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Tokugawa Era Conceptions of Samurai Honor

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Introduction

The majority of people's conceptions of samurai honor culture is wrong. people's understanding of samurai usually comes from pop culture ideas about samurai, which originated from bushido, samurai movies, video games, and manga/anime. However, the reality of samurai honor culture differs significantly from the perceived reality. The idea of bushido is a Meiji period myth created as an invented tradition to counteract growing Western influence in Japan that eventually took on a life of its own. The Tokugawa period is the period that is most often associated with the bushido idea of honor. The Tokugawa or Edo period (1603-1867) was when the Tokugawa shogunate ruled Japan from their base in Edo, now Tokyo. The Tokugawa took control after 100 years of civil war, known as the Sengoku jidai, which ended at the battle of Sekigahara. During the Tokugawa period, samurai honor culture distinctly changed as a result of new laws put in place by the Tokugawa. The new laws were meant to ensure that the Tokugawa maintained control over the many different samurai clans; these laws changed the system of vassalage which in turn changed how samurai outwardly perceived, gained, and maintained honor. However, the core root of how samurai perceived, acquired, and maintained honor stayed the same: control. During the Tokugawa, the way that control manifested in samurai honor changed to more predominantly feature loyalty, and control over lower classes, women and their own emotions. Many samurai and writers expressed this by changing the nature of the discussion on honor and reframing history to create a narrative that paints their theory of honor as the right one. However, all of these different ideas of what honor is, placed control as the central aspect of honor. The ideas only differed in how honor was gained and who could gain honor. These were ideals that the samurai believed encapsulated them and made them honorable, not every samurai

subscribed to this idea, and while some did, these ideas were just held up to be the ideal of how people should act. For this study, I rely on translated English works. However, to the best of my knowledge at the time of writing, this accurately represents the history of samurai honor culture.

Literature review

Much of the literature surrounding samurai honor culture during the Tokugawa period usually does not explicitly deal with the idea of honor itself. The main exception to this is *The Taming of The Samurai* by Eiko Ikegami.¹ This book was one of the first non-bushido focused historical works that delved deep into the history of samurai honor. The book covers much of samurai history from the early Heian to the end of the Tokugawa. However, while it does this, the book has a somewhat questionable thesis that tends to make sections of the book's analysis therefore doubtful. The book's central thesis is that the samurai heavily prized independence as one of their main virtues and their method of vassalage was mainly about showcasing a person's nobility by sacrificing their independence. This is when many critics think her thesis runs into trouble, which she does not adequately explain. The way she explains the complex system of vassalage and loyalty that came to encompass late Tokugawa society does not adequately demonstrate how independence was a prized virtue. She asserts that independence was so crucial for samurai. Why else would samurai act so independent and fast when faced with a crisis like the Perry expedition and the growing threat of colonialism? She also claims that the independent spirit explains the very fast adoption and growth of mercantilism of Japan during the Meiji period. This argument lacks the weight of her more concrete and realistic arguments which are found when she talks about earlier periods of Japan where it was obvious that samurai valued

¹ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

independence. Still, times change in Japan, and her argument does not do a good enough job of keeping up with the changing conceptions of honor in Japan.

While Ikegami's book is one of the largest and most popular writings on samurai honor during the Tokugawa period, it's not the only writing on honor culture. For example, Constantine Vaporis wrote a chapter called "*Samurai, Masculinity and Violence in Japan*"² for a volume of the *Cambridge World History of Violence*.³ This chapter provides an excellent overview of Tokugawa honor culture. However, it's only an overview, doesn't go into any real depth about these topics, and is mainly there to provide the reader with a general idea of honor culture. Another chapter on the early modern samurai by Denis Gainty does much the same thing in his chapter called "*The New Warriors*"⁴ in the textbook *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*.⁵ There's also a brief section on Tokugawa samurai in Oleg Benesch's book *Inventing the Way of the Samurai: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushidō in Modern Japan*.⁶ This chapter is again only an overview. Still, it does provide some excellent ways that samurai in this period thought about their honor in new ways that the chapters in *Taming of the Samurai*, or Vaporis dont. It goes into things like the Bun-bu dynamic or the multiple versions of samurai honor. It again does not pursue depth but is instead there to give a general idea of how modern bushido is a myth. There are also some sections in Thomas Conlan's new sourcebook for samurai culture throughout the years with some information for the Tokugawa period.

² Vaporis, Constantine N. "Samurai, Masculinity and Violence in Japan." in *The Cambridge World History of Violence: Volume 3, AD 1500–AD 1800*, ed. Antony, Robert, Stuart Carroll, and Caroline Dodds Pennock, (Cambridge University Press, 2020)

³ Antony, Robert, Stuart Carroll, and Caroline Dodds Pennock, eds. *The Cambridge World History of Violence: Volume 3, AD 1500–AD 1800*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.

⁴ Gainty, Denis. "The New Warriors" in *Japan emerging: Premodern history to 1850*, ed. Friday, Karl F., (Westview Press, 2012.)

⁵ Friday, Karl F., ed. *Japan emerging: Premodern history to 1850*. Westview Press, 2012.

⁶ Oleg Benesch. 2014. *Inventing the Way of the Samurai : Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushidō in Modern Japan*. Vol. First edition. The Past & Present Book Series. Oxford: OUP Oxford. Pg 42

However, these chapters reveal more about the general field of Tokugawa history. If it does include samurai, very rarely does it go into much depth about their culture of honor and instead usually revolves around other elements of a samurai's life, such as wealth or the alternate attendance system. While writings of this type did help a great deal with this paper, they often focus on one general aspect of samurai honor, such as its relation to wealth or gender. None of the papers attempt to provide an indepth analysis of honor itself in its many forms besides Ikegami.

Overall, there is a significant lack of English secondary sources surrounding samurai honor culture, especially those focusing primarily on Tokugawa honor culture. That is what my paper is trying to achieve; I, in part, disagree with Ikegami's version of Tokugawa history while also trying to bring more conversation about this period in Japanese history. There are many reasons for of secondary sources: one of the primary reasons is that the concept of bushido has become so mainstream and has shaped what many people consider to be the actual history of samurai honor culture, that writing on the reality just wouldn't be profitable for many publishers; often times the actual truth is kept to expensive textbooks which universities then use. Because the field of Japanese history is slowly losing the prestige that it had during its heyday of the 60's and 70's, and much of the funding that used to go to Japanese history is now going to Chinese history due to the rise of China and the decline of Japan following the bubble bursting on the Japanese economy. It has become harder and harder to write the books or otherwise find information that would go into writing on the realities of Tokugawa samurai culture. There has been a lot of work done on Japanese history, especially on early Japan, with people like Karl

Friday⁷ and William Wayne Farris⁸ providing a rich discussion on the nature of early samurai warriors. Even then, many authors talk about military history and not the culture of samurai honor. The specific field of Tokugawa samurai honor culture has roughly been left alone due to its close association with bushido. Bushido remains a touchy subject to research and write on, due to its use by the Imperial Japanese government during the Pacific War for propaganda and the training soldiers received due to the Imperial government's belief in *Elan vital*.⁹ Its use by people such as Yukio Mishima, a famous Japanese author who, during the seventies, attempted a coup against the Japanese government to restore the emperor and then committed Seppuku when it didn't work, also complicates the study of bushido.¹⁰ Mishima and other ultra-nationalists have so tainted the discourse around samurai honor culture that approaching it is rather tricky because it has so much baggage that can be hard to unpack, as well as large amounts of myth-busting one needs to do before one can approach the topic for a popular audience due to how mainstream the idea of bushido has become.

For this work I mainly use three primary source texts: *Hagakure*, *Chushingura*, and *Tales of Samurai Honor*. These works serve as great examples of the different ways that people tried to change the nature of samurai honor during the Tokugawa period. While some were far more popular and mainstream than others, they all serve to showcase how the Tokugawa shogunate

⁷ Friday, Karl F. *Hired Swords: The Rise of Private Warrior Power in Early Japan*. Stanford University, 1989.

⁸ Farris, William Wayne. *Heavenly warriors: the evolution of Japan's military, 500–1300*. Brill, 2020.

⁹ Friday, Karl F. "Bushidō or Bull? A Medieval Historian's Perspective on the Imperial Army and the Japanese Warrior Tradition." *The History Teacher* 27, no. 3 (1994): 339–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/494774>.

¹⁰ Reilly, Kara. "Mishima's Balcony Performance: Hypermasculinity, Masochism, and Reactionary Vanguardism." In *Vanguard Performance Beyond Left and Right*, edited by Kimberly Jannarone, 94–122. University of Michigan Press, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.5071255.11>.

and the new way that society worked during the Tokugawa period served to make many people reconsider how honor was thought of and how exactly it worked.

Hagakure was a supposed guide for samurai that a samurai turned monk called Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote. He worked as a page for Nabeshima Mitsushige, After Nabeshima's death, Yamamoto was forbidden from killing himself as well so he became a buddhist monk so that his old self could die as is buddhist custom. While *Hagakura* was not popular in japan at the time of its writing it grew in popularity after the Meiji period. *Hagakure* is a controversial title because of its association with imperial Japan. Imperial Japan was the name of the government after the Meiji Restoration when the emperor was considered head of state. During that period, *Hagakure* was used by the imperial government as the model for all of its soldiers because the book talked about bushido as the way of death. However the book itself does present a samurai participating in the reframing of samurai honor culture during this period. Due to this, he offers a viewpoint on the topics of the day and how they are related and reframed through the element of control that all samurai honor was filtered through.

Chushingura is a puppet play about a real-life event called the Ako vendetta. In this event, a group of samurai killed the person they thought responsible for the incident that led to their master's forced seppuku. They then turned themselves in. The Ronin's behavior was divisive, and every scholar had some opinion on whether or not what they did was considered honorable. *Chushingura* serves as the most popular retelling of the myth of Ako vendetta and as such has many things to say on the nature of samurai society and what it means to be a samurai.

Ihara Saikaku, the author of *Tales of Samurai Honor*, was not a samurai; he was a member of the rising merchant class that started to amass wealth and power during the Tokugawa period. Nevertheless, Ihara wrote a lot on samurai culture, making him a unique

resource for understanding how different non-samurai groups looked at samurai overall. Ihara was an extremely prominent writer whose work was read all over Japan during his career. Ihara also wrote a significant amount about shudo relationships, that I will discuss later in the section on gender. Because of his considerable popularity and non-samurai status, he has an interesting way of talking about samurai honor. Ihara often talks of honor as causing people to fight insanely to the death, usually resolving nothing. The collection *Tales of Samurai Honor* deals with his understanding of samurai honor, and it reveals how different groups of non-samurai people in Japan thought about the samurai's attitude towards honor, which can not only give us another perspective on honor but can also help us understand more of the contradictions in samurai ideas of honor.

The myth of bushido and a critique of Nitobe Inazo

The concept of bushido has profoundly affected how many people perceive samurai honor, and it's almost necessary to spend some time myth-busting the idea. The concept of bushido that most Americans are familiar with would be from the book written by Inazo Nitobe called *The Way of the Warrior*. In this book, Nitobe claims that he invented the word bushido, not realizing that it was present during the Tokugawa era. In fact, during the 1900s, when Nitobe wrote his book on bushido, many other people were writing about bushido at the same time, thus disproving the idea that he invented the concept. The idea of the samurai as loyal and honorable emerged out of a reaction to the increasing Western influence in the Japanese government with things like the draft and forced public schooling, which did not go over well with many of the public; as a reaction to these changes, many started to imagine an idealized version of the past. However, as the samurai were still recently in control, many of these ideas did not gain as much

popularity due to the recent history of samurai domination.¹¹ Over time many people forgot the recent domination of the samurai and their dissatisfaction with the imperial government increased, many ultra-nationalists turned to the idea of bushido as a way to promote their ideas. Ideas like reverence for a past ideal that was supposedly pure Japanese as well as reverence for the emperor. Bushido was and always has been a reaction to current events through a constructed past. However, after the shock of the Pacific war, Westerners became more interested in bushido because of the legends of kamikaze pilots and Japanese soldiers' resistance to being taken prisoner. As a result, after the Pacific War and with works like *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*,¹² which was a famous book about Japanese culture written by a person who didn't speak Japanese or set foot in Japan. *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* had a tremendous impact on the way many people think about Japan as a whole. *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* as well as samurai movies, heavily influenced the modern understanding of bushido. Bushido became, for many, the perceived history of Japanese samurai instead of the reality. Many of the Western ideas of bushido come from Nitobe's work after the American occupation and the success of *Rashomon*¹³, which was a samurai film directed by Akira Kurosawa about truth and samurai, which changed how Japanese directors thought about making samurai movies, otherwise known as Jidai Geki. "Jidai-geki was once canonised as, at least in part, a pandering to and a stylized affirmation of occidental perceptions of exotic Otherness and flamboyant pageantry to help secure international visibility and success in the wake of Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon*."¹⁴ As a result, directors realized that there was a lot of money to be made in the American market, if samurai movies

¹¹ Oleg Benesch. 2014. *Inventing the Way of the Samurai : Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushidō in Modern Japan*. Pg 42

¹² Benedict, Ruth, 1887-1948. 1946. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin company.

¹³ Kurosawa, Akira, director. *Rashomon*. Daiei Films, 1950. 1 hr 28 min.

