KIKKAWA MON Armour C1800
Signed “SUO IWAKUNI MASASHIGE”

‘Worn by CHOSHU KIKKAWA SAMURAI (Kikkawa Tsunehiro, Tsuneaki & Tsunemasa) C1800-1868
Retainers to the Mōri Daimyō
ARMOUR MAKER – Suo Iwakuni Masashige (Haruta style)
**Suo Iwakuni Masashige**

**SIGNATURE on DOU**

The armour bears the following signature on the left front side of the Dou (body portion).

周防 岩国 主  
Suo Iwakuni Ju  
( *Iwakuni town in Suo Province*)

藤原 正茂 作  
Fujiwara Masashige Saku  
( *Fujiwara Masashige made this*)

Translated this reads: “Fujiwara Masashige from Suo (Province), Iwakuni (Town) made this”. Fujiwara Masashige is listed on page 195 & 196 of Shin Kacchushi Meikan as working Mid Edo period (E-do Ji-dai Chu-ki), and this reference is detailed below.

A boroscope of the inside of the kabuto under the liner shows there is also a signature.

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**Book “SHIN KACCHUSHI MEIKAN” entry for Suo Masashige (pages 195/196)**

春田正茂江戸時代中期周防国住周防国に分布した春田系甲冑鍛工で、いつ頃分布したかは不明である。鍛え・姿・作域頗る優秀である。作風は僅かに前勝山とし、筋と筋の間に微かにふくらませ、響の孔と四天の鋲は比較的高く、眉庇は約四十五度くらいの傾斜で中央をふくらせ、鷹の羽の切れ込みは明珍系に似て広い。級立台の上端は入八双型に載るなど、目見一般的な姿ながら細部に特色が見られる。銘は「防州住藤原正茂作」鋲銘地一一十二間筋兜銘「防州住旗康正茂作」

**Translation**

Haruta Masashige mid-Edo Period, Suo Iwakuni Ju. Unclear about exact dates, extremely excellent work (Description of the work follows).
Printed Label on SIDE OF BOX

(Kikkawa Mon)
山口 藩
Yamaguchi Han

毛利家 一門
Mōri-Ke Ichi-Mon
(Mōri clan group)

後 諸侯
Ato Shoko
(After the lord)

周防岩国
Suo, Iwakuni
(Prefecture)

六万石
Roku-Man Koku *
(60,000 Men)

(Kikkawa Family Mon) Viscount/Lord* (Shisaku) Kikkawa Shigeyoshi, Yamaguchi Han, head of the Mōri Daimyō, after (retainer of) the Lord, from Suo in Iwakuni Prefecture, 60,000 Koku Fief (men)

VISCOUNT /SHISAKU TITLE used on the printed label

The title Shisaku or ‘Viscount’ is used on the printed label. This was the 4th peerage rank of 5 levels established in the Meiji Period – so a low rank Lord. This is significant because it is a Meiji period ranking. I think this later printed label refers to the Kamon (family crest) being that of Lord Kikkawa Shigeyoshi (Mōri Daimyō family) who was rated / valued at 60,000 Koku. The use of the title ‘Viscount’/Shisaku is explained further as at first glance it is rather unusual.

Being a Samurai suit of Armour, one would not normally expect to see a British peerage title equivalent to a low ranking ‘Lord’ on Edo Japanese armour. The British initially put a great deal of pressure against the Japanese in the early 1860’s in the Shimonoseki Incidents— that is they fought against the Emperor backed Choshu Samurai from Iwakuni. The Shogunate Forces already recognized Western powers and were ready to capitulate and open Japan to the West. It is important to remember that the Choshu Samurai were anti Shogun for Centuries and therefore pro Imperial at the time of the “Kinmon Incident and Boshin War”. The belligerents in the wars leading up to the Emperor gaining power (and therefore the demise of the Shogunate, and ultimately the removal of the Samurai) changed sides frequently as we shall see, however the Choshu Samurai stood firm in support of the Emperor. It would appear that the Choshu were more
interested in fighting the Tokugawa and used the excuse of supporting the Emperor to engage the Shogun loyalist forces. The reason why the Choshu Samurai (under the Mōri Clan) hated the Tokugawa Shogunate from centuries before stemmed from them siding with Toyotomi Hideyoshi who lost against Tokugawa Ieyasu at the battle of Sekigahara in the early 1600’s. They were therefore Tozama (conquered) Daimyō forces as opposed to Fudai Daimyō (Feudal forces on the victorious side). Suffice to say that under the Tokugawa regime, the Tozama were classed as lower ranking than Fudai as penance for losing at Sekigahara, and this state of affairs lasted for centuries. In the aftermath of war, the ‘Mōri’ samurai were also re-located to the mountainous area of Choshu, and subsequently lost most of their lands and income (some 1,200,000 Koku cut down to less than 400,000), hence their lust for revenge against the Tokugawa.

The events leading up to the Satsuma Rebellion provided the ideal opportunity, and a legitimacy, to the Choshu Han to side with the Emperor and therefore fight against the Shogunate (Loyalist) Tokugawa Forces, thereby finally seeking revenge for several hundred years of embarrassment.

Having been supported by Samurai loyalists, the new Emperor forces, or Meiji Government /Imperial forces, ultimately turned on the very Samurai that won the wars of the 1860’s and early 1870’s, finally annihilating ALL the (belligerent) Samurai during the Satsuma Rebellion. What tends to be forgotten is that the Meiji Government ‘bought off’ many Samurai by bestowing British equivalent titles and land on the previous Daimyō and Samurai who capitulated or fought with Imperial troops in the final stages of the Samurai rebellions, rather than engaging them in combat. The old Samurai feudal system was abolished under Emperor Meiji, so the use of ‘Daimyō’ and lower feudal titles also disappeared, and the Japanese, much influenced by Western powers, adopted the British titular customs. This is the reason we see the award of the British ‘Viscount’ title on ostensibly a late Edo Japanese Samurai Lord: It would appear that Lord Shigeyoshi, having quenched the clans thirst for revenge against the Tokugawa Shogunate forces, then capitulated with, rather than engage in combat, the Emperor. A noble gesture befitting the last of the Samurai, whose job it was to serve the Emperor.

**KOKU (from Wikipedia)**

In Edo times, the *Koku* was defined as a quantity of rice, historically defined as enough rice to feed one person for one year (one *masu* is enough rice to feed a person for one day). A *Koku* of rice weighs about 150 kilograms (23.6 stone or 330 pounds). During the Edo period of Japanese history, each *Han* (fiefdom) had an assessment of its wealth, and the *Koku* was the unit of measurement. The smallest *Han* was 10,000 *Koku* and Kaga Han, the largest (other than that of the Shogun), was called the "million-Koku domain". (Its holdings totaled around 1,025,000 *Koku.*) Many samurai, including *hatamoto*, received stipends in *Koku*, while a few received salaries instead. In the Tōhoku and Hokkaidō domains, where rice could not be grown, the economy was still measured in *Koku* but was not adjusted from year to year. Thus some *Han* had larger economies than their *Koku* indicated, which allowed them to fund development projects. In the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japanese units such as the *Koku* were abolished and the metric system was installed. The *Koku* (*石/石高?) is also a Japanese unit of volume, equal to ten cubic *shaku*. 3.5937 *Koku* equal one cubic meter, i.e. 1 *Koku* is approximately 278.3 litres.

**Suo province: 周防国 (Suo no Kuni) or 防州 (Bōshu).**

Today South Eastern Yamaguchi prefecture.

**Han in Suo**

- Iwakuni han 岩国藩
- Tokuyama han(Kudamatsu Han) 徳山藩(下松藩)
- **Suo Yamaguchi han 周防山口藩**
Districts

- Ōshima district 大島郡
- Kuga district 玖珂郡
- Kumage district 熊毛郡
- Tsuno district 都濃郡
- Saba district 佐波郡
- Yoshiki district 吉敷郡

If a Daimyo had no heirs, then his lands returned to the Emperor, so it was common for Daimyo to have many heirs (power has its re wards). This also rather conveniently disposed itself well to the feudal past-time of warfare to sort out land disputes! The Mōri clan had 4 early family lines (discussed later) and therefore many offshoots of the family, complicating matters a great deal. The box label says that the family crests (Ka-Mon) appearing on the armour and on the box is from the Kikkawa Shigeyoshi side of the family. Kikkawa Shigeyoshi is listed as a Bakamatsu hero (see chart below) living from 1855 to 1909, with a title of Suruga no Kami, and as deriving income from forestry. I assume he owned land with large forests providing timber.

BAKAMATSU HEROES (from Internet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestor</th>
<th>Date Born/Died</th>
<th>Location/Koku/Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>淺野長敬</td>
<td>1842～1907</td>
<td>広島四十二万六千石，安芸守，外様。</td>
<td>淺野長敬 学習院高等部教諭</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川輕鍬</td>
<td>1855～1909</td>
<td>岩国六万石，駿河守，外様。</td>
<td>吉川重喜 吉川家守備業</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>毛利元春</td>
<td>1818～1894</td>
<td>徳山四万石，淡路守，外様。</td>
<td>毛利元春 日本銀行信用銀行員</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The middle row above details Lord Shigeyoshi (Mori Han) as a recognized hero of the Bakamatsu Period.

BAKAMATSU PERIOD

The “Bakamatsu Period” generally refers to the period of civil war and fighting between the Tokugawa Shogunate or Military rulers of Japan (primarily Fudai Daimyo) and the Emperor (eagerly supported by Tozama Daimyo) C1860. Samurai once again chose sides to fight each other, becoming either Loyalist or Imperial belligerents as the Western powers sought to gain a commercial foothold in an isolated Japan. The whole issue of Fudai and Tozama ranking created from the 1600’s unification of Japan by Tokugawa Ieyasu and the outcome of the battle of Sekigahara, and the bitter resentment that simmered away for centuries, appears to have finally boiled over in the civil wars of the Bakamatsu period (late Tokugawa/1860’s). The civil strife was an ideal time for the rising politicians of Japan to eventually annihilate the ‘savage’ Samurai class (who contrary to popular misconception, were after all merely highly trained killers and mercenaries who delighted in their art and ruled through fear), thereby allowing Japan to enter the 19th Century and take advantage of modern technology: a disastrous step some 80 years later for the entire World, especially the entire East Asia region, during the Pacific War.

As we shall see later in this document, 1871 was significant in that it heralded the Haitorei, the edict banning swords in public, and the end of the Feudal Land system of the Samurai.
寄贈品
Kizohin
Donated (by)

経幹公御君
Tsunemasa-Ko O-kun
Lord (Kikkawa) Tsunemasa respectfully

明治四年十月改元
Meiji Yo-Nen Ju- Gatsu Kai-Gen
Meiji 4th Year 10th month (1871)
Change of the Era
(Referring to the Heitorei)

There were 2 listed Lord Kikkawa Tsunemasa. The first one (12th Lord) died aged 39 on 24 April 1867 from an illness. He was posthumously awarded the title Daimyō in 1868 primarily for his actions during the Kinmon Incident of 1864 and later in the Shimonoseki War(s). He spent his life supporting the Emperor, rather than the despised Bakufu (Tokugawa Shogunate).

The records surrounding the death of Tsunemasa are a little confusing. The 12th Lord Kikkawa Tsunemasa died in 1867, but his death was kept secret and unannounced officially until the following year. He was then posthumously awarded the title Daimyō in 1868 in honour of his earlier ‘work’ (fighting in support of the Emperor). As a result, the official records state that he retired in 1868, whereupon his son (also named Kikkawa Tsunemasa to add to the confusion) took over. The death of the elder 12th Lord Tsunemasa was not officially filed until March 1869. It is interesting to note that the son was not specifically listed as becoming the 13th Lord, but he is recorded in the history books as being ‘appointed the title of Lord’, presumably a hereditary title from his father. He ‘ended’ his Samurai position in 1868 (not sure if he died or just surrendered the title – see later). 1868 seems a little early to surrender the title, as most of the Daimyō (and therefore their retainers) seem to have ended their rule/died/capitulated/were defeated between 1869 and 1871 when feudal titles were abolished. I can only assume that the changes under the edicts and fighting (more collectively, and incorrectly, termed the Meiji Restoration) did not happen overnight and had widespread repercussions adding to the confusion. I suspect that in serving the Emperor, immediate capitulation to the Emperors demands was expected.

It is recorded on the armour box that Kikkawa Tsunemasa [2nd Gen] presented the armour in 1871, and it was owned by the preceding 3 generations (his father, grandfather and great grandfather). See later.

Incidentally, 1871 also saw the end of many sword making schools, including the famous and prolific group known as the Hizen Kaji from Hizen Province, Kyushu. Presumably 1871 was the year that the edict banning swords, and cutting the top-knot, really came into effect. I would question if there was also some kind of an edict to surrender all Samurai war accoutrements (weapons, armour etc) at the same time, hence the
armour also being surrendered in 1871 (see later for expanded details of the Kinmon Incident, Boshin War and Satsuma Rebellion).... In 1871 many Daimyo committed seppuku as they lost everything.

Hand-written LABEL on the inside of the amour BOX

明治四戊
Meiji-Yon Tsuchinoe
Meiji 4 (1871), May*

辰季
Tatsu-Sue
Dragon End/Season*

経礼
Tsunehiro (10th Lord)

経章
Tsuneaki (11th Lord)

経幹
Tsunemasa (12th Lord)

正茂作具足
Masashige Saku Gussoku
Masashige made (this) complete armour

* (戊 = N1795 Bo/E = 5th, Tsuchinoe 5th Calendar Sign/Earth)
(辰= N4653 Shin/Tatsu = 5th Zodiac Sign/Dragon
季=N3266 Ki = Season, Sue = End)

The inscription 辰季 ‘Tatsu-Sue’ is both offset and written slightly differently, so it could be interpreted several ways:
1. 明治四戊 辰季 Meiji-Yon Boshin-Sue
   (1871 at end/aftermath of Boshin) (Boshin war was 1869, so a probable conflict of dates)
2. 明治四戊辰季 Meiji-Yon Tsuchinoe Tatsu-Sue
   (1871, end of “Elder Brother of Earth-Dragon”).
3. 明治四戊 Meiji-Yon Tsuchinoe
   (1871, May), 辰季 Tatsu-Ki (Dragon Season)
4. 明治四戊 Meiji-Yon Tsuchinoe
   (1871, May), 辰季 Tatsu-Sue (End of the dragon)

Chinese Zodiac and Calendar Signs of the Period (small sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heavenly Stem</th>
<th>Earthly Branch</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>丁 Yin Fire</td>
<td>卯 Rabbit</td>
<td>1867 - 1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>戊 Yang Earth</td>
<td>辰 Dragon</td>
<td>1868 – 1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>己 Yin Earth</td>
<td>巳 Snake</td>
<td>1869 -30 Jan 1870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boshin (戊辰) is both the name given to one of the period civil wars of 1868/1869, and the designation for the fifth year of a sexagenary cycle in traditional East Asian calendars. 戊辰 can also be read as "tsuchinoe-tatsu" in Japanese, literally "Elder Brother of Earth-Dragon". In Chinese terminology, it translates "Yang Earth Dragon", which is associated with that particular year in the sexagenary cycle. Etymologically, 戊 and 辰 have nothing to do with "dragon" or "elder brother of earth", so the reading "tsuchinoe-tatsu" has to be regarded as a kind of associative kun'yomi. In term of eras, there is a conflict in that the 4th year of Keiō, 1868, also became the first year of Meiji in October of that year, ending in the second year of Meiji 1869.

AUTHORS NOTE I like to think this label was written by a proud and scholarly man, and alludes to both the Choshu Samurai struggles in the Boshin war, and at the same time to the end of the fearsome Samurai (dragons) battling to survive the impending changes. I believe it says “Presented in May 1871, the end of the Dragon(s)”. That is, at the end of the Samurai when the Emperor issued the edicts banning swords and took away both feudal land and an era of warrior reign that had lasted for centuries.

PRECIS of LABELS (together with known data).

The armour is signed armour by Iwakuni Masashige, from Iwakuni, Yamaguchi prefecture. It was worn by 3 retainers (samurai) of the Kikkawa Clan under Mōri Daimyō Shigeyoshi. The armour owners were 10th Lord Kikkawa Tsunehiro, 11th Lord Kikkawa Tsuneaki, and 12th Lord Kikkawa Tsunemasa. The armour was donated/surrendered in 1871 by Kikkawa Tsunemasa, son of 12th Lord, the armour bearing the Kamon of the Kikkawa Clan under the Yamaguchi Han, Mōri Daimyō.

Note: Kikkawa Tsunemasa 12th Lord served the Mōri Daimyō, and he would therefore have served under Mōri Takachika (from research online) and under Mōri Shigeyoshi (according to the label). Takachika was born in 1819 and died in 1871, and he ruled as Daimyō from 1836 to 1869. 1869 is when the Feudal land and title system appears to have been disbanded, but 1871 was also a pivotal year in the demise of the Samurai. Shigeyoshi was born in 1855 and died in 1909.

The disappearance of the Daimyō (titles) in 1871 could also be indicative of seppuku. Due to the multiple heredity lines of the Mōri Daimyō, this area needs more research. A brief look at some of the various listed Lords of Choshu (shown later) will impress upon the reader the complexity of the Daimyō Feudal system. It should also be remembered that the Daimyō were awarded lands and titles (British peerage titles) under the Meiji Government if they capitulated, so not all Daimyō ended their Samurai careers so abruptly in death.

Agent in Japan:

Seriously gorgeous and unique detailing. Definitely worth the price. Yamaguchi Han armor. Nine stars is usually Kyushu Hosokawa (ancestors of 1990s prime minister) but this one has a snake eye in the center. It was worn by 3 generations of the Kikkawa clan, an offshoot of the famous Mōri clan (notorious for being a serious pain in the ass to the Shogunate, and the reason Himeji castle was built as an outpost). This armor has history. Good chance someone will snap it up.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Class/ Rank</th>
<th>Buddhist name</th>
<th>Other name</th>
<th>Family Head</th>
<th>Died(age)</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>吉川広家</td>
<td>従四位下侍・民部少輔</td>
<td>全光院如</td>
<td>吉川元春</td>
<td>男</td>
<td>1587-1614</td>
<td>宇喜多直家女</td>
<td>1587大朝城（安芸）、1591富田城（出雲）、1625岩国城（周防）=玖珂郡一円37,129石</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川広正</td>
<td>内蔵助</td>
<td>浄性院宗閑</td>
<td>広家二男</td>
<td>1614-63</td>
<td>毛利輝元女</td>
<td>1634公称60,000石</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川広嘉</td>
<td>監物</td>
<td>玄真院快巌如心</td>
<td>広正長男</td>
<td>1663-79</td>
<td>鶚尾隆量女</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川広紀</td>
<td>内蔵助</td>
<td>普恩院徳峯祖天</td>
<td>広嘉長男</td>
<td>1679（59）</td>
<td>矢津（毛利綱広女）、石川義当女</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川広達</td>
<td>勝之助</td>
<td>涼雲院玉顔元鮮</td>
<td>室</td>
<td>1696-1715</td>
<td>一</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川経永</td>
<td>左立</td>
<td>偏照院蓮光花桜</td>
<td>龟次郎</td>
<td>1715-64</td>
<td>中条信実女</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川経倫</td>
<td>監物</td>
<td>大乗院心円通衡山</td>
<td>豊永貞吉五郎</td>
<td>1764-92</td>
<td>一柳末栄女</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川経忠</td>
<td>和三郎</td>
<td>紹徳院孝雲祖沢</td>
<td>経倫長男</td>
<td>1792-1803</td>
<td>忠進（織田信憑女）</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉川経賢</td>
<td>寛三郎</td>
<td>文巌院道馨</td>
<td>経忠長男</td>
<td>1803-07</td>
<td>一</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON THE KIKKAWA HAN (Est. 1587)**

岩国藩=吉川家（長州支藩），(Iwakuni-Han (Clan)= Kikkawa-Ka (House), Choshu Shi-Han (Province))
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Rank/Class</th>
<th>Buddhist Name</th>
<th>Real Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Ruled</th>
<th>Died</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>吉川 経礼</td>
<td>監物</td>
<td>賢好</td>
<td>経忠二男</td>
<td>1807-36</td>
<td>1836 (45)</td>
<td>隆（木下俊懃女）殿子（毛利就駒女）</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>木下俊懃女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>吉川 経章</td>
<td>尚五郎</td>
<td>賢章</td>
<td>経忠三男</td>
<td>1837-43</td>
<td>1843 (50)</td>
<td>梅子（長井元簡女）</td>
<td>1843</td>
<td>長井元簡女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>吉川 経幹</td>
<td>従五位下駿河守</td>
<td>章貞</td>
<td>経章長男</td>
<td>1844-67</td>
<td>1867 (39)</td>
<td>延子（木下俊愛女）</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>木下俊愛女</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kikkawa clan Samurai relevant to this armour are shown in blue above, and the following is a translation.

