Samurai

*Way of the Warrior in Modern Japan*

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í japönsku máli og menningu

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Abstract

The samurai were the Japanese version of knights who served their lords with devotion and loyalty, ready to give up their own lives in the service of their masters. The modernization of Japan had left the samurai behind as they had become increasingly obsolete in modern warfare but their spirit lives on in Japanese culture and way of life. While they were fierce warriors on the battlefield they were also educated men who were proficient at both the art of war and artistic skills. The samurai had their own unique culture with their own rituals and code of honor which became a part of modern Japanese society and can be seen to this day. The Japanese nation have integrated with various parts of samurai ideology which can be seen in various aspects of their daily lives from the Japanese military and criminal organizations to corporations. This thesis will chronicle how the samurai came to be, their way of life and the end of the samurai class. Emphasis is placed on their ideology, the founders of said ideology and how it has influenced Japan even after the end of the samurai class, how the ideology and spirit of the samurai still lives on in modern Japan.
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Introduction

Throughout the ages there have been many warriors; knights, Vikings, gladiators and more, but rarely have any captivated as much interest as much as the samurai have. Their intricate code of honor, traditions and their loyalty coupled with their prowess at military matters, while also being educated made them highly unique among warriors. They were not only masters of the sword but also learned men; some even mastered various artistic skills. Miyamoto Musashi, considered by many one of the greatest samurai to have lived, created his own sword style and was also an expert at painting, writer, calligraphy, woodcarver, metalwork, and was a master woodcarver. Miyamoto Musashi believed that that all ways are one in the end and that following the way of the warrior meant to be a master of other arts other than the sword, an ideology he personally followed through as seen through his works (Cook, 1993, p. 5 & Sayama, 1986, p. 139). Miyamoto Musashi was not the only samurai that believed that the way of the warrior was not only through the mastery of the sword but rather through the mastery of fine arts, loyalty to their lords and in the way they lived their lives with honor.

The samurai were the knights of Japan who fought for their lords and died for them if needed in order to protect their lord and their honor. Samurai had their own unique code of honor which they followed known as bushido (武士道) or the way of the warrior (Grivas, 2016, p. 3). This ideology of theirs became a part of the Japanese conscious and can still today be seen in various aspects of daily life in Japan. When Japan became modernized the samurai warriors slowly disappeared as their way of living and fighting style was slowly but surely becoming obsolete in the modern era. Despite fading away the influence the samurai had on Japanese society before and after their age was immense. This thesis will explore the origins and history of the samurai to understand how they as a social class as well as how their ideology came to be. In order to further understand their importance we will delve into bushido and see its influence in modern Japan society despite the samurai having been officially disbanded for more than a century ago.
I have always had fascination in samurai and it has only grown as I learned and studied more about the samurai and after I had the opportunity to visit Japan and see first-hand the prevalence of their continued influence in Japanese society. Later seeing the film ‘The Last Samurai’ caused me to think more about their society and wonder who the actual last samurai was, which in turn influenced me in deciding to further research the samurai and their way of life. The more I have learnt the more fascinated I have become about the samurai class and their way of life, their ideology and their influence on Japan.

The main research point of this thesis is to see if the ideology of the samurai still lives on to this day in the people of Japan and if so how does it do it present itself and more importantly how it has affected modern Japanese society. In order to answer the research question to to see if the ideology of the samurai has influenced modern Japan even after the death of the last samurai the first chapter will focus on their history, development and the end of the age of the samurai. Concepts such as the ritual of seppuku or ritual suicide combined with perception of honor will be explored as well as how it has inspired and influenced the Japanese people. The second chapter will explore in depth the acknowledged samurai ideology, how it originated and its founders and creators. Finally we will delve into this code of honor it has influenced Japan even after the age of samurai.
**Warriors of Japan**

During mid-11th century in feudal Japan, landowners were forced to seek protection from military chieftains as the governments control over the provinces weakened. Well-organized forces would eventually start emerging and with them professional warriors who would eventually became known as samurai (Sims, 1971, p. 10-11). The samurai warriors started appearing during the Kamakura Period (1185-1333). Ever since the Kamakura Period the samurai have been popular among story-tellers and theatrical dramas by both modern and feudal story-tellers due to their conducts and moral codes (Storry, 1976, p 38-39). The early samurai during the Kamakura Period (1185-1333), were still partly farmers during times of peace and would usually not fight during planting and harvesting seasons (Oishi, 1991, p.17). Most samurai were originally commoners of lower status within their own class until they became samurai. The samurai would rise through the ranks with their own efforts and achievements rather than those of their ancestors (Gluck, 1985, p. 269).