¹⁴ Bingham, Adam. "Contemporary Japanese Cinema Since Hana-bi." page 15

were presented in a way that more Americans would find familiar. As a result, many used Nitobe, which was already familiar to American audiences. This made the idea of bushido often follow along with what Nitobe claimed that bushido was. He claimed bushido was justice, courage, benevolence, politeness, sincerity, honor, self-control, and the sword. These ideas are almost completely false and have no bearing on the actual reality of the past, as will be shown in this paper. Most of Nitobe's ideas look at an imagined past and ways that samurai supposedly presented themselves to others as an excuse for samurai domination. When many American readers think of bushido, these are the ideals they think of. This is unfortunate as it obscures some really interesting history. Bushido also has some troubling connections, as with most reactionary ideas about the past. It was often used by ultra-nationalist groups to promote fascist ideology in modern Japan due to its associations with the imperial army and its use in the Pacific War.

Honor and loyalty

The history of samurai honor

For much of history, samurai honor was intrinsically tied to violence. The samurai were professional warriors who gained honor through their ability to wield violence well. Honor was gained through heroic actions on the battlefield and rewarding their followers properly. The importance of giving rewards illustrates how honor was originally used as a method of judging others' reliability not only in martial matters but also in rewarding followers for their heroic actions. Honor was supposed to showcase your ability to lead men in battle and to do that one must not only be a good leader shown through the ability to give gifts but also through the ability to fight. Because of honor's original use in demonstrating your ability, it was incredibly

important for other samurai to know about your honor. Recognition was crucial for advancement or successes in samurai society. This is why practices such as headtaking were so common for samurai: a severed head was proof of killing and a display for honor. For if you killed your opponent you were better than him at martial skills and furthermore you deserved a reward for killing an opponent. Recognition also required a samurai to fight or kill anyone who disparaged his honor. As honor was all about showcasing control leadership ability through violence and the ability to do it well, killing the disparaging person proved them wrong, and retained a samurai's honor. Furthermore, the samurai distinguished themselves from other groups of people by their ability to die for honor.¹⁵ With the rise of the samurai as main power holders over the imperial court after the Mongol invasion, a cult of honor emerged that justified their rule over different groups of people as stemming from their honorable actions.

There was a shared conception of samurai identity during the latter parts of the Tokugawa period. One of the major features that many came to encompass the idea of samurai identity was that of honor and loyalty. While different groups looked upon these ideals differently, the fact remains that during this period, one of the core aspects of the Samurai's conception of honor was loyalty. This was a dramatic shift from the history of the samurai, where for centuries, samurai often participated in backstabbing, and often switched sides in the middle of a fight if they saw they were losing.¹⁶ However, this wasn't seen as dishonorable; in fact it could be seen as honorable. "Because people at that time thought of killing and fighting as primal *musha no narai* (customs of the samurai), and exhibitions of one's manliness and superiority on the field were more important than chivalrous decency."¹⁷ During the early periods of samurai, around the time

¹⁵ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. page 31

¹⁶ Friday, Karl F. *Hired Swords: The Rise of Private Warrior Power in Early Japan*.

¹⁷ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. page 77

of the origins of the samurai, even until the Onin War (around 500 years), switching sides to end up on the winning side was a sign of martial skill and was one of the main ways to highlight your martial abilities. While it remained true that betraying your allies or cheating was good if it showcased your martial spirit, over time, the nature of loyalty changed as the nature of vassalage changed. Before the first shogunate, the nature of allegiance between samurai often was a matter of convenience, and no real stable hierarchy existed unless the court played a role. Often samurai kept to themselves unless they were engaged in local conflicts with other samurai. During these local conflicts, samurai would organize themselves around one figure and fight for that person in exchange for some sort of reward, usually in the form of monetary gain or the promise of loot.¹⁸ During these encounters, samurai would often switch to the winning side in order to perhaps save their own skin and gain rewards for switching to the winning side.

One of the main features of honor during this early period was the *Ie*, or the household. The household was the general family or clan structure. An *Ie* was descended from a male relative and everyone in the *Ie* was a member of that family. But it also included people like retainers and servants. This was a central aspect of how early samurai society organized its conception of honor. The *Ie* functioned as a way of giving samurai a starting point for their honor, as they could use the honor of their family as well as their own. But as samurai started more and more to be landholders, the *Ie* served as a way of managing and grouping together samurai so that some measure of stability could be achieved. It helped prevent the samurai from constantly fighting each other for land.¹⁹

¹⁸ Friday, Karl. *The first samurai: the life and legend of the warrior rebel, Taira Masakado*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

¹⁹ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. page 70

After the Gempei war and the founding of the first shogunate, the conception of honor in Early Japanese society remained basically the same. One samurai even claimed that it was always honorable to have a reputation for organizing a rebellious plot.²⁰ During the Kamakura and Ashikaga periods, another aspect of honor that had been brewing for a while became more prevalent: loyalty through death. Although the ideas of loyalty and rebellion may seem counterintuitive, they both fell under honor. “Decisions as to what action could be considered honorable were highly contextual and individualistic. Therefore, under the same banner of honor, the samurai often took the seemingly contradictory actions of absolute loyalty and defiant betrayal.”²¹ While the practice of betrayal was still common up until the Onin War, the idea of loyalty was not a stable idea of absolute loyalty since often samurai behavior was still based on personal interest above all else.

During this period the practice of seppuku increased. Simultaneously, there was a growth in literature discussing how honorable it was for samurai to seek to die with people with whom they had a close personal bond.²² Nevertheless, it was still the norm for samurai to either flee or surrender in order to save their life.²³ Only in the 1200s did this behavior begin to shift as more samurai started to fight to the death.

One of the features of honor that existed during the earlier period was that a leader was supposed to reward the men who fought for him. This was a critical piece of honor culture in Japan; the honor culture was created in order to demonstrate to different people how exactly one may be a good vassal or leader of men.²⁴ As the ability to be a good leader manifests in the ability to give gifts it showcases your control over your own greed in order to pursue success in

²⁰ Ibid page 83

²¹ Ibid page 85

²² Ibid page 83

²³ Ibid page 96

²⁴ Ibid page 27

martial matters. Further the ability to fight well in combat showcases your ability to control yourself and others through violence. This explains how seppuku may have been a way of displaying one's honor as well, as seppuku is the ultimate form of showcasing your control due to the horrific nature of the suicide itself. In the *Taiheiki*, A famous tale about the Genpei war that was later written down into a book, there is a description of a mass act of seppuku performed by a group of people led by a man called Nakatoki; he committed seppuku as a result of his loyalty, but also his inability to provide adequate rewards for his men.²⁵

Defining and Redefining Honor

During the Edo period, the Tokugawa government made sweeping changes to the laws in order to ensure their control over the system of samurai. As a result, the idea of honor changed dramatically. The Tokugawa banned the use of violence to settle disputes. This was done in order to ensure the Tokugawa government was the main arbiter of disputes. This signified a change as a point of honor among early samurai was their ability to settle disputes through violence. Furthermore, a lot of ideas about samurai honor were built upon the idea that fighting to protect honor was the basis of a warrior society. "We need to remember that the victor in a fight was not considered a killer or murderer. Instead, he was seen as upholding his honor and acting according to the warrior's code."²⁶ Even though the new laws stated that people should not fight or quarrel outside of government-sanctioned events, there were cases where it was seen as unfitting for a samurai not to fight to protect his honor, even if the law did not permit it.

²⁵ A translation and analysis of the speech can be found on page 109 of the taming of the samurai

²⁶ Vaporis, Constantine Nomikos. "Daimyo Compounds: Place and Space." In *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*, 128–71. University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqtsd.9>. Pg 162

There was an incident in the Okayama domain in 1647 where two samurai were on bad terms. One of them, called Matarokuro, started to slander the other in a castle when all of the domain's samurai were visiting. The samurai he was slandering, who went by the name of Genba, heard of the slander and did nothing. Matarokuro was ordered to commit seppuku on the grounds of his slander. Although Genba was praised for his forbearance in the presence of his lord, he was stripped of all his lands. The reason he was stripped of all of his lands was that he didn't fight back when he was supposed to.²⁷ Samurai held their positions because of their honor. Genba's failure to fight to protect his honor signified that he was no longer able to hold lands. As the Tokugawa government started to control more and more aspects of samurai life, they ended up changing the symbolic aspects of samurai honor. The Tokugawa's ability to determine what is right and what is wrong allowed them to steadily change the nature of samurai honor by changing how certain laws were enforced. They changed the nature of honor in order to make honor fit their new system and reinforce their control over samurai.

In *Chushingura*, one of the more interesting characters is a man named Honzo. Honzo is a retainer that serves Wakasanosuke. Wakasonuke was slighted by Moronao, whom he, therefore, planned to kill. When Honzo hears of this plan, he disobeys his lord, taking a large amount of money, going to Moronao and his retainers, and promising them a vast amount of wealth to bribe them into treating Wakasanosuke better. In this way, Wakasanosuke will not attempt to kill Moronao and lose his life.²⁸ What we can see from those two events are both of what the writers considered acts of proper honor. Wakasanosuke and Honzo are treated as honorable actors in this event, which tells us two things. The first is that according to this play, it is honorable to seek

²⁷ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. 212

²⁸ Takada Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, Namiki Senryu. "Chushingura The Treasury of Loyal Retainers." page 50

revenge for a slight. During this period, therefore, the idea of honor being gained and maintained through violence was still present, at least among lower classes as they were the primary group that watched the puppet show. However, this could be because samurai often directed their violence downward to maintain their social positions. But it also tells us that any insult to your person must be met with swift, decisive action. However, the nature of Tokugawa laws limited the ability to react to threats to a person's honor. Even though there were laws in place in order to try and prevent unsanctioned revenge seeking between samurai, it was still honorable to try and go around law to seek revenge anyway. The competition between what some groups saw as honorable and the laws put in place by the Tokugawa created a large amount of tension.

The Tokugawa tried to quash unsanctioned violence between samurai, without complete success. As for the authors of *Chushingura*, it remained the right action to seek retribution for a slight even if it would result in your death. However, as I will show in my section of gender and sexuality, these laws did not cover violence against women. And for many, violence remained an important part of showcasing honor, especially among younger samurai who were dissatisfied that the lack of major wars gave them no chance to perform or show off their honor. This dissatisfaction can be seen around 1600 in the *kabuki mono*, groups of samurai known for their nonconformist fashion and aggressive behavior who started numerous street brawls.²⁹ The *kabuki mono* were upset at the end of war and their lack of ability to demonstrate their martial abilities, leaving them no way of demonstrating their honor. Thus, they took to the streets, engaging in street brawls in order to prove themselves and their honor. The rise of the *kabuki mono* reflects an observation that Hobsbawm and Ranger have made about rapid social transformations leading to invented tradition:

²⁹ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. 205

“We should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated: In short, when there are sufficiently large and rapid changes on the demand or the supply side.³⁰”

The Tokugawa shogunate took control of Japan after a century of warfare and brought about a rapid change of society. Due to the lack of conflicts many samurai did not actually have to fight and so the old ways that people were able to move up in the social hierarchy were also fundamentally changed. During the Sengoku period, people frequently changed positions on the hierarchy due to skill at arms, and people like Hideyoshi Toyotomi could come from nothing and become nearly the ruler of all of Japan. Afterward, positions were solidified, and change in the hierarchical structure was far harder to do from below, and to change it from above was unlikely. This was done through a series of laws started by Hideyoshi Toyotomi, and finished by Ieyasu. Such as the new codified caste system, or the famous sword hunt which took swords away from many peasants. The sword hunt centralized violence in the hands of the samurai. Among the samurai, the Tokugawa made themselves the supposed sole arbiter of violence and all conflict between samurai should go through them; the result was an entrenched system of hierarchy and new samurai had to come to terms with the fact that they were no longer able to aspire to be a full daimyo. They would have to be content with being a retainer. Due to the shifting social patterns, as old practices and understandings of martial valor moved away from proving oneself in the violence of warfare to showcasing control through loyalty and obedience. Therefore, different groups invented their own tradition, calling upon a mythologized past to justify their positions of power.

Honor as Loyalty

³⁰ Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. Page 5

This invented tradition naturally relied on how samurai had previously based their right to rule on their ability to possess honor. But since the traditional method of displaying violence through skill at arms in order to gain and maintain honor was no longer available, many imagined a new tradition of samurai honor based upon loyalty. The idea of samurai honor changed by the late 1600s. The older idea of honor which was demonstrated by the ability to defend or gain your honor through violence, started to shift to an idea of honor demonstrated through loyalty. While this shift was caused by Tokugawa changes to the system of rule, this change was not an intentional shift on the part of the Tokugawa. This shift was instead a result of a reinvention of the past. People used new ideas about the past to justify their rule in the present, and in the process, new traditions came into being. The samurai looked to the past and chose to ignore the many elements of backstabbing and switching sides in order to focus on other elements of their past that would serve to define the present such as seppuku and loyalty to death.

One creates a tradition by referencing the past and claiming it has always been this way, even when talking about brand new concepts or ideas or, in the case of Japan, by modifying the importance of old ideas to the new reality. Ihara does this in a unique way in one of his stories, where he explicitly criticizes the old age of the samurai.

