production.<sup>16</sup> They owed a certain amount of tax as their share of the village’s annual dues, but beyond that, the remainder was theirs to keep. Coupled with the fact that, due to the survey, daimyo taxation was less arbitrary than that of local warriors, peasants could now confidently expect to keep the surplus after tax dues were met. The “deregulation” of agricultural communities had an enormous impact, boosting peasant initiative and propelling advances in agriculture, which drove overall economic development.<sup>17</sup>

Once again, daimyo in eastern Honshu led the way in offering incentives to cultivators. The Go-Hōjō began taking steps to encourage production in 1551 by offering tax exemptions, grants of seed rice, and subsidies on equipment for the opening of new

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<sup>15</sup> James McClain, *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth-Century Japanese Castle Town* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Under the survey, peasants were granted exclusive rights (*shiki*) to cultivate the land that they worked. See Kozo Yamamura, “Returns on Unification: Economic Growth in Japan, 1550-1650,” in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. Hall, 339.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

fields.<sup>18</sup> The policy was expanded in 1559, when the Go-Hōjō declared exemptions ranging from six to ten years on newly developed fields.<sup>19</sup> Cultivators were also enticed by cash rewards, paid in advance, which they could apply towards the construction of new fields.

The Imagawa instituted similar measures. They allowed cultivators to bid on the amount they could produce from newly created or reclaimed fields. The highest bidder won a chance to work the land, and was rewarded with ownership rights if he matched his bid. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Imagawa extended this system to currently owned fields. A cultivator could lose his land if he was outbid by another and then successfully out-produced.<sup>20</sup>

These incentives no doubt helped spur the development of new fields. Historians Kozo Yamamura and Nagahara Keiji estimate that total archipelago-wide arable acreage increased from 946,000 *chō* in 1450 to 1,635,000 *chō* in 1600, a jump of 72.8%.<sup>21</sup> This dramatic expansion was made possible by concurrent developments in infrastructure. Civil engineering projects, most notably irrigation works, had far-reaching economic consequences. Improved irrigation greatly contributed to economic and population growth in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> Effective water management ended consistent crop shortages for the first time in Japanese history. In addition, new irrigation works altered the landscape, allowing paddies to be constructed on the alluvial plains around rivers and lakes. This greatly expanded the area of potential arable, and

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>19</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 106.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 2

<sup>21</sup> Nagahara Keiji and Kozo Yamamura, "Shaping the Process of Unification," 103.

<sup>22</sup> Yamamura, "Returns on Unification," 329.

also affected settlement patterns. New towns began to spring up closer to rivers, because the risk of flooding was significantly reduced. Being located closer to a river in turn facilitated transportation. Major construction projects thus had many indirect consequences which benefited the economy.

Infrastructure construction was one area where daimyo effort could have a significant impact. Though agrarian construction projects were primarily carried out by the rural community itself, daimyo assistance was necessary for the completion of major projects. Magnates promoted local efforts, offering tax exemptions to landlords and cultivators who initiated construction projects.<sup>23</sup> They also provided loans, investment capital, organized labor, and secured supplies from merchants outside of the domain.<sup>24</sup> For example, the Mōri facilitated the construction of irrigation ditches in Aki province in 1532 by coordinating the efforts of various local notables.<sup>25</sup> In return for pledges of military support, the Mōri collected fees from these landholders and organized the project, though it was likely the local community that supplied most of the tools, workers, and labor to complete it. The Imagawa and Date daimyo took on similar “coordinator” roles in agrarian projects in their own domains.<sup>26</sup>

The two most famous examples of large-scale civil engineering projects are Shingen’s dike and the Kyūgo waterworks. Shingen’s dike was constructed on the Kamanashi River in Kai province between 1547 and 1552. Made possible by technological advancements such as iron nails, higher quality lumber, and new wall building techniques, the dike supposedly solved the chronic flooding problems of the

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<sup>23</sup> Farris, *Japan’s Medieval Population*, 229.

<sup>24</sup> Yamamura and Keiji, “Shaping Unification,” 85.

<sup>25</sup> Farris, *Japan’s Medieval Population*, 223.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

Kamanashi and Midai rivers. Similarly, the Kyūgo waterworks, on the Kanna River in Musashi province, utilized new construction techniques to build an enormous dam that irrigated hundreds of new paddies in an area of roughly 100 square kilometers.<sup>27</sup> Both of these projects were sponsored by the respective daimyo of the regions: the Takeda in Kai and the Go-Hōjō in Musashi.

### *Markets and Merchants*

Some domains were not very well-suited to agriculture and required daimyo to focus tax policies on other sectors of the economy. Trade was by far the most important and lucrative alternative to agriculture, and was a source of income that all daimyo attempted to tap, with varying degrees of success. Even agriculturally prosperous domains relied upon trade for a variety of essential goods. Trade was more important in the capital region and northern Kyushu, but throughout Japan, daimyo took various steps to encourage commercial activities and attract merchants. These policies helped facilitate the flow of goods and stimulated economic growth not only at the domainal, but archipelago-wide level.

No domain managed to be completely self-sufficient during the Warring States period. Landlocked domains relied upon imported marine products, foreign goods came almost exclusively through northern Kyushu ports, and many domains could not domestically produce enough rice for sustainability. Compounding the problem, the production centers of Kyoto, Osaka, and Sakai remained the only source for many

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

essential war materials during the sixteenth century. Commerce was not only essential for military provisioning, but for the very survival of the domain.

Daimyo recognized the benefits commercial activity, if they did not fully understand how to take advantage of it. Their policies towards merchants were essentially mercantilist. Merchants brought in essential goods, and were in the unique position to provide key fiscal services, such as money lending, that daimyo came to rely upon. Daimyo often granted wealthy merchants special privileges, rank, or even administrative jobs in return for steady supplies of military provisions, loans, luxury goods, supplemental food, and anything else the domain might require. For example, the Takeda entered into a special arrangement with the Sakata merchant house, appointing them to oversee all commercial activity in Kai province.<sup>28</sup> The Sakata were given special trading privileges and tax exemptions in return for their services and a steady supply of fish to the Takeda domain. Other merchant families entered into similar arrangements: the Yanada house oversaw commerce for the Date, the Tomono merchants became official commerce agents of the Imagawa, and the Kurata served in official capacity under the Uesugi.<sup>29</sup> In Kyushu as well, the Ōtomo appointed a prominent merchant family to oversee domainal finances. Hideyoshi granted the Sakai merchant Imai Sōkyū a fief of 2,200 koku and an official post in return for consistent supply of guns and ammunition for his armies in the 1580's.<sup>30</sup> Illustrating the importance of the commercial class to the war effort, Anayama Nobukimi, a Takeda retainer, gave special trading privileges to ten

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<sup>28</sup> Sasaki Ginya and William B. Hauser, "Sengoku Daimyo Rule and Commerce," in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. Hall, 129.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>30</sup> Berry, *Hideyoshi*, 45.

wealthy merchants who imported guns and iron into Kai.<sup>31</sup> Shingen himself gave a full tax exemption to a wealthy merchant who offered a steady supply of saltpeter.<sup>32</sup> In an effort to address the shortage of commerce in his domain, in 1553 Date Harumune waived all taxes on merchants entering his lands.<sup>33</sup>

Another technique employed to attract merchants was the creation of officially sponsored markets. The number and size of markets expanded greatly during the Warring States period, and they offered daimyo another opportunity to collect taxes. In addition, they provided villagers a place to exchange goods for coin, which the daimyo required for tax payment.<sup>34</sup> Beginning in 1564, the Go-Hōjō sponsored six markets per month at several locations.<sup>35</sup> These were designed to be easily accessible so that peasants could acquire goods and coin. By late century, there was a market every seven miles in the Uesugi domain.<sup>36</sup> Although created for the purpose of supplying the domain with additional income, markets were beneficial for all involved. They were important sources of daily supplies for rural and urban dwellers, as well as luxury items for daimyo and wealthy samurai.

The proliferation of markets encouraged overland trade, yet cumbersome tolls along major roads were a major burden for merchants. Pursued most aggressively by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the elimination of tolls greatly streamlined overland

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<sup>31</sup> Ginya and Hauser, "Sengoku Daimyo Rule and Commerce," 128.

<sup>32</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 188.

<sup>33</sup> Yamamura, "Returns on Unification," 361.

<sup>34</sup> When most initial cadastral surveys were carried out in the mid sixteenth century, daimyo required taxes be paid in cash. This later proved to be cumbersome and unworkable due to the shortage of coin in Japan and daimyo started to relax this requirement, allowing some taxes to be paid in kind while others were to be paid in cash. Eventually, all tax was converted to payment in kind. See Kozo Yamamura, "From Coins to Rice: Hypotheses on the Kandaka and Kokudaka Systems." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988).

<sup>35</sup> Yamamura, "Sengoku Daimyo and the Kandaka System," 56.

<sup>36</sup> —, "Returns on Unification," 360.

transportation. In his early days in Owari, Nobunaga did away with checkpoints and ordered “free markets and free guilds” (*raku-ichi raku-za*), a policy he would later apply on a larger scale in the capital.<sup>37</sup> In 1582, he installed the merchant Maeda Gen’i as his Kyoto deputy in charge of commerce.<sup>38</sup> It was his job to regulate the various guilds (*za*), and ensure that none were operating illegal monopolies. That same year, Nobunaga abolished the checkpoints on the seven entrances to Kyoto.

### *Non-Agricultural Income*

In addition to commerce, daimyo tapped non-agricultural production for revenues. Some villages specialized in a trade instead of cultivation. Goods or services were accepted in lieu of agricultural products for these communities. For instance, Takeda Shingen exempted settlements of ranchers, sake brewers, leatherworkers, blacksmiths, lumberjacks, and carpenters from agricultural taxes in exchange for products. In the 1550’s, Shingen granted full tax exemption to a community of blacksmiths in exchange for services.<sup>39</sup> Hideyoshi also accepted taxes in kind from smiths and leatherworkers.<sup>40</sup> In some domains, only licensed artisans were allowed to practice their craft, as a way to ensure income from various trades. Daimyo granted monopolies to craftsman guilds (*za*) in exchange for a percentage of the production. The Go-Hōjō restricted wood-cutting,

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<sup>37</sup> Wakita Osamu and James McClain, “The Commercial and Urban Policies of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi,” in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. Hall, 227.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>39</sup> Birt, “Warring States,” 188.

<sup>40</sup> Yamamura, “Shaping Unification,” 105.

fishing, hunting, mining, quarrying, and other activities to those with an official permit, which were granted in exchange for a portion of the product.<sup>41</sup>

Labor was another resource that daimyo tapped. Rural communities owed a certain amount of corvee annually, which the daimyo utilized mainly for urban construction projects. Rural labor made the extensive construction of castle towns and fortifications possible. In Tosa under the Chōsokabe, it was a serious crime to skip or even be late for corvee service.<sup>42</sup>

Sometimes, daimyo went after more immediate sources of income. Despite their best efforts, daimyo often found themselves under financial strain. Provisioning the army was a constant drain on the domainal treasury, and even though production increased in the sixteenth century, supplies still occasionally ran out. In lean harvest years, the problem exploded into outright crisis. Simply taking what you did not have was the most expedient solution. Provisions were frequently scarce in the early spring months, and many daimyo resorted to predatory warfare to fill the gap between production and need. Both Uesugi Kenshin and Takeda Shingen, two of the most active Warring States daimyo, consistently campaigned with the intention of replenishing dwindling supply stores.<sup>43</sup> Takeda Shingen set out on expedition no less than nine times during famine years from 1544-1563.<sup>44</sup> As William Farris has noted, this accomplished two goals simultaneously: it denied rival daimyo goods while refilling Shingen's own depleted reserves.<sup>45</sup> Pillage continued to be a popular tactic throughout the Warring States period, though it did

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>42</sup> Jansen, "Tosa in the Sixteenth Century," 103.