The samurai served the daimyo, their lords or landowners who were the feudal lords of Japan. The daimyo were the leaders of their clans and served only the shogun who was normally appointed by the emperor but a daimyo would sometimes take the title of shogun through military means and rule Japan under military dictatorship (Turnbull, 1996, p. 18). Samurai were hired by a daimyo to guard them and their lands offering in return land or food for their services. The samurai and their daimyo ruled their feudal fiefs in Japan which was divided as a country for seven centuries from 1185 till 1871. The samurai did not only lead the armies of their lord but tended to also serve as civil magistrates or as bureaucrats that were allowed to wear armor and wield swords. Their moral code dictated that they place the loyalty towards their lord above any other obligation, even above the emperor. As the samurai did not produce any wares they were a heavy burden on the farmers as their population grew. During times of civil war they were a necessity to their lords yet a burden during times of peace, causing their lords to encourage them to educate themselves from early 14th century whilst maintaining their martial prowess (Quigley & Turner, 1956, p. 11).
The samurai were both moral and philosophical models for the society as they were expected to set an example for the rest of society. Almost every samurai was educated in literacy and in martial arts during the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868). By the 18th century they were beginning to resemble bureaucrats more than warriors, while they still carried their swords it was more of an object to indicate their status as a samurai and were rarely used as a weapon (Perez, 2002, p. 159 & 609). The ideals that most samurai aspired to was to be self-disciplined and loyal to the lord they served while honing their skills in martial arts, as well as living austere lives. Confucian ethics guided the thoughts and actions of samurai during the Tokugawa period (1598-1868) and taught the samurai that the military arts had to be balanced, that they would also have to be proficient in both literary and artistic skills (Cook, 1993, p. 5).

During the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) samurai would not only assist their lord in military affairs they would also help their lord with administrative affairs. Some served as teachers, physicians and poets and various other professions, so it can be seen that samurai were multifaceted. The position of samurai became hereditary during the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) and would usually be passed on to the eldest son who was the legal heir (Allinson, 1999, p. 7).

**Samurai Origins**

The first samurai was believed to have been Taira Masakado, a powerful *daimyo* who revolted when the imperial authority was starting to decline. Masakado was a strong headed man who was very ambitious and ruthless towards even the people of his own clan (Hall, 1979, p. 81). In 939 Masakado would rebel against the imperial family and proclaim himself as the new emperor (McCullough, 1980, p. 264). He would expand his lands and forces quickly and set up his own government and court, but the more he expanded throughout the lands, so did his arrogance. Masakado as a warrior followed the *Kyusen no Michi* or the way of bow and arrow which was his martial philosophy from where he believed his strength came from. This sort of ideology or martial philosophy would later become known as *bushido* or the way of the warrior. Shortly after Masakado became the emperor his enemies would form an alliance against him and whittle away at his army and would eventually force him into a defensive battle (Cook, 1993, p. 32-37). In 940 when Masakado went alongside his army to invade the
Izu and Suruga Provinces he would be attacked by forces under the leadership of his cousin, Taira Sadamori and the government police officer Fujiwara Hidesato (McCullough, 1980, p. 264). Masakado made his last stand at the mountain of Sashima where he died when he was struck by an arrow. As a twist of fate or as some believed it to be a punishment of heaven for his arrogance, to die by the same weapon as the martial philosophy which he follows uses. His enemies cut his head off and sent it to the capital where they were rewarded with official positions and court ranks (Cook, 1993, p. 32-37).