**Kikkawa Tsunehiro (10th Lord)** 吉川 経礼

Ranked/Class Kenmotsu (Gov Official), Buddhist (burial) name of Kekoin Jiuntoin Ryokoin, real name Keko Yukinosuke, 2nd Son of Kikkawa Tsunetada (9th Gen), Born 1792, family head 1807-1836, died 1836 aged 45, wives were Kinoshita of the Takashi family, and also Mori-Shunare of the Utaka family.

**Kikkawa Tsuneaki (11th Lord)** 吉川 経章

Ranked/Class Naogoro, Buddhist (burial) name of Akira-Ko-In Eia-Sandoyu (Ei-Yama-Michi-Os) real name Ke-Sho Tora-go-ro, 3rd Son of Kikkawa Tsunetada (9th Gen), born 1793, family head 1837-1843, died 1843 aged 50, spouse was Nagaimotokan of the Umeko family.

**Kikkawa Tsunemasa (12th Lord)** 吉川 経幹

Ranked/Class Jugo-Ieke Suruga no Kami, Buddhist (burial) name of Yu-Ka-kuin Hara-Yama-Gen-Shizuka (Shunzangensei?), real name Akira-Sada Ki-kore-shin Ken-motsu. Born 1828, Ruled 1844-1867, died aged 39. He was the eldest son of Kenmotsu (Kikkawa Tsuneaki 11th Lord), his wife was called Shun Kinoshita of the Nobuko Family. His death was not registered until 1868, (没後 1868), when he was posthumously awarded the title of Daimyō (Daimyō Retsusuru - 大名に列す).
SAMURAI owners of this ARMOUR

吉川経礼 1807-1836 10th Lord
(きっかわ つねひろ) は、周防岩国領の第10代領主。Kikkawa Tsunehiro, the 10th lord of Iwakuni Suo territory. Born 1793, Died January 2, 1837 at the age of 44.

吉川経翁 1837-1843 11th Lord
吉川 経翁 (きっかわ つねあきら) は、周防岩国領の第11代領主。Kikkawa Tsuneaki, the 11th lord of Iwakuni Suo territory. Died November 19, 1843 at age 50.

吉川経幹 1844-1867 12th Lord
吉川 経幹 (きっかわ つねまさ)、周防岩国領の第12代領主。Kikkawa Tsune masa, the 12th Lord of Iwakuni Suo territory. Born 30 September 1829, Died 24 April 1867 aged 39 from illness. Fought in 1866 (“Second Choshu four border war”).

12th Lord Kikkawa Tsunemasa shown.

LATER GENERATIONS

吉川経幹 (Kikkawa Tsunemasa 2nd) 13th Lord 1868. Took over from his father, asked to defend Suruga, and appointed Lord in 1868 after the Retsusuru of his father...... (Posthumous award of Daimyō of his father)

吉川経健 (Kikkawa Tsunetake) 1868-1871. (Born 1855, Died 4 June 1909) 1871 saw the abolition of the Samurai and the feudal titles hence he is listed as finishing in 1871, although he died in 1909 aged 55.

It is interesting that several generations seem to have died or ceased to be head of the clan in 1867/1868. The Boshin War was 1868 to 1869, and the end of the Boshin War in turn heralded the end to the Clan system in 1871. Following the various battles and state of War, there was great turmoil and death amongst the Samurai, not least in the house of the Choshu Samurai who were in the thick of battle, and Kikkawa Tsunemasa who was “Appointed Lord” and therefore became the 13th Lord.

NOTE: There are some discrepancies regarding the dates (which should be considered accurate only within 1 year -- eg 1st year of a nengo is year 1, not 0, so translation errors were made, and the Japanese calendar was different to the Western calendar).

Image of a young Kikkawa Tsunemasa (note the Kikkawa Kamon on the front of the kimono in this and the above photo. It is thought that these images are both of the 12th Lord)
CHOSHU PROVINCE - home of the Kikkawa Clan.

Choshu Province was very strategically important in that it controlled the Japanese mainland shores at the closest crossing point across the Shimonoseki straits to Kyushu Island. Here the crossing is narrowest at 112 metres. Kyushu is the Island group to the Southwest which comprises the nine provinces of Chikuzen, Chikugo, Bizen, Bungo, Hizen, Higo, Hyūga, Satsuma and Ōsumi. Remember that historically Japan was isolated from the Western World except for some foreign shipping being allowed into the ports of Nagasaki and Fukuoka on Kyushu (and limited shipping later into Osaka). Thus almost all the land carried items and people entering Japan via Kyushu had to pass through Choshu. As the Lord of Hizen (Nabeshima Daimyō and their retainers) controlled the Nagasaki highway in Hizen at Saga Jo, so the Choshu Samurai (Mōri Daimyō) controlled the initial entry to the mainland of Japan. Thus all Western goods and personnel had to pass through Choshu territory, and that included land transported weapons, modern technology and Western Barbarians to which the Choshu showed open hostility.

CHOSHU in DETAIL (Wikipedia)

Nagato Province (長門国 Nagato no Kuni), often called Chōshū (長州), was a province of Japan. It was at the extreme western end of Honshū, in the area that is today Yamaguchi Prefecture. Nagato bordered on Iwami and Suō Provinces. Although the ancient capital of the province was Shimonoseki, Hagi was the seat of the Chōshū han (fief or domain) during the Edo period. Nagato was ruled by the Mōri clan before and after the Battle of Sekigahara. In 1871 with the abolition of feudal domains and the establishment of prefectures (Haihan Chiken) after the Meiji Restoration, the provinces of Nagato and Suō were combined to eventually establish Yamaguchi Prefecture.

The Chōshū Domain (長州藩 Chōshū Han) was a feudal domain of Japan during the Edo period (1603–1867) occupying the whole of modern day Yamaguchi Prefecture. The capital city was Hagi. It was coterminous with Nagato Province: in fact, Chōshū was simply shorthand for the province. The domain played a major role in the Late Tokugawa Shogunate. It is also known as the Hagi Domain (萩藩 Hagi Han).

The rulers of Chōshū Han were the descendants of the great Sengoku warlord Mōri Motonari. Mōri Motonari was able to extend his power over the entire Chūgoku region of Japan and occupied a territory worth 1,200,000 Koku. After he died, his grandson and heir Mōri Terumoto became Daimyō and implemented a strategy of alliance with Toyotomi Hideyoshi. This would later prove to be a great mistake. After Hideyoshi's death, the Daimyō Tokugawa Ieyasu challenged the Toyotomi power and battled with Hideyoshi's trusted advisor Ishida Mitsunari at the Battle of Sekigahara. Mōri Terumoto was the most powerful ally of the Toyotomi and was elected by a council of Toyotomi royalists to be the titular head of the Toyotomi force. However the Toyotomi forces lost the battle due to several factors tied to Mōri Terumoto:

His cousin Kikkawa Hiroie secretly made a deal with Tokugawa Ieyasu resulting in the inactivity of 15,000 Mōri soldiers during the battle.
His adopted cousin Kobayakawa Hideaki and his 15,600 soldiers betrayed Ishida's force and joined the Tokugawa side.
After assurances from Tokugawa Ieyasu, Mōri Terumoto gave up the formidable Osaka castle without a fight.
Despite its inactivity, the Mōri clan was removed from its ancestral home in Aki to Nagato Province (also known as Chōshū), and its holdings were drastically reduced from 1,200,000 to 369,000 Koku. This was seen as a great act of betrayal to the Mōri clan, and the Chōshū Han later became a hotbed of anti-Tokugawa activities. The origins of this were evident in the tradition of the clan's New Year's meeting. Every year during the meeting, the elders and the administrators would ask the Daimyō whether the time to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate has come, to which the Daimyō would reply: "Not yet, the Shogunate is still too powerful."

This dream would eventually be realized some 260 years later, when the domain joined forces with the Satsuma Domain and sympathetic court nobles to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate. They also led the fight against the armies of the former shogun, as did the Ouetsu Reppan Domei, Aizu, and the Ezo Republic, during the Boshin War. The domains' military forces of 1867 through 1869 also formed the foundation for the Imperial Japanese Army. Thanks to this alliance, Chōshū and Satsuma natives enjoyed political and societal prominence well into the Meiji and even Taishō periods.

**Economics**

The initial reduction from 1.2 million to 369,000 Koku resulted in a large shortfall in terms of military upkeep and infrastructure maintenance. In order to bring the domain's finance out of debt, strict policies were enforced on the retainers:

- All retainers' fiefs were drastically reduced.
- Some retainers who were paid in land began to be paid in rice.
- Some retainers were laid off and encouraged to engage in agriculture.

As a result of high taxation, farmers secretly developed farms far inside the mountains as a private food source. A new land survey was conducted within the domain in which many hidden farms were discovered and taxed. The domain also began a strict policy with regard to trade. Laws were also passed in which the profitable trade of the “four whites” was controlled by the domain: paper, rice, salt and wax. Some of the profits, and a large amount of the tax revenues from this trade, went into the domain coffers. These policies greatly strengthened the domain's finances and allowed the Daimyō more effective control over his territory. However, these policies angered peasants and displaced samurai alike, resulting in frequent revolts.

**Politics**

The capital of the domain was the castle town of Hagi, which was the source of the Chōshū alternate name of Hagi Han (萩藩). The domain remained under the rule of the Mōri family for the duration of the Edo period. Because the Shogunate frequently confiscated domains whose Daimyō were unable to produce heirs, the Mōri Daimyō created four subordinate Han ruled by branches of the family:

- **Iwakuni Han**: 60,000 Koku, ruled by descendants of Kikkawa Hiroie.
- **Chōfū Han**: 50,000 Koku, ruled by descendants of Mōri Hidemoto.
- **Tokuyama Han**: 40,000 Koku, ruled by descendants of Mōri Naritaka.
- **Kiyosue Han**: 10,000 Koku, ruled by descendants of Mōri Mototomo.

During the Edo period, the main branch died out twice and heirs were adopted from both the Chōfū branch and the Kiyosue branch. The Mōri Daimyō, as with many of their counterparts throughout Japan, were assisted in the government of their domain by a group of karō, or domain elders. There were two kinds of karō in Chōshū: hereditary karō (whose families retained the rank in perpetuity) and the "lifetime karō," whose rank was granted to an individual but could not be inherited by their son(s). The hereditary karō were either members of minor branches of the Mōri family, or members of related families such as the Shishido and the Fukuhara, or descendants of Mōri Motonari's most trusted generals and advisors such as the
Mazuda, the Kuchiba and the Kunishi. The lifetime karō were middle or lower samurai who displayed great talent in economics or politics and was promoted to karō by the Daimyō.

**FAMOUS PEOPLE of the BAKAMATSU PERIOD**

- Yoshida Shōin (1830–1859), educator and teacher of many reformers
- Takasugi Shinsaku (1839–1867), founder of the Kiheitai
- Kijima Matabei (1817–1864), swordsman, took part in the Kinmon Incident
- Kunishi Shinano (1842–1864), committed seppuku to take responsibility for the Kinmon Incident
- Kido Takayoshi (Kido Kōin) (1833–1877), Bakumatsu reformer

**LIST OF MÔRI DAIMYÔ**

*Môri clan (Tozama, 369,000 Koku), 1600–1871*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Môri Terumoto (毛利輝元)</td>
<td>1563–1623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Môri Hidenari (毛利秀就)</td>
<td>1623–1651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Môri Tsunahiro (毛利綱広)</td>
<td>1651–1682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Môri Yoshinari (毛利吉就)</td>
<td>1682–1694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Môri Yoshihiro (毛利吉広)</td>
<td>1694–1707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Môri Yoshimoto (毛利吉元)</td>
<td>1707–1731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Môri Munehiro (毛利宗広)</td>
<td>1731–1751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Môri Shigetaka (毛利重就)</td>
<td>1751–1782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Môri Haruchika (毛利治親)</td>
<td>1782–1791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Môri Narifusa (毛利斉房)</td>
<td>1791–1809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Môri Narihiro (毛利斉熙)</td>
<td>1809–1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Môri Narimoto (毛利斉元)</td>
<td>1824–1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Môri Naritô (毛利斉広)</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Môri Takachika (毛利敬親)</td>
<td>1836–1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Môri Motonori (毛利元徳)</td>
<td>1869–1871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simplified Genealogy of the main Mōri line (Lords of Chōshū)

- Mōri Motonari (1497-1571), who had, including other issue, two sons:
  - Takamoto (1523-1563). He had one son:
    - I. Terumoto, 1st Lord of Chōshū (cr. 1600) (1553-1625; r. 1600-1623). He had two sons:
    - II. Hidenari, 2nd Lord of Chōshū (1595-1651; r. 1623-1651). He had a son:
    - III. Tsunahiro, 3rd Lord of Chōshū (1639-1689; r. 1651-1682). He had two sons:
    - IV. Yoshinari, 4th Lord of Chōshū (1668-1694; r. 1682-1694).
  - V. Yoshihiro, 5th Lord of Chōshū (1673-1797; r. 1694-1707).
  - Naritaka, 1st Lord of Tokuyama (1602-1679). He had issue, including a son:
    - Mototsugu, 3rd Lord of Tokuyama (1667-1719). He had issue, including:
      - Hirotoyo, 5th Lord of Tokuyama (1705-1773). He had issue, including:
      - Nariyoshi, 7th Lord of Tokuyama (1750-1797). He had a son:
  - Hiroshige, 8th Lord of Tokuyama (1777-1866). He had issue, including:
  - XV. Motonori, 15th Lord of Chōshū, 1st Prince (1839-1896; r. 1869, Governor of Hagi 1869-1871, family head 1871-1896, created 1st Prince 1884). He had issue, including:
    - 16. Motoaki, 16th family head, 2nd Prince (1865-1938; 16th family head and 2nd Prince 1896-1938). He had issue, including:
      - 17. Motomichi, 17th family head, 3rd Prince (1903-1976; 17th family head 1938-1976, 3rd Prince to 1947). He had issue, including:
      - 18. Motoyoshi, 18th family head (1930-; 18th family head 1976-). He has one son.
  - Oyachō (1766-1800). He had one son:
  - Motokiyo (1551-1597). He had a son:
    - Hidemoto, 1st Lord of Chōfū (1579-1650). He had two sons:
    - Mitsuhiro, 2nd Lord of Chōfū (1616-1653). He had a son:
    - Tsunamoto, 3rd Lord of Chōfū (1650-1709). He had issue, including:
      - VI. Yoshimoto, 6th Lord of Chōshū (1677-1731; r. 1707-1731). He had a son:
      - VII. Munehiro, 7th Lord of Chōshū (1715-1751; r. 1731-1751).
      - Mototomo, 1st Lord of Kiyosue (1631-1683). He had a son:
      - Masahiro, 6th Lord of Chōfū, 2nd Lord of Kiyosue (1675-1729). He had issue, including a son:
      - VIII. Shigetaka, 8th Lord of Chōshū (1725-1789; r. 1751-1782). He had issue, including two sons:
      - IX. Haruchika, 9th Lord of Chōshū (1754-1791; r. 1782-1791). He had issue, including two sons:
      - X. Narifusa, 10th Lord of Chōshū (1779-1809; r. 1791-1809).
      - XI. Narihiro, 11th Lord of Chōshū (1784-1836; r. 1809-1824). He had issue, including a son:
      - XIII. Naritō, 13th Lord of Chōshū (1815-1836; r. 1836).
      - Oyachō (1766-1800). He had one son:
      - XII. Narimoto, 12th Lord of Chōshū (1794-1836; r. 1824-1836). He had issue, including a son:
      - XIV. Takachika, 14th Lord of Chōshū (1819-1871; r. 1836-1869).
Thus the Kikkawa Kamon (family crest of the Kikkawa) is of the 9 Celestial bodies (planets) but with a small ‘snake eye’ in the centre, the significance of which is unknown.

**JAPANESE MAP of LATE EDO KA-MON**
Kikkawa Kamon details from above map.

IWAKUNI –JO
(Iwakuni Castle)

Kikkawa Akimono
Iwakuni-Jo Ju (Living in Iwakuni Castle)
Rokuman Koku (60,000 Koku)

Choshu (including Kikkawa Clan) Samurai were retainers of the Mori Daimyo (Tozama ranked), and as such, hated the Tokugawa and Feudai Daimyo for centuries, eagerly siding with the Emperor in the late Tokugawa (Bakamatsu) civil wars.

LATE TOKUGAWA CONFLICTS involving Choshu Samurai

- Battle of Shimonoseki Straits (1863)
- Bombardment of Kagoshima (1863)
- The Mito Rebellion (1864)
- **Hamaguri Gate/Kinmon Incident (1864)** *
- First Chōshū ‘Punitive Expedition’ (1864)
- Shimonoseki Campaign (1864)
- Second Chōshū ‘Punitive Expedition’ (1866)

* Kikkawa Tsunemasa was recorded as being involved in the Kinmon/Hamaguri Gate Incident in 1864 in Kyoto, and in the Second Choshu Incident of 1866. It is quite likely that he served the Emperor and his Lord in other ‘Incidents’ (battles) as well. Termed ‘Incidents’ by politicians, it should be remembered that the Samurai fought for their ideals and died in battle during these bloody ‘incidents’; one would wonder how the politicians would react under similar circumstances of duress. Lord Tsunemasa was posthumously awarded the highest of honours (Daimyo rank) for his actions in the Hamaguri Gate Incident.

There were many incidents and battles from 1863 in what was effectively the run up to the Japanese Civil War (Boshin War), with the theme of the conflict starting with the opening up of Japan to foreign powers, and support of the Emperor against the Tokugawa Shogun for the Tozama Samurai, and finally to the annihilation of both the Samurai and their feudal culture. The history books detail a widespread Civil War, however it is not often referred to as such, with the Japanese proffering to use the terms ‘conflict’, ‘rebellion’, ‘incident’, ‘expedition’ and the like. Make no mistake, thousands lost their lives in Civil Warfare. A discussion of the various battles is detailed bellow, followed by brief discussions of the Boshin War. It is easy to get lost in the battles and to become confused about the aim as various belligerents changed sides using the conflicts to settle old scores. It would appear that the way of the Samurai was also to fight to the death: such was their cause in the last few years. Try to remember that the Choshu Samurai supported the Emperor as a means to engage the Tokugawa as you read through the conflicts.
The Battle of Shimonoseki Straits (Japanese: 下関海戦, Shimonoseki Kaisen) is a little-known naval engagement fought on July 16, 1863, by a warship of the United States Navy, the USS Wyoming, against the powerful feudal Japanese Daimyō, Lord Mōri Takachika of the Chōshū clan based in Shimonoseki. The USS Wyoming under Captain David McDougal sailed into the strait and single-handedly engaged the US-built but poorly manned Japanese fleet. Engaged for almost two hours before withdrawing, McDougal sank two enemy vessels and severely damaged the other one, and inflicted some forty Japanese casualties. The Wyoming suffered considerable damage with 4 crew killed and 7 crew wounded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>July 16, 1863</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Shimonoseki Straits, Honshu, Japan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Result     | American withdrawal |}

**Belligerents**

| Chōshū     | United States         |

**Commanders and leaders**

| Mōri Takachika | David McDougal |

**Strength**

**Land:**
- 4 shore batteries

**Sea:**
- 1 bark
- 1 brig
- 1 steamer

**Casualties and losses**

- 1 brig sunk
- 1 steamer sunk
- 1 sloop-of-war damaged
- 1 bark damaged
- 40 killed
- 7 wounded
- 4 shore batteries damaged
The battle was a prelude to the larger-scale 1863 and 1864 Shimonoseki Campaign by allied foreign powers. It took place among the troubled events of the Late Tokugawa Shogunate from 1854 to 1868, associated with the opening of Japan to the European and American powers.