<sup>43</sup> Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 195-196.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

lessen as daimyo domains solidified. Once new territory was integrated into the domain, daimyo went to great lengths to ensure that their own warriors did not employ the same method.

### *Economics and Survival*

Daimyo in eastern Honshu conducted the most extensive cadastral surveys. They probably had the best figures on actual productive capacity and retainer resources, which helps explain why daimyo in eastern Honshu were collectively the strongest group. The geography of eastern Honshu was also favorable for powerful daimyo to emerge. Areas in and around the Kanto possessed great agricultural potential, and as daimyo there conducted surveys, they were able to exploit more and more of the region's productive capacity. This resulted in a steady increase in agricultural production throughout the sixteenth century ultimately made the Kanto the economic heartland of Japan.

Oda Nobunaga was the first daimyo who was able to seize control of the capital region, and once he did, he began to institute the policies discussed above throughout Japan. The trade alone flowing through cities like Kyoto and Hyogo was enormously profitable, and coupled with the production centers of Osaka and Sakai, Nobunaga's regime quickly became an economic juggernaut.<sup>46</sup>

Daimyo that instituted all or many of the policies described in the previous sections became more politically and militarily powerful. However, economic might was not without a certain degree of risk. First, as daimyo gained more and more resources,

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<sup>46</sup> For statistics on the amount and value of trade goods flowing into Kyoto in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 150-159.

they built larger armies, but also had to pour more resources into maintaining those armies. Overall, there was a net increase in daimyo income, but the military was a constant fiscal strain, even for the most powerful daimyo. Second, prosperity made a daimyo more of a target. The most powerful Kyushu daimyo, the Ryūzōji, were eliminated by a coalition including the Shimazu and Nabeshima, who were threatened by Ryūzōji expansion. This is not to suggest that economic weakness was preferable to a strong resource base. Economically powerful daimyo had a better chance of survival, but still survival had more to do with other factors.

It would be difficult to compile a comprehensive list of survival rates for large and small daimyo throughout the entire Warring States period. Classification of daimyo as “greater” or “lesser” is somewhat arbitrary to begin with, and is complicated by the fact that the status of many daimyo changed drastically over the course of the sixteenth century. Consider the Maeda. Should they be classified as large or small daimyo? It depends whether we are looking at the Maeda in 1580 or in 1600. It is therefore inaccurate to classify some daimyo as either large or small for the entire period. We must classify daimyo as large or small within a specific time frame, and calculate survival rates for that period. Using John Hall’s map of major daimyo for the year 1572, survival rates are shown in table 2.2.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> John W. Hall, *Government and Local Power in Japan 500 - 1700, A Study Based on Bizen Province*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), xx. For a list of daimyo included in these statistics, see appendix.

	<b>Large Daimyo</b>	<b>Lesser Daimyo</b>
<b>Total Number</b>	14	32
<b>Eliminations</b>	8	21
<b>Survived</b>	6	11
<b>Rate</b>	.43	.34

Table 2.2: Survival rates for large and small daimyo

This data reflects the basic contention of the chapter. Economic might gave daimyo a better chance to survive, but did not guarantee it. Economics was one of, and not the most important, factor in daimyo survival. These numbers indicate that large daimyo were about 1.3 times more likely to survive than lesser daimyo. This is not a huge discrepancy, and would be even less if the list had included lesser daimyo who were assimilated into large daimyo's vassal bands as having "survived." These families did survive in the literal sense, but the focus of this study is those that were able to survive as daimyo.

### *Conclusion*

Japan underwent tremendous economic change in the sixteenth century. One of, or perhaps the only, positive consequence of continued warfare was that it acted as a catalyst for economic growth. Some new technologies that were developed on the battlefield were applied to domestic industries. Siege warfare led to developments in ditch-digging which resulted in more effective mining techniques. The need for

fortifications and walls spurred advancement in construction technology that was applied in irrigation works and other areas. Military necessity also drove political consolidation, and as Japan became organized into domains, daimyo enacted a wide range of policies to capitalize on increased production and commerce. In the process, old institutions of land administration and taxation were broken down and replaced by new fiscal systems that set the village as an economic unit and linked it directly to the daimyo's administration.<sup>48</sup> This was fundamentally beneficial for both the ruling and subject classes. It streamlined revenue extraction, dramatically augmenting daimyo income while simultaneously giving cultivators more independence, greater incentive to increase production, and a larger portion of the agricultural surplus. The agrarian community probably benefited from sixteenth century economic development more than any other group.

By conducting cadastral surveys, instituting new taxes, encouraging productive expansion, supporting infrastructure projects, regulating non-agricultural resources, promoting markets, and attracting merchants to the domain, daimyo were able to take advantage of the burgeoning economy. Although official policies could facilitate and direct economic progress, daimyo were largely dependent upon economic forces outside of their control. Economic conditions in most domains were largely predetermined by location, geography, and growing conditions. The most effective thing a daimyo could do was institute a more effective tax system.

Even with new ways to increase revenue, wealth did not guarantee survival. Economic power brought a daimyo increased political influence, but he still had to use

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<sup>48</sup> Michal P. Birt, "Samurai in Passage: The Transformation of Sixteenth-Century Kanto," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 391.

that influence wisely. Political astuteness remained essential, even for the most powerful daimyo. Having a strong economic base gave daimyo a better chance to survive, but it was one of several more important factors that affected survival. In the end, there was not a huge difference in the ability of large and small daimyo to survive.

In Warring States conflict, as would be expected, daimyo with greater resources usually prevailed over smaller opponents. There are only a few notable exceptions where much smaller armies prevailed over large ones, and those instances are some of the single most significant events in Warring States history. In the next chapter, I examine how daimyo applied their economic might to create effective armed forces, and the rare instances when daimyo overcame the odds and eliminated logistically superior foes.

### **Military Factors**

Military forces were the pinnacle of a domain's political and economic order. Strictly speaking, all Warring States daimyo who were eliminated, with the exception of those who were absorbed into rival daimyo's vassal bands, suffered military defeat. But military defeat was merely a manifestation of more fundamental political, geographic, and economic factors. Most of the time, Warring States conflict preceded predictably; daimyo with political, economic, or geographic advantages prevailed. From this perspective, battles were largely won or lost before they started.

The question then becomes were battles themselves even important? The answer is yes for two reasons. First, not all Warring States battles ended predictably. There are a number of cases where outmatched armies overcame the odds and scored spectacular victories. These were notable exceptions, and it is significant that these military upsets were some of the most important events of the Warring States period. Second, many battles were fought between relatively equal forces. In these cases, other, more intangible variables played a large role in determining the outcome. Intelligence, troop position, fatigue, tactical skill, and even weather could be decisive when neither side enjoyed a significant material advantage. For this reason, it was important for daimyo to build not only a strong, but a competent force.

Maintaining an effective army was an unending process. Warfare changed dramatically over the course of the sixteenth century, and daimyo had to work to stay on the cutting edge. Paralleling the great economic growth of the age, armies grew enormously in size and complexity. Daimyo who did not invest the time, money and

energy into maintaining a modern, up-to-date, fighting force were quickly overcome. In the previous chapter I gave some examples of sixteenth century economic expansion and how daimyo attempted to exploit it. Now, let us examine how daimyo applied increased revenues and resources towards the military. How did increasing daimyo political and economic authority translate into military power? What effect did technological innovation have upon warfare? How did daimyo build larger and stronger armies? Who was most successful at doing so, and what effect did military strength have upon survival?

Examining these questions will give us a fairly clear picture of why several specific Warring States battles turned out the way they did. However, there are a few cases where random events beyond human control appear to have significantly affected daimyo survival. This, unfortunately, requires a bit of speculation to explain. In these cases it is hard to determine a concrete reason for the outcome. The best that I can do is present several possibilities.

### *New Tactics, New Technology*

The transformation of warfare from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century can be summed up with the word “growth.” Increased size was undoubtedly the most conspicuous development in sixteenth century warfare, having a dramatic effect upon the nature of battles, composition of forces, and logistical support necessary to field an army. Only slightly less important was the introduction of new technology, most notably firearms, to the battlefield. Together, these developments dramatically altered the operation, command, and tactics of Japanese armies.

Early Warring States battles were rather limited engagements. Led by a trusted vassal or even the daimyo himself, groups of several hundred to one thousand mounted samurai might embark on a brief excursion to steal supplies or destroy a remote fortification, then quickly return to their own territory.<sup>1</sup> The scope and duration of campaigns was limited, battles were short, usually no more than skirmishes, and destruction and mortality were relatively low. Sieges were very limited, and the “castles” warriors raided were little more than wooden forts.<sup>2</sup>

By the mid to late sixteenth century, armies swelled into the hundreds of thousands, and could sustain long, destructive campaigns which lasted months. Mounted archers were just one, and no longer the most important, component of the army. Likewise the focus of warfare had shifted in several ways. The goal of early Warring States conflict was usually “human” centered. Armies’ main objective was to kill or capture people. Later in the century, the focus of warfare was largely the acquisition of territory. This type of predatory warfare had begun to develop in Japan in the fourteenth century, and was refined to new levels of sophistication in the sixteenth.<sup>3</sup> Light, mobile units of mounted archers were replaced by masses of heavily armored infantry, artillery, and siege apparatus. Integrated forces using coordinated, disciplined tactics supplanted the individual duelists of the medieval era. Armies also became professional and proletarian. Once the exclusive reserve of the landowning elite, anyone who was willing

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<sup>1</sup> Varley, “Warfare in Japan,” 65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See William Wayne Farris, *Heavenly Warriors: The Evolution of Japan's Military, 500 – 1300* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), chapter 1 for an explanation intraspecific and predatory warfare. For changes in Japanese warfare in the fourteenth century, see Thomas Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

and able to hoist a weapon in the sixteenth century could find employment in the armed forces. A new class of full-time fighters emerged, who were salaried employees of the daimyo. They were not restricted by the need to attend to landed interests and thus could stay in the field indefinitely. Creating a professional army was one of the best things a daimyo could do to make his military more effective.

Maintaining a standing army had traditionally been difficult because daimyo could only expect limited commitment from their retainers. Landowning samurai were unwilling to participate in protracted campaigns. After a month or two at the most, the need to return to manage their fields overcame their sense of commitment to the daimyo. This problem consistently plagued Chōsokabe Motochika of Tosa. Despite his best efforts to establish a permanent, professional military force, most of his warriors remained part time cultivators who could not participate in long campaigns and were harder to control.<sup>4</sup> Their ties to the land were an obstacle preventing them from becoming completely flexible to daimyo demands. Removing samurai from positions as direct land administrators was the first step towards building a “professional” army. With no agrarian responsibilities, soldiers could devote all their time to serving in the army, they tended to be better equipped and trained, and also had no outside interests that might come into conflict with their martial obligations.

Many of these new professional soldiers came from peasant backgrounds. It was a good way for able-bodied men to make a living, and often meant a significant reduction or even total elimination of their family’s taxes. Daimyo found that recruiting from villages by offering full time, salaried positions was more effective than attempting to

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<sup>4</sup> Jansen, “Tosa in the Sixteenth Century,” 95.

force the mobilization of an entire community. The latter method was often met with resistance, and was less effective because it relied upon villagers to organize, equip, and command a group of soldiers. Peasant leaders assumed this responsibility and often had to participate in campaigns themselves. This deprived the community of its leadership for the duration of the campaign. The whole process was cumbersome and onerous. Most daimyo found better ways to increase recruitment.