The word samurai originates from the verb *saburau* (侍う) which means to serve and the word itself roughly translates as those who serve (Turnbull, 1996, p. 18 & Narroway, 2008, p. 65). The word *saburau* had its origin in Chinese, it meant those who wait upon or accompany people in nobility or in the upper ranks of society which eventually changed to be pronounced *saburai* (侍い). The word was adjusted to mean those who serve close to nobility so they carried with them weapons in order to protect those they served. The word became associated with warriors who were in the middle and upper echelons of the warrior class, especially those who were vassals to lords and were involved in government or clan administration (Wilson, 2000, p. 17 & Narroway, 2008, p. 65). Japanese warriors would be later known as samurai while still retaining the meaning of those who serve and protect their lord’s interests and domain (Lu, 1997, p. 84). The samurai were called *bushi* (武士) which means warrior or fighting man but would later change during the 12th century to become synonymous with the word *bushi* (Turnbull, 1996, p. 18 & Grivas, 2016, p. 3). Samurai were easily noticeable by their weapons, one long sword and one short, known as a *katana* and *wakizaki*. They usually lived inside the castle of their lords and would often form a household of military aristocracy. The samurai were the third highest rank among nobility with only *daimyo* and the *shogun* above them, along with their dependents they counted for about 6 percent of the total population in Japan (Allinson, 1999, p. 7).
Ritual Suicide

The formal ritual of *seppuku* was a ritual of self-disembowelment where a samurai would rather take their own lives through disembowelment. It was often used when a samurai would rather die than to accept humiliation after defeat or to avoid the shame of captivity or torture at the hands of their enemies. Samurai would also commit *seppuku* if they had failed their lords depending on the severity of their failures as samurai put great emphasis on the virtues of honor, bravery, discipline and loyalty to their lord. The act of *seppuku* was a way for them to display their will and as a way for them to keep their honor and keep their pride intact (Reischauer, 1988, p. 57). During the Genroku Period (1688-1704) *seppuku* was regarded as punishment that was imposed on Samurai by their rulers not as an act of loyalty nor choice (Totman, 1993, p. 219). In Japan *Hara-kiri* or *seppuku* have the same meaning but *seppuku* is more used due to the synonym of the word *seppuku* being more elegant in Japanese. The first recorded *seppuku* occurred sometimes during the 12th century but became increasingly frequent following the first *seppuku* as samurai believed it to be a honorable way to die to atone for their failures. Should a samurai ever receive a death penalty they had the privilege to commit *seppuku* instead of being disgraced by being killed by a lowly executioner so they could keep their honor and pride intact after their death (Kennedy, 1964, p. 54-5).

One notable *seppuku* occurred in the early 19th century was performed by the Russo-Japanese war hero, General Nogi Maresuke (Reischauer, 1988, p. 168-169). General Nogi was raised in a samurai family so he was a stern believer of *bushido*. General Nogi was not a samurai himself but he lived his life by adhering to the code of *bushido* as he could. After the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) it was said that he had asked Emperor Meiji for permission to commit *seppuku* due to his failures in the Russo-Japanese war but was denied by the emperor who stated that he was not allowed to die while he still lived (Bergamini, 1972, p. 284-5). Emperor Meiji’s health would eventually deteriorate leading to his death in 1912, his death would not only affect Nogi at the time it would also affected the people as he was an important person to the nation (Allinson, 1999, p. 62). Nogi wrote a poem about Mount Fuji the day of the emperor’s funeral, he wished that the nation would unite for the sake of the men who had sacrificed themselves for the sake of the nation. Nogi changed into his white undergarment while his wife changed into a black kimono, bowing to their sons who fell in battle and to the late emperor (Buruma, 2003, p. 47). Nogi would follow his
emperor in death by committing seppuku, his wife would also follow the emperor and her husband in death by stabbing her neck with a dagger. General Nogi left a note following his death stating that he abhorred the indulgence of the younger generation and wished that more people would adhere more to the virtues of the samurai. When Emperor Hirohito heard of his death he lamented that Japan had suffered a regrettable loss (Bergamini, 1972, p. 290-292). His act generated a lot of controversy and admiration as it was reminiscent of a true samurai to follow their lord in both life and in death. One of the most renowned author of Japan, Natsume Sōseki wrote in his novel Kokoro with Nogi as an inspiration (Allinson, 1999, p. 181). Nogi's death was interpreted by some as a warning towards the direction the Japanese society was heading towards as there was an increasing spread of materialistic attitude and class conflict was growing (Sims, 1971, p. 58).