Background

In 1863 the Japanese Emperor Kōmei, breaking with centuries of imperial tradition and dissatisfied with Japan's opening to the United States and Europe, began to take an active role in matters of state and issued on March 11 and April 11, 1863, an "Order to expel barbarians" (攘夷実行の勅命). The Shimonoseki based Chōshū clan, under Lord Mōri, followed on the order, and began to take actions to expel all foreigners from the date fixed as a deadline, May 10 on a lunar calendar. Openly defying the Shogunate, Mōri ordered his forces to fire without warning on all foreign ships traversing Shimonoseki Strait. Remember that the Shimonoseki straits were narrow, and a significant channel for trade ships.

The Chōshū clan was equipped with mostly antiquated cannon firing round shot, but also some modern armament, such as five 8-inch Dahlgren guns which had been presented to Japan by the United States, and 3 steam warships of American construction; the barque Daniel Webster of 6 guns, the brig Kosei of 10 guns (originally the Lanrick), and the steamer Koshin of 4 guns (originally the Lancefield).

Attacks on foreign shipping

The first attack occurred on June 25, 1863. The American merchant steamer Pembroke, under Captain Simon Cooper, was riding at anchor outside Shimonoseki Strait, when intercepted and unexpectedly fired upon by two European-built warships belonging to the Choshu clan. The crew of one enemy vessel taunted the frantic American seamen with the loud and unnerving cry, "Revere the Emperor and drive out the barbarians!" ("尊皇攘夷", pronounced "Sonnō Jōi"). Under incessant cannon fire, Pembroke managed to get under way and escape through the adjacent Bungo Strait, with only slight damage and no casualties. Upon arrival in Shanghai, Cooper filed a report of the attack and dispatched it to the U.S. Consulate in Yokohama, Japan.

The next day, June 26, the French naval dispatch steamer Kienchang was also riding at anchor outside the strait when Japanese artillery, atop the bluffs surrounding Shimonoseki, opened fire on her. Damaged in several places, the French vessel escaped with one wounded sailor.

On July 11, despite warnings from the crew of the Kienchang, with whom they had rendezvoused earlier, the 16-gun Dutch warship Medusa cruised into Shimonoseki Strait. Her skipper, Captain François de Casembroot was convinced that Lord Mōri would not fire on his vessel, due to the strength of his ship and longstanding relations between the Netherlands and Japan. But Mōri Takachika opened fire, pounding Medusa with more than thirty shells and killing or wounding nine seamen. De Casembroot returned fire and ran the rebel gauntlet at full speed, fearful of endangering the life of the Dutch Consul General, who was then aboard Medusa.

Within a short time, the Japanese warlord had managed to fire on most of the foreign flags of nations with consulates in Japan and thus set in place a sequence of events that would prove disastrous for the Samurai.
Battle

At 4:45 am on the morning of July 14, 1863, under sanction by Minister Pruyn in an apparent swift response to the attack on the Pembroke, Comdr. McDougal called all hands. The Wyoming got under way 15 minutes later, bound for the strait, and after a two-day voyage, she arrived off the island of Himeshima on the evening of 15 July and anchored off the south side of that island.

At 5:00 am in the following morning, Wyoming weighed anchor and steamed toward the Strait of Shimonoseki. She went to general quarters at 9:00 am, loaded her pivot guns with shell, and cleared for action. The warship entered the strait at 10:45 and beat to quarters. Soon, three signal guns boomed from the landward, alerting the batteries and ships of Lord Mōri to Wyoming's arrival.

At about 11:15, after being fired upon from the shore batteries, Wyoming hoisted her colors and replied with her 11-inch pivot guns. Momentarily ignoring the batteries, McDougal ordered Wyoming to continue steaming toward a bark, a steamer, and a brig at anchor off the town of Shimonoseki. Meanwhile, four shore batteries took the warship under fire. Wyoming answered the Japanese cannon "as fast as the guns could be brought to bear", while shells from the shore guns passed through her rigging.

USS Wyoming then passed between the brig and the bark on the starboard hand and the steamer on the port, steaming within a pistol shot's range. One shot from either the bark or brig struck near Wyoming's forward broadside gun, killing two men and wounding four. Elsewhere on the ship, a Marine was struck dead by a piece of shrapnel.

Wyoming sinking the Japanese Lancefield.

Wyoming, in hostile territory, then grounded in uncharted waters shortly after she had made one run past the forts. The Japanese steamer, in the meantime, had slipped her cable and headed directly for Wyoming—possibly to attempt a boarding. The American man-of-war, however, managed to work free of the mud and then unleashed her 11-inch Dahlgrens on the enemy ship, huling her and damaging her severely. Two well-directed shots exploded her boilers and, as she began to sink, her crew abandoned the ship.

Wyoming then passed the bark and the brig, firing into them steadily and methodically. Some shells were "overs" and landed in the town ashore. As Comdr. McDougal wrote in his report to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles on 23 July, "the punishment inflicted and in store for him will, I trust, teach him a lesson that will not soon be forgotten."

After having been under fire for a little over an hour, Wyoming returned to Yokohama. She had been hulled 11 times, with considerable damage to her smokestack and rigging. Her casualties had been comparatively light: four men killed and seven wounded—one of whom later died. Significantly, Wyoming had been the first foreign warship to take the offensive to uphold treaty rights in Japan.

The two Japanese steamers sunk by the Wyoming were raised again by Chōshū in 1864 and attached to the harbor of Hagi. The results of the battle were not sufficient to stop the actions of the Choshu clan against foreign shipping and the shore batteries of Choshu remained intact. The shelling of foreign ships continued. Foreign powers would later combine into a powerful fleet in 1864 in order to conduct the Shimonoseki Campaign, with successful results.
The Bombardment of Kagoshima, also known as the Anglo-Satsuma War (薩英戦争 Satsu-Ei Sensō), took place on 15–17 August 1863 during the Late Tokugawa Shogunate. The British Royal Navy was fired on from coastal batteries near the town of Kagoshima and in retaliation bombarded the town.

**Background**

The British were trying to exact a payment from the Daimyō of Satsuma following the Namamugi Incident of 14 September 1862, in which British nationals were attacked (one killed, two wounded) by Satsuma samurai for not showing the proper respect for a Daimyō (Shimazu Hisamitsu). Following the incident, Lieutenant-Colonel Neale, the British Chargé d’Affaires, demanded from the Bakufu an apology and a huge indemnity for the Namamugi outrage of £100,000 ($440,000 in Mexican silver dollars), representing roughly 1/3 of the total revenues of the Bakufu for one year – a huge sum indeed. Neale kept threatening a naval bombardment of Edo if the payment was not made, whilst Britain also demanded of the Satsuma domain the arrest and trial of the perpetrators of the outrage, and £25,000 compensation for the surviving victims and the relatives of Charles Lennox Richardson, who had been the murdered businessman.
The Bakufu (Japanese central government), led by Ogasawara Nagamichi in the absence of the Shogun who was in Kyoto, eager to avoid trouble with European powers, negotiated with France and Great Britain on July 2, 1863, on board the French warship *Sémiramis*, apologized and paid the indemnity to the British authorities. Participating in the settlement were the main French and British political and navy representatives of the time: Duchesne de Bellecourt the French Minister in Japan, Lieutenant-Colonel Neale the Chargé d’Affaires of Great Britain, Admiral Jaurès and Admiral Kuper.

**Lieutenant-Colonel Neale in 1863, during the July preliminary negotiations with the Bakufu.**

Satsuma Province however refused to apologize, to pay the compensation of 25,000 pounds demanded by the British, or to convict and execute the two Japanese samurai responsible for the murder, arguing that disrespect to the Daimyō was normally sanctioned by the immediate death of those showing disrespect. Legally, their claim was invalid in this case, as foreigners in Japan benefited from extraterritoriality due to Japan's reluctant acceptance of what the Japanese called the Unequal treaties with Europe. Japanese customary law did not apply to foreigners. Furthermore, politically, Satsuma could not be seen as submitting to European demands in the very anti-colonial context at that time in Japan.

Great Britain, however, wished to make a point against anti-foreign outrages in Japan. Other anti-foreign troubles were occurring throughout the country at the same time, reinforced by Emperor Kōmei's 1863 "Order to expel barbarians". The European powers chose to react militarily to such exactions: the straits of Shimonoseki had already seen attacks on American, Dutch and French ships passing through, each of which had brought retaliation from those countries, with the U.S. frigate USS *Wyoming* under Captain McDougal, the Dutch warship *Medusa* under Kapitein de Casembroot, and the two French warships *Tancrède* and the *Dupleix* under Captain Benjamin Jaurès attacking the mainland. Eventually, on 14 August 1863, a multinational fleet under Admiral Kuper and the Royal Navy commenced the Bombardment of Shimonoseki to prevent further attacks on western shipping there. They succeeded.

**Initial settlement between the Bakufu and European Powers on board the French Navy warship *Sémiramis*, July 2nd, 1863. Center: Saikai Hida-No-Kami Daimyō (vice-minister), on his left Duchesne de Bellecourt, French Minister in Japan, on his right, Lt.-Colonel Neale, representative of Great Britain, Admiral Jaurès and Admiral Kuper RN.**

**Protestations of the Bakufu**

Following protracted and fruitless negotiations with Satsuma that had taken over a year, the British Chargé d’Affaires eventually had had enough. Under British Government instructions, he required the Royal Naval Commander-in-Chief of the Far East and China Station to coerce Satsuma into complying with the British Government's demands. Informed of the plans, the Bakufu asked for a delay in its implementation: "On receipt of your dispatch of the 3rd of August, we fully understood that you intend to go within three days to the territory of the Prince of Satsuma with the men-of-war now lying in the Bay of Yokohama, to demand satisfaction for the murder of a British merchant on the Tokaido last year. But owing to the present unsettled state of affairs in our empire, which you witness and hear of, we are in great trouble, and intend to carry out several plans. Supposing, now, something untoward was to happen, then all the trouble both you and we
have taken would have been in vain and fruitless; therefore we request that the said departure may be delayed for the present”. —Edo, 4th of August, signed by four Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Shogunate.

On the 5th, a Vice-Minister from Edo visited Colonel Neale, but far from further opposing the expedition actually transmitted that the Shogunate intended to send one of its steamers with the squadron. The steamer in question however did not join the expedition.

**Departure**

The British squadron left Yokohama on August 6. It was composed of the flagship HMS *Euryalus* (with Colonel Neale onboard), HMS *Pearl*, HMS *Perseus*, HMS *Argus*, HMS *Coquette*, HMS *Racehorse* and the gunboat HMS *Havoc*. They sailed for Kagoshima and anchored in the deep waters of Kinko Bay on August 11, 1863. Satsuma envoys came aboard Euryalus and letters were exchanged, with the British commander pressing for a resolution satisfactory to his demands within 24 hours. The Satsuma clan prevaricated, refusing to comply for various reasons.

**Combat**

The deadline expired, and diplomacy gave way to coercion. Deciding to put pressure on Satsuma, the British Navy commander seized three foreign-built steam merchant ships (*Sir George Grey*, *Contest*, *England*, with an aggregate value of about $300,000/£200,000 sterling or £128,000,000 in 2011 pounds) belonging to Satsuma which were at anchor in Kagoshima harbour, to use them as a bargaining tool. Picking their moment, just as a typhoon started, the Satsuma forces on shore vented their anger by firing their round shot cannons at the British ships. Surprised by the hostility, the British fleet responded by first pillaging and then setting on fire the three captured steamships (to the chagrin of the British sailors, who were thereby deprived of prize money). Then, after nearly two hours getting ready (they had not expected or intended to get into any exchange of fire with Satsuma), a line of battle was formed, which sailed along the coast of Kagoshima and fired cannon shells and round shot. One of the British warships, the gunboat *Havoc*, set five Ryukyuan trading junks on fire.
A 150-pound Satsuma cannon, cast in 1849. It was mounted on Fort Tenpozan at Kagoshima. Caliber: 290mm, length: 4220mm. (Cannons like this were made by the Hizen Tadayoshi in reveratory factories, and ultimately used to defeat the Samurai)

The naval bombardment claimed just five lives among the people of Satsuma (the city had been evacuated in anticipation of the conflict), and 13 lives among the British (including Captain Josling of the British flagship *Euryalus*, and his second-in-command Commander Wilmot, both decapitated by the same cannonball). Material losses were considerable, with around 500 wood-and-paper houses burnt in Kagoshima (about 5% of Kagoshima's urban area), and the three Satsuma steamships and five junk ships destroyed. The encounter was face-saving for Satsuma, and was even claimed as a victory by the Japanese side, considering the relative number of casualties. The British ships did not land troops or seize cannons (which would have signaled the absolute defeat of Satsuma); Kuper having decided that enough was enough.

**Final negotiations and convergence**

Satsuma however later negotiated and paid £25,000 (which they borrowed from the Bakufu and never repaid, due to the fall of the bakufu in 1869 and its replacement by the Meiji administration). They never produced or identified Richardson's killers, but despite this, the reparation received was enough to obtain an agreement by Britain to supply steam warships to Satsuma. Just a few years earlier, the British were happy to fire upon the Japanese in gunboat diplomacy, but no doubt now happier to sell the Japanese the gunboats.

The payment of the Satsuma indemnity.

The conflict actually became the starting point of a close relationship between Satsuma and Britain, which became major allies in the ensuing Boshin War. From the start, the Satsuma Province had generally been in favour of the opening and modernization of Japan. Although the Namamugi Incident was unfortunate, it was not characteristic of Satsuma's policy, and was rather abusively branded as an example of anti-foreign sonnō jōi sentiment, as a justification to a strong European show of force. An interesting historical footnote to this incident was that a young Heihachiro Togo (later Pacific War Admiral) was manning one of the cannons used to defend the port, and is reported to have attributed his future career as head and 'father' of the Imperial Japanese Navy to this moment.
The Mito rebellion (水戸幕末争乱 Mito bakumatsu sōran), also called the Kantō Insurrection or the Tengutō Rebellion (天狗党の乱 tengutō no ran), is a civil war that occurred in the area of Mito Domain in Japan between May 1864 and January 1865. It involved an uprising and terrorist actions against the central power of the Shogunate in favour of the Sonnō Jōi ("Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians") policy.

A shogunal pacification force was sent to the Mount Tsukuba on 17 June 1864, consisting of 700 Mito soldiers led by Ichikawa, with 3 to 5 cannons and at least 200 firearms, as well as a Tokugawa shogunate force of 3,000 men with over 600 firearms and several cannons.

As the conflict escalated, on 10 October 1864 at Nakaminato, the shogunate force of 6,700 was defeated by 2000 insurgents, and several shogunal defeats followed. The insurgents were weakening, however,
dwindling to about 1,000. By December 1864 they faced a new force under Tokugawa Yoshinobu (himself born in Mito) numbering over 10,000, which ultimately forced them to surrender.

The uprising resulted in 1,300 dead on the rebels’ side, which suffered vicious repression, including 353 executions and approximately 100 who died in captivity.

**KINMON / HAMAGURI GATE INCIDENT Aug 1864**

*IMPORTANT NOTE* Kikkawa Tsunemasa (the last Samurai to use the armour detailed here) was involved in the Kinmon Incident, and was posthumously awarded the title Daimyō by the Emperor for his work in the battle. He was also listed as being involved in the ‘Second Choshu’ Incident of 1866.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinmon Incident</th>
<th>禁門の変・蛤御門の変</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part of Bakumatsu conflicts</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

An 1893 woodblock print by Yūzan Mōri, depicting the Hamaguri rebellion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>August 20, 1864</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Kyoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Shogunal victory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belligerents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Tokugawa shogunate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Aizu Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Satsuma Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Mito Domain 🌒 Owari Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Kii Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Kuwana Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Ōgaki Domain, Echizen Domain, Hikone Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Yodo Domain, Asao Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌒 Shinsengumi Mimawarigumi Yūgekitai</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commanders and leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokugawa Yoshinobu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Kinmon Incident (禁門の変 Kinmon no Hen, literally, "Forbidden Gate Incident" or "Imperial Palace Gate Incident"), also known as the Hamaguri Gate Rebellion (蛤御門の変 Hamaguri Gomon no Hen "Hamaguri Imperial Gate Incident") was a rebellion against the Tokugawa Shogunate that took place on August 20, 1864, at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto. It reflected widespread discontent among pro-imperial and anti-foreigner groups, who rebelled under the Sonnō Jōi slogan. Sonnō Jōi had been promulgated by the Emperor as the "Order to expel barbarians" in March 1863, and the rebels sought to take control of the Emperor to accomplish the restoration of the Imperial household to political supremacy and oust the Shogunate Bakufu. During the bloody crushing of the rebellion, the leading Chōshū clan was held responsible for its instigation. During the incident, the Aizu and Satsuma domains led the defense of the Imperial palace in support of the Tokugawa side. The Shogunate followed up the incident with a retaliatory/punitive armed expedition, called the First Chōshū Expedition, in September 1864.

**FIRST CHOSHU EXPEDITION (Sep 1864)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Chōshū expedition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Part of Bakumatsu conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belligerents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chōshū Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonnō Jōi Rōnin force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokugawa shogunate</td>
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<td>Aizu Domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satsuma Domain</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualties and losses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death penalty for the rebel leaders responsible for the Kinmon Incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The First Chōshū expedition (Japanese: 第一次長州征討) was a punitive military expedition led by the Tokugawa Shogunate against the Chōshū Domain in retaliation for the attack of Chōshū on the Imperial Palace in the Kinmon Incident. The First Chōshū expedition was launched on 1 September 1864. The conflict finally led to a compromise brokered by the Satsuma Domain at the end of 1864. Although Satsuma initially jumped on the opportunity to weaken its traditional ally Chōshū, it soon realized that the intention of the Bakufu was first to neutralize Chōshū, and then to neutralize Satsuma. For this reason, Saigo Takamori, who was one of the Commanders of the Shogunate forces, proposed to avoid fighting and instead obtain the leaders responsible for the rebellion. Choshu was relieved to accept, as were the Shogunate forces, who were not much interested in battle. Thus ended the First Chōshū expedition without a fight, as a nominal victory for the Bakufu. What happened to the Choshu leaders is unknown to this author.
**SHIMONOSEKI CAMPAIGN (20 July 1863)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>July 20 - August 14, 1863, September 5–6, 1864</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Shimonoseki, Japan, Honshu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Decisive Allied victory</td>
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**Belligerents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Chōshū</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sir Augustus</td>
<td>Kuper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Jaurès</td>
<td></td>
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**Commanders and leaders**

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<th>United States</th>
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<th>Kiheitai:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lord Mōri</td>
<td>Akane Taketo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masamitsu</td>
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**Strength**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sea:</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28 warships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 war-junks</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualties and losses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62 killed or wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 warships damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 killed or wounded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Shimonoseki Campaign (Japanese: 下関戦争, Shimonoseki Sensō/ Bakan Sensō) refers to a series of military engagements in 1863 and 1864, fought to control Shimonoseki Straits of Japan by joint naval forces from Great Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States, against the Japanese feudal domain of Chōshū, which took place off and on the coast of Shimonoseki, Japan. The Japanese term for this event translates to the Shimonoseki War.