Innovative daimyo offered tax exemptions and other incentives to landless or servant-status peasants. Reducing taxes in return for military service was a favorite strategy of the Takeda.<sup>5</sup> A few individuals found their niche as fighters and vaulted themselves into samurai ranks.<sup>6</sup> These men were brought in to serve directly under the daimyo, welcome employment for misfortunate or desperate individuals. In lean years, daimyo found it very easy to recruit new soldiers. Data from the campaigns of Uesugi Kenshin and Takeda Shingen suggest that campaigns frequently coincided with periods of food shortage.<sup>7</sup> In times of hardship, soldiering was attractive despite the danger because it at least offered hungry peasants steady meals. According to one historian, scholars have overlooked how “much the conflict of the Warring States era was a result of humans’ most basic instinct to fill their bellies.”<sup>8</sup> It was not hard to find volunteers for campaigns of pillage, and they served several purposes as well. “Provision-collecting” expeditions deprived rival daimyo/warriors of whatever goods were stolen, added these items to the aggressor’s inventory, and alleviated the shortage at home by placing the army in the field. They were a very effective recruitment tactic.

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<sup>5</sup> Birt, “Warring States,” 197.

<sup>6</sup> —, “Samurai in Passage,” 379.

<sup>7</sup> Farris, *Japan’s Medieval Population*, 195-197.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

The agrarian community was a sizable reservoir of human resources that daimyo tapped to expand their armies, but they also placed greater demands upon “men of the province.”<sup>9</sup> One of the most significant developments in the relationship between daimyo and samurai in the sixteenth century was the solidification of service obligations. The cadastral survey was instrumental in giving daimyo an edge over provincial warriors both economically and politically, and this advantage was used to increase military demands. Once daimyo had fairly accurate figures on their vassals’ landholdings and resources, they were able to standardized military obligations proportionate to the amount of resources that the warrior controlled. This was a huge improvement over the previous system, which was haphazard and based largely upon precedent. At times, it resulted in a situation where powerful retainers actually owed the daimyo *less* military service because they had the leverage to negotiate lesser obligations. After the survey, daimyo were able to demand a fixed rate based upon income: the larger a retainer’s investiture, the more men and supplies he owed the daimyo at campaign time.

Paralleling the standardization of military service obligations were more specific mobilization commands. Large, integrated armies required specialized soldiers and equipment. Throughout the sixteenth century, daimyo began to issue mobilization orders that specified what kinds of soldiers a retainer was required to supply. For example, the Go-Hōjō’s 1559 register, one of the most detailed extant sixteenth century documents, meticulously records each vassal’s location, income, and service obligation. The register is a list of all Go-Hōjō retainers, some 500 warriors, organized into troops according to

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<sup>9</sup> *kokujin*

rank.<sup>10</sup> It records specific details regarding the income each retainer draws and from where, as well as the number and type of troops and equipment he must supply when required. Perhaps based on this particular record, in 1570 the Go-Hōjō issued an order to a retainer controlling a fief worth 1,197 *koku*. This individual was required to mobilize himself, plus 27 men consisting of 18 foot soldiers, 10 of which had to be equipped with pikes, 3 archers, 2 gunners, and 4 horsemen.<sup>11</sup> The Go-Hōjō also took steps to ensure the quality of their soldiers. They required a troop of samurai called the Arakawa Company to submit to periodic inspections to ensure that weapons, armor and equipment were kept in good condition.<sup>12</sup> Direct retainers of the daimyo were required to keep a horse that was worth at least one-third of their stipend.<sup>13</sup>

As military service was becoming standardized, the actual operation of the army became more structured. The wearing of uniforms, drills, and coordinated movements to flags and the sounds of trumpets all attest to tighter discipline and greater organization. The days of individual combat were long over. Armies that did not fight as a unit would no longer stand a chance. Tactically, tight formations of pike-wielding infantrymen proved to be very effective against mounted archers. These units were complemented by gunners, archers, artillery and cavalry, although it now served a secondary role.

Stronger government allowed daimyo to mobilize larger forces, which could be effectively deployed as mass infantry.<sup>14</sup> Firearms, which were introduced into Japan in 1543, could be very effectively employed by mass infantry. They spread very quickly

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<sup>10</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 90.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Morillo, "Guns and Government: A Comparative Study of Europe and Japan," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 1 (1995): 75.

across the archipelago and further enhanced armies' destructive power. In 1549, only six years after their introduction, Oda Nobunaga ordered 500 matchlocks from gunsmiths in Kunimoto.<sup>15</sup> Shingen is reported to have had roughly 300 guns by 1550.<sup>16</sup> He felt that they were absolutely essential in battle and wrote to his retainers that "heretofore, guns will be the most important weapon."<sup>17</sup> Whether they were essential or not is unclear. However, it is certain that they could be very effective, and the most powerful daimyo went to great lengths to maximize the new weapons in their armies.

Daimyo in and around the capital had the most ready access to gunpowder weapons, as it was the only firearm-producing region in premodern Japan. This was in no small way why the production centers of Osaka and Sakai were so important to the success of Oda Nobunaga and subsequently Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi needed a consistent supply of guns and ammunition, securing these needs through his relationship with merchants like Imai Sōkyū.<sup>18</sup> Daimyo outside the capital region had a more difficult time securing firearms. They relied heavily upon merchants and traders, who at no small cost could ship the items into the domain. It was standard practice to offer arms dealers some sort of incentive to guarantee a consistent supply of necessary war materials. Takeda Shingen offered one merchant a complete tax exemption just to supply the domain with saltpeter, an ingredient in gunpowder.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Delmer M. Brown, "The Impact of Firearms on Japanese Warfare," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 7 (1947-1948): 238.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Imai Sōkyū was a Sakai merchant who was granted a 2,200 *koku* fief and an official post in return for his commitment to supply Hideyoshi's armies with firearms and munitions. See chapter three.

<sup>19</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 188.

Larger armies engaged in wars for territory led to the proliferation of siege warfare. As this became the dominant mode of fighting, technologies were developed to increase the effectiveness of both fortifications and sieges. Japanese engineers made great advances in constructing trenches, which could be used both offensively and defensively. Fortifications also became much larger and more complex. The wooden forts of the medieval period were surpassed by enormous edifices of stone and brick. These buildings were very resilient, necessitating new tactics and equipment for invading armies. But until Japanese gunpowder weapons became advanced enough to render castles obsolete, large machines used for tunneling were employed on the battlefield.

### *Economic Warfare*

Much larger and more destructive than their forbearers, sixteenth century armies could unleash widespread devastation upon entire regions. Most daimyo found this to be the most effective strategy in weakening enemies. Successful military commanders, including Nobunaga, Shingen, Terumoto, and others, preferred to avoid decisive encounters, even when they had the advantage.<sup>20</sup> A military victory, no matter how spectacular, came at a heavy price. More sublime was a strike that damaged an opponent's ability to fight. Why confront an army directly when it was more effective in the long run to attack its foundations? It was difference between cutting a weed, which might grow back, and chopping out its roots.

Destruction of property, arson, and confiscation of food and supplies were so common as to be the norm in sixteenth century warfare. Tactics that damaged productive

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 26.

capacity, ruined property, or otherwise caused economic harm appear to have been the samurai's most effective weapons. As noted above, many generals such as Takeda Shingen employed the "provision as you go" method while campaigning. His armies raided villages and simply stole whatever they needed or desired. The effect was amplified when Shingen timed campaigns to coincide with the rice harvest, as he often did. His armies would fall upon a village during the busy harvest time, when people were vulnerable to attack, and steal their newly collected crop. Takeda forces found ways to maximize their economic gains during campaigns by stealing not only material goods, but people as well. Kidnapped prisoners fetched an attractive sum if ransomed by family members. Those not fortunate enough to be liberated were sold or pressed into service as servants or soldiers.<sup>21</sup> Other daimyo pillaged while on campaign as well, as it worked wonderfully for invading armies. In four separate years, Kenshin marched his troops during periods of distress, presumably with part of the agenda being the acquisition of supplies. If successful, these campaigns harmed enemy forces and also subdued new territory.

Stealing goods offered double benefits, but sometimes this was not practical. In such cases the next best thing was to simply destroy the crops and other supplies of an enemy. Armies frequently engaged in the destruction of fields, buildings, raw materials, homes, and anything else that could be knocked down. Arson was a very popular, and effective, weapon, as illustrated in a summary of selected Mōri military actions from 1547 – 1582. During that 35 year period, there are four recorded instances of stolen crops, six of harvest or crops being destroyed, and seven cases of arson, two of which were

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<sup>21</sup> Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population*, 207.

entire villages were burned.<sup>22</sup> The most infamous example of Warring States destruction is Oda Nobunaga's obliteration of the Enryakuji temple complex on Mount Hiei near Kyoto. By all accounts, everything was completely destroyed. Oda armies razed as many as two thousand buildings, and killed about the same number of monks.<sup>23</sup> That action completely eliminated the temple's ability to fight – a resounding success in economic warfare for Nobunaga.

Due to the enormous size of his forces, Hideyoshi was able to engage in economic warfare on an unprecedented level. While this culminated in the ill-conceived devastation of Korea during the Imjin War, Hideyoshi had used similar tactics domestically. Blockading was one of his favorite methods, which he employed with success against the Mōri, Shimazu, and Go-Hōjō, who at the time were some of his most powerful opponents.<sup>24</sup> He also destroyed dams, flooded villages and fortifications, and razed areas around cities. Defending armies found it very difficult to sustain themselves for long in such situations, especially against the enormous logistical support Hideyoshi's armies enjoyed. His forces probably did as much damage with shovels, sledgehammers, and torches as they did with bows, swords, and guns.

### *Field Commanders and Tactics*

In cases where two armies actually engaged in combat, things were a bit more complicated than overturning crops or lighting buildings on fire. The intricate makeup of sixteenth century armies required skilled commanders to effectively coordinate offensive

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>23</sup> Berry, *Hideyoshi*, 46.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 72.

and defensive maneuvers. Once armies got into the field, if both sides were relatively evenly matched, talented officers could be the difference between victory and defeat. Good generals and skilled tacticians could sometimes overcome serious material disadvantages. Although rare, there are a handful of cases in which a more powerful army was tactically outclassed and defeated by a smaller force. More often, armies that met on the field were roughly the same size, and adroit commanders gave one side the slight edge it needed to claim victory.

Nobunaga was famous for his innovative tactics, and it is fair to say that he was a brilliant strategist. However, two of the things that he is most famous for on the battlefield: the use of the surprise attack, and the renowned “three-shot volley,” have been exaggerated. Nobunaga became associated with surprise attacks because of his victory over the Imagawa in 1560 at the battle of Okehazama. This is undoubtedly the most spectacular victory in Warring States history and is very significant, as it single-handedly launched Nobunaga’s career. Leading a force of about 3,000, Nobunaga ambushed an Imagawa army that may have been as many as 25,000 strong and routed it.<sup>25</sup> Oda forces outmaneuvered the Imagawa army the night before the battle, lying in wait with their position unknown to the enemy.<sup>26</sup> The following day, Nobunaga’s army benefited from a sudden rainstorm. As the Imagawa forces lay hunkered down against the gale, Nobunaga’s army stormed the camp and killed Imagawa Yoshimoto himself.<sup>27</sup> Yoshimoto’s troops were thrown into chaos – it was a smashing victory for the attackers. Elimination of the Imagawa vaulted Nobunaga into national prominence, and several

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<sup>25</sup> Estimates of the strength of the Imagawa force at Okehazama vary wildly, some being as low as 10,000 and as high as 40,000. Most estimates are between 10,000 and 25,000, however.

<sup>26</sup> Varley, “Warfare in Japan,” 67.