“Our present age has witnessed a drastic change in the behavior and attitudes of samurai. In bygone days, proving his mettle was the samurai’s paramount consideration and life was held cheap. If the sword sheaths of two samurai accidentally brushed against each other, the men would rail at each other and then begin a profitless duel; as a result either they would both be killed, or else the victor would stride away from his slain opponent. Such behavior was praised for it was said to reflect the true samurai spirit, but in fact this kind of bravado is completely contrary to the way of a samurai. In order to be prepared for the worst eventuality, a lord bestows a considerable stipend upon each of his retainers. Any man who ignores the obligation thus incurred and selfishly throws his life away in a personal quarrel is a villain, deaf to righteousness.”³¹

³¹ Saikaku, Ihara. "*Tales of samurai honor (Buke giri monogatari)*." page 71

Criticizing the past of samurai honor culture and acknowledging the present situation of how samurai are expected to act is interesting for two reasons. First is that Ihara lived from 1642-1692, and he lived early in the Tokugawa era, showing us how this shift was rather dramatic in its speed to change the way the entire society viewed how samurai were supposed to act. While loyalty has obviously been a concept in samurai honor for a while, the most dramatic thing here is the denunciation of violence as the proper way of maintaining honor. The idea that violence is not the proper method for honor but instead honoring your lord is the most important part of samurai honor. This quote criticizes the past because it shows that this new idea of the lord first has become very entrenched when he wrote this. Honoring your lord could take many forms during this period. According to Yamamoto, honor was achieved through absolute loyalty and dying in service to your lord and putting him above all else. The more general opinion is that samurai owe subservience to the lord and that takes the form of listening to orders or showing proper respect. This form of a feudal contract was implemented in the Sengoku period and made into the mainstream during the Tokugawa. In return for your position and stipend you would honor your lord and serve him. Not only would that take the form of bureaucratic busy work but it would also be military. However violence in order to defend your honor was considered a lack of loyalty and therefore frowned upon. These ideas are shown by the focus on the military aspects in the quote by Ihara which denotes that military service is also expected as part of honoring your lord. But unsanctioned use of violence was frowned upon and considered improper.

Ihara wasn't the only one who thought that violence should not be a feature in samurai honor anymore and should instead be framed through loyalty. Yamaga Sako later contemplated the exact purpose of a samurai and tried to answer the question of what is the point of the

samurai. He claims this question is important as samurai do not produce any goods: they do not farm, manufacture or create. He claims that the business of the samurai is service and much like Ihara military preparation is simply the outer texture of inward peace.

“The business of the samurai is to reflect on his own station in life, to give loyal service to his master if he has one, to strengthen his fidelity in associations with friends, and, with due consideration to his own position, to devote himself to duty to duty above all. . . . It would not do for the samurai to know martial and civil virtues without manifesting them. Since this is the case, outwardly he stands in physical readiness for any call to service, and inwardly he strives to fulfill the way of the lord and subject, friend and friend, parent and child, older and younger brother, husband and wife. Within his heart he keeps to the ways of peace, but without, he keeps his weapons ready for use.”³²

What Yamaga Sako reveals here is an interesting trend away from the importance of martial strength as the prominent outward appearance of honor. In contrast, *Hagakure* or *Chushingura* shifted the idea of martial strength into loyalty, reframing loyalty as tradition. Here Yamaga Sako is outright saying that military readiness is not the most important factor in honor; instead, it is the filial bonds between retainer and master, bonds resembling a family, and correctly using those bonds is how one gains honor. Military readiness is just something that happens in those bonds. Although presenting the same ideas of what should be loyalty as *Hagakure* and *Chushingura*, this piece does it in a dramatically different fashion by rejecting the old ideas of the warrior as no longer needed and demonstrating how honor could only be gained by following his Confucian values, which he proposes are already somewhat inherent in existing samurai values.

Like other Confucian scholars, Yamaga is using this period of change to reconceptualize the basis of honor. While Yamaga doesn't make any outward showing of it in the quotations above, he often uses the ideas of Confucius. He looks down on Neo-Confucianism as a distorted version of Confucian ideas, so much so that he was partly exiled for these views. Yamaga fuses

³² De Bary, Wm Theodore, Carol Gluck, and Donald Keene. *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2, 1600 to 2000*. Vol. 2. page 167

older conceptions of honor with more modern ideas of being a loyal retainer. In doing so, he binds these ideas to Confucius, claiming that honor comes from Confucian values, thereby justifying his existence in the honor culture of Japan. Confucian scholars influenced the conversation on bushido and the ideas of honor during this period. In their attempt to marry Confucian ideas about leadership to the Shogunate, many scholars had to come to terms with bushido. One of the major issues with trying to implement Neo-Confucian ideas into the shogunate was that Neo-Confucianism was primarily built around the concept in China where the military could be ignored as an unpleasant reality, whereas in Japan, the ruling class were the army and so trying to wrestle those two things together was a challenge that left for many differing opinions and arguments.

A student of Yamaga Sako wrote about the proper method of arranging your day as a samurai, revealing some interesting concepts about how samurai should act. He talks about how a samurai should act, without describing anything martial. He mainly discusses filial piety and how one should serve their lord like their parents.³³ This is interesting because Yamaga Sako did speak a lot about martial matters, as he believed it was an essential part of samurai culture. However, martial values are not described in this piece written by his student. This book was also written for younger children and was meant to serve as a primer on being a proper samurai. As a result, it would make sense to teach young children about what could be said to be the main aspect of being a samurai from other perspectives. Another interesting aspect about this book is that it contains numerous ideas centered around the Confucian classics. In order to understand the primer fully, one would need a thorough base in the Confucian classics. This suggests that Yamaga Sako thought that it was important for aspiring samurai to have a thorough understanding of Confucianism to be a samurai properly. The fact that there is no aspect of

³³ Ibid page 164

martial prowess or training suggests that, to this group, the actual martial aspects were of limited importance to a samurai's knowledge. However, we understand that this isn't true and many samurai still tried to merge their ideas of honor with different aspects of martial prowess.

Much like the idea of violence one of the significant ways that samurai society organized itself changed in the Tokugawa, Kampei's story in *Chushingura* is a great example of how the *Ie* was replaced with the clan structure. Kampei was the one who was supposed to be watching out for Enya when Enya encountered Moronao, but Kampei was instead with his lover at the time, which resulted in Enya not being able to kill Moronao. Kampei, later on in the story, is walking down an old path where a man is robbing another man, and eventually, the robber kills the old man. Kampei finally finds his way to this and accidentally kills the robber while boar hunting. He then finds 50 Ryo worth of money from the robber and returns home. Later on, he tries to use that money to pay for a sculpture of his lord, using this money as a method of atonement. After a series of revelations, it turns out the old man killed by the robber is Kampei's father-in-law and was coming back from trying to sell Kampei's wife into prostitution for money. However, it originally seemed like Kampei killed his father-in-law, and in return for this and for abandoning his lord, he attempted to commit seppuku.

"I am ashamed to appear before you in these humiliating circumstances. I had made up my mind to commit seppuku if you refused my request. I'll tell you everything since, as you say, the crime of killing my father reflects disgrace on our late master. . . . When I got back home I learned what had happened. The man I killed was my father-in-law and the money, the price of my wife. Everything I do goes at cross purposes. . . . (During this period it is revealed that Kampei actually killed the man who killed his father and in return Goemon lets Kampei join as one of the ronin to kill Moronao.) Narrator: He cuts his belly in a cross and, pulling out his entrails, presses them to the paper. Kampei: I have sealed the document in my blood. Ahhh, how grateful, how thankful I am! My long-cherished wish has become a reality. Mother, please do not grieve. Father's death

and my wife's becoming a prostitute have not been in vain. Offer this money as a contribution to the league."³⁴

This quote provides some useful information on how the *Ie* was understood in relation to the clan structure. The main idea that this quotation shows is how, according to this text, the *Ie* became nearly irrelevant to maintain samurai honor. Instead, it primarily involved the larger clan daimyo structure. The same thing can be seen in Hagakure, as the author often talks about the greatness of his domain and, therefore, his clan/daimyo. Unlike the *Ie*, which was built around the extended family, the clan daimyo structure wasn't inherently tied to family unless it was the daimyo's family but instead based around the system of vassalage that tied groups together. In the final lines, Kampei showcases how the destruction of his *Ie* is completely fine as it benefits the larger system of vassalage he is a part of. By presenting this aspect, it tells us that the authors (and due to its popularity, we can assume many more) found this idea at least commonplace. This tells us that another significant aspect of samurai honor was recontextualized in this period to serve the feudal nature of Tokugawa rule better. However, whether it was done intentionally or not is unknown, although unlikely. It can be seen that these changes, both the seppuku and the change to the *Ie*, both served the nature of Tokugawa rule. The new changes to the *Ie* allowed for redefining how honor was understood and maintained, allowing the daimyos and the Tokugawa to effectively maintain a more rigid control over honor even if there were no more wars to fight and they were the ones that people served. Perhaps one of the reasons that this was allowed to pass through the censors, even with the very obvious name changes and time changes, was because it conformed to values that the Tokugawa benefited from.

³⁴ Takada Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, Namiki Senryu. "*Chushingura The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*." Page100-101

Honorable Debts and the Death Frenzy

According to Yamamoto, the author of *Hagakure*, the main goal of any samurai should be loyalty and service to the clan. All samurai incur a debt when they are taken in or raised in the clan structure. This debt is why samurai serve the leader of the clan and ensure that their will is carried out. This idea of debt is a major departure from older ideas about serving the lord; one served for rewards and as a method of demonstrating military prowess. This may seem like a dramatic change in the arguments surrounding honor culture. However, it was still rooted in the ideas of self-control, because a demonstration of loyalty now reveals the control over a desire for personal advancement. As it was thought that control played a role in aspects of martial combat as well, your ability to put the clan in front of your own personal desires, either for life or for advancement, demonstrates your self-control. Furthermore, I argue that seppuku was a form of expressing the ultimate form of control over yourself. By participating in a highly painful and drawn-out form of death, it reveals your ability to control not only your emotions but also your ability to remain stoic. Even though in the later Tokugawa, the institutionalization of seppuku became highly ritualized and was mainly used as a form of execution exclusive to samurai, it remained about expressing self-control. As it became highly ritualized, it shifted from being able to master pain to being able to master the fear of death.³⁵ Yamamoto is simply reframing control from being primarily surrounding ideas of martial prowess and into ideas surrounding loyalty and selfless sacrifice. He does this by reframing the narrative from joining with a lord in order to demonstrate your martial ability, to performing your loyalty. He then gives examples on the proper way to perform your loyalty and why it reveals your control. Such as service to your lord

³⁵ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. Page 255

and preparing each day by getting ready to die. By proposing a new method for gaining honor, Yamamoto exhibits how interchangeable the nature of samurai honor could be.

Yamamoto also discusses several aspects of samurai honor, using different lessons to teach the reader how to be a proper samurai. Some examples of what Yamamoto understands as proper samurai conduct reveals how he understood the concept of honor. “If you make a mistake and die in the process, you may be thought of as mad (*kichigai*), but it will not bring shame. This is the mind-set of one who firmly lives by the Martial Way. Rehearse your death every morning and night. Only when you constantly live as though you are already a corpse (*jōjū shinimi*) will you be able to find freedom in the martial Way, and fulfill your duties without fault throughout your life.”³⁶ Loyalty was central to how Yamamoto understood honor. The ‘martial way’ refers to the way of the samurai, as samurai separated themselves from others through their exclusive right to violence over others and themselves. When he claims that the best way to gain martial prowess is to live as though already dead, he emphasizes that the best way to gain honor is through selfless loyalty. However, in order to frame that as an element of control, he claims that the best way to serve is to master the fear of death. He thus manipulates the superficial nature of honor while keeping the same core.

Yamamoto’s focus on living as though already a corpse extends beyond just doing your duties he also argues that it is the best way that a samurai can fight. Yamamoto wrote that in order to serve, one must enter a death frenzy.

“Bushido is to enter a ‘death frenzy’ (*shini-gurui*). Even dozens of men cannot kill a man in a frenzied state already determined to die.” Lord Naoshige said this. One cannot accomplish great exploits in a normal frame of mind. Just become insane and desperate to die. In the Way of the warrior, contemplating matters too deeply will cause you to fall behind others. Don’t think of loyalty or filial piety, just enter a frenzy to perish in *shidō*.

³⁶Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. Alexander Bennet trans. page 43

Loyalty and filial piety will manifest as a matter of course in the death frenzy.”³⁷

Warrior skill was one of the most important aspects to samurai and samurai honor. Yamamoto is telling the reader the best way to fight; however, since there was no fighting to be had during his time, he was free to make things up that better suited his ideals. In this way, he developed the idea of the death frenzy. His new theory on the best way to fight reveals how samurai of his time may have thought about combat and violence as a whole: the best way to fight was to give up all pretense of living and attempt to die. The fact that this is obviously so wrong suggests that to him the aspect of control was seen as the most important aspect in fighting. The act of giving up your will to live and fight determined to die is an act of supreme control over the self. Because it's such an extreme demonstration of control, which suggests that Yamamoto felt that the most important aspect of martial skills is in the amount of control over the self. While self-control does have some impact on your ability to fight, Yamamoto emphasizes it to the point that it becomes the central important idea. But because it also ties back into his argument about the best way to serve your lord it showcases that to him embracing death is the best way to be loyal and that will also transfer into skill at arms. But because Yamamoto combines two different features of loyalty and fighting prowess through the same means of the death frenzy he is showcasing how the two different ideas are able to be bridged and therefore he is attempting to combine the way people think about martial skill and loyalty.