Background

Despite efforts of appeasement by the Tokugawa shogunate to establish an atmosphere of peaceful solidarity, many feudal Daimyōs remained bitterly resentful of the shogunate's open-door policy to foreign trade. Belligerent opposition to European and American influence erupted into open conflict when the Emperor Kōmei, breaking with centuries of imperial tradition, began to take an active role in matters of state and issued on March 11 and April 11, 1863 his "Order to expel barbarians" (攘夷実行の勅命 – Jōi jikkō no chokumei).

The Chōshū clan, under Lord Mōri Takachika, began to take actions to expel all foreigners after the deadline of the 10th day of the 5th month, by the lunar calendar. Openly defying the shogunate, Takachika ordered his forces to fire, without warning, on all foreign ships traversing Shimonoseki Strait. This strategic but treacherous 112-meter waterway separates the islands of Honshū and Kyūshū and provides a passage connecting the Inland Sea with the Sea of Japan. Even before tensions escalated in Shimonoseki Strait, foreign diplomats and military experts, notably U.S. Foreign Minister to Japan Robert Pruyn and Captain David McDougal of the U.S. Navy, were aware of the precarious state of affairs in Japan. A letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, dated June 12, 1863 written by McDougal stated, "General opinion is that the government of Japan is on the eve of revolution, the principal object of which is the expulsion of foreigners."

Campaign

First Battle, July 20, 1863

The French engagement at Shimonoseki, with the warships the Tancrède and the Dupleix, under Captain Benjamin Jaurès. "Le Monde Illustré", October 10th, 1863.

On the heels of McDougal's engagement, on 20 July 1864, the French Navy retaliated for the attack on their merchant ship. The French force consisted of marines and two warships, the Tancrède and the Dupleix. With 250 men, under Captain Benjamin Jaurès, they swept into Shimonoseki and destroyed a small town, together with at least one artillery emplacement. The intervention was supported by the French plenipotentiary in Japan, Duchesne de Bellecourt, but the French government, once informed, strongly criticized their representatives in Japan for taking such bellicose steps, for the reason that France had much more important military commitments to honour in other parts of the world, and could not afford a conflict in Japan. Duchesne de Bellecourt would be relieved from his position in 1864. Jaurès was also congratulated by the Shogunal government for taking such decisive steps against anti-foreign forces, and was awarded a special banner.

Diplomatic negotiations

Meanwhile, the Americans, French, British and Dutch feverishly opened diplomatic channels in an effort to negotiate the reopening of the passage to the Inland Sea. Months dragged by with no end in sight to the growing dilemma. By May 1864, various bellicose Japanese factions had destroyed thousands of dollars in
foreign property, including homes, churches and shipping. This wanton destruction included the U.S. Legation in Tokyo, which housed Minister Robert Pruyn.

Throughout the first half of 1864, as Shimonoseki Strait remained closed to foreign shipping, threats and rumors of war hung in the air, while diplomatic efforts remained deadlocked. Then the British Minister to Japan, Sir Rutherford Alcock, discussed with his treaty counterparts such as American Minister Robert Pruyn, the feasibility of a joint military strike against Takachika.

They were soon making preparations for a combined show of force. Under the wary eyes of the Japanese, fifteen British warships rode anchor alongside four Dutch vessels, while a British regiment from Hong Kong augmented their display of military might. The French maintained a minimal naval presence, with the bulk of their forces in Mexico trying to bolster Emperor Maximilian’s unstable regime.

The U.S., engaged in civil war, limited itself to demonstrate diplomatic and minimal military support for the Allies. In the meantime, Takachika procrastinated in negotiations by requesting additional time to respond to the allied demands, a course of action unacceptable to the treaty powers.

The allies decided that the time for united action had arrived. Despite retaliatory action from the treaty powers, another attack occurred in July, 1864, when the rebel forces fired upon the U.S. steamer Monitor after she entered a harbor for coal and water. This provoked further outrage, even after a British squadron was returning to Yokohama after delivering a multi-national ultimatum to Takachika, threatening military force if the strait was not opened.

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Final Battle, September 5–6, 1864

The U.S. chartered steamer *Takiang* accompanied the operation in a token show of support. The two-day battle that followed on September 5 and 6 did what the previous operations could not; it destroyed the Prince of Nagato's ability to wage war. Unable to match the firepower of the international fleet, and amid mounting casualties, the rebel Chōshū forces finally surrendered two days later on September 8, 1864.

Allied casualties included seventy-two killed or wounded and two severely damaged British ships. The stringent accord drawn up in the wake of the ceasefire, and negotiated by U.S. Minister Pruyn, included an indemnity of $3,000,000 from the Japanese, an amount equivalent to the purchase of about 30 steamships at that time. The Bakufu proved unable to pay such an amount, and this failure became the basis of further foreign pressure to have the Treaties ratified by the Emperor, the harbor of Hyōgo opened to foreign trade, and the customs tariffs lowered uniformly to 5%. A full account is contained in Sir Ernest Satow's *A Diplomat in Japan*. Satow was present as a young interpreter for the British admiral, Sir Augustus Kuper on the British flagship HMS *Euryalus* commanded by Captain J.H.I. Alexander. It was also the action at which Duncan Gordon Boyes won his Victoria Cross at the age of seventeen.

Satow described Boyes as receiving the award "for conduct very plucky in one so young." Another VC winner at Shimonoseki was Thomas Pride, and the third was the first American to win the medal, William Seeley. De Casembroot wrote his account of the events in *De Medusa in de wateren van Japan, in 1863 en 1864*.

In 1883, twenty years after the first battle to reopen the strait, the United States quietly returned $750,000 to Japan, which represented its share of the reparation payment extracted under the rain of multi-national shells. Several life-size replicas of the guns used by Chōshū can now be found at Shimonoseki in the spot where they were captured. They were put there by the Shimonoseki city government in 2004, in recognition of the importance of the bombardment in Japanese history.

The replicas are made of hollow steel and include coin-operated sound effects and smoke from the barrels.
Chōshū forces attacking Shogunal forces in Kyōto on August 20, 1864, in the Kinmon Incident.

Aftermath

Right after the foreign interventions, the Shogunal government also launched its own preparations for a punitive expedition against Chōshū, the First Chōshū expedition. The expedition was aimed at punishing the 1864 Kinmon Incident in which Chōshū forces attacked Shogunal forces in Kyōto. The expedition was however cancelled after a compromise was brokered, involving the beheading of the leaders of the rebellion.

At the same time as this campaign, the British Royal Navy engaged Satsuma samurai at the Bombardment of Kagoshima, one of the several engagements of the Japanese conflict of 1863 and 1864.

Historical significance

Closely resembling the series of little conflicts fought by the European powers in Asia, Africa and elsewhere during the Nineteenth Century, the troubles in Japan seemed to exemplify their gunboat diplomacy, a prevalent tool in imperialism. Bitter resentment against foreign influence made the Chōshū clan feel justified in engaging in foolish acts of military provocation, in defiance of their own government.

A cannon captured by the French at Shimonoseki. Today on display at the northern gate of Les Invalides, Paris. Lower right inset: the symbol mark (Mon) of Chōshū inscribed on top of the cannon.

The same nationalistic anger directed against foreigners demonstrated by the Japanese would flare up again in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion. The U.S. and its European allies then felt compelled to use military force to uphold the treaty with Japan. For the U.S., July 1863 was a momentous month for Northern arms at the battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

While it was bitterly embroiled in the American Civil War, the world was carefully watching President Abraham Lincoln's government for signs of weakness and indecision. The actions of USS Wyoming made it the first foreign warship to offensively uphold treaty rights with Japan; this fact coupled with the possibility that the events would mire the U.S. in a foreign war made the battle of Shimonoseki a significant engagement.

While the battles of Shimonoseki Strait were mere footnotes in the histories of the European powers, an interesting aspect of the affair was the resourcefulness displayed by the Japanese, something another generation of Europeans and Americans, eighty years later would come to appreciate. The feudal Japanese did not set eyes on a steam-powered ship until Commodore Perry's arrival only a decade before USS Wyoming's battle. Yet they had rapidly learned the ways of the Europeans within that brief span, purchasing foreign vessels and arming them with foreign weaponry. The quality and abundance of these armaments in 1860s Japan shocked the world.
Important Note Kikkawa Tsunemasu 12th Lord (owner of this armour) is recorded in history as having fought in the 2nd Choshu Expedition. As Choshu Samurai outnumbered 30:1 by the Tokugawa forces and neighboring Samurai, had the Choshu lost, their lands would have been confiscated and their families subject to brutal retribution.

The Second Chōshū expedition (Japanese: 第二次長州征討), also called the Summer War, was a punitive expedition led by the Tokugawa Shogunate against the Chōshū Domain. It followed the First Chōshū expedition of 1864. The Second Chōshū expedition was announced on 6 March 1865. The operation started on 7 June 1866 with the bombardment of Suō-Ōshima, Yamaguchi by the Navy of the Bakufu. The expedition ended in military disaster for the Shogunate troops, as Chōshū forces were modernized and organised effectively. By contrast, the Shogunate army was composed of antiquated feudal forces from the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>7 June 1866</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Western Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Decisive Shogunal defeat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bakufu and numerous neighboring domains, with only small elements of modernized units. Many domains only put up half-hearted efforts, and several refused Shogunate orders to attack outright, notably Satsuma who had by this point entered into an alliance with Choshu. This latter fact of war is most important in the outcome of many Samurai battles, who were not so foolish to throw their lives away.

Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the new Shogun, managed to negotiate a ceasefire after the death of the previous Shogun, but the defeat fatally weakened the Shogunate's prestige. Tokugawa military prowess was revealed to be a paper tiger, and it became apparent that the Shogunate could no longer impose its will upon the domains. The disastrous campaign is often seen to have sealed the fate of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

The defeat stimulated the Bakufu in making numerous reforms to modernize its administration and army. Yoshinobu's younger brother Ashitake was sent to the 1867 Paris Exposition, Western dress replaced Japanese dress at the Shogunal court, and collaboration with the French was reinforced leading to the 1867 French military mission to Japan.

AUTHORS NOTE: Lord Tsunemasa 12th died of an illness aged 39 in 1867, however, his death was not officially registered until the following year (presumably with the turmoil of civil war all around, it was not wise to register a Lord’s death too soon for fear of confiscation of land and benefits).

BOSHIN WAR 1868 to 1869

The Boshin War comprised 7 main Battles during which the new Meiji Government finished off the last of the Pro-Tokugawa loyalists.

Samurai of the Satsuma domain, fighting for the Imperial side during the Boshin War period. Photograph by Felice Beato.

Date  3 January 1868 – 18 May 1869
### Belligerents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Side</th>
<th>Commanders and leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Imperial Court</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tokugawa Shogunate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aizu Domain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takamatsu Domain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Alliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Tozama: Satchō Alliance</td>
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<td>Yodo Domain</td>
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### Commanders and leaders

#### 1868

**Emperor:** Meiji

**CIC:** Prince Komatsu Akihito

**Army:**
- Saigo Takamori
- Kuroda Kiyotaka
- Omura Masujirō
- Yamagata Aritomo
- Nakamura Hanjiro
- Matsudaira KataMōri
- Shinoda Gisaburō
- Matsudaira Sadaaki
- Tanaka Tosa
- Kondo Isami

**Shogun:** Tokugawa Yoshinobu

**Commander:**
- Katsu Kaishu
- Enomoto Takeaki
- Matsudaira KataMōri
- Shinoda Gisaburō
- Matsudaira Sadaaki
- Tanaka Tosa
- Kondo Isami

#### 1869

**President:** Enomoto Takeaki

**Army:**
- Otori Keisuke
- Arai Ikunosuke
**IMPORTANT NOTE.** The Imperial Forces during the Boshin War comprised of the Emperor’s troops who were uniformed and had artillery, together with the Satsuma, Choshu, Hizen and Tosa Samurai clans. By the time of the Boshin war, the Satsuma Samurai had changed sides in support of the Emperor. The combined Imperial forces fought against the Tokugawa Shogunate Samurai, or ‘BAKUFU’, who did not use modern weapons, preferring the bow, spear and sword. Thus the Satsuma, Choshu, Hizen and Tosa Samurai fought FOR the Emperor in the Boshin War of 1868/1869, but some 10 years later, the Satsuma Samurai (under Saigo Takamoroi) would fight AGAINST the Imperial forces during the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877 when the Emperor elected to disband the Samurai.

The **Boshin War** (戊辰戦争 Boshin Sensō, "War of the Year of the Yang Earth Dragon") was a civil war in Japan, fought from 1868 to 1869 between forces of the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate and those seeking to return political power to the imperial court. It comprised of 7 main battles listed below during which the Pro-Tokugawa forces were finished off:

- **Battle of Toba-Fushimi**
- **Battle of Koshu-Katsunuma**
- **Surrender of Edo**
- **Battle of Utsunomiya castle**
- **Battle of Ueno**
- **Battle of Hokuetsu**
- **Battle of Aizu**
- **Battle of Hakodate**

The war found its origins in dissatisfaction among many nobles and young samurai with the Shogunate’s handling of foreigners following the opening of Japan during the prior decade. An alliance of western samurai (particularly the domains of Chōshū, Satsuma and Tosa) and court officials secured control of the imperial court and influenced the young Emperor Meiji. Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the sitting shogun, realizing the futility of his situation, abdicated political power to the emperor. Yoshinobu had hoped that by doing this, the Tokugawa house could be preserved and participate in the future government.

However, military movements by imperial forces, partisan violence in Edo, and an imperial decree promoted by Satsuma and Choshu abolishing the house of Tokugawa led Yoshinobu to launch a military campaign to seize the emperor's court at Kyoto. The military tide rapidly turned in favor of the smaller but relatively modernized imperial faction, and after a series of battles culminating in the surrender of Edo, Yoshinobu personally surrendered. Those loyal to the Tokugawa retreated to northern Honshū and later to Hokkaidō, where they founded the Ezo republic. Defeat at the Battle of Hakodate broke this last holdout and left the imperial rule supreme throughout the whole of Japan, completing the military phase of the Meiji Restoration.
Around 120,000 men were mobilized during the conflict, and of these about 3,500 were killed. In the end, the victorious imperial faction abandoned its objective to expel foreigners from Japan and instead adopted a policy of continued modernization with an eye to eventual renegotiation of the Unequal Treaties with the Western powers. Due to the persistence of Saigō Takamori, a prominent leader of the imperial faction, the Tokugawa loyalists were shown clemency, and many former shogunate leaders were later given positions of responsibility under the new government.

The Boshin War testifies to the advanced state of modernization already achieved by Japan barely fourteen years after its opening to the West, the already high involvement of Western nations (especially Britain and France) in the country's politics, and the rather turbulent installation of Imperial power. Over time, the war has been romanticized by Japanese and others who view the Meiji Restoration as a "bloodless revolution," despite the number of casualties.

**Foreign military assistance**

*Bakumatsu troops near Mount Fuji in 1867. The painting by French officer Jules Brunet shows an eclectic combination of Western and Japanese equipment.*

Despite the bombardment of Kagoshima, the Satsuma domain had become closer to the British and was pursuing the modernization of its army and navy with their support. The Scottish dealer Thomas Blake Glover sold quantities of warships and guns to the southern domains. American and British military experts, usually former officers, may have been directly involved in this military effort. The British ambassador Harry Smith Parkes supported the anti-Shogunate forces in a drive to establish a legitimate, unified Imperial
rule in Japan, and to counter French influence with the Shogunate. During that period, southern Japanese leaders such as Saigō Takamōri of Satsuma, or Ito Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru of Chōshū cultivated personal connections with British diplomats, notably Ernest Mason Satow.

The Shogunate also was preparing for further conflict by modernizing its forces. In line with Parkes' designs, the British, previously the Shogunate's primary partner, proved reluctant to provide assistance. The Tokugawa thus came to rely mainly on French expertise, comforted by the military prestige of Napoleon III at that time, acquired through his successes in the Crimean War and the War of Italy.

The Shogunate took major steps towards the construction of a modern and powerful military: a navy with a core of eight steam warships had been built over several years and was already the strongest in Asia. In 1865, Japan's first modern naval arsenal was built in Yokosuka by the French engineer Léonce Verny. In January 1867, a French military mission arrived to reorganize the shogunal army and create the Denshūtai elite force, and an order was placed with the United States to buy the French-built ironclad warship CSS Stonewall, a relic of the American Civil War.

The Shogunate army in 1866. Modernization of Bakufu forces proved insufficient against Chōshū.

Due to the Western powers' declared neutrality, the Americans refused to release the ship, but once neutrality was lifted, the imperial faction obtained the vessel and employed it in engagements in Hakodate under the name Kōtetsu (literally "Ironclad").

Coups d'état.

Following a coup within Chōshū which returned to power the extremist factions opposed to the Shogunate, the Shogunate announced its intention to lead a Second Chōshū expedition to punish the renegade domain. This in turn prompted Chōshū to form a secret alliance with Satsuma. In the summer of 1866, the Shogunate was defeated by Chōshū, leading to a considerable loss of authority. In late 1866, however, first Shogun Iemochi and then Emperor Kōmei died, respectively succeeded by Yoshinobu and Emperor Meiji. These events "made a truce inevitable."

The Tokugawa Shogunate ends, but the fighting continues

On November 9, 1867, a secret order was created by Satsuma and Chōshū in the name of Emperor Meiji commanding the "slaughtering of the traitorous subject Yoshinobu." (Tokugawa Yoshinobu). Just prior to this however, and following a proposal from the Daimyō of Tosa, Yoshinobu resigned his post and authorities to the emperor, agreeing to "be the instrument for carrying out" imperial orders. The Tokugawa Shogunate had ended but the fighting between the Tokugawa Forces and Imperial Forces was to continue.

While Yoshinobu's resignation had created a nominal void at the highest level of government, his apparatus of state continued to exist. Moreover, the shogunal government, the Tokugawa family in particular, would remain a prominent force in the evolving political order and would retain many executive powers, a prospect hard-liners from Satsuma and Chōshū found intolerable. Events came to a head on January 3, 1868 when these elements seized the imperial palace in Kyoto, and the following day had the fifteen-year-old Emperor Meiji declare his own restoration to full power. Although the majority of the imperial consultative assembly was happy with the formal declaration of direct rule by the court and tended to support a continued collaboration with the Tokugawa (under the concept of "just government" (公議政, kōgiseitai)), Saigō
Takamōri threatened the assembly into abolishing the title "shogun" and ordered the confiscation of Yoshinobu's lands.

Although he initially agreed to these demands, on January 17, 1868 Yoshinobu declared "that he would not be bound by the proclamation of the Restoration and called on the court to rescind it." On January 24, Yoshinobu decided to prepare an attack on Kyoto, occupied by Satsuma and Chōshū forces. This decision was prompted by his learning of a series of arsons in Edo, starting with the burning of the outerworks of Edo Castle, the main Tokugawa residence. This was blamed on Satsuma ronin, who on that day attacked a government office. The next day shogunate forces responded by attacking the Edo residence of the Daimyō of Satsuma, where many opponents of the shogunate, under Takamōri's direction, had been hiding and creating trouble. The palace was burned down, and many opponents killed or later executed. Thus began the Boshin War.

**BATTLE of TOBA-FUSHIMI (Jan – Feb 1868)**

On 27 January 1868, Shogunate forces attacked the forces of Chōshū and Satsuma, clashing near Toba and Fushimi, at the southern entrance of Kyoto. Some parts of the 15,000-strong Shogunate forces had been trained by French military advisers, but the majority remained medieval samurai forces. Meanwhile, the forces of Chōshū and Satsuma were outnumbered 3:1 but fully modernized with Armstrong howitzers, Minié rifles and a few Gatling guns. After an inconclusive start, on the second day, an Imperial pennant was remitted to the defending troops, and a relative of the Emperor, Ninnajomiyomi Yoshiaki, was named nominal commander in chief, making the forces officially an imperial army (官軍 kangu). Moreover, convinced by courtiers, several local Daimyō, up to this point faithful to the Shogun, started to defect to the side of the imperial court. These included Daimyō of Yodo on February 5, and the Daimyō of Tsu on February 6, tilting the military balance in favour of the Imperial side.