<sup>27</sup> Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 41.

years later he was able to march on Kyoto. The rest of that story is well-known, so it is no surprise that Okehazama became so emblematic of Nobunaga's skill and meteoric rise to power.

Centuries later, he is still revered as a master of the surprise attack, even inspiring Japanese commanders before the strike on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in 1941. Despite the fact that it was responsible for what may have been his most significant victory, Nobunaga rarely employed the surprise attack. His campaigns were carefully orchestrated, methodical affairs that relied upon long-term strategy and superior logistical support.<sup>28</sup> He should instead be remembered as a meticulous planner.

Nobunaga is rightly lauded as a visionary when it came to the use of new technology. He was one of the first Warring States commanders to use firearms extensively, probably because he was the first to acquire large numbers of them. Nonetheless, he should be acknowledged for quickly recognizing the potential of guns and integrating them into his forces. Credited with "inventing" the three-shot volley, where gunners form three alternating lines and take turns firing while the others reload, Nobunaga is remembered as one of the greatest tacticians in history. His extensive use of guns certainly was something new in Japan at the time, but use of the three-shot volley is unsubstantiated, an invention of Tokugawa-period chroniclers.<sup>29</sup>

Another clear example of Nobunaga's tactical skill was at the battle of Nagashino in 1575. Facing the famed Takeda cavalry, Oda forces won a decisive victory, primarily due to their expert deployment of gunners. Katsuyori, successor to Shingen and Takeda

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<sup>28</sup> Jeroen P. Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord, Oda Nobunaga Reconsidered* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2000), 41.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

commander at the time, was not the military strategist his father was. He was utterly outfoxed by his opponent, who maneuvered his troops into an area confined by a river on one side and a mountain range on the other.<sup>30</sup> This effectively cancelled any advantage Katsuyori's superior cavalry might have afforded him. Entrenched behind barricades, Nobunaga's gunners tore through the Takeda horsemen as if it were target practice.

These notable examples illustrate Nobunaga's tactical brilliance. Although there were some setbacks, he enjoyed a steady stream of military success after 1568, so it is clear he was at least a more than capable commander. His generals, largely men from Owari, were held to a high standard and rewarded substantially for their accomplishments. Toyotomi Hideyoshi must have been exceptional for him to have risen so high in the Oda ranks. Thus, skilled commanders surely played a part in Nobunaga's success, though it would not bring him ultimate victory.

The Go-Hōjō, like Nobunaga, were unable to survive the Warring States era despite their powerful military. Prior to Hideyoshi's invasion, the Go-Hōjō boasted one of the most strategically savvy and well organized armies in eastern Honshu. Following the direction of Hōjō Sōun, Hōjō daimyo scored steady military victories before their demise in 1590. They did this by adhering to the principles laid down by Sōun in his famous 21 articles. In it, he stressed the importance of timing in campaigns. Sōun himself always waited to take advantage of his opponents when they were in the middle of a political quarrel or military action, striking when they were occupied elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> He was also conservative in his acquisition of territory, only conquering manageable chunks at a

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 14.

time and not over-extending his forces. New territory was always administered by a trusted vassal or family member, who ruled from a “satellite castle” that acted as an extension of Odawara. This system proved very effective; the Go-Hōjō had tight control over their territory and never experienced a significant threat from their vassals. Sōun’s heir, Ujitsuna, continued the expansion of Go-Hōjō territory and left his own injunctions to future daimyo. Emphasizing the importance of constant military preparedness, he wrote, “In victory, tighten your helmet strings.”<sup>32</sup>

No discussion of Warring States battle commanders would be complete without the most famous rivalry in Japanese history, that between Uesugi Kenshin and Takeda Shingen. Both leaders were tactically brilliant, although very different. Shingen was a more conventional commander. He preferred long-term strategy, opting for meticulously planned campaigns with a high probability of success.<sup>33</sup> Shingen avoided decisive encounters. He preferred not to commit to battle unless he enjoyed significant numerical superiority, and like Sōun, conquered territory in manageable chunks. Kenshin, on the other hand, was a bit more erratic. Inspired by tales of Minamoto Yoshitsune, he consistently sought the “knockout punch.” His campaigns were less organized, and he would often leave conquered territory, allowing enemies to retake it. In the long run, Shingen was a more successful general, scoring victories over even the most powerful of his contemporaries, including Nobunaga and Ieyasu. However, again illustrating the importance of other factors, it was the Uesugi who managed to survive the Warring States period, albeit in truncated form.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>33</sup> Varley, “Struggle for the East,” 26.

Skilled military command certainly did not guarantee survival, but conversely, military blunders greatly contributed to daimyo elimination. The Ōuchi, a family that was eliminated because they lost control over their vassals, met their demise due to incompetent military leadership. Ōuchi Yoshitaka's sore mismanagement of a 1549 campaign against the Amako house cast serious doubts on his capacity for leadership in the hearts of his top vassals. By 1551, Yoshitaka was deemed unfit to rule and the Ōuchi house was destroyed by the Mōri, their erstwhile retainers. Even though the incident that caused the upheaval did not result in the immediate or total destruction of the Ōuchi, this military blunder caused the Ōuchi to lose control of their vassal band.

### *Conclusion*

If a daimyo knew how to exploit his advantages, however meager they might be, he could survive without resorting to military conflict very often. For survival, armies were more important as a deterrent to invasion. The situation was slightly different for daimyo who had expansionistic aims or ambitions for archipelago-wide influence. Even in those cases, most military victories and defeats can be explained by political, geographic, or economic factors, as the actual fighting was usually a foregone conclusion.

Two significant cases of military eliminations are the Imagawa and the Takeda. Despite enjoying nearly every material advantage, the Imagawa were eliminated by Oda Nobunaga in one fell swoop. The battle was so devastating for them that politics were not a major factor, nor was there any geographic reason that would have put them at a disadvantage. Their demise was due to an utter military blunder. A complete intelligence failure left them unprepared for Nobunaga's brazen surprise attack. When combined with

the sudden rainstorm, and the fact that the Oda army was able to locate and eliminate Yoshimoto, Okehazama became a complete disaster.

Like the Imagawa, the Takeda suffered from a combination of bad luck and military failure. Had Shingen not suddenly fell ill and died in 1573, the Takeda would have been much better prepared to face the threat posed by Nobunaga. By all accounts, Shingen's heir Katsuyori was a valiant fighter, but he lacked the tactical and leadership skills of his father. His over-reliance upon cavalry, which was becoming obsolete by the 1570's, led to a decisive military defeat. Perhaps we should not be too harsh on Katsuyori, though, for he was facing the most powerful daimyo of the day, and one of the best military commanders. After Nagashino, the Takeda never recovered, although they did manage to survive until 1582.

These examples show that the most important thing for survival, from a military standpoint, was not scoring the spectacular victory (as Nobunaga, who did not survive, was apt to do), but avoiding the knockout punch (which the Imagawa and Takeda failed to do). In the long run, more conservative daimyo, such as the Maeda, Mōri, and Tokugawa, fared better through the Warring States period. Patience, planning, and defense, rather than offense, placed these daimyo in the positions of highest power as the sixteenth century ended.

Daimyo had a fair degree of control over their military, though there was always an element of randomness involved in combat. The decision of when to fight, whom to fight, and whom to make an alliance with, were largely political. The next chapter explores how political decisions had important economic and military consequences and greatly affected daimyo survival.

### Daimyo and Sixteenth Century Politics

The creation of daimyo domains fundamentally altered Japan's political administration. Although Japan became less centralized at the macro level during the sixteenth century, within each domain, power became more concentrated in the hands of the daimyo. The political situation evolved from a large network of highly fractured administrative units under the Muromachi bakufu, to a conglomeration of tightly organized regional units that were politically independent. The shift from governors who administered provinces to daimyo who claimed whatever territory they could control was a combination of construction and destruction.<sup>1</sup> Land administration was reorganized, new landlords emerged, and old *shōen* institutions were replaced by a government that centered upon the daimyo as the ultimate authority. Daimyo established an array of new institutions, and completely reordered local government. Essential to the creation of the political order was the destruction of the old one. Before daimyo could assert domain-wide supremacy, they had to eliminate competing sources of authority including local warriors, independent villages, confederacies (*ikki*), temples, and old estate landlords. For the Imagawa, as was the case with most major daimyo, this process began with the assertion of fiscal control and political techniques claiming a pedigree or official bakufu appointment to distance themselves from local warriors.<sup>2</sup>

Daimyo had to be astute in both the internal (intra-domainal) and external (inter-domainal) political arenas. Intra-domainal politics involved the breakdown of old

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Ann Ryavec, "Political Jurisdiction in the Sengoku Daimyo Domain: Japan, 1477-1600" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1978), 114.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

institutions and establishment and maintenance of daimyo rule over provincial warriors, villages, and peasants. This process can also be labeled “domain formation.” Achieving autonomy required some crafty maneuvering that could not be accomplished overnight. Daimyo faced well-established traditions, power-relations, and competing claims to authority from multiple contenders. Daimyo used whatever political leverage they could muster to bolster their position vis-à-vis these entities within the domain, and rival warlords outside it.

At the same time they were struggling to solidify their position at home, daimyo faced even greater threats lurking outside the domain. Inter-domainal politics was an arena of shifting alliances, coalitions, often feeble non-aggression pacts, deception, and manipulation. As Michael Birt puts it, “treaties, alliances (often shifting and temporary) and hostage-taking were the most important ingredients in daimyo political control, especially when dealing with other magnates.”<sup>3</sup> Cooperation between daimyo usually only lasted as long as both sides stood to benefit. The moment that one party sensed an advantage was to be gained elsewhere, the alliance ended. Friends became enemies very quickly, sometimes switching sides multiple times. With all of the dangers involved, it must have been very difficult to navigate the waters of sixteenth century politics wisely. It is hard to pinpoint exactly what skills were necessary to do so – good instincts, perceptive judge of character, charisma, and admittedly, a degree of luck. Daimyo with that rare mix of abilities had the greatest chance of survival. Tellingly, the vast majority of daimyo families that did survive had at least one leader who was lauded for political

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<sup>3</sup> Birt, “Warring States,” 7.

sagacity. Conversely, nearly every family that was eliminated lacked such a gifted chieftain.

Inter- and intra-domainal politics were complementary, though ultimately, inter-domainal affairs had a greater impact upon daimyo survival. Firmer control at home allowed a daimyo to take a more assertive stance in his dealings with rival warlords. By the same token, an alliance with a powerful or prestigious presence enhanced a daimyo's standing domestically. It was therefore difficult to have one without the other, though not impossible. One mechanism daimyo used to solidify their position atop local warriors was the cadastral survey. Although primarily an economic device, the survey was applied politically as well.

### *Establishing Daimyo Authority*

Perhaps more than any other subject in the sixteenth century, much has been written about "domain formation" and the transformation that it brought about. In addition to its economic effects, the survey was a fundamental mechanism that allowed daimyo to establish political supremacy.<sup>4</sup> There is a close correlation between an effective survey system and political power. Significantly, all of the most powerful daimyo of the sixteenth century implemented surveys.<sup>5</sup>

As discussed in chapter 2, the survey led to a significant increase in tax revenues. Though this was its most conspicuous effect, the expanded knowledge that daimyo acquired as a result of the survey could be applied for political gain. One of the first

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<sup>4</sup> Keiji and Yamamura, "The Sengoku Daimyo and the Kandaka System," in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. John Hall, 27.