Many of the people writing about samurai honor are attempting to create a new tradition in order to reinforce their claims. Yamamoto is doing the same thing, to do so he continuously makes references to the past or other long-standing cultural traditions in order to give his work legitimacy, Hobsbawm wrote that to invent tradition one must make continuous references to the

³⁷ Ibid page 97

past in order to justify existence in present “Inventing traditions, it is assumed here, is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition.”³⁸ In order to bridge the gap between his tradition and the past, Yamamoto often draws on Neo-Confucian ideas about filial piety. During the Tokugawa period, there was a surge in the promotion of Neo-Confucian ideas, and schools began to focus on teaching Neo-Confucian books, especially among samurai.³⁹ Furthermore, in his book, he talks about the four oaths, which are: “I will never fall behind others in pursuing the Way of the warrior. I will always be ready to serve my lord. I will honor my parents. I will serve compassionately for the benefit of others.”⁴⁰ This bears some resemblance to the Buddhist five precepts, and I further believe that the author's time as a Buddhist monk was the origin of these four oaths. The author is making some outright references to Confucianism and more subtle ones to Buddhism, especially in the idea of the four oaths. However, I believe that Yamamoto is making these connections on purpose in order to present how his opinions, while different from the norm, are backed up by history and different aspects of culture. He also makes many references to the past. For example, he makes reference to Kusunoki Masashige, who fought for the emperor during the Genko war he is famous for supposedly saying “Would that I had seven lives to give for my country” he references this when he says, “My greatest hope is that when I die, if I am to be reincarnated seven times, each time is as a samurai of the Nabeshima clan to realize my purpose of faithful and valuable service.”⁴¹ By drawing examples from the *Taiheiki*, a chronicle of the Nanboku-cho period, he draws on one of the most culturally important works for conceptions of

³⁸ Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. *The invention of tradition*. Page 2-3

³⁹ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. 299-300

⁴⁰ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. page 39

⁴¹ Ibid page 102

samurai honor. Yamamoto, by making all of these references and allusions, is in the process of trying to invent a tradition for samurai honor culture.

Performing and Internalizing Honor

During the Tokugawa period, samurai did not have many ways of performing their honor. As having your honor be known by the rest of samurai society was an important aspect due to the fact that samurai honor originally existed as a way of demonstrating your ability as a soldier or leader to other samurai, it was very important that you showcase your honor. However, during the Tokugawa period, some people started to argue that some honor could be internalized. One of the main reasons for this change was that samurai had no means of demonstrating their honor as the old way of demonstrating honor through violence was gone, and how do you showcase your loyalty to your lord?

In one of the most famous scenes in *Chushingura*, the book's main character, Yaranosuke, demonstrates how honor can be internal even if performing an action that would not normally confer honor. Yaranosuke eats an octopus given to him by Kudaya, who had turned from being Enya's retainer into a spy for Moronao. The octopus is important because it was the night before the anniversary of Enya's death, and during that time, you aren't supposed to eat fish.⁴² This event shows us how far loyalty is supposed to go in its ideal form. The reason this scene is so famous is not only because it is near impossible to get the emotions right but also because of how the scene represents loyalty. Yaranosuke is willing to go so far in the ruse he keeps up so that the others can secretly attempt to kill Moronao that he is willing to pollute himself and dishonor his master, all in the name of honoring his master. This shows that the idea of the Senken is again being modified to indicate that honor is an internal metric, even if it is used as a method of

⁴² Takada Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, Namiki Senryu. "*Chushingura The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*." 113

judgment. Because all of Yaranosuke's actions are considered dishonorable, being a wastrel or a man upon the waves, living in the pleasures of the floating world, is not seen as good conduct for many samurai.

Furthermore, the dishonorable actions that he takes become honorable because they are a deception. This deception shows to the writers that honor can be internalized. It also reveals that honor is still a performative action used to judge others. However, honor in service of your lord is an internal honor. This idea is an obvious contradiction. As I have already talked about, honor is supposed to reflect in your other actions and self-control. So internal honor can exist and still be performative because of the assumption that if you have honor in one area, your other actions will be honorable. His actions are honorable due to all of his positions and potential temptations. It is, in fact, a ruse, and eating the octopus is the ultimate expression of self-control, and being able to eat it with a straight face shows his top honor through his self-control. However, later in the story, we see how Yaranosuke does want to display his loyalty on the battlefield with his lord. Upon thinking of missing the opportunity to do so, he bursts into tears.⁴³ His desire to demonstrate his loyalty and, therefore, his honor on the battlefield tells us that performing your honor was still a significant factor in understanding honor. The dishonorable actions he undertook in preparing for this plot would still have been performative and therefore not internal because of the eventual plot, which would reveal the truth and reveal his honor. However, that's not the case, as the actions themselves do bring honor even if they would never have been seen.

Yamamoto would argue that it is far more difficult to properly serve a master well. To try and maintain loyalty and diligent service is the more loyal action than combat. Furthermore, loyalty and diligent service don't need to be seen for you to still maintain honor.

⁴³ Ibid page 148

“On loyalty. Rather than exploits in battle, a retainer can exhibit magnificent loyalty by correcting his master’s mind-set, and thereby contribute to the stability of the domain. It is not difficult to be the first warrior to attack the enemy line or achieve a meritorious feat, as all one needs to do is risk life and limb by charging forth. This is a solitary action, and is over when you die. On the other hand, correcting the lord’s faults requires many years of devoted toil—not brief, sacrificial missions. It is only after one has been promoted to the position of elder councilor or chief retainer following years of dedicated service, earning the trust of one’s colleagues and lord and receiving his favor, that a man earns the right to offer counsel. This demands inestimable hard work until promotion is granted.”⁴⁴

Yamamoto here reconstructs the narrative on how samurai can gain honor in this period. He highlights how the old ideas of what makes a person good at violence can be achieved through loyalty. This shift to loyalty reveals another aspect that changes the old idea of honor needed to be demonstrated. For Yamamoto, honor does not need to be externally demonstrated to others; it could be internal, gained through loyalty, even an unseen loyalty. The honor of loyalty changes how honor is gained and perceived. It shifts the nature of discussions of honor. Although the idea may not have originated with Yamamoto, his co-option of the idea shows the dramatic shifts in honor culture during the Tokugawa period. Furthermore, it reinforces the fact that honor was about control. If it was just about violence, it would necessitate that honor be demonstrated. If honor comes from self-control, it can be internal and invisible.

“A retainer who is too perceptive is bad”—a famous comment by Yamasaki Kurando. Preoccupation with concerns of whether someone is loyal or disloyal, just or unjust, appropriate or inappropriate as a retainer, and scrutinizing matters from the perspective of right and wrong, good and evil, is not a desirable attitude. It will suffice to simply relish the role of service, and esteem your lord above all else. This makes for a top-notch retainer. Serving with too much gusto, or cherishing your lord excessively may lead to mistakes; but it will bring to fruition the goal in one’s heart. It is said that excessiveness

⁴⁴Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. Alexander Bennet trans page 219

in anything is harmful, but service is surely the exception. In this case, failure through overzealous attention to duty is nothing short of honorable.”⁴⁵

He opens this section with a quotation to give more credence to his idea, reinforcing his other main point that honor is gained through selfless service and that it can be internal. This statement adds another element to the idea that mistakes are acceptable, provided, of course, they are in service to your lord. Mistakes in service to the lord leads to success overall. Yamamoto frequently argues that if your lord is wrong, you should not correct him. This silence reveals how self-control remains at the core of his invented tradition. Although he appears to be talking about loyalty, loyalty primarily serves to reinforce honor and self-control. This is an inherently self-serving argument of loyalty disguised as being selfless.

The Ako Vendetta

Loyalty and the clan became the new central concepts that honor was framed around. However, what happens when a person's loyalty is split between their clan and the shogunate? Before the Tokugawa, this was an easy answer, whatever benefited you most. However, during the Tokugawa, with the lack of available jobs and a large number of samurai, being kicked out from a clan would mean becoming a ronin for most likely the rest of your life, especially as the clan was not associated as the main way that samurai had a starting basis for honor. As such, the way people thought about loyalty was changed due to the new social pressures put in place by the new focus on the clan. A great example of the ways that many people tried to reframe honor is how they talked about the Ako Vendetta, which was an event where Asano Naganori attempted and failed to kill Kira Yoshinaka. However, because Asano did this without Tokugawa approval

⁴⁵ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. Alexander Bennet trans page 126

he was sentenced to commit seppuku. The retainers of Asano then waited a year and killed Kira. This was a very famous event that caused much discussion over whether or not the actions taken by the Ronin were justified, many different groups had different opinions and their opinions can inform on how to better understand different interpretations of honor.

During the Sengoku period, a method of punishment was devised in order to keep honor conflicts at bay in an army and to promote cohesion on campaigns. This punishment demanded that in the case of a killing or conflict between two people, both would be punished, usually in the form of execution. This form of punishment was called *Kenka ryoseibai*; during the Ako vendetta, one retainer of the Tokugawa, a Neo-Confucian, wanted to investigate why Asano tried to kill lord Kira and thought that applying *Kenka ryoseibai* would be more appropriate.

“Still, Lord Asano is the lord of a castle and the recipient of fifty thousand *koku*. Moreover, the main branch of the Asano clan, to which he is related, is one of the most powerful daimyo families in the realm. Might we be proceeding without sufficient concern for the gravity of the situation in sentencing him to commit *seppuku* on this very day? . . . True, Lord Kira behaved admirably, nevertheless, it seems that even if Lord Asano, a daimyo with a stipend of fifty thousand *koku*, was deranged, if he bore a grudge that prompted him to discard his family, forget his presence in the shogun's castle, and would strike Lord Kira with his sword, then is it so difficult to conclude that Lord Kira must have pushed him over the limit?”⁴⁶

This occurs before the Ako vendetta when Asano Naganori attempted to kill Kira Yoshinaka. Okada Denpachiro argues that there may be more to this than meets the eye and warns against potential retribution from the Asano clan. This can tell us ideas about samurai honor based upon what he assumes, mainly that his position must assume some level of honor. Because honor is still based around elements of control, as that was usually a martial skill, samurai were expected to control their emotions. Because of his emotional outburst, we see an example of how the

⁴⁶De Bary, Wm Theodore, Carol Gluck, and Donald Keene. *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2, 1600 to 2000*. Vol. 2. page 356

position influenced people's understanding of how people were expected to behave. Mostly, a person's position was supposed to indicate some form of preexisting honor; this honor is directly tied to his self-control, as the lack of self-control spurred the retainer to ask whether there's something more here.

Yamamoto had his own opinions on what should have happened during the Ako vendetta. He at first criticizes the ronin for not acting soon enough, claiming that they should at first have just thrown themselves at Kira because “being killed this way brings no shame.”⁴⁷ Pausing to gather reinforcements or think out a plan, he argues, would have potentially resulted in them missing the ability to assassinate Kira. He claims that just charging in with no fear of death most likely would have worked. But the important part is that it would bring no shame, furthering his idea of the death frenzy as the proper method of interacting and one that would bring honor. “The rōnin of the Asano clan were culpable for not immediately committing seppuku at the Sengakuji Temple [after the night raid on Lord Kira’s mansion]. Moreover, it took too long to exact revenge after their master was killed by the enemy. What if [their intended victim] Lord Kira had died of illness in the interim? It would have been a disgrace. Warriors of the Kamigata region are clever and shrewd in finding ways of being showered in praise.”⁴⁸ He claims that the proper way for the 47 ronin to act would have been to immediately commit seppuku. Furthermore, he also explains how lack of immediate action and proper planning are against the main ideas of honor and that the best method is for someone to throw themselves into the fight and die. We do see elements of this in the past, where being the first one into the fight was a sign of honor. However, that has a different meaning than what Yamamoto puts forth, as the main reason for not hesitating was missing an opportunity to avenge your lord. But he claims that it was all for attention and not for

⁴⁷ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. page 70

⁴⁸ Ibid page 70

actual honor that they committed this act. He demonstrates his claim by talking about how they should not have waited and instead gone straight to killing Kira. Furthermore, he claims in his book that honor should not be performative and that looking for attention goes against what makes honor. He mainly thinks that serving your lord without fear of death is the primary way that a person could gain honor and so one must be devoted to their lord. If it was just service that Yamamoto thought was important, killing Kira would not have been necessary.

Yamamoto is saying in plain words that service through devotion, not just service, is the primary method of gaining honor. The next quotation builds on that idea. “Depending on the situation, one may have to trample on one’s lord’s commands, or waive charity from other people to carry out your duty. Ultimately, you will never deviate from the right course so long as your sole desire is to serve your lord.”⁴⁹ This quotation shows that there are not any true mistakes if you are just interested in properly serving your lord. Serving your lord will always be the proper thing to do, even if there is another lord who is telling you to do something. If you are just listening to your lord, then it won't matter. The difficult part here is that he may be referring to the Tokugawa Shogunate or its bannerman. Yamamoto did not like the shogunate but was not able to say that explicitly in his book. Nevertheless, he does talk about the shogunate behaving improperly, such as banning oibara.⁵⁰ He implies that stepping over the shogunate may be the proper action in the long run, if done with proper loyalty to your lord. However, the book was still banned later by the shogunate.