On February 7, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, apparently distressed by the imperial approval given to the actions of Satsuma and Chōshū, fled Osaka aboard the Kaiyō Maru, withdrawing to Edo. Demoralized by his flight and by the betrayal by Yodo and Tsu, Shogunate forces retreated, making the Toba-Fushimi encounter an Imperial victory, although it is often considered the Shogunate forces should have won the encounter. Osaka Castle was soon invested on February 8 (on March 1, Western calendar), putting an end to the battle of Toba-Fushimi.

At the same time, on 28 January 1868, the naval Battle of Awa between the Shogunate and elements of the Satsuma Navy took place. This was Japan's second engagement between two modern navies. The battle, although small in scale, ended in favour of the Shogunate. On the diplomatic front, the ministers of foreign nations, gathered in the open harbor of Hyōgo (present day Kobe) in early February, issued a declaration according to which the Shogunate was still considered the only rightful government in Japan, giving hope to Tokugawa Yoshinobu that foreign nations (especially France) might consider an intervention in his favour. A few days later however an Imperial delegation visited the ministers declaring that the Shogunate was abolished, that harbours would be open in accordance with International treaties, and that foreigners would be protected. The ministers finally decided to recognize the new government.
The rise of anti-foreign sentiment nonetheless led to several attacks on foreigners in the following months. Eleven French sailors from the corvette *Dupleix* were killed by *samurai* of Tosa in the Sakai incident on March 8, 1868. Fifteen days later, Sir Harry Parkes, the British ambassador, was attacked by a group of *samurai* in a street of Kyoto.

The killing of French sailors by Tosa soldiers in the Sakai incident, 8 March 1868. *Le Monde Illustré*

**SURRENDER of EDO**

Beginning in February, with the help of the French ambassador Léon Roches, a plan was formulated to stop the imperial court's advance at Odawara, the last strategic entry point to Edo, but Yoshinobu decided against the plan. Shocked, Léon Roches resigned from his position. In early March, under the influence of the British minister Harry Parkes, foreign nations signed a strict neutrality agreement, according to which they could not intervene or provide military supplies to either side until the resolution of the conflict.

Kondo Isami, leader of the pro-Shogunate Shinsengumi, facing soldiers from Tosa (distinctive “Red bear” (赤熊, *Shaguma*) wigs of the officers) at the Battle of Kōshū-Katsunuma

Saigō Takamōri led the victorious imperial forces north and east through Japan, winning the Battle of Kōshū-Katsunuma. He eventually surrounded Edo in May 1868, leading to its unconditional defeat after Katsu Kaishu, the Shogun's Army Minister, negotiated the surrender. Some groups continued to resist after this surrender but were defeated in the Battle of Ueno on 4 July 1868. Meanwhile, the leader of the Shogun's navy, Enomoto Takeaki, refused to surrender all his ships. He remitted just four ships, among them the *Fujisan*, but he then escaped north with the remnants of the Shogun's Navy (eight steam warships: *Kaiten*, *Banryū*, *Chiyodagata*, *Chōgei*, *Kaiyō Maru*, *Kanrin Maru*, *Mikaho* and *Shinsoku*), and 2,000 members of the navy, in the hope of staging a counter-attack together with the northern Daimyō. He was accompanied by a handful of French military advisers, notably Jules Brunet, who had formally resigned from the French Army in order to accompany the rebels.

Troops from Sendai, following their mobilization in April, joined a northern alliance against Imperial Troops in May 1868

**Resistance of the Northern Coalition**

After Yoshinobu’s surrender, most of Japan accepted the emperor’s rule, but a core of domains in the North, supporting the Aizu clan, continued the resistance. In May several northern Daimyō formed an Alliance to
fight Imperial troops, the coalition of northern domains composed primarily of forces from the domains of Sendai, Yonezawa, Aizu, Shonai and Nagaoka, with a total of 50,000 troops. An Imperial Prince, Kitashirakawa Yoshihisa had fled north with partisans of the Tokugawa shogunate and was made the nominal head of the Northern Coalition, with the intention of naming him "Emperor Tobu".

Enomoto's fleet joined Sendai harbour on August 26. Although the Northern Coalition was numerous, it was poorly equipped, and relied on traditional fighting methods. Modern armament was scarce, and last-minute efforts were made to build cannons made of wood and reinforced with roping, firing stone projectiles. Such cannons, installed on defensive structures, could only fire four or five projectiles before bursting.

On the other hand, the Daimyō of Nagaoka managed to procure two of the three Gatling guns in Japan and 2,000 modern French rifles from the German weapons dealer Henry Schnell.

In May 1868, the Daimyō of Nagaoka inflicted high losses on the Imperial troops in the Battle of Hokuetsu, but his castle ultimately fell on May 19. Imperial troops continued to progress north, defeating the Shinsengumi at the Battle of Bonari Pass, which opened the way for their attack on the castle of Aizu-Wakamatsu in the Battle of Aizu in October 1868, thus making the position in Sendai untenable.

The coalition crumbled, and on October 12, 1868 the fleet left Sendai for Hokkaidō, after having acquired two more ships (Oe and Hōō, previously borrowed by Sendai from the Shogunate), and about 1,000 more troops: remaining Shogunate troops under Otori Keisuke, Shinsengumi troops under Hijikata Toshizo, the guerilla corps (yugekitai) under Hitomi Katsutarō, as well as several more French advisers (Fortant, Garde, Marlin, Bouffier). Clearly the French were not sticking to the Western neutrality agreement either.

On October 26, Edo was renamed Tokyo, and the Meiji period officially started. Aizu was besieged starting that month, leading to the mass suicide of the Byakkotai (White Tiger Corps) young warriors. After a protracted month-long battle, Aizu finally admitted defeat on November 6.

**Hokkaidō campaign**

Creation of the Ezo Republic

The Japanese and their French military advisers in Hokkaido
Following defeat on Honshū, Enomoto Takeaki fled to Hokkaidō with the remnants of the navy and his handful of French advisers. Together they organized a government, with the objective of establishing an independent island nation dedicated to the development of Hokkaidō. They formally established the Republic of Ezo on the American model on December 25, Japan's only republic ever, and Enomoto was elected as President, with a large majority. The republic tried to reach out to foreign legations present in Hakodate, such as the Americans, French, and Russians, but was not able to garner any international recognition or support. Enomoto offered to confer the territory to the Tokugawa Shogun under Imperial rule, but his proposal was declined by the Imperial Governing Council.

During the winter, they fortified their defenses around the southern peninsula of Hakodate, with the new fortress of Goryokaku at the center. The troops were organized under a Franco-Japanese command, the commander-in-chief Otori Keisuke being seconded by the French captain Jules Brunet, and divided between four brigades. Each of these was commanded by a French non-commissioned officer (Fortant, Marlin, Cazeneuve, Bouffier), and were themselves divided into eight half-brigades, each under Japanese command.

Final losses and surrender

The Imperial navy reached the harbour of Miyako on March 20, but anticipating the arrival of the imperial ships, the Ezo rebels organized a daring plan to seize the Kotetsu. Led by Shinsengumi commander Hijikata Toshizo, three warships were dispatched for a surprise attack, in what is known as the Naval Battle of Miyako. The battle ended in failure for the Tokugawa side, owing to bad weather, engine trouble and the decisive use of a Gatling gun by Imperial troops against samurai boarding parties.

Imperial forces soon consolidated their hold on mainland Japan, and, in April 1869, dispatched a fleet and an infantry force of 7,000 to Ezo, starting the Battle of Hakodate. The Imperial forces progressed swiftly and won the naval engagement at Hakodate Bay, Japan's first large-scale naval battle between modern navies, as the fortress of Goryokaku was surrounded with 800 remaining men. Seeing the situation had become desperate, the French advisers escaped to a French ship stationed in Hakodate Bay — Coëtlogon, under the command of Dupetit-Thouars — from where they were shipped back to Yokohama and then France. The Japanese requested that the French advisers be given judgment in France; however, due to popular support in France for their actions, the former French advisers in Japan were not punished for their actions.

Enomoto had resolved to fight to the end, and had sent his valuables to his adversary for safekeeping. These included the Naval Codes he had brought back from Holland, which he entrusted to the general of the Imperial troops, Kuroda Kiyotaka, but Otori convinced him to surrender, telling him that deciding to live through defeat is the truly courageous way: "If it's dying you want you can do it anytime." Enomoto surrendered on May 18, 1869, and accepted the Meiji Emperor's rule. The Ezo Republic ceased to exist on June 27, 1869.
Aftermath

The 16-year-old Meiji Emperor, moving from Kyoto to Tokyo, end of 1868.

Following victory, the new government proceeded with unifying the country under a single, legitimate and powerful rule by the imperial court. The emperor's residence was effectively transferred from Kyoto to Tokyo at the end of 1868. The military and political power of the domains was progressively eliminated, and the domains themselves were soon transformed into prefectures, whose governors were appointed by the emperor. A major reform was the effective expropriation and abolition of the samurai class, allowing many samurai to change into administrative or entrepreneurial positions, but forcing many others into poverty. The southern domains of Satsuma, Chōshū and Tosa, having played a decisive role in the victory, occupied most of the key posts in government for several decades following the conflict, a situation sometimes called the "Meiji oligarchy" and formalized with the institution of the genrō. In 1869, the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo was built in honour of the victims of the Boshin War.

Some leading partisans of the former Shogun were imprisoned, but narrowly escaped execution. This clemency derives from the insistence of Saigō Takamōri and Iwakura Tomomi, although much weight was placed on the advice of Parkes, the British envoy. He had urged Saigō, in the words of Ernest Satow, "that severity towards Keiki [Yoshinobu] or his supporters, especially in the way of personal punishment, would injure the reputation of the new government in the opinion of European Powers." After two or three years of imprisonment, most of them were called to serve the new government, and several pursued brilliant careers. Enomoto Takeaki, for instance, would later serve as an envoy to Russia and China and as the education minister.

The Imperial side did not pursue its objective to expel foreign interests from Japan, but instead shifted to a more progressive policy aiming at the continued modernization of the country and the renegotiation of unequal treaties with foreign powers, later under the "rich country, strong army" (富国強兵 fukoku kyōhei) motto. The shift in stance towards the foreigners came during the early days of the civil war: on April 8, 1868, new signboards were erected in Kyoto (and later throughout the country) that specifically repudiated violence against foreigners. During the course of the conflict, Emperor Meiji personally received European envoys, first in Kyoto, then later in Osaka and Tokyo. Also unprecedented was Emperor Meiji's reception of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, in Tokyo, "as his equal in point of blood."

Although the early Meiji era witnessed a warming between the imperial court and foreign powers, relations with France temporarily soured due to the initial support by France for the Shogun. Soon however a second military mission was invited to Japan in 1874, and a third one in 1884. A high level of interaction resumed around 1886, when France helped build the Imperial Japanese Navy's first large-scale modern fleet, under
the direction of naval engineer Louis-Émile Bertin. The modernization of the country had in fact already started extensively during the last years of the Shogunate, and the Meiji government ultimately adopted the same orientation, although it was better able to mobilize the whole country towards modernization in a more efficient way due to having a more streamlined and centralized bureaucracy. Upon his coronation, Meiji issued his Charter Oath, calling for deliberative assemblies, promising increased opportunities for the common people, abolishing the "evil customs of the past," and seeking knowledge throughout the world "to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule." Prominent reforms of the Meiji government included the 1871 abolition of the domain system, by which the feudal domains and their hereditary rulers were replaced by prefectures with governors appointed by the emperor.

Reception by the Meiji Emperor of the Second French Military Mission to Japan, 1872.

Others included the introduction of compulsory schooling and the abolition of Confucian class distinctions. The reforms culminated in the 1889 issuance of the Meiji Constitution. However, despite the support given to the imperial court by samurai, many of the early Meiji reforms were seen as detrimental to their interests: the creation of a conscript army made of commoners, as well as the loss of hereditary prestige and stipends antagonized many former samurai. Tensions ran particularly high in the south, leading to the 1874 Saga Rebellion, and a rebellion in Chōshū in 1876. Former samurai in Satsuma, led by Saigō Takamori, who had left government over foreign policy differences, started the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877. Fighting for the maintenance of the samurai class and a more virtuous government, their slogan was "new government, high morality" (新政厚徳 shinsei kōtoku). It ended with a heroic but total defeat at the Battle of Shiroyama.

Later depictions

A romanticized Japanese vision of the Battle of Hakodate (函館戦争の図), painted circa 1880. The cavalry charge, with a sinking sail ship in the background, is led by the leaders of the rebellion in anachronistic samurai attire. French soldiers are shown behind the cavalry charge in white trousers. With a modern steam warship visible in the background, imperial troops with modern uniforms are on the right.

In modern summaries, the Meiji restoration is often described as a "bloodless revolution" leading to the sudden modernization of Japan. The facts of the Boshin War, however, clearly show that the conflict was quite violent: about 120,000 troops were mobilized altogether with roughly 3,500 known casualties. Later Japanese depictions of the war tended to be highly romanticized, showing the Shogunal side fighting with traditional methods, against an already modernized Imperial side. Although traditional weapons and techniques were used, both sides employed some of the most modern armaments and fighting techniques of the period: including the ironclad warship, Gatling guns, and fighting techniques learned from Western
military advisers. Whilst the Gatling guns certainly came from the USA and there would have been US Army advisors, there certainly wasn’t the large number depicted in the Hollywood movie “Last Samurai”.

Such Japanese depictions include numerous dramatizations, spanning many genres. Notably, Jirō Asada wrote a four-volume novel of the account, Mibu Gishi-den. A film adaptation of Asada's work, directed by Yojiro Takita, is known as When the Last Sword Is Drawn. A ten-hour television jidaigeki based on the same novel starred Ken Watanabe. The 2001 Goryokaku film is another jidaigeki highlighting the resistance in Hokkaidō. Among Japanese anime, Bakumatsu Kikansetsu Irohanihoheto in part dramatizes the Boshin War, while Rurou Kensis is set 10 years after. Rurouni Kensis's first OVA Rurouni Kenshin: Trust & Betrayal is set in the time of the Boshin War and depicting several events of the Boshin war (for example the attacking of the Edo residence of the Daimyō of Satsuma or the failed boarding of the Kōtetsu at the Battle of Miyako Bay).

Western interpretations include the 2003 Hollywood movie The Last Samurai directed by Edward Zwick, which combines into a single narrative historical situations belonging both to the Boshin War, the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion, and other similar uprisings of ex-samurai during the early Meiji period. The elements of the movie pertaining to the early modernization of Japan's military forces as well as the direct involvement of foreign (mostly French) forces relate to the Boshin War and the few years leading to it. However, the suicidal stand of traditionalist samurai forces led by Saigō Takamori against the modernized Imperial army relate to the much later Satsuma Rebellion.

**Weaponry of the Boshin War**

The forces of Chōshū and Satsuma were fully modernized with Armstrong howitzers, Minié rifles and one Gatling gun. The Shogunate forces had been slightly lagging in term of equipment, although a core elite force had been recently trained by the French military mission to Japan (1867–1868). The Shogun also relied on troops supplied by allied domains which were not necessarily as advanced in terms of military equipment and methods, composing an army that had both modern and outdated elements.

**Individual guns**

Guns of the Boshin war. From top to bottom: a Snider, a Starr, a Gewehr.

Numerous types of more or less modern smoothbores guns and rifles were imported, from countries as varied as France, Germany, the Netherlands, Britain and the United States, and coexisted with traditional types such as the Tanegashima matchlock gun.

Most Shogunate troops used Büchse smoothbore guns, which had been imported in Japan since around 1840, initially from the Netherlands by Takashima Akiho (高島秋帆). These guns were rather ancient and had limited capabilities, with an effective lethal range of about 50 meters, and a firing rate of about 2 rounds per minute. The Daimyō of Nagaoka however, an ally of the Shogun, possessed two Gatling guns and several thousand modern rifles. The Shogunate is known to have placed an order for 30,000 modern Dreyse needle guns in 1866. Napoleon III provided Tokugawa Yoshinobu with 2,000 state-of-the-art Chassepot rifles, which he used to equip his personal guard. Antiquated Tanegashima matchlock guns are also known to have been used by the Bakufu however.

Mortar with hollowed shell, Boshin war (1868-1869), Japan.
Imperial troops mainly used Minié rifles, which were much more accurate, lethal, and had a much longer range than the smoothbore Gewehr guns, although, being also muzzle-loading, they were similarly limited to two shots per minute. Improved breech-loading mechanisms, such as the Snider, developing a rate of about ten shots a minute, are known to have been used by troops of the Tosa Domain against the Shogunate's Shōgitai, at the Battle of Ueno in July 1868. In the second half of the conflict, in the northeast theater, Tosa Province troops are known to have used American-made Spencer repeating rifles. American-made handguns were also popular, such as the 1863 Smith & Wesson Army No 2, which was imported to Japan by the Scottish trader Thomas Blake Glover and used by the Satsuma forces.

Artillery. For artillery, wooden cannons, only able to fire 3 or 4 shots before bursting, coexisted with state-of-the-art Armstrong guns using explosive shells. Armstrong guns were efficiently used by the troops of Satsuma and Saga throughout the war.

Warships. In the area of warships also, some of the most recent ironclads such as the Kotetsu coexisted with older types of steamboats and even traditional sailboats. The Shogunate initially had a rather strong edge in warships, and it had the vision to order the state-of-the-art French-made Kotetsu, although the ship was blocked from delivery by foreign powers on ground of neutrality once the conflict had started, and was ultimately remitted to the Imperial faction shortly after the Battle of Toba-Fushimi.

Uniforms. Uniforms were Western-style for modernized troops (usually dark, with variations in the shape of the helmet: tall conical for Satsuma, flat conical for Chōshū, rounded for the Shogunate). Officers of the Shogunate often wore French uniforms. Traditional troops however retained their samurai clothes.

Some of the headgear for some of the Imperial troops was quite peculiar, involving the use of long, colored, "bear" hair. The "Red bear" (赤熊, Shaguma) wigs indicate officers from Tosa, the "White bear" (白熊, Haguma) wigs officers from Chōshū, and the "Black bear" (黒熊, Koguma) wigs officers from Satsuma.

Individual BATTLES of the BOSHIN WAR 1868 to 1869

The Boshin war was the civil war in which the new Meiji government finished off the last of the Pro-Tokugawa loyalists. It erupted in 1868 between troops favorable to the restoration of political authority to the Emperor and the government of the Tokugawa shogunate. The new Meiji government defeated the forces of Shōgun Tokugawa Yoshinobu (mostly from the western domains of Satsuma and Chōshū) at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, and afterwards divided into three armies to advance on the Shogun’s capital of Edo. The imperial army marching up the coast of the Sea of Japan was commanded by Yamagata Aritomo and Kuroda Kiyotaka.

The following details the individual main battles that comprised the Boshin War.
Battle of Toba-Fushimi (3-6 Jan 1868)

3 Jan 1868 The Bakufu troops and Satsuma-Chôshû troops clashed in the suburbs of Kyoto. The Satsuma-Chôshû alliance defeated the Bakufu troops and gained real power of the new government.

- Bakufu loyalists Vs. Emperor Imperialists
  - Date: 1868 Jan 3-6
  - Location: Toba, Fushimi
  - Japanese: 鳥羽伏見の戦い (Toba Fushimi no tatakai)

Former Shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu moved to Osaka castle from Nijo castle after Ōsei Fukko in December 1867. Satsuma needed to lure the Tokugawa into war in order to destroy the power of the Bakufu, so they had Rônin terrorize Edo. This had the desired effect when Bakufu forces in Edo burnt down the Satsuma mansion there. On 1868/1/2 Bakufu retainers left Osaka for Kyoto to subdue the forces of Satsuma. Bakufu Loyalist forces numbered around 10,000~15,000. They were opposed by pro-Imperial forces of about 3500~5000 which were advancing upon Fushimi from the north. Most of these troops were from Satsuma, but contingents from Tosa and Chôshû were also present.