<sup>5</sup> These daimyo included the Go-Hōjō, Takeda, Imagawa, Matsudaira, Mōri, Ōtomo, Oda, Uesugi, Asakura, and Ryūzōji, among others. See Berry, *Hideyoshi*, 34.

things they attempted to do was to limit the power of “men of the province,” who posed a consistent threat if not sufficiently subjugated. Warlords struggled to strike a balance between the reliability and efficacy of their vassal band.<sup>6</sup> Independent warriors were difficult to control, but daimyo needed powerful samurai to fight for them. Different daimyo dealt with this problem in different ways, but the trend was towards an expansion of daimyo authority at the expense of local landlords. Although this placed more of the burden of mobilization costs on the daimyo, the extra expense was absorbed by the daimyo’s expanding revenue base.

A key tactic daimyo used to rein in warriors was the replacement of enfeoffment with a stipend. Made possible by the survey, a grant of land was simply substituted for a fixed salary of comparable value. Originally perceived as a way to increase income, replacing land control with stipend may have secured more steady earnings for provincial warriors, but they ultimately surrendered political authority. It was an ingenious way of co-opting this group by the daimyo. It severed warriors’ ties to the local population, denied them an independent source of wealth, forced them to stay under the watchful eye of the daimyo in his castle town, and made warriors completely dependent upon the daimyo for status and income. Since they were now paid out of the daimyo’s treasury, and not through their own tax-farming activities, it was in their interest to uphold domainal law and see to it that the daimyo received his dues. Samurai were effectively converted into the daimyo’s agents.

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<sup>6</sup> Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 28.

The removal of samurai from independent land bases had the dual effect of restraining their authority and bringing the village under the direct supervision of the daimyo. This turned out to be enormously advantageous for local communities, making them more supportive of the daimyo over entrenched local landlords. Gaining the confidence of village communities helped to solidify the daimyo as *the* legitimate political authority. The usurpation of provincial warriors' fiscal control by the daimyo put an end to the days when local landlords could arbitrarily confiscate whatever they desired. Now it was the domainal authority, the daimyo, who confiscated the village's hard-earned resources. However, daimyo taxation was actually *less* burdensome than that of samurai landlords, who were notorious for adjusting the tax rate if they desired a greater profit. Daimyo did issue increased tax demands, but once the level was set it rarely increased. Much more common were exemptions and remission of taxes during hard times. Daimyo were in a better position to do this than a local landlord. Should there be a local crop failure or other disaster, daimyo could divert funds from other areas and absorb the revenue loss, provided the calamity did not affect the entire domain. Local landlords had no such margin to cope with adversity. In addition, daimyo taxed villages as units, only requiring them to meet their assessed obligation. Outside of that, the village was largely left to manage its own affairs. Their only real dealings with the governing authority were the yearly collection of dues. As one historian has stated, the samurai were "squeezed" out of positions of influence by the daimyo on one side, and an emerging class of village elites who took over administration of local affairs on the other.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Birt, "Samurai in Passage," 370.

Landlords were not always completely removed, but daimyo found ways to sharply curtail their authority. For instance, after their inaugural survey in 1524, the Imagawa placed limits on the tax samurai landlords could collect based upon their own survey figures. Two years later, the policy was made more restrictive when the Imagawa required each individual tax collected by samurai landlords to be authorized by the daimyo.<sup>8</sup> The Go-Hōjō did the same, setting limits on the amount samurai landlords could collect from villages.<sup>9</sup> But why would long-entrenched landlords simply accept a sudden breach of their authority? For the Imagawa, as with several other daimyo, it had to do with their combined political and economic might.

Daimyo found ways to cleverly exploit their position to co-opt warrior landlords. Confirming cultivator land rights was one of the most effective ways for daimyo incorporate “men of the province” under their banner.<sup>10</sup> The Imagawa utilized this technique, evoking their old title as *shugo* under the bakufu to claim authority. Cooperation with the Imagawa was attractive to provincial warriors, because it solidified their own territorial claims (at least, that is what they thought) by backing them up with Imagawa military strength. As warriors recognized the Imagawa’s ability to *enforce* land rights, more and more sought legitimation. By basically buying provincial warriors’ loyalty, power quickly became concentrated in the daimyo’s hands. Soon the Imagawa were able to establish themselves as the sole legitimate authority throughout the domain. By the mid sixteenth century, if a landlord did not have a document of title from the

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<sup>8</sup> Ryavec, “Political Jurisdiction,” 130.

<sup>9</sup> Birt, “Samurai in Passage,” 382, and Keiji, “Sengoku Daimyo and the Kandaka System,” 57.

<sup>10</sup> Ryavec, “Political Jurisdiction,” 114.

Imagawa, he had no legal right over any territory.<sup>11</sup> As the most powerful landlord and the holder of survey figures, the Imagawa were the only group in a position to actually enforce this demand. As more groups came to recognize the Imagawa as legitimate, they were harder and harder to challenge. Once daimyo accumulated sufficient strength, they no longer had to cite old bakufu titles to claim authority, but ruled based upon their own ability to defend and keep the peace in the domain. Previous titles, appointments, and prerogatives were made void. Conditions in other domains followed a similar progression.

In cases where enfeoffment was not replaced outright by stipend, daimyo used survey figures to fragment vassals' landholdings.<sup>12</sup> Breaking vassals' estates into scattered pieces meant that they could not personally oversee affairs in each of their territories. This made the landlord dependent upon the daimyo's agents for the day to day administration of the land, but more importantly, for revenue extraction. As they were breaking up geographically contiguous fiefs, daimyo began to transfer powerful retainers away from their traditional seats of power.<sup>13</sup> Daimyo usually disguised this move as a reward for faithful service, offering vassals larger enfeoffments, although the territory would be scattered and far away from the warrior's ancestral home. Samurai were at a great disadvantage in new areas. They did not have established connections with the local population, and at times found it very difficult to bring the local samurai and peasants in the new territory under control. This was of course the daimyo's plan from the start. Keeping vassals comparatively weak was one of the only ways of safeguarding against rebellion.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>12</sup> This practice was most often utilized with high-level, powerful retainers who were able to resist daimyo attempts to completely remove them from their positions as landlords.

<sup>13</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 90.

Another way in which the survey bolstered daimyo political and economic power was by giving them a fairly accurate idea of the amount of land that was under cultivation. This opened the door for daimyo to lay claim to any expansion of agricultural lands. Some daimyo claimed automatic ownership of any newly constructed or reclaimed fields.<sup>14</sup> The Takeda exercised this prerogative, although they rarely took control of land themselves.<sup>15</sup> It was used to reward vassals or provide incentive to cultivators to increase production. In the latter case, the Takeda “granted” the land to the cultivator – although he was the one who cleared it in the first place.

Collectively, daimyo in eastern Japan were the most effective in conducting and utilizing the survey for political gain. Effective surveying helped make eastern daimyo as a group the most powerful. Because they were so firmly in control of their domains, despite the considerable competition in the region, daimyo from eastern Japan had a better chance at survival than in several other regions where there were less-powerful adversaries. Daimyo in western and central Japan, especially the area around the capital, were less effective with their surveys. This group had a harder time breaking down remnants of the *shōen* system, and local landlords were able to retain a fair degree of power.<sup>16</sup> Conditions in the capital region were the least conducive for daimyo rule. Kyoto and its environs contained the greatest number and the most entrenched contenders for power, including the Muromachi bakufu, bakufu appointees, aristocratic estate holders, and old temples. This is one of several reasons why no single daimyo was able to establish supremacy in the capital region.

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<sup>14</sup> Birt, “Samurai in Passage,” 394.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> Keiji, “Sengoku Daimyo and the Kandaka System,” 29.

*Judicial Authority and Domainal Law Codes*

While daimyo utilized the survey to strengthen fiscal control, they moved to establish supremacy in judicial matters as well. As had been the case with land administration, daimyo sought to eliminate competing sources of authority and deny provincial warriors independent judicial prerogative. Throughout the medieval period, judicial authority was largely in the hands of local landlords, but usually this authority had been delegated by the bakufu, a temple, or a *shōen* proprietor. When the medieval system crumbled in the fifteenth century it resulted in a tangle of competing claims to judicial power. Local agents were reluctant to relinquish privileges they had been granted even as bakufu officials and estate proprietors attempted to re-assert more direct control over local territories. When daimyo burst on the scene in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, they had to hack through the judicial web and establish a single system. Eventually, daimyo were able to strong arm competing parties into accepting their supremacy.

In this regard, temples probably presented the most formidable challenge to daimyo authority. Many held vast amounts of land in *shōen*, and had administered their territory independently for centuries or more. Daimyo with sufficient military strength, such as the Go-Hōjō, were able to unilaterally deny temples traditional judicial rights. In the 1520's, Hōjō Ujitsuna extended daimyo authority into temple grounds and denied temples the right to deal with criminals who fled to their lands.<sup>17</sup> Other daimyo were not as successful. Some had to forcibly subordinate temples, while others were never able to fully subjugate them. Once again, daimyo in eastern Honshu were the most successful in

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<sup>17</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 30.

asserting judicial supremacy, while those around the capital had the most difficult time. The most powerful, well-established temples, such as the Ishiyama Honganji, Enryakuji, Tōdaiji, and others had deep roots in and around the capital. None of the small, and mid-sized daimyo in the region had a chance at breaking these religious institutions' power. It took the most dominant daimyo of the day, Oda Nobunaga many years and hard fighting late into the century to subjugate (or eliminate) these powerful temples.

“Men of the province” presented another challenge to judicial supremacy. Often, local warriors handled judicial affairs in their own territory and settled disputes with one-another in a method called “self-redress of grievances,” (*jiriki-kyūsai*). Warriors took matters into their own hands when need be, usually violently. As daimyo incorporated warriors into their vassal band, it was very inconvenient to have them fighting one-another. Continued disruption threatened the effectiveness of the daimyo's army, and in turn, his very survival.

To avoid chaos, it was essential for daimyo to control the judicial system. Some issued domain law codes to end unregulated vigilante justice. Aimed primarily at local warriors, the codes severely punished self-redress, asserting that justice was in the daimyo's hands. The daimyo's objective, however, was not justice, but control. Self-redress was replaced by “equal punishment” (*kenka ryōsei*), whereby both parties in a conflict would be held accountable, regardless of the circumstances.<sup>18</sup> While this may seem counterproductive, it is important to consider “equal punishment” as a military justice system during wartime. Internal quarreling could rapidly doom an army, and it made judicial matters streamlined and convenient for the daimyo. “Equal punishment”

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<sup>18</sup> Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai*, 145.

worked quite well for the daimyo who implemented it, which included magnates from eastern and western Honshu. The ability to maintain peace and order throughout the domain was often cited as justification for daimyo rule.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, in Warring States Japan, might made right.

Although force could ultimately silence most opposition, many daimyo sought legitimation. They employed a wide range of tactics to bolster their claims to authority, ranging from fabricating lineages, to seeking court and bakufu titles, to acquiring investiture from the Ming emperor. Daimyo who could make claims to authority based on legitimate bakufu appointments were more successful in asserting their control over local warriors than those who emerged from obscurity.<sup>20</sup> It is critical to note that only daimyo who had been *shugo* under the Muromachi bakufu promulgated domain-wide law codes in the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> This point emphasizes the importance of politics: legitimation and prestige were important ingredients in daimyo power.

Titles were not empty labels. Daimyo used them to create social distance between themselves and high-level samurai, who were often former peers. Only a select group of daimyo enjoyed long pedigrees as bakufu officials, the rest came from similar backgrounds as the provincial warriors they now sought to dominate. These daimyo faced the problem of asserting their dominance over a group who had recently been equals, and whose collaboration had made their own rise to power possible. Some warriors witnessed the progression of one of their peers firsthand, having fought alongside one-another in battle, and may have served as fellow comrades-in-arms under the previous magnate. It

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<sup>19</sup> Ryavec, "Political Jurisdiction," 143.