The act of seppuku remains a popular theme in dramas and movies but is an act that has mostly disappeared from modern Japan. For example the story of the forty-seven samurai who sought revenge for the murder of their master, their story has been told repeatedly to this day through various media. Asano who was learning etiquette was insulted by his instructor Kira causing him to attack Kira with his sword. Following his attack, Asano had his fief confiscated and was ordered to commit seppuku for attacking Kira in the castle of the shogun (Sansom, 1943, p. 498-499 & Sakaiya, 1995, p. 150-51). The forty-seven samurai became ronin, master-less samurai following the death of their lord and decided to avenge their lord by killing the perpetrator of his death, Kira. The ronin avenged their lord by killing Kira and would bring his head to the grave of their lord and turn themselves in for the crime they had committed (Kennedy, 1964, p. 111-112 & Storry, 1976, p. 79-80). The ronin were guilty of riot and murder but public opinion made it difficult to punish them as the public believed them to be honorable men who had avenged their master who was wronged (Sakaiya, 1995, p. 150-51). Some scholars at the time believed that it was the wish of the ronin to commit seppuku to follow their lord in death as they had achieved their goal of avenging their lord. The shogun, impressed by their argument ordered that the ronin commit seppuku, allowing the forty-seven ronin to follow their lord in death which allowed the government to uphold law and order (Storry, 1976, p. 79-80 & Sakaiya, 1995, p. 150-51). The forty-seven ronin would be buried next to their lord at the temple of Sengakuji in Tokyo. Following their death they were praised as the ideal samurai that exemplified the ideals
of *bushido* (Storry, 1976, p. 79-80 & Kennedy, 1964, p. 111-112). The story of the forty-seven *ronin* has been adapted by playwrights for puppet theater and *kabuki* stories and was a favorite of the common people. In the 20th century it has remained a popular story among the Japanese people, their story has been adapted to multiple dramas and films. The story of the forty-seven *ronin* is only one of many that happened during feudal Japan regarding samurai that has been adapted and told throughout the years (Schirokauer, 1993, p. 148).

**End of the Samurai Class**

In 1588 the *daimyo* Toyotomi Hideyoshi would enforce a law that would prohibit anyone other than the samurai to wield weapons. Hideyoshi would also forbid samurai from returning to their villages and leave the master they served while peasants were not allowed to leave their trade and were restricted to their occupation. By restricting the samurai and the peasants, Hideyoshi had restricted class mobility and any possible change of status. This would become the basis for the four class structure, samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants were each given their own role and identity and were not allowed to change their occupation (Hall, 1979, p. 84-85). The four classes were governed by the imperial family and nobility in the court and the order of status descended from samurai, peasants, artisan and merchants being the lowest of the four classes. The samurai being the highest ranking class, allowed them to exert their authority over the other classes as they pleased. Due to Confucian contempt of money making and any commercial related activity the merchants were ranked the lowest of the four classes as they did not produce anything unlike the farmers who produced and artisans who made tools for them to use (Hunter, 1989, p. 65).

During the rule of the Tokugawa government (1598-1868) it had been peaceful for 200 years, in that time Japan had begun modernizing at an alarming rate and the need for civil servants begun replacing the need for samurai (Cook, 1993, p. 5). Due to various changes that the Tokugawa government made when they came to power the economy had begun to crumble. The samurai began growing in numbers and lived in comfort and luxury causing the tax system that had been working for centuries to be insufficient. Samurai were living in luxury that by all rights was beyond their status which would cause serious strain on the common people. The rising population and
increased spending caused the land tax to be unable to keep up with the demand. The government was forced to reduce the salaries of the daimyo and the samurai forcing them to loan from merchants causing them to fall further in debt (Hall, 1955, p. 5-6, 47, 107). After the reduction of their salary the samurai were forced to find other means of income causing the relationship between the samurai and their lords to be strained as money was more important to the samurai than their loyalty to their lords as they had failed them. Some samurai started their own businesses, whilst others allied with traders and begun marrying their daughters to merchants or adopting the sons of merchants. The prestige of the samurai dropped as they had abandoned their code of honor by yielding to the lower classes. When samurai could no longer sustain their household some of the members of said household would often wander around in hopes of make their fortune somewhere else. These wandering samurai were known as ronin or a master-less samurai. These ronin were unemployed and looked upon as social misfits who posed a danger of causing a social and political unrest (Hall, 1955, p. 7-8, 10, 116). These days the word ronin is used for Japanese students who have failed their University entrance examinations who are seeking to retake their entrance examination after a year of further study (Takeuchi, 1997, p. 185).