1868 Jan 3 The battle started near Koeda Bridge in Toba. Satsuma’s units fired at the Bakufu troops. The Bakufu’s commander believed that Satsuma would yield the way when confronted with his 10,000 troops. Therefore, despite the enemy fire, the Bakufu were not expecting a battle and did not engage the Satsuma forces.

Concurrently, the Satsuma-Chôshû alliance forces and the Bakufu troops started firing at each other in the Fushimi area. The Satsuma, who were well armed with modern artillery, were positioned at Gokôgû. This hilltop position was on higher ground than Fushumi Bugyo (magistrate’s office) where the Bakufu troops were positioned. Satsuma forces were easily able to spot and fire upon their enemies, but the Bakufu troops were having a hard time establishing a line of sight to the Satsuma forces. The Bakufu’s Shinsengumi force decided to directly engage the Satsuma forces. This foolhardy charge against a well fortified hilltop position bristling with guns had predictable results, and the Shinsengumi were roughed up badly. 20 of their men were killed. Surprisingly, the Bakufu troop commander Takenaka Shigetaka was missing during the battle. The absence and incompetence of their commanders put the Bakufu troops in both Toba and Fushimi at a severe disadvantage. The Bakufu troops retreated to Yodo during the night.

Fushimi

Jan 4-5 The battles in Toba and Fushimi continued. On Jan 5, Emperor Meiji gave the Imperial flag and a sword to Prince Ninnajinomiya Yoshiaki who was chosen to be the commander of the Imperial troops. When the flag appeared at the front line, it confused the forces of the Bakufu. The Imperial banner in effect changed the entire situation, now establishing the Satsuma forces as the Imperial Army. Any attack against them would now be seen as an attack on the Emperor and the Bakufu would be branded as rebels. Many Bakufu troops ran off rather than do this.

The defeated Bakufu troops tried to enter Yodo castle. The castle was the residence of Inaba Masakuni who was Rôjû (High ranking Bakufu
Inaba was in Edo at the time. The castle refused to open the gate and the Bakufu troops had to retreat to the South.

**Yodo**

**Jan 6** The Tôdô clan of Tsu han also betrayed the Bakufu and Aki han joined the Imperial troops. The betrayals shocked the Bakufu forces, and they became demoralized and defeatist. This was compounded when the ‘fence sitters’ Gosanke and many Western Han decided to take the Imperial troop side. When the Bakufu troops retreated to Osaka, their master Tokugawa Yoshinobu was already gone. Matsudaira KataMôri, Matsudaira Sadaaki, Itakura Katsukyo (Rôjû), and Sakai Tadato (Rôjû) also escaped from Osaka castle secretly and took a ship to Edo. This came as a shock to the Bakufu troops. The exit of their leadership further sapped their will to fight.

**Bakufu Loyalist troops**

- **Toba Area**
  - Commander: Takigawa Tomotaka
  - Infantry Unit1: 1000 (Tokugawa Dewanokami)
  - Infantry Unit5: 800 (Akiyama Shimousanokami)
  - Denshûtai: ? (Ogasawara Iwaminokami)
  - Mimawarigumi: 400 (Sasaki Tadasaburo)
  - Kuwana han force: ?(Hattori Hanzo)
  - Ôgaki han force: 500 (Obara Tadamichi)
  - Hamada Han force: 30 (?)

- **Fushimi Area**
  - Commander: Takenaka Shigetaka
  - Infantry Unit4: 1000 (Yokota Izunokami)
  - Infantry Unit7: 800 (Osawa Kenichiro)
  - Infantry Unit11: 900 (Sakuma Shigehisa)
  - Infantry Unit12: ? (Kubota Shigeaki)
  - Denshûtai: ?
  - Yugekitai: 50 (Imahori Echizen no Kami)
  - Aizu Han forces: ? 7 units
  - Shinsengumi: 150 (Hijikata Toshizo)
  - Takamatsu Han: 300 (Miyake Kageyoshi?)
  - Toba han: 98 (Inagaki Kurobe)

**Imperial troops**

- Satsuma Han forces: Number unknown
- Chôshû han forces: 659
- Tosa Han forces: Number unknown.

**Battle of Koshu-Katsunuma (Mar 1868)**

Mar 1868, Bakufu sent the Kôyô Chinbutai(Shinsengumi) to Kofu castle. However the castle was occupied by the Imperial troops already. The Kôyô Chinbutai was defeated in Katsunuma.

**Saigo Takamôri and Katsu Kaishu**

Bakufu loyalists vs. Emperor Loyalists
The Shinsengumi returned to Edo after the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. Kondô Isami, the commander of Shinsengumi, visited Katsu Kaishû in Edo castle, where he asked to go to Kôfu castle to meet the Imperial troops. Katsu had no idea that the Shinsengumi would try to block off the imperial troops. But Kondô's real intention was taking over the castle. Kondô recruited new members and reformed the Shinsengumi as the Kôyô Chinbutai.

The battle of Koshu Katsunuma

On 1 Mar, The Kôyô Chinbutai took Kôshu avenue to Katsunuma. They were welcomed in the towns on the way because the region was home of the main Shinsengumi members including Kondô (who was using the alias Okubo Tsuyoshi), Hijikata (who was using the alias Naito Hayato).

The welcome parties slowed them down considerably. As the result, Kôfu castle was occupied by the Imperial troops before they arrived. Almost half of the Kôyô Chinbutai members deserted before arriving at Katsunuma. They were defeated within 2 hours. Right before the battle, Hijikata alone went back to Hachioji to ask Nappatai, which was the unit formed by Hatamoto for support. But the Nappatai ignored the request.

Notes Kondô told Katsu that he had known a person in the imperial troops who would accept his request, according to "Kainanroku"解難録

Surrender of Edo (6 Mar 1868)

6 Mar the Imperial troops planned to attack the Edo castle on 15 Mar. Bakufu retainer Yamaoka Tesshu visited Saigô Takamôri in Sunpu to negotiate the terms of capitulation. Saigo Takamôri entered Edo on 13 Mar and had a meeting with Army minister Katsu Kaishu to negotiate the surrender of the Edo castle. As the result, the Imperial troops entered Edo without blood on 11 Apr. Same day, Tokugawa Yoshinobu left Edo and headed to Mito.

Battle of Utsunomiya castle (19-23 Apr 1868)

The Bakufu retainers who refused to surrender made resistance against the Imperial troops. 19 Apr, the Bakufu troops occupied the Utsunomiya castle but they were defeated by the reinforcements of the Imperial troops in 4 days.

- Bakufu loyalists Vs. Emperor loyalists
  - Date: 1868 Apr 19-23
  - Location: Utsunomiya, Shimotsuke province
  - Japanese: 宇都宮城の戦い(Utsunomitajo no tatakai)

In April, 1868, about 2000 Bakufu loyalists gathered at Konodai in Shimosa province. They formed 3 units and headed north. (Commander: Ôtori Keisuke)

- 19 Apr, the front unit (captains: Akizuki Noborinosuke and Hijikata Toshizô) defeated the Imperial troop(Kagawa unit) and occupied Utsunomiya castle. The Reinforcement corps were immediately called. They defeated other Bakufu troops at Iwai. (4/20)
- 22 Apr, the Ôtori units attempted to take over Mibu castle but defeated by the reinforcement corps.
23 Apr, the Ōtori units abandoned Utsunomiya castle due to the increase of Imperial troops and retreated to Aizu.

**Battle of Ueno (15 May 1868)**

15 May, The Imperial troops and Shōgitai clashed at Kan-ei-ji temple.

- **Bakufu loyalists Vs. Emperor loyalists**
  - *Date: 1868 May 15*
  - *Location: Ueno, Edo*
  - *Japanese: 上野戦争 (Ueno sensô)*

Edo castle was handed over to Imperial troops peacefully. However, many former bakufu retainers disagreed with the decision made by former Shogun Tokugawa Yoshihito and Katsu Kaishū. They formed a group called the Shōgitai and gathered at Kan'ei-ji temple (in what is now Ueno Park).

Omura Masujiro, the commander of the Imperial troops announced that the attack against the Shōgitai would take place on the 15th day of the fifth month of the Japanese calendar. As a result, almost half of the Shōgitai members deserted before that day.

The battle started at the Kuromon ("Black Gate") of Kan'e-ji, which was being guarded by 450 Shōgitai members. A famous statue of Saigo Takamori stands on this spot today. The Imperial troops attacked from the front of the gate and from behind the temple, attacking the temple directly with thirteen cannon based within the Edo manor of Kaga Han (today the main campus of Tokyo University). The Shōgitai was destroyed in a day.

The Kuromon can be found today in Entsu-ji in Arakawa-ku.

**Battle of Hokuetsu (29 Jul 1868)**

The Battle of Hokuetsu (北越戦争 Hokuetsu senso) was a battle of the Boshin War of the Meiji restoration, which occurred in 1868 in the northwestern part of Japan, in the area of modern Niigata Prefecture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battle of Hokuetsu</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part of Boshin War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: 1868 March 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Nagaoka, Echigo Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: Decisive Imperial victory</td>
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</tbody>
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Makino Tadakuni, the Daimyō of Nagaoka, in Echigo Province (modern day Niigata prefecture) was a supporter of the Tokugawa shogunate, and refused to submit to the new government even after the fall of Edo Castle to the imperial armies. With the assistance of two Prussian businessmen (the brothers Edward and Henry Schnell) as military advisors, he purchased two Gatling guns (only one other existed in Japan at the time), 2,000 French rifles, and various other armaments.

On May 4, 1868, Nagaoka joined the Northern Coalition against the Imperial government. The Imperial army was intent on seizing Niigata harbor to facilitate the supply of weapons and troops in the campaign against Aizu and Shōnai, the two main centers of the revolt.

In the ensuing campaign, Imperial troops suffered heavy losses on land, especially due to the action of Nagaoka's Gatling guns. In the meantime, a small commando team reached Nagaoka Castle by sea, and set it on fire. The castle fell on July 8, 1868. A secondary action occurred two months later, when surviving Nagaoka troops, together with troops from Aizu, managed to take the castle back on September 10, throwing the Imperial side in disarray. However, the attacking side also suffered serious losses, including its leader Kawai Tsugunosuke, who was wounded during the battle and later died of gangrene in Aizu. The castle was retaken by the Imperial troops on September 15.

Aftermath

The Battle of Hokuetsu ended the last resistance to the new Meiji government on the Sea of Japan coast of Honshū, and isolated the remaining center of resistance: Aizu. After an unsuccessful effort at stopping the progress of the Imperial armies at the Battle of Bonari Pass, the next key battle in the Boshin War was the Battle of Aizu.

Battle of Aizu (20 Apr - 22 Sep 1868)

The battles over Shirakawa castle took 3 months. The Imperial troops defeated Aizu at Bonari pass on 21 Aug 1868, Aizu surrendered on 22 Sep.

Bakufu Loyalists Vs. Emperor Loyalists
Date: 1868 Apr 20 to Sep 22
Location: Aizu
Japanese: 会津戦争(Aizu Senso)

Shirakawaguchi

20 Apr, Aizu troops occupied Shirakawa castle. A Chōshū samurai Sera Shūzō who was stationed inside the castle was assassinated in Fukushima same day. 25 Apr, Imperial troops attempted to take over the castle but were defeated. 28 Apr, reinforcement of the imperial troops were arriving near Shirakawa. They started attacking the castle in the early morning of 1 May. The imperial troops numbered about 700, Bakufu loyalists side were 2500 to 3000. However, Aizu troops lost commanders early and they had to retreat.
According to Ichiji Masaharu's journal, the death toll of Bakufu loyalists’ side was about 700, Emperor Loyalist’s side was only 10.

**Nihonmatsu**

29 Jul, about 2000 Imperial loyalist troops crossed the Abukuma river to attack Nihonmatsu castle. Nihonmatsu Han had only 300 soldiers, including the Nihonmatsu Shonentai. Aizu Han sent the Denshutai to help Nihonmatsu Han but they were outnumbered. Lord Niwa Nagakuni escaped to Yonezawa Han, and his chief vassals set fire on the castle and committed Seppuku.

**Bonari pass**

Aizu Han had built 3 batteries on the pass and about 700 soldiers’ stationed(Aizu Han, Nihonmatsu Han, Sendai Han, Denshutai, Shinsengumi). 8/21 early morning, one battery had fallen. Aizu troops weren't able to find enemy troops quickly because of dense fog. About 2000 Emperor Loyalist troops broke through the pass in the evening. They secured Juroku bashi next day.

**Siege of Aizu-Wakamatsu castle (23 Aug to 22 Sep)**

Unfortunately, main troops of Aizu Han were at Nikko-guchi when Emperor Loyalist troops reached Juroku bashi. Lord Matsudaira KataMōri had to send Byakkotai to block them. 23 Aug Emperor Loyalist troops entered Wakamatsu town which made the town people panic. More than 200 family members of Aizu Han retainers committed suicide to avoid getting captured. 26 Aug, Yamakawa Okura unit returned to the castle from Nikko-guchi. Emperor loyalist troops had secured North-East sides of the castle wall already. 28 Aug, Yonezawa Han surrendered. Reinforcements of Emperor Loyalist troops were arriving to Wakamatsu town one after another, it increased to more than 30,000. Inside of the castle was full of injured people. 14 Sep Emperor Loyalist troops launched an all-out attack. 22 Sep, Aizu Han surrendered. When the castle fell, there were more than 1000 women, children and elderly.

**Aftermath**

Matsudaira KataMōri confined himself until 1872. Aizu Matsudaira clan was reassigned to Tonami Han the north edge of Honshu. Aizu han Karō Saigo Tanomo and some retainers joined Enomoto Takeaki's Bakufu loyalist troops and fought against Emperor loyalists in Hakodate.

**Battle of Hakodate**

Enomoto Takeaki and former Bakufu retainers took Bakufu's fleet to Ezo, occupied Goryōkaku fort on 26 Oct and established the local government. They attempted the Naval Battle of Miyako Bay but it failed. 1869 Apr 9 the imperial troops landed Otobe, and on 18 May former Bakufu troops surrendered.
Battle of Koshu-Katsunuma (6 Mar 1868)

- Bakufu loyalists Vs. Emperor loyalists
  - Date: 1868 Mar 6
  - Location: Katsunuma
  - Japanese: 甲州勝沼の戦い (Kôshû Katsunuma no tatakai)

The Shinsengumi returned to Edo after the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. Kondô Isami, the commander of Shinsengumi, visited Katsu Kaishû in Edo castle, where he asked to go to Kôfu castle to meet the Imperial troops. Katsu had no idea that the Shinsengumi would try to block off the imperial troops. But Kondô's real intention was taking over the castle. Kondô recruited new members and reformed the Shinsengumi as the Kôyô Chinbutai. On Mar 1, The Kôyô Chinbutai took Kôshû avenue to Katsunuma. They were welcomed in the towns on the way because the region was home of the main Shinsengumi members including Kondô (who was using the alias Okubo Tsuyoshi), Hijikata (who was using the alias Naito Hayato).

> The battle of Koshu Katsunuma

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Matsumae castle

The former Bakufu retainers headed by Enomoto Takeaki escaped from Edo in 1868/4 and arrived at Ezo in 1868/10. After they occupied Goryôkaku fort, they headed to capture Matsumae castle.

> Goryôkaku Honjin

In 1868/11/5, the ground troops lead by Hijikata Toshizo overthrew Matsumae ham’s defense line at Oyobegawa River. They occupied the hill in front of Matsumae castle. The castle had 7 batteries. Every time when Hijikata’s soldiers came close to Karametemon gate, the Matsumae soldiers opened the gate to fire the cannon and then closed it quickly. While they were making the same maneuver over and over again, Hijikata took a small unit and entered the castle from behind. Matsumae Han surrendered on 20 Nov 1868. The former Bakufu retainer troops lost their battleships Kayo Maru and Shinsoku Maru during the battle. On 15 Dec 1868 they declared the Republic of Ezo and Enomoto was elected to be the president.

Miyako bay. Next they planned to seize the warship Kôtetsu that was anchoring at Kuwagasaki harbor in Miyako bay. Kôtetsu was the iron ship that Tokugawa Bakufu purchased from the U.S. but it was possessed.

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by the Imperial forces at the time. 1869/3/21, Kaiten Maru, Banryô Maru and Takao Maru left Hakodate, but only Kaiten Maru was able to reach Miyako bay. Kaiten Maru succeeded in a surprise attack against Kôtetsu, but only 7 crews were able to jump on the deck of Kôtetsu and they were all shot. Fortunately there were only supply ships near Kôtetsu. Once they realized the operation failed, they quickly left the bay. Kôga Gengo the captain of Kaiten Maru was killed in the battle.

Hakodate

Routes taken by Imperial troops.

9 Apr 1869, the Imperial troops started landing on Ezo. The Ezo troops spotted them at Futamataguch, Kikonai and Matsumaeguchi. Matsumae castle fell first, and the Imperial troops defeated the Ezo troops at Kikonai. The Ezo troops commanded by Hijikata Toshizô at Futamataguch was defeating the Imperial troops but when Yaginai was broken through, Hijikata decided to withdraw to Hakodate.

11 May 1869, the Imperial troops attacked Hakodate. They had 7 ships to support the ground troops but one of them Chôyô Maru was sunk by Banryô Maru. Hijikata was killed when he was on the way to Benten battery to rescue Shinsengumi. On 16 May 1869, the nearest battery from Goryôkaku was occupied, and the Republic of Ezo surrendered two days later on 18 May 1869 bringing the Boshin war to an end.

The Warring Parties of the Boshin War (Simplified)

- **Great Japanese Empire  Bakufu Section**
  - The Bodhisattva long alliance
    - Satsuma
    - Choshu
      - Jones team
    - Tosa
    - Miss Rescue Team
    - Hizen clan

- **Tokugawa shogunate**
  - Austrian Yu the more columns Fan alliance · would Zhuang League
  - Aizu clan
    - New electoral group [A Yang Zhen Fu team]
    - Kyoto see back group
  - Kuwana Clan
  - Shonai clan
  - Akiyoshi Team
  - Ezo Republic
On 18 May 1869 the Boshin War ended. The victors of the BOSHIN WAR were the Imperial Army force, that is the Government Troops of Emperor Meiji and the Satsuma/Choshu/Hizen and Tosa Clans. It is ironic that these latter Samurai clans that had fought and paid the ultimate price in support of the new Emperor Meiji, and assisted him in gaining power, would in turn be defeated by the Emperor in what was to become known as the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877, the last Japanese Civil War that would see the end of the Samurai.

The Boshin War had been a civil war within Japan in which many country men (including noblemen, government officials, and samurai) opposed the opening of Japan’s borders. Specifically, it was felt by many (most notably the Satsuma clan) that the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate had accepted terms with other nations that were extremely insulting and put Japan at a distinct disadvantage in the global economy. This war was fought between the Tokugawa Shogunate (the ruling body at the time) and the Imperial army. It was also a Civil war that had roots dating back to Tokugawa Ieyasu’s unification of Japan in the early 1600’s and the systemic problems caused by the resulting Tozuma/Feudal Daimyo class distinctions In as nutshell, the Boshin War was THE time to settle old scores, and what more noble a cause for the Samurai than to support either the Emperor, or the Shogun.

The Tokugawa army consisted of samurai utilizing traditional samurai weapons (such as swords, bows and arrows) whereas the Imperial side (most notably supported by the Satsuma clan) consisted of samurai that used modern firearms and cannons in addition to traditional weapons such as swords and arrows. Ultimately the Imperial army won the Boshin War, and paved the way for the instatement of what would be known as, “The Meiji Government”.