<sup>20</sup> Katsumata Shizuo and Martin Collcutt, "The Development of Sengoku Law," in *Japan Before Tokugawa*, ed. Hall, 103.

<sup>21</sup> H. Paul Varley, "Introduction to the Sengoku Daimyo," 23.

was difficult for these established “men of the province” to suddenly accept increasingly authoritative daimyo rule. Most eventually did, either grudgingly or through force, but not without some resistance. Even after firmly establishing themselves, daimyo found that they could only push certain retainers so far. There were limits to daimyo authority.

Nagao Tamekage, Uesugi Kenshin’s father, was an example of one daimyo who had difficulty creating social distance between himself and his retainers. In 1513, Tamekage did not command, but requested, the services of his vassal Nakajō Fujisuke for an upcoming campaign.<sup>22</sup> The situation appears to have persisted under Kenshin, as he issued a series of *requests* to Irobe Katsunaga in 1557 to join him on a campaign already in progress.<sup>23</sup> Probably reminded by resentful vassals of their own humble beginnings from time to time, daimyo who rose to power through *gekokujō* had a harder time subjugating local warriors.

While the implementation of law codes is often cited as clear evidence of daimyo’s ability to force their will upon the “men of the province,” it did not completely eliminate provincial prerogative. In some ways, domainal law codes benefited provincial warriors by systematizing the judicial system, clearly delineating jurisdictional boundaries, and making daimyo rule less arbitrary. Some vassal bands actually implemented codes themselves as a check on daimyo power. Retainers of the Rokkaku house, frustrated by incompetent and capricious rule, drafted a domain-wide law code and forced the daimyo to endorse it.<sup>24</sup> It would therefore be a mistake to exaggerate the significance of domainal law codes. Although only the most powerful daimyo appear to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 24.

have had the leverage necessary to force such codes upon their vassals, they did not turn daimyo into autocrats. There remained a degree of give and take between daimyo and provincial warriors. Daimyo had to keep their vassals happy, usually by bestowing rewards, even as they placed more restrictions upon them. Parceling out the spoils of war was one of the most important aspects of daimyo rule. In a treatise left to his heirs, Hōjō Ujitsuna advised keeping a permanent reserve of estates and land that could be awarded to vassals when need be.<sup>25</sup> This kept warriors motivated to offer quality service, knowing that their lord had lands that could be won if the campaign went well. Ujitsuna went on to say that if there was no available land, it was essential to go out and conquer new territories immediately.<sup>26</sup> From this perspective, territorial expansion could be considered a method of political control. No doubt conquest entailed other benefits, but pacifying and keeping vassals happy may have been the primary motivation in some offensive campaigns.

### *The Treasure of Loyal Retainers*

As it related to the question of survival, keeping vassals happy was much more important than ruling with an iron fist. While daimyo who promulgated law codes enjoyed more control over vassals than those who did not, this did not guarantee survival. Retainers still had to be rewarded, placated, and kept happy or the consequences could be disastrous. Even Oda Nobunaga, the most powerful daimyo of his time, was brought

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<sup>25</sup> Birt, "Warring States," 34.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

down by dissention among his own retainers. The elimination of the Oda is the most obvious, and significant, example of how disloyal vassals could destroy a daimyo.

The motives behind Akechi Mitsuhide's assassination of Nobunaga have long been questioned, and may never be fully understood. Many historians hold that Mitsuhide chafed under Nobunaga's rule due to abuses and personal affront, and took advantage of an opportune time to exact his revenge. A fair deal of evidence supports this contention. Consider that Mitsuhide was one of Nobunaga's top generals, yet was only awarded the castle of Sakamoto and two districts in Ōmi province for his services. This investiture was less than that of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, although Mitsuhide had more years of service than both, and a better combat record than Ieyasu. In addition, Mitsuhide's relationship with Nobunaga was famously rocky. Observers close to Nobunaga reported numerous public insults directed towards the captain, possibly fueling resentment. And finally, Nobunaga may have betrayed Mitsuhide's trust in an incident involving the Hatano clan of Tamba. Promising amnesty, Mitsuhide managed to convince Hatano Hideharu, holder of Yakimi castle, to forego a protracted siege and accept Oda suzerainty. Unfortunately for Mitsuhide, Nobunaga later overturned his general's assurance of safe treatment and had Hideharu executed in 1579. The Hatano understandably accused Mitsuhide of treachery, and retaliated by kidnapping and executing his mother in Ōmi. Mitsuhide, as one might expect, was deeply resentful over the incident.

Despite this suggestive evidence, Mitsuhide's biographer, Takayanagi Mitsutoshi, concluded that Mitsuhide was merely driven by ambition.<sup>27</sup> In the wake of Nobunaga's death, it is clear Mitsuhide intended to assume the mantle of leadership, but whether or not this was his sole motive from the start is difficult to determine. It is hard to discount the likelihood of an intense personal grudge. Likely it was a combination of Mitsuhide's dislike for his lord, and the possibility of supplanting him, that inspired the assassination. He appeared indecisive directly prior to the Honnōji incident, composing *renga* and asking for divine inspiration as to what course to take.<sup>28</sup> His reluctance suggests that the assassination was not driven solely by secret ambition. Whatever Mitsuhide's motives, it was a mistake on Nobunaga's part that allowed him to take such action. Nobunaga's failure to recognize either his vassal's discontent or his inflated ambition became his undoing. Despite their previous disagreements, Nobunaga continued to trust Mitsuhide and invested him with heavy responsibility. Perhaps Nobunaga's harsh ruling style backfired.

The Ōuchi in western Honshu provide a less prominent but still significant case of retainers eliminating their lord. Due to his incompetence and political bungling, the head of the Ōuchi house, Yoshitaka, lost the confidence of his vassal band in the late 1540's.<sup>29</sup> Yoshitaka's erstwhile retainers rallied around one of their own, Sue Takafusa, and dispatched the daimyo with little effort in 1551. In the wake of the Ōuchi defeat, the Mōri of Aki rose to supremacy in western Honshu, and remained as one of the most powerful

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<sup>27</sup> Takayanagi Mitsutoshi, *Akechi Mitsuhide*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1958), 210.

<sup>28</sup> Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus*, 214.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Judd Arnesen, *The Medieval Japanese Daimyo: The Ōuchi Family's Rule of Suō and Nagato* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 218.

daimyo houses throughout the Tokugawa period.<sup>30</sup> In this case, the Ōuchi were doomed by indecisiveness and poor leadership – faults that brought the demise of several Warring States daimyo.

A third interesting episode of *gekokuujō* involved the Araki, who were in the service of Oda Nobunaga. During a 1578 campaign that pitted the Oda against the Mōri and their Ishiyama Honganji allies, Araki Murashige defected to the Mōri side, possibly because of his religious beliefs.<sup>31</sup> This put the Oda in a very precarious position, and may have amounted to a Mōri victory were it not for another mutiny, this time in Nobunaga's favor. With the help of Jesuit priests, Nobunaga was able to persuade an Araki vassal, Takayama Ukon, to join his cause. Ukon's defection turned the tide back towards the Oda camp, and the Mōri eventually sued for peace. An incident that could have amounted to a cataclysmic defeat for Nobunaga ended in the elimination of the Araki after their own tactics were turned against them. Episodes like this illustrate the importance of keeping vassals under close surveillance.

Other notable examples are cases where provincial warriors became powerful daimyo after overthrowing their lords. These include the Ryūzōji, who overthrew the Shōni and came to dominate northern Kyushu, the Go-Hōjō, who became one of the most powerful families in eastern Japan, the Asai, who eliminated the Kyōgoku and were then ousted themselves when they reneged on an alliance with Nobunaga, the Asakura, who

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<sup>30</sup> Following, of course, their astute decision to make peace with Hideyoshi.

<sup>31</sup> Araki Murashige was a Christian, and may have been upset by Nobunaga's restrictive policy towards Christianity. If that is the case, then it is ironic that Nobunaga lured Takayama Ukon to his banner by promising to endorse Christian proselytizing. Murashige may have been persuaded by material rewards from the Mōri as well.

usurped the Shiba, shugo of Echizen province, and the Chōsokabe, who became masters of all of Shikoku after eliminating their former lords, the Ichijō.<sup>32</sup>

Once again illustrating the intensity of conflict in the capital region, there were more instances of *gekokuujō* there than anywhere else. For example, the Miyoshi family of Awa province entered the Warring States period as retainers of the Hosokawa family. The Hosokawa were *shugo* of Awa, and had assumed the position of *kanrei*, making them influential figures in the capital. As Hosokawa vassals, the Miyoshi became embroiled in the struggle for Kyoto following the Ōnin War. In 1565, the Miyoshi decided to strike out on their own and briefly joined forces with the Matsunaga family, deserting the Hosokawa. With the intention of claiming the position of *kanrei* for themselves, the Miyoshi-Matsunaga alliance deposed the shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru and installed Tokugawa Yoshihide as their puppet. Relations soon soured between the allied families, and the two sides became embroiled in conflict. Conditions for both families worsened when they were driven from Kyoto by Oda Nobunaga in 1568. The Matsunaga then decided to join with Nobunaga, although they would eventually rebel and be eliminated in the siege of Shigi castle in 1573. The Miyoshi, meanwhile, retreated to their traditional home of Awa province on Shikoku where they were soon overcome by the Chōsokabe. The Hosokawa managed to continue as daimyo into the Edo period, but were greatly weakened. Warring States politics was not for the faint of heart.

Daimyo who were able to withstand or suppress challenges from their own vassals overcame one of the major difficulties of the Warring States era. More daimyo

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<sup>32</sup> For a useful summary of these events, see *The Sengoku Biographical Dictionary*, <http://wiki.samurai-archives.com/>

were eliminated by their own vassals in the capital due to the small size of the domains and relatively equal strength of daimyo and provincial warriors aspiring to become daimyo. Domains in other regions were generally larger, and once magnates in eastern and western Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku established control over whole regions, it was difficult for local warriors to challenge that authority. After some early shakeups, such as the rise of the Go-Hōjō, Mōri, Ryūzōji, and others, there were few instances of *gekokujō* outside the capital region. Most provincial landlords simply did not have the logistical capability to resist daimyo like the Takeda, Imagawa, Shimazu, and so forth. Consequently, these larger daimyo were not as concerned with threats from individual warriors, but could only realistically be challenged by confederacies.<sup>33</sup> Vigilant daimyo took steps to break down horizontal associations among provincial warriors. If they could keep warriors isolated, they had little to fear from within the domain.

### *Politics with Rival Daimyo*

Threats from outside of the domain were another matter entirely. They were both more numerous and more dangerous. Dealing with external hostiles was not solely a military matter: much depended upon political relations. The demise daimyo who refused all alliances was swift. He would soon find himself outnumbered by a group of his peers, unable to resist. Daimyo did not simply fight any and all who stood in their path, they (at least, the clever ones) carefully chose their opponents and the timing of their campaigns. Military success was almost always prefaced by political maneuvering that would isolate

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<sup>33</sup> Varley, "Introduction to the Sengoku Daimyo," 15.

the opponent and neutralize, as much as possible, other threats that might arise while a daimyo's energies were focused on a particular campaign.

Some of the most successful daimyo rose to prominence with very little fighting. The rise of the Maeda family is one of the clearest examples of political astuteness throughout the Warring States period. From humble beginnings as Owari castellans under Nobunaga, the Maeda became the second most powerful daimyo in all of Japan. Their domain in Kanazawa was surpassed only by the holdings of the Tokugawa family during the Edo period. It was the Maeda's decision to remain conservative, ally themselves with the most powerful groups, and safeguard against rebellion, which allowed them to achieve such greatness.