Hayashi Hoko was a Confucian scholar and the head of the Confucian academy. He took a more middle stance in the arguments around the Ako vendetta, arguing that both the ronin and the law were correct. “To hang onto life by enduring shame and humiliation is not the way of the

⁴⁹ Ibid page 194

⁵⁰ Ibid page 96

samurai. We must also consider the vendetta from the perspective of the law. Anyone who sees the law as his enemy must be put to death.”⁵¹ Here we see how this Confucian scholar tries to fit the ideas of Confucianism into the current situation. He does this by bringing up quotations that one should not share the same sky as the enemy of one's father or ruler. In this, he quotes the book of rights; however, the original book of rites states "not to live under the same sky with the murderer of one's father" What we see here is something that we also see in Hagakure: Hayashi is attempting to create an idea of the past, in this case, the idea is a misinterpreted quotation from the books of rites, but he is also using the format of a person asking him a question and him responding as the format for this piece. This furthers the connection between him and Confucius. By making these connections, the author hopes to make connections between the past and himself. Doing this, he furthers his point that both the government and the ronin in the Ako vendetta were justified. The samurai were justified because it is supposedly in their nature not to endure humiliation, and the law was justified because it comes from the state and righteous rulers. This piece of writing tells the reader of a greater purpose in trying to merge the military aspect of Tokugawa rule with Confucianism by highlighting aspects of the samurai that supposedly follow Confucian values and suggesting that the Tokugawa rule is just and benevolent despite their military elements.

We also see that some people also found that the ronin in the Ako vendetta were justified and thought they were righteous. Muro Kyuso was born the son of a ronin before becoming a scholar serving under the Tokugawa shogunate. Throughout his book on the Ako vendetta, he constantly references different aspects of Chinese history to justify his claims through Confucian

⁵¹De Bary, Wm Theodore, Carol Gluck, and Donald Keene. *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2, 1600 to 2000*. Vol. 2. page 360-361

ideas. He also frames this as a discussion between his three disciples who are contemplating the classics, giving the scholar a further veneer of legitimacy.

“Another disciple, Tani Kyozen observed, “No, that is not the case! In ancient times Bo Yi and Shu Qi strongly opposed King Wu’s plan to overthrow King Zhou and the Shang dynasty. Thus they stood in front of the horse of King Wu’s army, hoping to prevent the overthrow with their own bodies. Now the samurai of Ako domain strongly opposed the pardon of Lord Kira Yoshinaka and so they banded together to take revenge on him in Edo. Bo Yi and Shu Qi sought to fulfill their humanity and succeeded. The Ako samurai chose to give up their lives for the sake of righteousness. While these examples differ in scale, they are the same in that both were based on giving primary importance to the righteousness that binds lords and retainers.”⁵²

By claiming a connection between the ronin and Bo Yi and Shu Qi, Muro is claiming that the past backs up his opinion. In doing so, he is furthering an agenda about the most important aspect of righteousness: the master-follower relationship. He demonstrates how the master-follower relationship should be by telling us the story of Bo Yi and Shu Qi; in doing so, the link he creates reveals the imagined past he is linking it back to, and in doing so, he attempts to create a tradition. But the interesting thing about this is that it is not the Japanese past but instead the Confucian Chinese past. He could have just as easily used the story of Kusunoki Masashige to present his example; however, he used a story from ancient China to reveal his point. That does make sense for a Confucian scholar to claim that Chinese history is older and more enlightened; therefore, by claiming that version of the past, it shows that this is the better thing to do.

Sato Naokata was a Neo-Confucian who, unlike the others I've mentioned before, did not serve in Edo and instead served in numerous domains. He claims that the 47 ronin, instead of acting out of loyalty to their lord instead, operated out of greed and if they wanted to demonstrate

⁵² De Bary, Wm Theodore, Carol Gluck, and Donald Keene. *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2, 1600 to 2000*. Vol. 2. page 362

against the shogunate's decision to kill lord Asano, which he argues was justified. He instead claims that the proper and honorable way to act would have been for them all to kill themselves because of the state's decision.⁵³ This he argues is the proper way to go about things and that is to act in accordance with the state. The action of loyalty he talks about is largely an idea coming from a Confucian place of understanding. Another Confucian scholar called Ogyu Sorai claims that Asano acted inappropriately to his station: “forgetting his ancestors and acting no more courageously than a common fellow, Lord Asano yielded to a moment of anger that morning and thus failed in his attempt to kill lord Kira. Lord Asano’s behavior must be deemed unrighteous (fugi). At best, the forty-seven men can be said to have deftly carried out their master’s evil intentions. How can that be called right (gi).”⁵⁴ This argument reinforces the old idea that what separates samurai from other members of the social order is their honor or, in this case, their self-control. This does tell us martial abilities still define that honor. It was just that these new things, such as loyalty or fashion in Hagakure, were just seen as extensions of military prowess instead of being actions that were separate from military prowess.

Gender and sexuality

What is Masculinity

The way Tokugawa samurai understood masculinity was not only just as a concept separate in itself but also as something intertwined with honor. Samurai needed to justify their ruling position and patriarchal authority. Their masculinity often was tied into their idea of honor as well as a feature of their ruling system. When Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote Hagakure, he

⁵³Ibid page 367

⁵⁴ Ibid page 364

talked about how men were becoming less masculine. He describes the decreasing masculinity through an encounter he had with a doctor.

“I once heard that the physician Matsugumasaki-no-Kyōan said, ‘In the profession of medicine, treatments for men and women are meted out differently in accordance with positive and negative energy (yin-yang). The pulse of a man is different to that of a woman. Still, in the past five decades or so, the variance between the pulses between the sexes has become indistinguishable. Since noticing this, I have modified my treatment of eye ailments in men to comply with how I treat women. Male patients show little response to traditional male treatments. I have come to the realization that manly essence is absent in many of them, and they have become very feminine as a sign of the worsening times. This is an observation gleaned from medical treatment that I keep secretly to myself.’”⁵⁵

When he describes his encounter in the form of a conversation with a doctor, he is adding more legitimacy to his later claim that men are becoming more and more feminine because they do not go through acts that he considers manly. By making this claim, he is trying to support his argument that he makes throughout his books that honor is taking a serious decline in these times and we must go back to the past. His past is a twisted version, and so he backs up his position with claims from others and a story from more famous people. By linking an idea of honor to masculinity, he reaffirms his claim that masculinity, and therefore honor, is declining. He reinforces this point later on in the book, “Four or five decades ago, when Matanuki was considered to be proof of manliness, no man dared show an unscathed thigh to others, so he would inflict cuts on himself. Such actions validated his valor and virility. A man’s work was bloody indeed. Nowadays, however, such acts are condemned as foolish, and matters are resolved with a clever tongue, while difficult work is avoided altogether. This is a matter that young warriors should chew over thoroughly.”⁵⁶ The act of Matanuki is reportedly piercing one’s thigh with a sharp object such as a sword. Control is an intrinsic part of honor, and what we can

⁵⁵ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. page 59-60

⁵⁶ Ibid page 60

glean from this quote is that it's very much an important part of masculinity as well. The two are very much intertwined as having masculinity was seen as a major reason for a person to have honor. Directing violence towards oneself demonstrates your ability to control your reaction to pain. Showing off the wound informs the world that you possess strong control over your emotions. The other thing that we can gain from this quote is that showing off your masculinity is important. If it wasn't, why else would they not dare to show their unscathed thighs to others? While this is most likely a fictional account of the past it does tell us many things about how people conceived of masculinity such as that supposedly it was backed by science, it was tied to violence and honor, and it needed to be shown in order for it to be validated.

Matanuki showcased one of the most important feature of samurai masculinity which was the ability to control pain. Hagakure tells the story of a man who was ill while dying and yet never cried out in pain. ““I will do no such thing! Everyone knows the name of Jin’uemon, so how would it look if a man considered more outstanding than the rest was to let out an audible groan in his final moments?’ He never cried out to the very end.”⁵⁷ The idea of controlling your emotions was also an aspect of samurai honor. To control your emotions was seen as an act of martial valor and therefore a critical component to honor. The ideas of honor and masculinity are very much intertwined and their combination serves to bolster the patriarchy. Honor is treated as if it were a part of masculinity, as if only a man could really possess honor, despite the fact that there were famous women soldiers in the day. The women soldiers are seen as exceptions that demonstrate how honor is usually only male. Because honor is masculinity, the understanding of masculinity can also help to better understand Tokugawas samurai’s conception of honor.

Yamamoto also believes that samurai women should share in the acceptance of death that male samurai are supposed to maintain. For example, in the case of a house fire when a samurai's

⁵⁷ Ibid page 230

husband was away, women were supposed to embrace death. While everyone was evacuated, it became apparent that the lady of the house had not evacuated. According to Yamamoto, the woman apparently said “I have already been telling my servants to leave, but my husband is away, and it would not be appropriate for his wife to abandon the house in his absence. I am prepared to burn to death.”⁵⁸ This was supposedly relayed by Kanemaru. To the samurai, women were seen as objects, like kites, utterly without personal direction, moving on the wind to the whims of the samurai who hold the real power. “Once, a certain man said, “I know the shape of ‘reason’ (ri) and ‘women.’” When somebody asked what shape these things were, he replied: ‘Reason is a square, and will not budge at all. Women are round. Women do not discriminate between good or evil, wrong or right, and will roll into any position.’”⁵⁹ Women are not supposed to have any free will and this is supposedly the natural state of women. Women are not only seen as antithetical to reason and thus they are able to ‘roll into any position.’ Women who exhibit any will at all are, according to Yamamoto, seen as improper. However, this seeming lack of control is what allowed the samurai to position women away from their in-group and allow them to maintain their dominant position by claiming that women have no control while samurai honor is based around control. The idea that they somehow are separate beings fulfills a different purpose. Not only does mentioning this serve as reinforcing the patriarchal system that samurai inhabit, but it also serves to create an Other who is different from the masculinity that samurai are supposed to inhabit. This Other would allow samurai to buttress their masculinity by presenting women as a contrast and further their justification for rule over others. as one of the major ways that they did define their ability to rule was their honor. The samurai's system of masculinity allowed them to justify and maintain their control over women as well as people of lower social

⁵⁸ Ibid page 239

⁵⁹ Ibid page 244

classes. This control was made into different laws that furthered the way that masculinity was controlled by samurai as well as maintaining a system of domination over women and lower classes.

There were two famous rules in the Tokugawa shogunate, one where a samurai or commoner could kill an adulterous wife, the other where a samurai could kill a commoner for disrespect.⁶⁰ These rules, while not actively done very much in practice, served as a symbolic role to place different people in a subordinate position. “Katsu Kokichi’s autobiography describes an encounter between a samurai named Sakurai and a commoner. When Sakurai wounded the commoner, Katsu and an outcast worked together to disarm the samurai. The samurai was jailed, and the outcast subsequently rewarded for his bravery, demonstrating the practical reality behind the theoretical right of the samurai. Indeed, most forms of violence by samurai were frowned upon.”⁶¹ The practical reality was that the ability to commit these acts of violence was frowned upon. By actually partaking in the right to kill people who disrespected you, you would reveal to the rest of samurai society your lack of control and, therefore, your lack of masculinity. The idea of masculinity served as a way of exhibiting your honor as well, which is one of the reasons that the ability to kill your wife if she had an affair was done very rarely in practice. To do so would demonstrate a man’s lack of masculinity and therefore take away some of his honor.

In *Chushingura* the one character who embodies the ideal of masculinity the most isn't the samurai but instead their merchant co-conspirator, Gihei. However his position as merchant actually prevents him from being masculine. In the story one day two policemen draw Gihei out

⁶⁰ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. Page 246

⁶¹ Gainty, Denis. "The New Warriors: Samurai in Early Modern Japan." In *Japan Emerging*, Page 7

of his house and threaten to arrest and torture him in order to make him confess. Then they bring out a box and begin to open it, upon this, Gihei throws himself upon it and tries to convince them not to open it. Upon this happening however the policemen grab Gihei's son and threaten to kill him. Upon seeing this Gihei says. "Ha-Ha. I see you expect to extort a confession from me, the way you might from women or child, by taking a hostage. But Gihei of the Amakawayaya is a man. Not even love for my son can make me confess what I don't know."⁶² after the policemen say that he obviously is colluding because he sold military equipment. He says "Go on, kill me! Stab my son before my eyes! Run him through! Tell me, when you slice a man by inches, do you start with the hands or do you split him through the chest first? Here, I offer you my shoulder bones and my spine-take your pick! Narrator: He thrusts himself before them, then wrenches his son from their grip. Gihei: I'll show you my spirit won't be swayed by love of my son. Narrator: He looks as if he intends to strangle the boy."⁶³ After this it turns out it was a ruse by the 47 ronin to test Gihei. We see here three different aspects of masculinity; one is that you are not supposed to lie and the other is that you should not hold strong familial bonds and that your honor comes before any family attachments. There's also the fact that you should not shy away from pain. Again these ideas come from what is considered honorable and the concept of being honorable is inherently tied to masculinity and because only samurai are truly honorable, the merchant is not seen as being able to join them on their journey to avenge Enya. Despite his actions which prove his masculinity he is never going to be on the same level as the samurai. "It's a miserable thing to be a merchant. If I were a samurai even if my stipend had been a mere handful of rice, I would cling to your sleeves and skirts when you set out on your mission and go with you, if only to dip water for your tea when you stop for a rest. But I cannot do even that. Yes, it's a wretched thing

⁶² Takada Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, Namiki Senryu. "Chushingura The Treasury of Loyal Retainers." page 158

⁶³ Ibid page 159

to be a merchant. I see now how fortunate a man is to know a master's kindness and the authority of a sword. I envy you that you can lay down your lives for them,"⁶⁴ Gihei is not able to be the man he wishes to be because of his status as a merchant. The position of one's social status determines how masculine one can be. Even though all of the samurai respect Gihei for his words and actions it isn't even mentioned that he isn't able to go. It's just taken as fact that as Gihei is a merchant he would be excluded from this revenge because of his status. As Gihei is not able to take part in this revenge in a more visceral sense he is not able to take part in the most honorable of actions. His masculinity and honor is completely separate from that of the samurai. As the samurai contrived honor to be something that is held exclusively by samurai as a means of separating themselves from others and maintaining control, the fact that merchants are unable to properly participate in honor also disallows them from participating in masculinity.