The end of the Boshin War saw the Tokugawa Shogunate defeated by Meiji Government forces and Samurai loyal to the Emperor. All that was left now was to remove the remaining Samurai and their archaic feudal ways, and Japan could move into the ‘new age of technology’.

**Chronology of Japan POST Boshin War**

- Meiji reign (1868): the Emperor issued order of deities separation, five Royal Oath
- Meiji 2 (1869): Boshin war end version of the membership money-back guarantee
- 1871 (1871): Waste Phan home county, Nissin amity new SFO
- Meiji 5 (1872): the adoption of the Gregorian calendar (November 9, change calendars and edict. Meiji December 25 years (old calendar), the next day as the Meiji 6 years on January 1).
- Meiji 6 (1873): conscription order, government rent corrections, Meiji six coup (Xixianglongsheng · Itagaki Taisuke etc. Shimono)
- Meiji 7 (1874): China essays House set up to build the white book sent troops to Taiwan
- Meiji 8 (1875): Karafuto the Kuril exchange treaty
- Meiji 9 (1876): Japan-DPRK amity
- Meiji 10 (1877): Southwest war (- Meiji 11 years) SATSUMA REBELLION
- Meiji 11 (1878): place the new law, the Kioi Sakamoto の変
- Meiji 12 (1879): On August 31, the Crown Prince Ming Palace, Prince Yoshitomo (Taisho emperor) was born. Okinawa Prefecture set (Ryukyu punishment)
- Meiji 13 (1880): Congress period into the alliance forged
- Meiji 14 (1881): Meiji fourteen years of the coup, the the Congress opened edict released. After the fall of the Okuma Shigenobu, 蔵 Qing Song Fang Zhengyi Matsukata deflation
- Meiji 15 (1882): Fukushima incident
- Meiji 17 (1884): the Chichibu event Coup
- Meiji 18 (1885): The Treaty of Tianjin, the cabinet system implemented
- Meiji 22 (1889): Greater Constitution of the Empire of Japan released
- Meiji 23 (1890): First session of the general election of member of the Japanese House of Representatives. Back to the first Imperial Diet convened the Imperial Rescript on Education "published
- Meiji 24 (1891): Otsu event
Nissin war (- 1895)
  • Meiji 28 (1895): The Treaty of Shimonoseki

Many samurai that supported the Meiji government would actually go on to “retire” and take on high ranking positions within the government. Ironically, despite being backed by numerous samurai clans, the Meiji government would later implement many political, social and cultural changes that would eventually lead to the total abolishment of the samurai way of life.

Haitorei Edict: The wearing of swords was ‘optional’ from 1871 t 1876, however, the Haitorei Edict was a law passed in 1876 by the Meiji government that formally banned the carrying of swords in public. This was one of many steps taken by the new government in an attempt to bring Japan into a new era. Some argue that this law was passed to make communities safer by preventing civilians (non military individuals) from carrying weapons) while others argue that this was a direct assault on the samurai way of life. This law was one of many laws passed that was a direct assault on the previously enjoyed rights/privileges of the samurai class, and the law eventually lead to the abolishment of the samurai.

Dampatsurei Edict: This was a law passed shortly after Haitoriei Edict, and forced the samurai class to cut off their traditional top knots (referred to as a Chonmage). This law was passed in conjunction with the establishment of the national military. Clearly this was a direct assauilt on the Samurai way of life.

Satsuma Rebellion: The Satsuma Rebellion was one of several armed uprisings against the Meiji government. This rebellion was lead by the Satsuma samurai clan, who had originally supported the Imperial army in the Boshin War. Ironically, the same government that the Satsuma clan had helped to establish was now responsible for establishing new laws in an attempt to “modernize” Japan, that consequently lead to the abolishment of the samurai way of life. The Satsuma clan was lead by a number of samurai, including Saigo Takamōri. Saigo had had originally been one of the biggest advocates for the Imperial Army, and subsequent Meiji government. However, he, and other leaders of the Satusma clan, had grown increasingly troubled with the direction of the new Meiji government. The Satusma clan, with an army of 20,000 to 30,000 strong (the majority being samurai), led a rebellion against the Meiji government. The Meiji government, with an army numbering 300,000 to 350,000 and was able to cripple the Satsuma rebellion in a matter of months.

The Battle of Shiroyama: The final battle of the Satsuma Rebellion, this battle serves as the basis for the final battle scene in the film Last Samurai. After months of fighting the Satsuma forces had dwindled to approx 400, including their now leader, Saigo Takamōri (as the rest of the high ranking samurai leaders had been killed in battle). Saigo lead his 400 remaining troops against the Meiji army. The strategy was to charge the Meiji army with the intention of engaging the army in close quarters combat, as the Meiji conscripts had not been trained in this type of combat, and thus was susceptible to this type of attack. The Satsuma clan was successful for a period of time, but was unable to overcome the great imbalance in man power. The Satusma clan quickly dwindled to a mere 40 samurai. These remaining samurai, in a last ditch effort charged the Meiji army line and where cut down in a hail of gun fire (which included the newly acquired Gatling guns), thus ending the Battle of Shiroyama, and the Satsuma Rebellion.

Saigo Takamōri

Saigo Takamōri, is often called one of the last true samurai, and in some circles even referred to as “The Last Samurai”. He was a high ranking member of the Satsuma clan and helped to establish the Meiji government. Despite serving as a Meiji bureaucrat for a number of years, he grew growingly disenfranchised with the Meiji government, and helped to lead an army of samurai in an attempt to overthrow the Meiji government.
(the Satsuma Rebellion). He also led what remained of the Satsuma clan into what would later be referred to as the Battle of Shiroyama. Saigo Takamori (who the lead samurai Katsumoto is loosely based on in the Hollywood movie “Last Samurai”) is often himself referred to as the last samurai, and he died in the last Satsuma Rebellion battle of Shiroyama.

SATSUMA REBELLION 1877

A brief description of the Satsuma Rebellion is included to complete the picture of the demise of the Samurai.

Although the Satsuma Domain had been one of the key players in the Meiji Restoration and the Boshin War, and although many men from Satsuma had risen to influential positions in the new Meiji government, there was growing dissatisfaction with the direction the country was taking. The modernization of the country meant the abolition of the privileged social status of the samurai class, and had undermined their financial position. The very rapid and massive changes to Japanese culture, language, dress and society appeared to many samurai to be a betrayal of the jōi (“expel the barbarian”) portion of the sonnō jōi justification used to overthrow the former Tokugawa shogunate.

Saigō Takamōri, who had supported the reforms in the beginning, was especially concerned about growing political corruption (the slogan of his rebel movement was shinsei-kōtoku (新政厚徳?, new government, high morality). Saigō was a strong proponent of war with Korea in the Seikanron debate of 1873. At one point, he offered to visit Korea in person and to provoke a casus belli by behaving in such an insulting manner that the Koreans would be forced to kill him. A war would not only spur the strengthening of Japan's military, but would restore to the samurai their raison d'etre. When the plan was rejected, Saigō resigned from all of his government positions in protest and returned to his hometown of Kagoshima, as did many other Satsuma ex-samurai in the military and police forces.

To help support and employ these men, in 1874 Saigō established a private academy in Kagoshima. Soon 132 branches were established all over the prefecture. The “training” provided was not purely academic: although the Chinese classics were taught, all students were required to take part in weapons training and instruction in tactics. The traditions of bushido were emphasized. Saigō also started an artillery school. The schools resembled paramilitary political organizations more than anything else, and they enjoyed the support of the governor of Satsuma, who appointed disaffected samurai to political offices, where they came to dominate the Kagoshima government. Support for Saigō was so strong that Satsuma had effectively seceded from the central government by the end of 1876.

Prelude

Word of Saigō’s academies was greeted with considerable concern in Tokyo. The government had just dealt with several small but violent samurai revolts in Kyūshū, and the prospect of the numerous and fierce Satsuma samurai, being led in rebellion by the famous and popular Saigō was alarming.

In December 1876, the Meiji government sent a police officer named Nakahara Hisao and 57 other men to investigate reports of subversive activities and unrest. The men were captured, and under torture, confessed that they were spies who had been sent to assassinate Saigō. Although Nakahara later repudiated the
confession, it was widely believed in Satsuma and was used as justification by the disaffected samurai that a rebellion was necessary in order to “protect Saigō”.

Fearing a rebellion, the Meiji government sent a warship to Kagoshima to remove the weapons stockpiled at the Kagoshima arsenal on January 30, 1877. Ironically, this provoked open conflict, although with the elimination of samurai rice stipends in 1877, tensions were already extremely high. Outraged by the government's tactics, 50 students from Saigō’s academy attacked the Somuta Arsenal and carried off weapons. Over the next three days, more than 1000 students staged raids on the naval yards and other arsenals. Presented with this fait accompli, the greatly dismayed Saigō was reluctantly persuaded to come out of his semi-retirement to lead the rebellion against the central government.

In February 1877, the Meiji government dispatched Hayashi Tomoyuki, an official with the Home Ministry with Admiral Kawamura Sumiyoshi in the warship Takao to ascertain the situation. Satsuma governor, Oyama Tsunayoshi, explained that the uprising was in response to the government's assassination attempt on Saigō, and asked that Admiral Kawamura (Saigō's cousin) come ashore to help calm the situation. After Oyama departed, a flotilla of small ships filled with armed men attempted to board Takao by force, but were repelled. The following day, Hayashi declared to Oyama that he could not permit Kawamura to go ashore when the situation was so unsettled, and that the attack on Takao constituted an act of lese-majeste.

On his return to Kobe on 1877 February 12, Hayashi met with General Yamagata Aritomo and Ito Hirobumi, and it was decided that the Imperial Japanese Army would need to be sent to Kagoshima to prevent the revolt from spreading to other areas of the country sympathetic to Saigō. On the same day, Saigō met with his lieutenants Kirino Toshiaki and Shinohara Kunimoto and announced his intention of marching to Tokyo to ask questions of the government. Rejecting large numbers of volunteers, he made no attempt to contact any of the other domains for support, and no troops were left at Kagoshima to secure his base against an attack. To aid in the air of legality, Saigō wore his army uniform. Marching north, his army was hampered by the deepest snowfall Satsuma had seen in more than 50 years.

**The Southwest War - Siege of Kumamoto Castle**

The Satsuma vanguard crossed into Kumamoto Prefecture on February 14. The Commandant of Kumamoto castle, Major General Tani Tateki had 3,800 soldiers and 600 policemen at his disposal. However, most of the garrison was from Kyūshū, and as many officers were natives of Kagoshima, their loyalties were open to question. Rather than risk desertions or defections, Tani decided to stand on the defensive.
On February 19, the first shots of the war were fired as the defenders of Kumamoto castle opened fire on Satsuma units attempting to force their way into the castle. Kumamoto castle, built in 1598, was among the strongest in Japan, but Saigō was confident that his forces would be more than a match for Tani’s peasant conscripts, who were still demoralized by the recent Shimpuren Rebellion.

Saigō Takamori Gunmusho (軍務所) banknote, issued in 1877 to finance his war effort. Japan Currency Museum.

On February 22, the main Satsuma army arrived and attacked Kumamoto castle in a pincer movement. Fighting continued into the night. Imperial forces fell back, and Acting Major Nogi Maresuke of the Kokura Fourteenth Regiment lost the regimental colors in fierce fighting. However, despite their successes, the Satsuma army failed to take the castle, and began to realize that the conscript army was not as ineffective as first assumed. After two days of fruitless attack, the Satsuma forces dug into the rock-hard icy ground around the castle and tried to starve the garrison out in a siege. The situation was especially desperate for the defenders as their stores of food and ammunition had been depleted by a warehouse fire shortly before the rebellion began.

During the siege, many Kumamoto ex-samurai flocked to Saigō’s banner, swelling his forces to around 20,000 men. In the meantime, on March 9 Saigō, Kirino and Shinohara were stripped of their court ranks and titles by the Government of the Emperor.

On the night of April 8, a force from Kumamoto castle made a sortie, forcing open a hole in the Satsuma lines and enabling desperately needed supplies to reach the garrison. The main Imperial Army, under General Kuroda Kiyotaka with the assistance of General Yamakawa Hiroshi arrived in Kumamoto on April 12, putting the now heavily outnumbered Satsuma forces to flight.

### Battle of Tabaruzaka

On March 4 Imperial Army General Yamagata ordered a frontal assault from Tabaruzaka, guarding the approaches to Kumamoto, which developed into an eight-day long battle. Tabaruzaka was held by some 15,000 samurai from Satsuma, Kumamoto and Hitoyoshi against the Imperial Army’s 9th Infantry Brigade (some 90,000 men). At the height of the battle, Saigō wrote a private letter to Prince Arisugawa, restating his reasons for going to Tokyo. His letter indicated that he was not committed to rebellion and sought a peaceful settlement. The government, however, refused to negotiate.

In order to cut Saigō off from his base, an imperial force with three warships, 500 policemen and several companies of infantry, landed in Kagoshima on March 8, seized arsenals and took the Satsuma governor into custody.
Yamagata also landed a detachment with two infantry brigades and 1,200 policemen behind the rebel lines, so as to fall on them from the rear from Yatsushiro Bay. Imperial forces landed with few losses, then pushed north seizing the city of Miyanohara on March 19. After receiving reinforcements, the imperial force, now totaling 4,000 men, attacked the rear elements of the Satsuma army and drove them back.

**Tabaruzaka was one of the bloodiest campaigns of the war.** Imperial forces emerged victorious, but with heavy casualties on both sides. *Each side* had suffered more than 4,000 killed or wounded.

**Retreat from Kumamoto**

After his failure to take Kumamoto, Saigō led his followers on a seven day march to Hitoyoshi. Morale was extremely low, and lacking any strategy, the Satsuma forces dug in to wait for the next Imperial Army offensive. However, the Imperial Army was likewise depleted, and fighting was suspended for several weeks to permit reinforcement. When the offensive was resumed, Saigo retreated to Miyazaki, leaving behind numerous pockets of *samurai* in the hills to conduct guerilla attacks.

![Saigo's army clashes with the government's forces.](image)

On July 24, the Imperial Army forced Saigō out of Miyakonojō, followed by Nobeoka. Troops were landed at Ōita and Saiki north of Saigō's army, and Saigō was caught in a pincer attack. However, the Satsuma army was able to cut its way free from encirclement. By August 17, the Satsuma army had been reduced to 3000 combatants, and had lost most of its modern firearms and all of its artillery.

The surviving rebels made a stand on the slopes of Mount Enodake, and were soon surrounded. Determined not to let the rebels escape again, Yamagata sent in a large force which outnumbered the Satsuma army 7:1. Most of Saigō’s remaining forces either surrendered or committed seppuku. However, Saigō burned his private papers and army uniform on August 19, and slipped away towards Kagoshima with his remaining able bodied men. Despite Yamagata's efforts over the next several days, Saigō and his remaining 500 men reached Kagoshima on September 1 and seized Shiroyama, overlooking the city.

**Battle of Shiroyama**

![Battle of Shiroyama.](image)

Saigō and his remaining *samurai* were pushed back to Kagoshima where, in a final battle, the Battle of Shiroyama, Imperial Army troops under the command of General Yamagata Aritomo and marines under the command of Admiral Kawamura Sumiyoshi outnumbered Saigō 60-to-1. However, Yamagata was determined to leave nothing to chance. The imperial troops spent several days constructing an elaborate system of ditches, walls and obstacles to prevent another breakout.
The five government warships in Kagoshima harbor added their firepower to Yamagata's artillery, and began to systematically reduce the rebel positions.

After Saigō rejected a letter dated September 1 from Yamagata drafted by a young Suematsu Kenchō (see M. Matsumura, Pōtsumasu he no michi, pub. Hara Shobo, 1987, Chapter 1) asking him to surrender, Yamagata ordered a full frontal assault on September 24, 1877. By 6 a.m., only 40 rebels were still alive. Saigō was severely wounded. Legend says that one of his followers, Beppu Shinsuke acted as kaishakunin and aided Saigō in committing seppuku before he could be captured. However, other evidence contradicts this, stating that Saigō in fact died of the bullet wound and then had his head removed by Beppu in order to preserve his dignity.

After Saigo's death, Beppu and the last of the "ex-samurai" drew their swords and plunged downhill toward the Imperial positions and to their deaths. With these deaths, the Satsuma rebellion came to an end.

Aftermath

Financially, crushing the Satsuma Rebellion cost the government greatly, forcing Japan off the gold standard and causing the government to print paper currency. The rebellion was also effectively the end of the samurai class, as the new Imperial Japanese Army built of conscripts without regard to social class had proven itself in battle. Saigō Takamōri was labeled as a tragic hero by the people and on February 22, 1889, Emperor Meiji pardoned Saigō posthumously.

Order of battle

Organization of the Imperial Forces

At the start of the Satsuma Rebellion, the Imperial Japanese Army (including the Imperial Guard) numbered approximately 34,000 men. The line infantry was divided into 14 regiments of 3 battalions each. Each battalion consisted of 4 companies. In peacetime, each company had approximately 160 privates and 32 officers and non-commissioned officers. During war a company's strength was to be increased to 240 privates. A battalion had 640 men in peacetime and theoretically 960 men in wartime. They were armed with breech-loading Snider rifles and could fire approximately six rounds per minute.

There were two "regiments" of line cavalry and one "regiment" of imperial guard cavalry. Contemporary illustrations show the cavalry armed with lances.

The Imperial Artillery consisted of 18 batteries divided into 9 battalions, with 120 men per battery during peacetime. During war, the mountain artillery had a nominal strength of 160 men per battery and field
Artillery had 130 men per battery. Artillery consisted of over 100 pieces, including 5.28 pound mountain guns, Krupp field guns of various calibers, and mortars.

The Imperial Guard (mostly ex-samurai) was always maintained at wartime strength. The Guard infantry was divided into 2 regiments of 2 battalions each. A battalion was 672 men strong and was organized as per the line battalions. The cavalry regiment consisted of 150 men. The artillery battalion was divided into 2 batteries with 130 men per battery.

Japan was divided into six military districts: Tokyo, Sendai, Nagoya, Osaka, Hiroshima and Kumamoto, with two or three regiments of infantry, plus artillery and other auxiliary troops, assigned to each district.

"Hunting a rat": satirical drawing of the Satsuma rebellion, in the 1877 English language Japan Punch. The policemen hold a banner reading "新政厚徳" ("New government, high morality", the slogan of the new government), and the rat is surrounded by baton-wielding policemen.

In addition to the army, the central government also used marines and Tokyo policemen in its struggle against Satsuma. The police, in units ranging from 300 to 600 men, were mostly ex-samurai (ironically, many of whom were from Satsuma) and were armed only with wooden batons and swords (Japanese police did not carry firearms until the Rice Riots of 1918). During the conflict, the government side expended in average 322,000 rounds of ammunition, and 1,000 artillery shells per day.

**Organization of the Satsuma forces**

The Satsuma samurai were initially organized into six battalions of 2,000 men each. Each battalion was divided into ten companies of 200 men. On its march to Kumamoto castle, the army was divided into three divisions: a vanguard of 4,000 men, the main division of 4,000 men, and a rearguard of 2,000 men. In addition, there were 200 artillerymen and 1,200 laborers. In April 1877, Saigō reorganized the army into nine infantry units of 350 to 800 men each.

The samurai were armed with Enfield and Model 1857 Six Line (Russian) muzzle loading rifles and could fire approximately one round per minute. Their artillery consisted of 28 mountain guns, two field guns, and 30 assorted mortars.

**Name**

In English the most common name for the war is the "Satsuma Rebellion." Mark Ravina, the author of *The Last Samurai: The Life and Battles of Saigo Takamōri*, argued that "Satsuma Rebellion" is not the best name for the war because the English name does not well represent the war and its Japanese name. Ravina said that the war's scope was much farther than Satsuma, and he characterizes the event as being closer to a civil war than a rebellion. Ravina prefers the English name "War of the Southwest."