As daimyo, the Maeda line began with Toshiie, who got his start as a page in service of Oda Nobunaga. In 1551, he was granted an initial stipend of 125 *koku*, which was tripled five years later in reward for exemplary military service.<sup>34</sup> Misfortune struck in 1559, when Toshiie killed a fellow Oda retainer in a quarrel. He was subsequently dismissed from service, which by all expectations, should have brought an end to the Maeda line. However, Toshiie was blessed with great foresight, and recognized the advantages of following the charismatic Nobunaga. In an attempt to be reinstated, Toshiie participated, on his own initiative, in the battle of Okehazama and presented Nobunaga with two heads taken in combat.<sup>35</sup> He distinguished himself again in a campaign against Saitō Tatsuoki, and the following year, 1561, presented Nobunaga with the head of

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<sup>34</sup> James L. McClain, *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth-Century Japanese Castle Town* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 22.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Adachi Rokuhyōe. Toshiie's efforts paid off, as he was reinstated with a stipend of 1,125 *koku* later that year.

Maeda fortunes continued to rise through the 1560's and 70's. Toshiie was able to break into the ranks of daimyo in 1570 when he was awarded a 33,000 *koku* fief in Echizen following Nobunaga's invasion of the province. The lineage would not relinquish daimyo status until the entire domain system was abolished in the late nineteenth century. For the remainder of the Warring States era, Maeda power steadily rose by avoiding most conflict and yielding to more powerful adversaries. The first major political decision that Toshiie had to make was in 1582, on the death of Nobunaga. He initially chose to side with Shibata Katsuie against Hideyoshi. At the time, it was a wise decision, as Maeda territory bordered that of the more powerful Katsuie.<sup>36</sup> But circumstances changed after Katsuie was defeated at Shizugatake in 1583, and Toshiie reacted quickly. He accepted Hideyoshi's suzerainty and joined the campaign that ousted the Shibata from Echizen. As a reward, Toshiie's domain was doubled and he was granted the castle town which became known as Kanazawa.

Following this great success, the Maeda remained loyal Toyotomi generals. They did not take aggressive military action, preferring to solidify control in the Noto/Kaga region. When the Sassa attacked in 1585, the alliance with Hideyoshi paid off, as he sent reinforcements to the Maeda's rescue. After crushing the invaders, the Maeda were granted former Sassa territory, which once again doubled the size of Toshiie's domain. Two years later, Maeda forces participated in Hideyoshi's Kyushu campaigns, for which they were rewarded. From 1585 on, their alliance with Hideyoshi ensured that there

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

would be no serious threat to Maeda survival. Toshiie wisely recognized this comfortable position, and remained content with the territory he had amassed.

The Maeda found themselves at another crossroads in 1598 upon the death of Hideyoshi. Maeda Toshiie was appointed to the board of regents, who were charged with administration of the Toyotomi regime until Hideyoshi's son, Hideyori, came of age. This coalition was shaky from the start, and it became clear early on that a rivalry was brewing between Maeda Toshiie and Tokugawa Ieyasu. That tension may have come to a head were it not for Toshiie's death in 1599. Upon rumors that the Maeda had entered into an anti-Tokugawa plot with Ishida Mitsunari, Ieyasu readied his forces for an invasion of Kanazawa. The new Maeda head, Toshinaga, wisely chose to avert conflict with Ieyasu, and sent envoys denouncing the rumors. The two great families entered an uneasy peace that was solidified when Toshinaga joined the Tokugawa coalition at the battle of Sekigahara. The Maeda entered the Edo period as one of Japan's leading daimyo.

Toshinaga's decision not to engage Ieyasu was crucial for Maeda survival. Had they opted to take up arms against the Tokugawa, it is likely they would have suffered defeat. Even in victory, a weakened Maeda army would have then had to contend with Ishida and possibly Mōri aggression. It was a brilliant political move. According to James McClain, who traced the rise of the Maeda family in the book *Kanazawa*, "the notion of a contest with the Tokugawa for national hegemony must have been a strong temptation. But Toshinaga was also well aware that his father had become a great daimyo by supporting others who thirsted for national (*sic*) leadership, and, in the end, he decided

that he could best advance his family's interests by adopting the same tactic."<sup>37</sup> There is no clearer example of a political success.

Interestingly, the Tokugawa were another lineage that exhibited the same kind of political skill as the Maeda. Under the leadership of Ieyasu, the Tokugawa took more risks, and fought more during the Warring States period than their Maeda contemporaries, but still political sagacity accounted for a great deal of their success. Ieyasu witnessed a steady rise in his fortunes under Oda Nobunaga, and handled the crisis after his death wisely. By not directly confronting Hideyoshi, he avoided what could have been a decisive battle, and one that he most likely would not have won. A real test of Ieyasu's stance towards Hideyoshi came during the campaign against the Go-Hōjō in 1590. Longtime Tokugawa allies and related through marriage, the Go-Hōjō believed Ieyasu would ultimately come to their aid in the event of a Toyotomi offensive. This proved to be a fatal miscalculation, and despite Ieyasu's repeated appeals to the Go-Hōjō to submit to Hideyoshi, they opted to fight it out. Ieyasu wisely kept his allegiance with Hideyoshi, and actually participated in the campaign against his cousins and former allies.

This decision, though it may have been personally difficult, paved the way for the Tokugawa to achieve archipelago-wide dominance. After the Go-Hōjō were eliminated, Ieyasu was transferred to their former holdings, which encompassed the entire Kanto plain. The move meant Ieyasu actually controlled more rice-producing land than Hideyoshi himself, and gave him a very strong base from which to extend his influence. In the years after Hideyoshi's death, Ieyasu skillfully forged a coalition of daimyo willing to unite under his banner and bested his chief rival, Ishida Mistunari, at the battle of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 26.

Sekigahara. He wrote no less than 200 letters to daimyo all across Japan in the months leading up to Sekigahara, urging them to fight for him, or at least not participate on Mistunari's side.<sup>38</sup> His overtures must have been quite persuasive, for only 30,000 of the 82,000 Western troops actually fought at Sekigahara.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps his most cunning move was his persuasion of Kobayakawa Hideaki to defect mid-battle, which proved decisive. With this kind of political acumen, it is no accident that the Tokugawa became the most powerful daimyo in Japan.

Even clearer illustrations of the importance of political maneuvering are cases of lesser daimyo who managed to survive despite territorial and material disadvantages. Several daimyo survived the Warring States era almost solely by making the right alliances, including the Ōmura of Kyushu.<sup>40</sup> The Ōmura were small fish in the pond of Kyushu daimyo. Under Ōmura Sumitada, this family controlled the district of Sonogi in Hizen province. Their territory had little to offer aside from the port of Nagasaki. Ōmura bay divides Sonogi into two halves, and much of the terrain is mountainous and remote. Many locales were difficult to access, contributing to a high degree of regionalism. Ōmura daimyo were never able to establish firm control over local warriors. Their authority was based upon an unstable system of enfeoffment of branch families, who were at best unreliable allies. Yet despite the precarious situation, the Ōmura managed to survive the Warring States period.

Sumitada did all he could to exploit the trading potential of his only real cash cow, the port of Nagasaki. From the 1550's, he cultivated relations with Portuguese traders,

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<sup>38</sup> Varley, "Warfare in Japan," in *War in the Early Modern World*, ed. Black, 82.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> The following discussion of the Ōmura is taken from Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 89 – 94.

currying favor by allowing Jesuit missionaries to enter his domain and proselytize. Recognizing that the closer he allied himself with the priests, the more vessels he could attract to his ports, Sumitada himself converted to Christianity. Partnership with the foreigners soon paid off in 1566, when Ōmura vassals in Yokoseura rebelled. The Portuguese rushed supplies, guns, and troops to the scene, rescuing Sumitada from almost certain destruction.

Sumitada found himself backed into a corner again almost fifteen years later, this time facing a much more powerful threat, the Ryūzōji. He wisely yielded to Ryūzōji Takanobu rather than face destruction. It was clear that the invaders desired the port of Nagasaki, but Sumitada realized that relinquishing it to the Ryūzōji would mean the end of the Ōmura lineage. He thus devised a clever solution that would both deny Takanobu Nagasaki and allow him to continue to profit from its trade. Taking advantage of his friendship with Portuguese Jesuits, Sumitada ceded control of Nagasaki to the Society of Jesus in return for taxation and duty privileges on incoming goods. This placed him under the protection of Portuguese traders, whom the Ryūzōji could not afford to challenge. In 1579, the Ryūzōji invaded, but Sumitada's Portuguese friends were once again quick to the rescue. Equipped with muskets and aided by several warships, the Ōmura were able to repel the offensive. After it became clear that attacking the Ōmura meant challenging the Portuguese as well, rival daimyo sought easier targets. The Ōmura remained virtually immune to the power struggle on Kyushu as the Ōtomo, Shimazu, and Ryūzōji, fought each other to exhaustion.

When the Shimazu emerged victorious, Sumitada quickly made peace with them. He may have faced another challenge to wrest Nagasaki away, but he was saved by

Hideyoshi's invasion in 1587. Sumitada then joined Hideyoshi's invasion force, along with several other Shimazu enemies in Kyushu. The campaign ended with Shimazu acquiescence, and as reward for their cooperation, Hideyoshi confirmed the Ōmura domain in Sonogi, although he took control of Nagasaki directly. Nevertheless, Sumitada had solidified his position as daimyo. From that point forward, any challenge to his territory would amount to a challenge to Hideyoshi.

It is worth mentioning that alliances did not always have such a favorable outcome. Some worked initially, but ended up being counterproductive. The best way to manage an alliance was to maintain it only until presented with a better opportunity. In eastern Honshu, a coalition between three leading daimyo, Hōjō Ujiyasa, Takeda Shingen, and Imagawa Yoshimoto, may have ultimately contributed to their downfall. Through a bewilderingly complex series of intermarriages, in 1541 these three daimyo concluded a non-aggression pact that set the course of conflict in eastern Honshu for at least the next twenty years. The alliance allowed Shingen to concentrate on expanding to the north, against Uesugi Kenshin, which became the most celebrated rivalry in Japanese history. The Imagawa were able to focus attention on their eastern border and possibly move on Kyoto, while the Go-Hōjō took advantage of the opportunity to consolidate their own rule in the Kanto. Initially, this worked well for the parties involved, though in the long run it may have distracted them from more dangerous threats. Imagawa were eliminated in spectacular fashion by Oda Nobunaga, the Go-Hōjō would have been in a good position, but they chose not to submit to Hideyoshi, and, one historian has argued that the alliance caused the Takeda to wear themselves out fighting the Uesugi and not pay enough

attention to developments around the capital.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, this non-aggression pact allowed the three families to become major daimyo. Had they continued to fight each other, they may have been eliminated much earlier. As it was, Hideyoshi was not able to fully pacify eastern Honshu until 1590.

### *Knowing When to Fight*

All great military commanders recognize the virtue of a strategic retreat. In Warring States Japan, picking your battles was as important, if not more so, as what happened during the battle itself. Several major daimyo ensured their survival by not engaging in a contest they could not win. The Shimazu did so twice in the sixteenth century. They were first able to carve out a niche for themselves in Kyushu by avoiding decisive confrontations with their chief rivals, the Ryūzōji and the Ōtomo. While those two families were engaged in hostilities, the Shimazu recognized their opportunity to strike. Weakened from their encounter with the Ryūzōji, the Ōtomo were overrun by a Shimazu offensive in 1578. Following the Shimazu example, the Nabeshima family used the opportunity to finish off the Ryūzōji. In this case, patience prevailed over aggression.