By turning different social classes into different categories of beings through the way these different classes are able to participate in the honor culture. These controls also further justify the samurai's domination over others. "A person said, 'I always wondered why eminent men could make sage remarks, but the reason occurred to me one day. Lower-class men are too busy being selfish and thinking lewd thoughts, so their hearts are polluted. They are incapable of eliciting a wise opinion and don't have the inclination to compose poetry. Noble people of high stature are void of impurity in their hearts to start with, and are inherently able to formulate sage ideas through their chasteness."⁶⁵ By telling the reader that lower-class people are unable to participate in the supposed highlights of nobility, such as poetry or sage remarks based on Confucian principles it prevents them from engaged in nobility and separates them from power. He says they can't because they think lewd thoughts and are selfish. By thinking these sorts of

⁶⁴ Ibid page 161

⁶⁵ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. page 155

thoughts, one becomes less pure and therefore corrupted. However it also exhibits one of the key elements of samurai ideas about their masculinity and, much like their honor, it's about control. If you can control your selfishness and lewd thoughts you become purer and therefore more able to be considered members of the elite. Especially the elite based around the idea of the Confucian scholar-gentlemen, which had influenced thoughts about the ideal form of masculinity around this time due to the growth of Neo-Confucianism. The concept of samurai masculinity also affected how women were treated and understood as masculinity was also defined by the idea of femininity.

Much like modern ideas of femininity, in Tokugawa Japan it was inappropriate for women to be too interested in sex. As such, it was legally permitted to murder or harm cheating women. Control over women's sexuality was inscribed both in law and in social situations. Yamamoto wrote in *Hagakure* that “a man who fakes a smile is a coward, and a woman prurient.”⁶⁶ This tells us two things. First, faking your emotions for appearance is seen as cowardly for men. But the corollary to male cowardice is women's overt sexuality. Controlling women's sexuality was seen as part of being a man. One of the reasons that not many samurai acted upon their ability to kill an adulterous wife was that it was seen as having failed. “The samurai husband who was involved in an act of retaliation never recovered his honor completely. . . An action as sensational as killing an erring wife and her lover would make the samurai's marital problem known to the community; it would expose the shame of the house to the world at large. The husband might even be accused of *fukaku* (negligence); he would have serious trouble in the samurai community, and he would lose face among his colleagues. The need to retaliate was seen as proof of the husband's previous stupidity and was almost considered ‘an

⁶⁶ Ibid page 74

additional shame.”⁶⁷ The process of controlling women's bodies was seen as an important part of samurai honor culture and was seen as an essential part of masculinity. The ability to kill adulterous women, an extreme measure, suggests how important it was that women's sexuality be controlled by men. The fact that this law existed and that it was never practiced showcases that even though the rule was largely ceremonial the fact of its existence reveals the importance of control to masculinity. According to Yamamoto the best way to handle a situation where you figure out your wife is cheating is to kill the adulterer, lie to the authorities and divorce your wife sometime after.⁶⁸ This was the best possible way to handle a wife's adultery because this way maintains one's control over women while not opening up judgments on one's masculinity. The importance of controlling women's sexuality also showcases just how important it was for men to be in control to demonstrate your masculinity, and the way that the system worked to punish or ostracize those not masculine or feminine.

Chushingura also tells us how marriage as a institution was understood during the Tokugawa period. Especially in relation to control over women and femininity. Kampei's wife, Okaru, was sold into prostitution by her family in order to finance Kampai's desire to help the ronin. Okaru's parents both view this not only as acceptable but as the proper thing to do when one is in need of money. “Then your father suggested that perhaps you had thought of selling your wife to raise the money. Of course, this was most unlikely, but it might be that you felt constrained because of your wife's parents. Your father said, ‘the best thing would be for me to sell my daughter without telling kempei. When a samurai is desperate he'll even turn to crime, they say. It's no disgrace to sell his wife, the money is for his lord's sake.’”⁶⁹ Okaru herself is

⁶⁷ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. page 146

⁶⁸ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. page 243

⁶⁹ Takada Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, Namiki Senryu. “Chushingura The Treasury of Loyal Retainers.” page 91

willing to go. The ideal for women is to be totally without agency or, as Yamamoto put it, be able to roll in any position. But Gihei also had another interaction before the encounter with the ronin. In one eventful encounter he was taking care of supplies and he had sent his wife away supposedly to protect her and keep the plot secret. Then his father in law appears and threatens to make him divorce his wife and as he has no choice because he needs to keep his wife away to still be a part of the conspiracy.⁷⁰ The idea that one's duty should come before your family is a key idea in the frame of masculinity. Gihei was willing to abandon his wife and Kampei was willing to sell his wife into prostitution in order to commit to the plot.

However there is a difference in the ways the wife's act further reveals how supposedly samurai women were more in line with the ideal of femininity than merchant women. As mentioned before, Okaru was perfectly willing to be sold into slavery saying "I'm leaving my husband, it's true, but I'm selling myself for our master's sake, so I don't feel sad or anything like that. I go in good spirits, Mother."⁷¹ However Gihei's wife comes back upon learning that he agreed to divorce her. This is shown in the story as being rather disgraceful. The encounter does make her seem pitiful but at the same time it suggests her inability to move on as being something of derision. According to the authors of *Chushingura* the proper way that women should be expected to behave is that they should be completely at the mercy of others and should be stoic in the face of horrifying realities like being sold into prostitution or losing the ability to see your son. The major features of ideal samurai femininity is that women are just expected to go along with anything. This serves as the juxtaposition of masculinity which is all about control. The ideas of control have ranged so far from control over your emotions, especially pain, to control over others either women or peasants. To have control is to be masculine in Tokugawa

⁷⁰ Ibid page 154-155

⁷¹ Ibid page 93-94

Japan. The opposite is true for women in that they are expected at all times to go with the flow and never deviate from the path set for them.

In *Tales of Samurai Honor*, he puts front and center what he dislikes about the supposed nature of women and he tells the reader what is supposedly better about men. In *Tales of Samurai Honor* Ihara writes about the ideal samurai marriage. “Had his wife been a beauty, Jubei would have been distracted from his work by her charms; but he had taken this wife out of duty rather than infatuation, and was able to put all his energies into military affairs. . . his wife spoke day and night of nothing but military tactics. . . From the beginning of their marriage, she kept him constantly thinking about military matters, as a result, Jubei later became a famous general, and his name was praised throughout the world.”⁷² To Ihara, relationships with beautiful women are something that distracts samurai from the more important matters that they have to attend to, the most important of them being military matters.

Shudo and sexuality

A major feature of Tokugawa era understandings of sexuality is the idea of Shudo. This was a form of pederasty in which an older man would enter into a sexual relationship with a boy who had not undergone his coming of age ceremony, which is usually described as the cutting of one’s forelocks. For boys who had not undergone their coming of age ceremonies, they were not supposed to cut their forelocks. “a shudō relationship in one’s youth. Care is needed. There is nobody to teach young men about the perils of shudō. I will tell you the basic knowledge required. ‘A wife does not serve two husbands.’ Be true to only one man in your lifetime. Otherwise you are the same as a male prostitute, and equivalent to a whore of a woman. This is

⁷² Saikaku, Ihara. *"Tales of samurai honor (Buke giri monogatari)." page 38*

abominable conduct for a samurai.”⁷³ The most apparent idea here is that in a shudo relationship one doesn't cheat and is held to the same standard as marriage. However we also get different information from this quote. There are perils that are not taught to younger men despite the fact that such a relationship is supposedly common and something to be proud about. “You should be proud and claim to be the best in the land when it comes to courage and shudō (male love).”⁷⁴ The ideas of courage being a critical component to masculinity as well as honor reveal how the ideas of masculinity were elements of shudo and that it is a key component to understanding more elements of sexuality in the Tokugawa period. It can also help us better understand honor as it does have ties to conceptions of masculinity as well as honor. “His affectionate yearnings will not go unrewarded after devoting himself to the relationship for five years. Under no circumstances should you be duplicitous. Only then can a samurai be called an adherent of bushido.”⁷⁵ Again we see how Yamamoto is tying in the idea of honor into the Shudo relationships. The idea of holding off from engaging in sexual activities for five years as well as the idea that one should not lie to advance the relationship reveal that lying was an important part of the concept of bushido as well as masculinity and that controlling emotions is an important part of the same ideas. But again violence is still a central aspect in these understandings of Shudo relationships and that the elements of Hagakure's understanding of honor are central to his idea of sexuality as well. ““The essential point in shudō is preparation to forfeit your life for the sake of your lover. Otherwise you risk humiliation. On the other hand, though, this means that you would be unable to surrender your life in the service of your lord. Through this contradiction, I came to realize that in shudō, you should love your partner, but not love him at

⁷³ Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. *Hagakure: the secret wisdom of the samurai*. Alexander Bennet trans. Tuttle Publishing, 2014. page 119

⁷⁴ Ibid page 145

⁷⁵ Ibid page 119

the same time.”⁷⁶ This quote tells us that love requires sacrifice and a thorough preparedness to die for the one you love but at the same time the lord should take priority. However if one has doubts, one should back down and if the other party persists in their pursuit, you should be prepared to strike him down.⁷⁷

The shudo relationship between the older man and the younger suggests an element of control between the two, either giving up control or asserting control. The shudo relationship that Hagakure suggests as the way of going about it is all about a symbolic master-vassal relationship. The shudo relationship in its loss and gain of control was suggestive of the way that Hagakure largely goes about trying to showcase the master-vassal relationship. The older man would be more suggestive of the master and the younger would be suggestive of the retainer. Through this shudo became a way of performing your masculinity and therefore larger prowess in honor. For the older man in the shudo relationship was a method of gaining control over another person whereas for the younger it was more suggestive of giving up control. In the five years Yamamoto suggests to the people to ensure that they are able to give their near total devotion is reminiscent of the ways that Yamamoto talks about the devotion to your lord. To Yamamoto to participate in shudo is a way of proving your manliness because of the way it replicates the master-vassal relationship. The reason the shudo relationship and the master vassal relationship proves a person's manliness is because of the element of control in both relationships. For the retainer, giving up that element of control over your destiny may seem like a lack of control and therefore suggests a person's lack of masculinity. However it does the opposite. By serving a daimyo or the shogun, a samurai in fact demonstrates his control over greed and desire for social progress. When someone subjects himself to the rule of a daimyo, he

⁷⁶ Ibid page 120

⁷⁷ Ibid page 119

exhibits control over emotions, an emotional control that translates to other aspects that control, such as the control and use of violence.

Through the Mirror of Male Love mainly deals with shudo relationships between samurai. One of the more important aspects this paper looks at is how honor developed as a system, because samurai needed to be able to advertise their military ability. Even during the Tokugawa period the idea that honor and masculinity was related to violence had not disappeared, regardless of the overall level of peace. So when Ihara Saikaku wrote the *Great Mirror of Male Love* an important part of how he framed shudo relationships came from that idea of violence being a key part in honor and masculinity. However as discussed before Ihara wasn't a Samurai and so the way he viewed this honor may have been different and can help us provide greater insights into the way the greater Tokugawa society viewed samurai honor culture. One story called *Two Old Cherry Trees Still in Bloom* tells the tale of two old men who in their youth had loved each other. During their youth one of them had an unwanted suitor and so they agreed to a duel. Upon which the two young boys not only killed the unwanted suitor but "his entire entourage of swordsmen."⁷⁸ This is a recurring theme throughout the book where two lovers have to deal with an unwanted suitor and so they duel. The majority of the time the two lovers are both able to very easily deal with the unwanted suitor and usually more. Shudo relationships were seen as aspects of manliness, and manliness is tied to control which, during the Tokugawa period, is also thought of as linked to being good at violence. Their participation in this shudo relationship reaffirms their manliness and also makes evident their ability to do violence against others well. This is also why the unwanted suitor and his entourage were able to be so easily defeated. Because the unwanted suitor was unable to control his desire, it's obvious that he wouldn't be able to control himself overall and therefore would be bad at violence as well as

⁷⁸ Saikaku, Ihara. *The great mirror of male love*. page 181

being a bad leader, and so his entourage would be easily defeated. Shudo relationships existed as a way to affirm one's manliness.