The Satsuma Rebellion (西南戦争 *Seinan Sensō* (Southwestern War)) was a revolt of Satsuma ex-samurai against the Meiji government from January 29 to September 24, 1877, 9 years into the Meiji Era. It was the last, and the most serious, of a series of armed uprisings against the new government.
THE FINAL BATTLE – TABARUZAKA to SHIROYAMA

On a muddy field outside Kagoshima on September 25, 1877, the feudal system that had dominated Japan for 700 years died, not with a whimper but with a defiant roar. At 6 that morning, the 40 remaining warriors of the last traditional samurai army in Japanese history rose from their foxholes, drew their swords and charged into the guns of the 30,000-man-strong imperial army.

Twenty-three years earlier, Japan was officially ruled by a figurehead emperor, while the real power rested in the hands of the shogun, or 'barbarian-expelling commander in chief.' Under the shogun, and answerable only to him, came the Daimyō ('great lords'), who were clan heads and hereditary provincial governors. Within the Han (a term meaning both 'province' and 'clan'), society was a rigidly controlled pyramid, with the peasant at the bottom. The glue that held that structure together was the military caste that served the Daimyō: the samurai. That system began to come apart in 1854, when U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry sailed into Kagoshima Harbor and invited Japan to join the modern world — at gunpoint.

Determined to prevent future humiliations, Japanese leaders decided that they needed a modern army equipped with the most up-to-date weapons, trained by the best officers of the day: the French and Germans. In 1872, the imperial army was reorganized as a force of 46,000 conscripts from every social class. Suddenly, 2 million samurai found themselves ineligible for careers that had once been theirs alone.

During the 1860s, Japan underwent a period of turmoil as conservative-minded Daimyō and samurai attacked both the government and foreigners in an attempt to restore the country's isolation. Japan's future was ultimately resolved in 1868, however, when Emperor Mutsuhito stepped into power under the title of Meiji ('enlightened peace'), abolished the shogunate, ratified a constitution and moved the imperial capital to Edo, which was renamed Tokyo. While the army was becoming westernized, statesmen such as Prince Tonomi Iwakura and Toshimichi Okubo championed industrialization, so Japan could sustain a modern, competitive war machine. In August 1871, the Daimyō lost their old domains — for which they were given compensatory pensions — and the old provinces were replaced with prefectures. In the same year, the wearing of swords in public became optional, and in 1876 it became illegal. For the unemployed samurai, such edicts piled degrading insult upon injury. Many able men who had fought and bled to return real power to the emperor in 1868 now spoke of the 'good old days' of samurai dominance. Prominent among them was Field Marshal Takamōri Saigo. Born in Satsuma, the westernmost province on the island of Kyushu, in 1827, 'Great Saigo,' as his supporters called him, had backed the Meiji emperor in 1867.

So great was his dedication that when his government sought a plausible excuse for a war with Korea, Saigo offered to go there as ambassador in 1873, intending to insult the Korean government to such a degree that it would be forced to kill him, thereby providing Japan with its casus belli. Saigo was already on board a ship to Korea when the government reconsidered its agreement to his scheme and recalled him. Although deprived of his grand gesture, Saigo and fellow conservatives continued to agitate for war and a samurai-based army, but the peace party got the upper hand in the imperial councils. The war party resigned in protest, and Saigo returned to his home city of Kagoshima, where he went into voluntary retirement from public life. Even personal appeals for aid from his close friend, Shimpei Eto, who led 2,000 Kyushu samurai in revolt in 1874, failed to move him. The rebellion was quickly crushed, and Eto was beheaded.

A large number of imperial guardsmen had resigned with Saigo and later accompanied him to Kyushu. To help support and employ those men, Saigo started a series of 132 private schools, or shigakko, scattered throughout Satsuma province. Instruction at the schools centered on the Chinese classics, although French and English were also taught. In addition, all students were required to take part in weapons training and instruction in tactics. Saigo also started an artillery school. Emphasis was placed on the historical prowess of the Satsuma warrior, and students were indoctrinated in Bushido, the samurai's ancient chivalric code.

Word of the shigakkos' martial nature was greeted with considerable alarm in Tokyo. The government had already dealt with several small but violent samurai revolts, and the prospect of Satsuma samurai, which were widely regarded as the best in Japan, being led in rebellion by the Great Saigo was too terrible to contemplate. During the days of the Han, Satsuma had taken a lead in arms manufacture and importation. As
a result, there was considerable weaponry stockpiled at several armories scattered throughout the province. On January 30, 1877, a government ship arrived in Kagoshima and, without explanation, began removing munitions. Officials intended to transport them to Osaka. The result transformed the government's concerns about rebellion into a self-fulfilling prophesy. Outraged by these high-handed tactics, 50 students attacked the Somuta arsenal and tried to carry off arms. During the next three days, more than 1,000 students raided the naval yards and the Iso arsenal, stealing 84,000 rounds of ammunition.

The officer in charge of removing the arms lodged a formal protest with the provincial government. The police, however, reported that they were unable to find even one of the raiders, in spite of the students' having paraded their trophies through the city streets. Giving up in disgust, the officer ordered the ship to leave Kagoshima. The students then seized the arms factories, hired more workers and went into full production. When Saigo, who was away hunting at the time, heard what had happened, he flew into a rage at the student leaders. The deed was done, however, and he later congratulated his students.

Between February 3 and 7, the Satsuma provincial government arrested 58 government agents. Several of them were Satsuma-born Tokyo policemen, the type of men the government wanted for spying operations in Satsuma since they could speak the dialect, which even today is unintelligible to outsiders. Soon after word of the arrests got out, a rumor circulated that several of the suspected spies had confessed under torture to having been sent by the government to kill Saigo and stir up insurrection as an excuse for the government to invade. His students began agitating for war.

Over his subordinates' objections, Saigo decided to go to Tokyo and try to negotiate with the government. He opposed taking an armed bodyguard with him, preferring to rely on his rank as a marshal of the imperial army for his protection. Matters had gone beyond Saigo's control, however, since an advance body of rebellious samurai had already departed for Tokyo without his knowledge. The rebels knew that Saigo was too much of a traditionalist to abandon his fellow samurai in a time of crisis, and would be morally obligated to take command.

Saigo was still trying to avoid war. Rejecting large numbers of volunteers, he began his journey with only 12,000 students. Furthermore, he made no attempt to contact any of the other Han for support, and no troops were left on Kagoshima to secure his base against an attack. For his war chest, Saigo took only 25,000 yen, sufficient to buy supplies for a month. To aid in the air of legality that he was trying to project, Saigo wore his army uniform.

On February 17, Saigo paid his respects at the gate of the Shimayu clan, his hereditary overlords. He then departed Kagoshima with his rear guard, the main body of his army having left the day before. Marching north, the army was hampered by the deepest snowfall Satsuma had seen in more than 50 years.

Two days earlier, Maj. Gen. Taketa Tani, commander of Kumamoto Castle, had received a letter, purportedly from Saigo. In brusque terms, the letter informed him that Saigo would soon be passing by his command, and requested that the garrison be turned out to meet Saigo and receive his orders. The authenticity of that letter is doubtful, since its harsh tone was calculated to incite determined resistance. Saigo, with his small force, could hardly have wanted a fight, and if he had, he would not have warned Tani that he was on the way. Moreover, the letter was not in Saigo's handwriting. There is, however, a second letter authenticated as being in Saigo's hand, which politely informed Tani that he and his army would soon be passing through Kumamoto on a peaceful mission, asking that measures be taken to prevent alarming the population. The first letter may have been sent by shigakko extremists hoping to provoke a confrontation.

Whatever Saigo's intentions, Tani had no intention of letting his army pass. By February 21, he had 3,800 soldiers and 600 policemen at his disposal. The police contingent was no mean addition to the garrison, for Japanese policemen were a paramilitary force recruited from the samurai class, comparable to the French gendarmerie or Italian carabinieri. It is interesting to note, however, that the Japanese police shunned the use of firearms, preferring to rely on their swords and martial arts skills.
Since most of the garrison of Kumamoto Castle was from Kyushu, and many of the officers were natives of Kagoshima, their loyalties were open to question. Rather than risk desertions or defections, Tani decided to stand on the defensive. After laying in a large store of food and demolishing several hundred houses around the castle to provide fields of fire, the general and his command settled down to wait for Saigo.

Small clashes and skirmishes took place on February 21, forcing the imperial advance guards to withdraw inside Kumamoto. Although the castle, built in 1598, was among the strongest in Japan, Saigo was confident that his 9,000 samurai would be more than a match for Tani’s hitherto-untried peasant conscripts. After surrounding the castle on the 22nd and keeping up small-arms fire all day, the rebels launched a series of ill-coordinated assaults on the walls after dark. Though bloodily repulsed by concentrated fire, the samurai continued to hurl themselves at the walls with suicidal ferocity. After two days of fruitless attack, however, their ardor began to wane. While 3,000 men dug into the rock-hard icy ground around the castle and tried to starve the garrison out, a rebel detachment sent to block the passes north of town soon encountered the forward elements of the relief force. After several sharp clashes, both sides disengaged on the 26th.

By the time fighting resumed on March 3, both sides had been reinforced and numbered about 10,000 each. They faced each other along a 61½-mile front from Tabaruzuka southwest to Ariake Bay. Although Prince Taruhito Arisugawa was the official commander of the imperial forces assigned to put down the Satsuma rebels, real command was in the hands of General Aritomo Yamagata. A samurai from Chosu who had studied military science in Europe and headed the War Ministry in 1870, Yamagata was an old friend of Saigo’s. He believed in authoritarian government and shared Saigo’s desire for military expansion into Taiwan, Korea and Manchuria, but he also favored modernizing the Japanese army along Prussian lines. It was Yamagata who ordered a frontal assault on the Satsuma positions on March 4, which developed into the eight-day Battle of Tabaruzuka.

As the two sides were well dug in, a fierce war of position developed in which neither side could gain an advantage. There was little shooting, either due to lack of ammunition or from inclination. Imperial troops, no less than the rebels, made their assaults with cold steel alone. By the time the imperial forces managed to dislodge the rebels, each side had suffered more than 4,000 killed or wounded.

At the height of the battle, Saigo wrote a private letter to Prince Arisugawa, restating his reasons for going to Tokyo. His letter indicated that even at that late date Saigo was not committed to the rebellion and sought a peaceful settlement. The government, however, refused to negotiate. Its armament factories were producing 500,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition a day. The empire was on a full war footing and was determined to crush the rebellion.

In order to cut Saigo off from his base, an imperial force made up of three warships, bearing 500 policemen and several companies of infantry, arrived in Kagoshima on March 8. After the troops landed, they seized the arsenals and took the provincial governor into custody.

Deprived of supplies from home, rebel forces lived on food purchased from the local peasants with paper promissory notes, bearing the stamp of the Satsuma commander. Those notes continued in circulation long after the rebels had been driven out of the area and in spite of a government ban on their use. Nor was popular support for the rebels limited to monetary matters. A local dissident leader, Kichijuro Ikebe, gathering a force of 2,000 samurai from students of the private schools that he had founded in imitation of the Great Saigo, joined the rebellion.

During the stalemate at Tabaruzuka, Yamagata decided to land a detachment behind the rebel lines, so as to fall on them from the rear. That force, comprising two infantry brigades and 1,200 policemen, boarded ship at Nagasaki on March 17 and sailed to Yatsushiro Bay. Though contested by rebels, the imperial forces landed with nominal losses, then pushed north to the city of Miyanohara, reaching it on the 19th. After receiving reinforcements, the imperial force, now totaling 4,000, attacked the rear elements of the Satsuma army and drove them back upon the main rebel force.
Meanwhile, at Kumamoto Castle stocks of food were running dangerously low. The shortage of ammunition was so severe that rationing was necessary and the artillerists were reduced to firing unexploded Satsuma shells back at the besiegers. The garrison, however, no longer had to contend with the wild frontal assaults that had characterized the early stage of the siege. Most of the fighting was now confined to sniping and isolated clashes between rival swordsmen.

General Tani, facing the supply problem, decided to dispatch a sortie in hopes of linking up with the relief force. At that time, the relief force was then only a few miles away. On the night of April 8, eight companies of infantry under Major Sasukata Oku slipped through the Satsuma lines, dispatching the enemy sentinels with swords or garrotes. Oku's small force, though discovered and attacked the next morning, was able to keep a hole open in the rebel lines long enough to revictual the garrison before passing through and linking up with the imperial army.

Working in cooperation, the two imperial forces closed in on the Satsuma army. A final attack was planned for April 14, but before it could be carried out, Saigo disengaged and his men took up new positions on high ground east of Kumamoto. The imperial forces linked up with the castle garrison the next day, ending 54 days of siege. Both armies had suffered heavy casualties, but the conscription system allowed the imperial army to replace its losses. It now had more than 20,000 men, compared to the rebels' 8,000. Many of the Satsuma commanders advocated a fight to the death where they stood, but Saigo vetoed the plan. Reorganizing his army into nine companies, he retreated to the east.

After seven days and a march of 100 miles through rugged wastes, the samurai limped into Hitoyoshi. Morale was so low that Saigo ordered that any samurai who deserted, failed to obey orders or abandoned his weapons would be compelled to commit suicide. Lacking any definite strategy, the rebels dug in to await the next government offensive.

Although reinforced, the imperial army had suffered so much from the fighting that it was forced to suspend operations for several weeks in order to regroup. During that period, one of Saigo's subordinates slipped into Kagoshima, despite the presence of the imperial garrison, and raised a force of 1,500 samurai. To prevent a recurrence of that sort of thing, the garrison was reinforced by an additional infantry brigade on May 4. After their reorganization, imperial troops resumed the offensive and forced the rebels back to Miyazaki. Several weeks of guerrilla fighting followed as the government forces mopped up small pockets of samurai scattered throughout the Kyushu hills. On July 24, the imperial forces opened their main offensive against Saigo's army in Miyakonojo. Retreating before the government troops, the samurai next tried to make a stand at Nobeoka, a coastal city north of Miyakonojo.

By landing troops at Oita and Saiki to the north of Saigo's position and making rapid forced marches up from the south, Yamagata was able to surround Saigo again, but the rebels proved too strong to hold. Concentrating on one point of the encirclement, they were able to cut their way free. The battle around Nobeoka had been so fierce that the imperial army was forced to detail troops to keep floating bodies from fouling a pontoon bridge over which their supply lines passed. John Capen Hubbard, an American sea captain in the service of the Mitsubishi Company, happened to be in the area soon after the battle, and in a letter to his wife reported that most of the bodies were of rebels.

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By August 17, constant marching, fighting and retreating had reduced the Satsuma army to a mere 3,000 effectives. Almost all of their modern firearms had been lost. Among the rebel weapons captured by the imperials at Nobeoka were numerous matchlock muskets of ancient vintage. The only heavy ordnance the rebels still possessed were some homemade wooden cannons wrapped with bamboo strips. The rebels' next position was on the rugged slopes of Mount Enodake. They were soon surrounded. Determined not to let the rebels escape again, Yamagata issued orders for extra security precautions and then set about tightening the ring. With their backs against the wall, outnumbered 7-to-1, large numbers of samurai surrendered, but for many others the very idea was anathema. As victory and surrender were ruled out, there remained only the hope for a glorious death. Enodake's rugged slopes, however, were not to Saigo's liking as a final resting
place. He decided to break the ring of steel one more time, determined to fall back on Kagoshima or die trying.

On the evening of August 19, Saigo burned his private papers and his imperial army uniform. Abandoning their sick and wounded, the remnants of his army climbed to the misty summit of Mount Enodake, where the imperial cordon was weakest. Forced to carry Saigo on a special litter, since he was suffering from a hydrocele, the little army managed to slip through the fog undetected, quietly dispatching the few guards who barred its path.

Yamagata, who had no idea in which direction Saigo had gone, sent out patrols in all directions. After eight days of tramping through rugged, rain-swept mountains and misty forests, Saigo's men found their path blocked by a large patrol. They halted, facing the imperials all day. When night came, they split their force in two, slipped around both flanks of the patrol and escaped again. On September 1, the remaining 500 rebels slipped into Kagoshima, having eluded government patrols in a heavy rain. Gathering a few pieces of artillery from the private schools and some food from the local people, they took possession of Shiroyama ('castle mountain'). The government troops began arriving soon after, and once again the rebels were surrounded. With 30,000 troops at his disposal, Yamagata outnumbered Saigo's forces 60-to-1. Having been outfought and outmaneuvered so often in the past, however, he was determined to leave nothing to chance. The imperial troops spent several days constructing an elaborate system of ditches, walls and obstacles to prevent another breakout. To his already extensive artillery train, Yamagata added the weight of five warships in the harbor and began to systematically reduce the rebel positions. During the siege, more than 7,000 shells were fired, and the imperial forces had another 7,000 in ready reserve if needed.

In comparison, Saigo's force was reduced to melting down metal statuettes that local civilians smuggled in, and casting the metal into bullets. Medical supplies consisted of one carpenter's saw for amputations and a few rags for bandages. The only shelters were shallow holes scraped in the hillside. During the last days of the siege, Saigo lived in a hole measuring only 6 feet deep and 3 feet wide.

Yamagata's battle plan was to assault the samurai position from all sides at once. A special force was ordered to seize the area between a private school and Somuta, and occupy Iwasakiguchi, thereby splitting Shiroyama in half. Every man was to hold his position at all costs. Units were forbidden to assist one another without express permission. If a unit retreated with enemy troops in pursuit, the neighboring units were to fire into the area indiscriminately, killing their own men if necessary.

Two of Saigo's officers approached the imperial positions under a white flag in the hope of finding a way to save him. To their disgust, the officers were treated as if they were deserters. Before returning to their own camp, they were given a letter from Yamagata to Saigo, which entreated him in the friendliest terms to cease the senseless slaughter and surrender.

Saigo read the letter carefully. His resolve remained unshaken. The war had cost the imperial forces more than 6,000 troops killed and 10,000 wounded, while the much smaller samurai army had lost 7,000 dead and 11,000 wounded. Too much blood had been spilled, but honor forbade surrender. Calling his closest friends to his dugout, Saigo spent his last night in a sake party.

Following an intensive artillery bombardment that lasted most of the night of September 24, imperial forces stormed the mountain at 3 a.m. By 6 a.m., only 40 rebels were still alive. While being carried toward Iwasakiguchi, Saigo was wounded in the thigh and stomach. Losing blood rapidly, he selected a suitable spot to die. One of his most loyal followers, Shinsuke Beppu, carried him farther down the hill on his shoulders. Then, kneeling on the ground, Saigo had Beppu cut off his head with a single sword stroke. A servant hid the head to keep it from falling into enemy hands. At that point, Beppu and the last of the samurai drew their swords and plunged downhill toward the enemy positions until the last of them was mowed down.
By 7 a.m., the Satsuma Rebellion was over. The greatest threat to the Meiji government was also the last of a series of civil wars that had raged through Japan for 1,500 years. Ironically, the conflict did more to defeat samurai goals than any act of legislation could have done. Fighting to preserve the old order, the samurai had gone down in bloody defeat to modern weapons wielded by the lower-class soldiers they despised. The modern Japanese army had passed its first test and would soon develop into a force that would terrorize Asia and briefly humble the Western forces of Russia, Germany, Britain, the Netherlands and the United States.

In spite of the futility of his cause, however, Takamori Saigo's integrity and strength of convictions left a lasting impression on both the people and the government he had opposed. The latter posthumously withdrew the brand of traitor from his name and made his son a Marques. Later honored by a statue in Tokyo's Ueno Park, Saigo is still popularly regarded as a heroic figure: the last of the noble samurai.

For those who believe that the Satsuma Rebellion was a bloodless and honourable end to the Samurai, it should be noted that there were 13,000 dead and 21,000 injured in the rebellion which saw the last of the Samurai perish in civil war with the Emperor's troops using modern weapons supplied by the West.