The most important strategic decision the Shimazu made was when they submitted to Hideyoshi. Without a doubt, if they had elected to challenge him militarily, it would have resulted in complete annihilation. The same can be said for the Chōsokabe and the Date. Motochika's decision not to fight Hideyoshi, although it entailed a dramatic reduction of his territory, was responsible for the survival of the Chōsokabe clan. Date Masamune was content to stay uninvolved in central politics, and accepted Hideyoshi's

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<sup>41</sup> Varley, "Introduction to the Sengoku Daimyo," 19.

offer of confirmation in return for submission.<sup>42</sup> The Mōri as well, made a wise decision not to fight in 1582, after their surrender to the Toyotomi-led invasion by Oda Nobunaga. Only several days later, Hideyoshi was occupied with his campaign against Shibata Katsuie and vulnerable, yet Mōri Terumoto chose to uphold his submission and not challenge Nobunaga.<sup>43</sup>

Conversely, fighting against the odds was a serious mistake. The most vivid example of such a blunder is the Go-Hōjō's refusal to submit to Hideyoshi. There was logistically no way that they could stand up to Hideyoshi, yet they refused to surrender, and it cost them. Hideyoshi was able to mobilize an estimated 200,000 troops against the Go-Hōjō's 50,000.<sup>44</sup> The siege of Odawara was a very one-sided affair.

The demise of the Takeda can also be considered a political blunder. After the defeat at Nagashino in 1575, the Takeda were significantly weakened. They sustained heavy losses in the battle, and following Shingen's recent death, were without a leader of the same caliber. By all accounts, Katsuyori was a great fighter, but lacked the leadership skills of his father. Although the Takeda managed to hold out until the 1580's after protracted encounters with the Matsudaira, their fate was essentially sealed in 1575. Nobunaga and his allies had by that time established such a powerful logistical base that it was only a matter of time before the Takeda would succumb to their forces. Katsuyori may have served his families interests better had he sued for peace in the wake of Nagashino.

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<sup>42</sup> This was, of course, after he had witnessed the massive siege of Odawara that utterly destroyed the Go-Hōjō.

<sup>43</sup> Berry, *Hideyoshi*, 79.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

### *Conclusion*

Every daimyo that managed to survive the Warring States period made astute political moves. The same cannot be said of the other factors considered in this study. Political factors were not decisive in every case of survival, but unlike geographic, economic, military, and random factors, played some role in each instance. A daimyo himself was largely responsible for his political posture, particularly towards rival daimyo. The decisions he made regarding local warriors, campaigns, and alliances could have a huge effect, either positive or negative. If he was politically savvy, a daimyo could manage to survive regardless of the disadvantages or challenges he faced.

Significant cases of survival due to political factors include the Tokugawa, Maeda, Ōmura, Shimazu, Chōsokabe, Mōri, and Date. All of these daimyo managed to maintain control of their own vassals and avoid elimination by other daimyo through wise alliances and compromises. The fact that politics was important for both large and small daimyo attests to its importance as a category. Small daimyo such as the Ōmura survived due because of their political skill. No daimyo, large or small, survived solely on the merits of any other category. Politics played a significant role even for those that owed their success primarily to other factors. Consider the Date, whose location largely accounted for their survival. That advantage would have been wiped out had they not made the decision to submit to Hideyoshi in 1590.

The significance of the “successes” and “failures” list is that it includes all of the most powerful daimyo. It is therefore no accident that the Tokugawa, who made wise political decisions and combined that with material efficacy, emerged supreme. Alliances with powerful allies brought them material strength, which then reinforced the political

clout they could wield against opponents. The Tokugawa are the epitome of politically successful daimyo. Through their alliance with Oda Nobunaga and decision not to challenge Hideyoshi, they came to control a massive resource base in the Kanto plain. This in turn reinforced their economic, military, and political power and transformed them into a dominating force. It is no surprise that the daimyo who ultimately ended up on top at the end of the Warring States period had the most favorable of all geographic, economic, and military conditions.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has attempted to answer the question of why some daimyo survived the Warring States period while others did not. I have argued that reasons for daimyo survival were not largely economic nor military, but geographic and political. Success in the Warring States period was almost always due to a combination of favorable geographic conditions and wise political decisions. Geography and politics sit at the two ends of the spectrum of factors that daimyo could control. While geographic conditions could not be fundamentally altered, survival was not completely predetermined since daimyo had a significant level of control over political matters.

Given that geography predetermined so many attributes of a daimyo's domain and that there are many examples of consequential political decisions, most cases of survival or elimination can be logically explained. One of my main contentions is that the Warring States period and the process of unification progressed more logically than has been recognized. However, there was still a degree of randomness involved. Events could be influenced by a number of uncontrollable, unforeseen factors that cannot be clearly defined or placed in any of the four categories discussed in chapters 1 – 4.

The most influential variable was the weather. Though general weather conditions were of course well-known, sudden changes, storms, floods, snow, and rain showers could significantly alter the plans of an army in the field. Inclement weather might cause delays, changing the timing and ultimate outcome of a campaign, or it might cause the cancellation of a campaign altogether. Weather also affected individual battles and, depending upon the circumstances, might give one side a distinct advantage. Unexpected death was another random factor that usually had important consequences. The loss of a

family head or important military commander could lead to internal problems and make the family vulnerable to attack. Sometimes experienced, charismatic leaders simply could not be replaced. Other random factors included equipment problems, both on and off the battlefield. Equipment failure off the battlefield was of course less severe, but still might cause problems by slowing an army down, increasing costs, and impeding movement. On the battlefield, malfunction was not uncommon for sixteenth century weapons, especially muskets, and could lead to defeat.

Random factors are harder to trace because they are not as well documented and often their effect is not completely clear. Nevertheless, there are at least two clear examples of daimyo who were eliminated due to the effects of the kinds of random factors discussed here. The first and most prominent example is that of the Imagawa. They were decisively defeated and wiped out as a lineage after the battle of Okehazama in 1560. As noted earlier, this victory was partially due to Oda's brazenness, but in this case the weather was the decisive factor. Even acknowledging Nobunaga's superior intelligence regarding the Imagawa position, had Yoshimoto's forces not been hunkered down against the rain, it is unlikely that the rout would have been as severe. Under normal conditions, Imagawa troops, who enjoyed a significant numerical advantage, might even have been able to scramble to the defensive in time to score a victory themselves. As it was, the attackers were able to completely overrun the Imagawa camp, and were lucky enough to fall upon Yoshimoto's tent before the defenders could organize. After the death of their commander the Imagawa army was in shambles. History could have been quite different were it not for that particular rainstorm.

The death of Takeda Shingen was another unforeseen event that ultimately led to the destruction of the Takeda house. Shingen died in 1573, in the middle of a siege of Noda castle in Mikawa province. He died either of a stray bullet wound or stomach cancer, and though it did not lead to a succession dispute or any problems within the Takeda household, his death was nonetheless unexpected. It left the Takeda vulnerable. His son, Katsuyori, was forced to hastily take over for his father, but he lacked the tactical skill, experience, and confidence of his retainers that Shingen had possessed. The loss of such an important leader could not have come at a worse time for the Takeda, as they were headed towards conflict with an increasingly powerful Oda-Tokugawa coalition. Under Katsuyori's leadership, the Takeda managed to survive until 1582, but ultimately succumbed to the combined might of Ieyasu and his powerful ally. The Takeda defeat at Nagashino was partially due to Nobunaga's superior firepower, but it was clearly a tactical blunder on Katsuyori's part as well. He allowed his forces to become hemmed in between a river and the mountains, limiting the effectiveness of his powerful cavalry. We cannot say for sure, but things may have turned out differently had Shingen managed to survive into the 1580's or later.

Was the Warring State period random or rational? The truth lies somewhere in the middle. Certain trends, tendencies, and probabilities are clear, yet chance played an important role as well. It is inaccurate to characterize the period as completely logical and rational, yet to emphasize only chaos and uncertainty in the sixteenth century is no closer to the truth. To a large extent, Warring States history is comprehensible, though it is not always logical.

I am suggesting a re-conceptualization of sixteenth century Japan. It should not be treated as a footnote to the medieval period, when all order collapsed and Japan descended into a period of tumult and irrationality. Nor should it be considered simply a prelude to the Tokugawa period, although it is clearly important in that regard. Many of the foundations and fundamental institutions of the Tokugawa order were developed in the sixteenth century. It was also a period of economic and technological advancement that set the stage for demographic expansion throughout the next century. All of the essential elements of the Tokugawa government, economy, and social order were laid down during the sixteenth century. For this reason, I believe that the Warring States period should be studied in its own right as a time where those institutions were developed out of a range of possibilities. This will lead not only to a greater understanding of the period under question, but also contribute to our knowledge of why the Tokugawa order continued as it did. Inflexible at times, why was the government unable to deal with persistent problems, and why was the expansion of bakufu authority checked in the mid seventeenth century? Could it be that a fundamental reorganization of the political settlement was impossible, impractical, or simply unthinkable? Whatever the answer, it illustrates the endurance of sixteenth century economic and institutional developments.

## Appendix

### List of Daimyo

(daimyo who were eliminated are listed in italics)

#### Region 1 (Kyushu)

Akizuki  
Aso  
Harunobu  
Hestugi  
Ho  
*Kii*  
Matsūra  
*Ōtomo*  
*Ryūzōji*  
Sagara  
Shimazu  
*Shoni*

#### Region 2 (Shikoku)

Aki  
Chōsokabe  
*Ichijō*  
*Kono*  
*Miyoshi*  
*Sōyo*

#### Region 3 (western Honshu)

*Amako*  
*Matsuda*  
Mōri  
*Kikkawa*  
*Kobayakawa*  
*Ōuchi*  
*Ukita*  
Yamana

#### Region 4 (capital)

*Akechi*  
*Asai*  
*Asakura*  
*Besshō*  
*Hatakeyama* (Kii)  
*Hatano*  
*Hosokawa*  
Ikeda  
*Isshiki*  
*Kitabatake*  
*Kōsa*  
*Miyoshi*  
*Niki*  
*Sasaki*  
*Takigawa*  
*Tsutui*  
*Urakami*

Region 5 (eastern Honshu)

*Anegakoji*  
*Ashikaga*  
*Asakura*  
*Chiba*  
*Go-Hōjō*  
*Imagawa*  
*Jinbo*  
*Kiso*  
*Matsudaira*  
*Murakami*  
*Nagao*  
*Oda*  
*Saito*  
*Sassa*  
*Satake*  
*Satomi*  
*Shibata*  
*Suwa*  
*Takato*  
*Takeda*  
*Toki*  
*Uesugi (Musashi)*  
*Uesugi (Echigo)*  
*Utsunomiya*

Region 6 (Tohoku)

*Akita*  
*Ashima*  
*Ando*  
*Date*  
*Hatakeyama (Mutsu)*  
*Kasai*  
*Mōgami*  
*Nanbu*  
*Onoji*  
*Oura*  
*Soma*

**List of Daimyo Cited in Fig. 2.2****Large Daimyo**

Asai  
 Asakura  
 Chōsokabe  
 Date  
 Go-Hōjō  
 Mōri  
 Oda  
 Ōtomo  
 Ryūzōji  
 Shimazu  
 Tokugawa  
 Uesugi  
 Yamana

**Lesser Daimyo**

Akamatsu  
 Akita  
 Amago  
 Anegakōji  
 Aso  
 Arima  
 Besshō  
 Hatakeyama  
 Hatano  
 Hosokawa  
 Imagawa  
 Itō  
 Jinbo  
 Kii  
 Kikkawa  
 Kōno  
 Matura  
 Miyoshi  
 Mōgami  
 Murakami  
 Nagao  
 Nanbu  
 Nihonmatsu  
 Ogasawara  
 Ōmura  
 Saionji  
 Satomi  
 Soma  
 Tsugaru  
 Urakami  
 Ukita  
 Utsunomiya

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