Shudo was seen as the way to properly engage in love in the great mirror of male love because of the supposed duplicitous nature of women. As a result of this nature, if you love women it's seen as being unable to control your more base emotions. “All men are beautiful, whereas women of beauty are rare.’ This was the orthodox opinion of Abe no Seimei. Why? Because female beauty is completely artificial. Women bury their faces under a thick layer of powder, paint their lips red, blacken their teeth, reshape hairlines, and ink in eyebrows. Even the way they dress is designed to deceive.”⁷⁹ If all the beauty of women is deceit to fall for it would be considered improper for a samurai, according to Ihara all love coming from women is something of a honeypot. He claims that to love a woman is superficial in some ways and that it would really only result in pain in the future. But because the author tells us that women are inherently more duplicitous, it tells the reader that many of these stories will feature men who are supposedly more sincere because that is what men are inherently. What's interesting is that samurai are also expected to keep up appearances much like women are expected to put on makeup. In the story *He Fell in Love*, a samurai falls in love with a younger samurai called Shume. Over time, he longed to see the boy more and more so he gave up on his official duties, took a leave of absence and went searching for Shume. However in his search, he no longer had any way of making money, and so his appearance became more and more ragged. “By now Gizaemon’s appearance was quite strange. He was in love, to be sure, but no samurai should so disgrace himself in society. That he should have allowed himself to fall so low could only attributed to a remarkable karmic bond.”⁸⁰ Samurai were expected to keep up appearances as

⁷⁹ Ibid page 63

⁸⁰ Saikaku, Ihara. *Tales of samurai honor (Buke giri monogatari).* page 153

well but by singling out women's use of beauty products as a sign of their supposedly worse nature reveals an intense double standard. But what this also tells us is that by talking about the supposed karmic bonds that link Gizaemon to his Shume, it allows for Gizaemon's supposed faux pas of lack of decorum to be allowed. This tells us that it's important for samurai to be well dressed. Furthermore the fact that "he should have allowed himself to fall so low."⁸¹ also revealing that maintaining a form of good dress is supposedly one of the aspects of control, and that by failing to dress well he is showing a lack of control or, in other words, a lack of manliness. Later on in the story Shumu goes to his lord and says that "A certain man has fallen in love with me," he said. 'If I refuse him, I betray my honor as a follower of the way of boy love. If I act freely, it means breaking my lord's law and is tantamount to rejecting your long-standing benevolence toward me. Please kill me so that I may escape this quandary.'⁸² After this quote the lord tells him to go home so that he may think over his choice, however Shume states that if he does go home he will act inappropriately with his man. This is a major lack of control; however, the book praises them for the nobility and courage. This goes against the ideas expressed in Hagakure. Shume is not acting in service to the lord and while he is choosing death, he isn't choosing death in service but rather to avoid service. This does show a difference in the opinions of Shudo between Ihara and Yamamoto. Yamamoto placed the lord as the most important aspect of the shudo relationship. In a way, he viewed shudo as a method of training for the master-vassal relationship. By allowing yourself to be controlled by an older man, it prepares you for when you allow yourself to be controlled by your master. The way Yamamoto frames shudo is often in reference to the idea of the master-follower relationship and in that regard the relationship should never come before service to your lord. However Ihara believes that Shudo

⁸¹ Ibid page 153

⁸² Ibid page 156

relationships are more important than service to your lord. While Shudo relationships and service to a lord both reinforce masculinity, the point as to why they exist differ. In another story, *Implicated by His Diamond Crest*, Ihara tells of a man who caught a random person on the street who was supposedly delivering poisons from a man called Tannosuke. However, Tannosuke claimed no knowledge of this and repeatedly denied it. However, he did actually know who had gotten the poisons: delivering the poisons was an attempt to frame him because he did not reciprocate the love another person had for him, but Tannosuke didn't want to turn the person in because his decision had been made with love.⁸³ The story eventually ends with all the main characters dead again, which shows Ihara's tendency to have love or honor kill everybody involved. However the important part is that Tannosuke deliberately lied to his lord and held up a potential murder investigation to protect people he loved. Ihara writes that this decision was to be praised and called him "unique in the annals of boy love, but even that characterization did not do him justice."⁸⁴ By suggesting that this act is proper, he is signaling a departure from Hagakure and other works that depict shudo and placing it above service to the lord in it. Another aspect that shows up repeatedly not only in *Great Mirror of Male Love* but also in *Tales of Samurai Honor* is that often both samurai ideas of honor and love will often result in the deaths of all of those involved. The juxtaposition of the ideals of honor and masculinity as expressed in shudo come from the idea of control resulting in the deaths of all involved due to the sudden influx of emotions hints at derision towards the samurai ideal. In *He Fell in Love*, Shume's declaration to his master that he must be killed because of his adherence to boy love, which would also result in the death of Gizaemon as well. Here the lord is getting in the way of the relationship between Shume and Gizaemon. This is a recurring theme throughout the book in which often the very

⁸³ Ibid page 77-80

⁸⁴ Ibid page 79-80

nature of loyalty of the samurai class holds them back from truly embracing the way of boy love. Ihara is constantly showcasing the samurai's lack of control by demonstrating their strict adherence to honor which will usually result in their deaths or in the case of *The Great Mirror of Male Love* the influence of the lord usually results in their death.

Wealth and poverty

Realities of samurai wealth

During the Tokugawa period, many samurai were put into poverty. Tokugawa policy made it almost impossible for samurai to accrue or spend wealth the same way that they did during earlier periods. The way that retainers made money was that they were given a stipend from their daiymo. This stipend was paid in rice, in an amount called a koku, which is around 180 liters. This rice was supposedly the amount needed to feed one person for a year. Samurai would keep some of this money and then exchange the rest for currency that would pay for the majority of their needs. For the majority of the Tokugawa period many samurai stipends did not increase dramatically, however their costs did. This was because during the Tokugawa period Japan became increasingly mercantile and merchants started to accumulate more and more wealth. As a result it became harder and harder to live in cities. Furthermore because all samurai were essentially forced to live in cities it became harder to escape the increasing commercialization of society. "One more contributing factor was that, during the Tokugawa period, all the samurai and their families lived in cities and depended on the availability of

commercial goods there. Commercialization brought a relatively lower price for rice and a higher price for other commodities, a situation that worsened the state of rice-dependent daimyo. The increased expense, in particular, caused by Sankn Kotai (alternate residence in Edo and home area), and of keeping up official bureaus in Edo, increased the financial pressures on the daimyo”⁸⁵ The increased commercialization of Tokugawa society means that as time went on samurai had less and less money that they were able to spend and costs at the least stayed the same or at the worst were continuing to rise. This resulted in samurai and daimyo needing to acquire loans and other means of money so that they could maintain their domains. A good example of this would be the bannermen of the Tokugawa who were the direct vessels of the shogunate. Over 93 percent of these samurai stipends remained the same throughout the Tokugawa period. They suffered from an increasing lack of money from the number of retainers they were required to maintain as well as the daily necessities of life.⁸⁶ Due to this fact the shogunate placed a ban on ‘luxuries’ in order to try and maintain the wealth level of the bannermen.⁸⁷ However while this applies to the bannerman specifically this was happening for almost all samurai throughout the Tokugawa period. The inability or the unwillingness for the Tokugawa to raise the stipends of their bannermen suggests an attitude towards money that is rather unsupportive especially as the differences between classes and the subjection of the lower classes through the class system necessitates a separation between merchants and the samurai. As samurai were supposedly higher on this chain to engage in money would be to lower yourself and undermine the Tokugawas basis of authority.

⁸⁵ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. page 173-174

⁸⁶ Yamamura, Kozo. "The increasing poverty of the samurai in Tokugawa Japan, 1600–1868." page 383

⁸⁷ Ibid page 394

However samurai did have some means to be able to manage debts or income difficulties which could range from attending the alternate attendance for allowances provided to moving to the mountains. For alternate attendance, Samurai were given allowances for living in Edo and if samurai didn't spend all of their money they were allowed to keep it. One samurai was given 39 ryo and were able to come back with 15.6 ryo.⁸⁸ During the tensho period one ryo was roughly equal to 4 koku. This samurai's stipend was around 30 koku. As a result he was able to double his income for this period. The size of the allowance varied from domain to domain, however it usually was roughly based on the retainer's own stipend.⁸⁹ While the trip to Edo would have provided an extra source of income for the samurai, the fact that the allowance was limited to the size of the stipend means that it couldn't have added as much extra income to everyone. Furthermore not all samurai could reliably make the trip to Edo all the time. This was not a reliable way for the samurai to go on to make money. Furthermore it is highly likely that many samurai went to Edo on a rotation system⁹⁰ and those who went before would not have been able to go again. For others their service in Edo could actually have been the cause of your debts as some people were forced to pay more money for things in Edo due to the fact that the job you were assigned at Edo could change. "This time he was given a job as bursar, which put him in a supervisory position for the preparations for the wedding of the heir to the shogun's daughter. This important job, unfortunately for Kinzo required a great outlay of money for entertaining and gift giving, and as a result, Isoda concludes, Edo service was the cause of inoyama family's debt."⁹¹ Unfortunately this left Edo service as something that could benefit the samurai's economic situation or could destabilize it further. But even then Edo service was not something

⁸⁸ Vapouris, Constantine Nomikos. *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*, page 111

⁸⁹ Ibid page 112

⁹⁰ Ibid page 104

⁹¹ Ibid 112-113

that all samurai could attain. Another method that was open to the samurai was moving to a mountain estate to try and free themselves from the economic situation in the castle towns and cities. This process would allow samurai to better their financial situation because they would not have to worry about maintaining retainers or other things that would usually help make samurai more financially stable. There were some troubles with this system as well. “(In Tannai's case as well, a move to a mountain residence would have required a formal request to his overlord. Tosa samurai like Tannai could petition to be declared officially "poverty-stricken" which allowed them to live temporarily on the land, outside the castle town, and to withdraw from official duties and contacts, all in order to allow a retainer's household time to try to recover its economic health.)”⁹² The process of moving to a mountain residence would declare the samurai poverty-stricken, but as we have seen with the Tokugawas reaction to the bannermans increasing poverty, this may have produced a reaction that the samurai would be seen as indulgent, and thereby lacking in the self-control needed to stay financially stable. That would have been seen as improper for a samurai and could have bigger long-term effects on the samurai who needed to move. Furthermore, the request had to be put up by the lord who would most likely not have agreed. After all it wasn't just the retainers who were subject to increasing financial strain. Oftentimes daimyo would engage in something called Onkariage. This was a forced loan that a daimyo would use in order to get wealth from their retainers. This loan would not get repaid by the daimyo. Due to the daimyos desire to maintain their own financial base, samurai were forcefully tied up in agriculture. Samurai and Daimyos were forced away from their land and into the castle towns. As a result, it was very difficult for the samurai actually to make sure they were getting the proper amount from farms. Furthermore during the Tokugawa

⁹²Vaporis, Constantine N. *Samurai and merchant in mid-Tokugawa Japan: Tani Tannai's Record of daily necessities (1748-54).* page 218

period there was a large amount of peasant reaction to their lords which tended to disrupt the samurai economic base. According to Aoki Koji, there were supposedly 6889 instances of upheaval and 1212 involving peasant/village upheaval.⁹³ The daimyo were slow to change to the new commercial economy and for the majority of the Tokugawa period daimyo made the majority of their money from grain and rice taxes. The changing nature of rice prices also hurt the daimyo. But it also put daimyo in a potentially disastrous position if any social issues would harm grain and rice production which it frequently did. Daimyo attempts to increase the taxes on more economically beneficial agriculture such as silk and cotton were often met with some form of reprisal from the farmers.⁹⁴ As such the means of daimyo's wealth were largely stagnant if not worsening as well. This was further complicated by demands for the Tokugawa samurai to participate in funding road building or castle building projects. But the system of forced borrowing also dramatically decreased the financial stability of the retainers as well and many of them were becoming even more increasingly reliant on loans. (The forced borrowings by the domain figured large in the Tani household's financial difficulties. Although occasionally imposed before the mid-eighteenth century, the practice had become routine and widespread by the time of Tannai's financial record. First exacted in Tosa in 1704 (Hoei 1) at a rate of ten per cent, the reductions became more severe toward the middle of the century, when the domain's financial state worsened.)⁹⁵ This put even more pressure onto the samurai who often had to pawn items in order to make ends meet. Without the ability to systematically address the nature of their increasing poverty many samurai were becoming more and more reliant on loans, especially as the Tokugawa shogunate was less and less willing to deal with the merchant class

⁹³ cited in *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* on page 174

⁹⁴ *Ibid* page 175

⁹⁵ Vaporis, Constantine N. "*Samurai and merchant in mid-Tokugawa Japan: Tani Tannai's Record of daily necessities (1748-54).*" page 221

and poverty that the samurai were experiencing. To complicate the matter further, explicitly dealing with finances of the samurai could be seen as overreach by the shogunate, or could upset the delicate balance that the shogunate was balancing that involved keeping daimyo and samurai short of money so that they would not be able to finance a rebellion. As a result of all of these things and the limited ability to actually fix the debt issue that had become endemic to samurai during this time, many samurai were losing a substantial amount of money.

The shift of economic power away from the samurai and to the merchants reveals the decline of the agrarian economic system. This was a threat to the system of power that maintained the samurai, because samurai had based their wealth on agrarian modes of production and their stipend was paid in rice. The changing nature of commerce threatened the samurai's hold on power in the Tokugawa state. Despite the fact that the Tokugawa themselves were samurai, the increasing economic power of the merchants threatened the control of the Tokugawa space that the samurai had enjoyed. "The result was a sort of cultural *gekokujō*, in which the lower (merchants) were overtaking the higher (samurai) in the social order. The problem was widespread and significant; samurai were forced to borrow from merchants in order to keep up the required appearances of class and rank, and the Tokugawa government at several points was forced to cancel samurai debts to merchants in order to staunch the free flow of capital from the highest to the lowest social class."⁹⁶ By threatening to overtake the social order the Tokugawa shogunate were forced to intervene, exhibiting the true depth of this problem. But the change in the nature of social positions through wealth and the samurai's increasing reliance on loans does undermine the political order of the Tokugawa world as merchants were put on the lowest class as they were seen to not produce anything. This was further undermined as many merchants were

⁹⁶ Gainty, Denis. "The New Warriors: Samurai in Early Modern Japan." In *Japan Emerging*. page 5

able to buy samurai status which granted them the right to wield swords and to have a last name. This further undermined the samurai social order as the way the samurai had started to distinguish themselves was their ancestry and hereditary position. That position of superiority was challenged by the growing economic and political power of the merchant class, which was encroaching on the supposed elite superiority of the samurai. However, the dominant economic position that could be taken by merchants would sometimes morph into a dominance that would emerge even though both needed each other. "To be sure, all dependent relationships are mutualistic (merchants needed creditors to lend to, just as creditors needed merchants as sources of capital), yet throughout the correspondence to be analyzed below the dominant position assumed by the merchant Saitaniya becomes clear."⁹⁷ The economic entanglement yet dominance ends up creating an interesting space in which the merchant was able to take this dominant position not only because of Tannai's economic woes but through the understanding that this is not a unique situation. If this situation was isolated Saitaniya would not have been able to take the stance of superiority due to potential fear that there could be some reprisal from the samurai. Some would argue that the fact that samurai were put into a lesser position by the merchants threatened their whole concept of superiority that allows them ideologically to be in a dominant position. However I would argue that this supposed inferiority actually benefited the samurai's position.

Samurai's conception of wealth in honor

Overall, the samurai tried to avoid commerce, as much of the ideology of the Tokugawa period came from or was influenced by Neo-Confucian thinking that the handling of commerce

⁹⁷ Vaporis, Constantine N. *"Samurai and merchant in mid-Tokugawa Japan: Tani Tannai's Record of daily necessities (1748-54)."* page 206

was supposedly lesser. During this period, many samurai were somewhat modeling themselves or were at least influenced by the idea of the men of letters, which in turn was influenced by the bun-bu understanding. These concepts made many samurai not want to interact with commerce more than they needed to, because commerce was seen as distasteful by some people. The Bun-Bu dichotomy meant that samurai were supposed to engage in different aspects of civil and military life, and the civil aspects were usually seen as a way of creating another ideology for samurai rule. Samurai are able to rule because of this split which enables them to rule properly. However, the concept of civil governance was largely based on the concept of the man of letters from Neo-Confucian thought and the military aspects of bun largely ignored commerce. There was never really a space for samurai to engage in more aspects of trade other than the grain taxation they already did. Samurai, ever fearing a lack of honor, often choose not to properly engage in commerce or trade. It also reveals why the taxes on trade usually remained so low throughout different domains despite increasing commercialization of the economy. Even though more taxes on trade not only would have benefited the samurai, putting taxes on trade would have helped prevent trade, thereby reinforcing samurai control. For the majority of the Tokugawa era most daimyo had the basis of their economy come from agriculture taxes and everything else was secondary. As the daimyo did have relative economic freedom to change the way their domain functioned and didn't pay taxes to the Tokugawa in any formal sense, many daimyo did possess the freedom to change their local economies in order to better profit off the increasing commercialization, and yet almost all didn't. If there was change, it was very slow in coming as most daimyo did not shift their source of revenue from agriculture taxes to other sources until much later in the Tokugawa period.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Ikegami, Eiko. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge: page 75

The class system established by the Hidiyoshi and modified by the Tokugawa put merchants at the bottom of the hierarchy due to the idea that they do not produce anything. As a result if a samurai were to engage in trade it would be seen as untoward and would potentially further inflame the tensions between the classes that were already present. Another reason why many samurai groups were growing so poor was because properly engaging in commerce or trade or other means of acquiring wealth would have been seen as a negative. The Tokugawa's response to the increasing poverty of their bannerman was to prevent the purchase of luxuries, suggesting that the Tokugawa thought that the lack of wealth was due to the lack of self-control over their bannerman. While the modern idea of samurai as frugal does have its roots in the poverty of the samurai, that concept is largely a myth and it is obvious that samurai were in many ways ostentatious. The idea of samurai frugality mostly comes from imperial doctrine during the late Meiji, Showa, and Taisho periods of Japan in order to support the war efforts in Japan's different wars as well as endure the Great Depression.

In *Chushingura*, Moronao insults Wakasanosuke by deriding his position in the government by claiming that his stipend is so small it is a miracle he is even a samurai.⁹⁹ Yet later on in the story Honzo, Wakasanosuke's retainer, gives away a tremendous amount of wealth "Thirty rolls of silk and thirty pieces of gold from Lady Wakasanosuke. Twenty pieces of gold from the chief retainer, Kakogawa Hanzo. Ten pieces of the same from chief of the residence guards. Ten pieces of the same from the samurai of the household."¹⁰⁰ This is an interesting piece of information, because Wakasanosuke is supposedly of meager means and yet is able to supply this much wealth. This tale shows a different way of understanding the wealth of the samurai, especially how wealth is spent in order to bribe Moronao. The copy of the play

⁹⁹ Takada Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku, Namiki Senryu. "Chushingura The Treasury of Loyal Retainers." page 36

¹⁰⁰ Ibid page 50

translated by Keene does not include any information about where the money came from. This leads us to two questions: did Honzo have the ability to purchase this and how did it affect him? We know later on in the story that Honzo receives a stipend of 500 koku.¹⁰¹ When Honzo dies, it reveals more information on how Honzo's gift affected him, although it still gives no concrete clues as to who supplied it. "I was sure that my master had been humiliated because the bribes our limited means permitted were insufficient, and Moronao had been annoyed. So I went to Moronao, without telling my master, and offered him presents of gold, silver, and clothing, far beyond our means, . . . The bribe was successful and Moronao apologized."¹⁰² Who 'our' here refers to is unclear in the translation and without the ability to read the original play I am unable to say definitively if this was part of Honzo's and Wakasanosuke's wealth or if it all came from Honzo. What it does tell us is that the gifts supplied to Moronao were part of a bribe and that they were far beyond the ability of the Honzo to afford. The first part suggests that there may have been a culture of bribes in certain aspects of samurai society that would have presented an even further drain on the resources of the samurai. Furthermore it confirms that this gift was too much for the finances of the supplier, whoever it may be. Honzo is praised for this act by the narrator, and we can see that, according to the authors of the play, giving away either a large amount of money for one person or for the general clan structure would be a positive in order to save the head of the structure's life. If it was just Honzo, him spending all of his wealth in order to save his master would be exhibiting his loyalty and ability to put his master above his own financial state. However if it wasn't just Honzo's wealth that was being spent but some part of Wakasanosuke's as well, it would suggest that taking money from your master in order to perform a bribe would be a good thing. Later on in the story Honzo wishes to leave the service of

¹⁰¹ Ibid page 135

¹⁰² Ibid page 144

Wakasanosuke and tells him that he toadied for Moronao and so he should leave his service. This suggests that if it was Wakasanosuke's money he didn't keep a very close eye on his accounts. If it was part Waksanosuke's money it would suggest that to the authors of Chushingura, stealing from your master to save him would be a good thing that and that to put money above the lives of the people you serve is distasteful.

In Chushingura, the authors seem to acknowledge the idea and at the same time disagree with the idea that the loyalty a samurai owes to his master is equivalent to the size of the stipend. The use of this idea even to disparage it presents a way of thinking that existed and shows how there are different ways of understanding how wealth and loyalty interact. Heimon and Yuranosuke discuss how wealth should be understood in conversation with loyalty. "You're a food soldier with a stipend of *ryo* and an allowance of three men's rations. Now don't get angry - for you to throw away your life attacking the enemy, in return of a pittance suitable for a beggar priest, would be like putting on a performance of grand kagura to express your gratitude for some green nori. My stipend was 1,500 *koku*. Compared to you, I might take enemy heads by the bushel and still not do my share. . . . Whether he's a wretch like myself with a bare income of three rations, or a rich man like you with 1,500 *koku*, and there is no high or low in the debt of gratitude we owe our master."¹⁰³ While Yuranosuke put up a front he makes an argument that the loyalty one should show to your master is based on the amount of stipend you receive. The play is making the claim that loyalty is beyond just the stipend you receive, and in order to make that claim it brings in the counter-argument when Yuranosuke is putting on a fake front in order to deceive in order to further reveal how the authors held that opinion. It seems while at least one of the authors felt this way it might not have been the more common opinion as during the same act later on when Kudayu was stabbed and reviled one of the first things that they say about him was

¹⁰³ Ibid page 109

that “You received a large stipend from our master and benefited by innumerable other kindnesses, and yet you became a spy for our enemy Moronao”¹⁰⁴ The idea that wealth and loyalty are in a way interconnected does suggest that samurai did think about money. Yet the place of money in their system of honor was in debate, with some people viewing money as separate to the overall structure of loyalty, and some viewing it as integral.

Both of these ideas surrounding wealth and loyalty are based on the idea of control. Samurai who may have understood wealth and the stipends ensure loyalty would have understood that by entering into service you are obviously surrendering part of your control but that demonstrates other elements of your control such as your ability to sacrifice your own interests for the interests of others. However those interests only go as far as the daimyo is willing to give. if you do more work then the stipend that the daimyo gives you in a stipend it reveals how you actually lack the capacity for control. If you do more than what you are given in return, it demonstrates your ability to be swayed by emotion and therefore lack the capacity to properly do the other things that having control would necessitate such as violence. On the other side, choosing to remain loyal would showcase your control over your desire for monetary gain, and by doing more than what you would originally have been paid to do would cement you as having true elements of control.

Like almost everything else the samurai’s understanding of wealth derived from their understanding of control. There was obvious differences in how different samurai contextualized and understood wealth, especially in regards to loyalty and the increasing poverty of the samurai. The element of control can be seen throughout the different groups through the different interpretations of the importance of wealth. While this section has many talked about Chushingura, it is fair to assume that these conversations would have been happening throughout

¹⁰⁴ Ibid page 123

the Edo period, as the rise of Neo-Confucian philosophy started to influence many different samurai's understanding of wealth. Combined with the ever-increasing poverty of the samurai, how samurai interacted with wealth would have been very different over time, yet the majority of them spurned the accumulation of wealth for its own sake as ignoble.

Conclusion

The samurai constructed their various ideas surrounding honor around control. How they gained and perceived that control differed from person to person and especially through class and gender. Through all of these different viewpoints, it remained the same that being a samurai meant having control whether that be through control over the self or control over others. The idea of control is the foundation upon which samurai society bases its ideas of honor. During the Tokugawa period, samurai often framed the idea of self-control through the lens of loyalty. People like Yamamoto believed the ultimate form of loyalty manifested in a complete abandonment of life and an embrace of death which would allow a person to serve with utmost loyalty. His idea of control comes mainly through control over the self which he believes would help samurai manifest martial abilities. To Yamamoto, the ability to manifest martial abilities naturally comes from the ability to embrace death and control one's desire only then could a person truly be loyal. People like Ihara also thought similar things, but he also presented samurai domination through the lens of class and how class interacts with honor. He wrote about how the Tokugawa samurai understood gender in ways that are very similar and yet different from our modern understanding of gender. Gender mainly served to keep domination over others by

separating genders in two different groups and making one group the only group capable of possessing honor. Furthermore the realities of samurai poverty played a role in how exactly samurai understood themselves and others around them. The system was in some ways designed to keep the samurai poor and to prevent rebellion.

The way that samurai honor was perceived was changed dramatically during the Tokugawa period, coinciding with increased control over the samurai. The reactionary works of people like Yamamoto spurred on the rapid changes that were being made to samurai society by new laws and legislation. This prompted people to look to new avenues for presenting honor, and one of the primary ways that it was written about was in Confucian works by many different groups of people. This would be a great topic for people to look more in depth in the way that Neo-Confucianism influenced samurai culture during the Tokugawa period. While I talked briefly about this topic in my section on honor I unfortunately didn't have the opportunity to go more in depth with this area due to a lack of time and the sources available to me. Hopefully this is a topic that I'll be able to explore in the future as I gain more Japanese language skills.

Other great areas that people could explore would be early samurai honor culture. While this has been somewhat talked about in Karl Friday's *The First Samurai*, that is only the story of one person no matter how influential on popular imagination. I think there can be more work done on samurai culture during the periods of the late Heian and early Kamakura shogunate. I think there is some great room for thinking about the first shogunate and its effect on government as well as how it affected samurai culture, especially looking at the Mongol invasion and the fall of the Kamakura shogunate and rise of the Ashikaga. I think there is more work that can be done in regards to how samurai honor culture may have emerged as a reaction to the court's interaction with the samurai, and how they carved out a spot socially through their initial

workings with the court to the eventual domination. There is so much room to explore here and I hope that eventually many of these questions will be looked at in depth. Furthermore, I think there is more one can do with the Tokugawa era. The Tokugawa period was a period of increasing commercialization and the growing sale of luxury goods specifically meant for people other than samurai, especially books and art. I think there are great ways that a person could look at art and other types of literature besides Ihara for examples of other dimensions on how people perceived samurai honor.

Another great way that a person could look at samurai honor is the idea of bushido. While the modern idea of bushido is incorrect it has been thoroughly critiqued by many. The work *Inventing The Way of The Samurai* by Oleg Benesch is a great example of the work that can be done analyzing the myth of Bushido. However, Benesch's focus is primarily on the bushido of imperial Japan and his work rather lags when it comes to modern versions of bushido and the stories that it tells. While it does make connections to how Judo, Sumo, and Kendo have used the myth of bushido to popularize themselves, the book leaves out how things like video games and manga and anime have influenced the conception of bushido all over the world in profound ways. I think there are a lot of things that can be learned by looking at how people in Japan today and worldwide use bushido in order to spread certain messages and ideas, and how that is all being fed back into the one idea of bushido. Because as much as I am loath to admit, bushido has become increasingly popular all over the world and the ways it is being used are nuanced and worthy of exploration.

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