In 1872 the four class system was abolished and samurai were designated as shizoku, a status to distinguish them and their descendants as a former samurai or warrior family. The term was a way to denote their lineage and former status but did not have the same weight as it used to have. The status of the samurai was further endangered when the bearing of swords in public was banned 1886, which was what set them apart from commoners. After the ban only military officers, policemen and appropriate officials were allowed to carry swords. At around the same time conscription was introduced, conscripts were taught modern warfare rather than the individualistic combat that the samurai were used to which was not suited for modern warfare. The idea of conscripting common people into the army infuriated the samurai (Hunter, 1989, p. 268-9 & Duus, 1998, p. 94). Universal military training in 1872 made the existence of the samurai aristocracy redundant. Samurai that retained their nobility would receive stipends from the government for eight years while other samurai were left to fend for themselves. Some would build their own business enterprises with the stipends they received while others would join the new army or the police force. All these changes were too drastic for many samurai stuck in the old ways with many
feeling that the government had gone too far with their reforms (Meyer, 1993, p. 137).

The samurai were 8 percent of the total population at the time and were most the most educated and politically active of the total population. Due to the government consistently alienating the samurai causing the samurai to finally rebel in 1877 during the Meiji Restoration Period (1868-1912) in what became known as the Satsuma Rebellion with Saigo Takamori as their leader (Hunter, 1989, p. 167). Saigo Takamori opposed the new reforms and laws as he believed that the foundation of the country’s strength was the warrior class. Takamori believed that with each reform taking more and more privileges away from the samurai was tantamount to weakening the country (Kennedy, 1964, p. 160-161). Takamori had withdrawn from the government in 1873 and wished to retire in peace in Satsuma. When Takamori's followers became involved in the rebellion against the government his sense of duty and loyalty towards his comrades compelled him to join them in their rebellion (Bary & Keene, 1964, p. 147-148).

Saigo Takamori was a hero for the samurai who felt left behind by the changing times and were still stuck in their traditional ways (Buruma, 2003, p. 26). Takamori would build up his forces and begin his rebellion in 1877 in Satsuma, the rebellion would last for 6 months and would take 40,000 troops to quell down the rebellion. The army consisted of new conscripts and would show their worth against the rebellion with their modern weapons and tactics (Hall, 1979, p. 284). The rebellion ended in September, a total of 30,000 men fell and Takamori, having been mortally wounded ended his own life by committing seppuku. Takamori told his follower to cut his head off and run off with it as he did not want it in the hands of his enemies and be disgraced after his death. Takamori was reinstated posthumously with titles and all his honors intact in 1890 despite rebelling against the government. Takamori's reputation had never declined during the rebellion and after his death (Kennedy, 1964, p. 160-161).

The Satsuma Rebellion was the last protest of the feudal system as most ex samurai and the common people believed that the reforms and changes were for the better. Despite dying for a lost cause, Takamori would became a hero for future generations of patriots (Meyer, 1993, p. 137). Takamori’s death has been highly disputed, one account say that he committed suicide after his defeat by the hands of the army (Bergamini, 1972, p. 256). Another account of his death stated that he was killed in battle and that his head was displayed by high officials marching towards Tokyo in
triumph (Jansen, 1988, p. 128). Though there were various accounts on his death, historians believed that he died fighting the government (Allinson, 1999, p. 131). Takamori was the embodiment of a samurai and their indomitable spirit in the eyes of the Japanese people and was thought by many as the last samurai. The Satsuma Rebellion showed how few samurai were actually willing to rebel despite their dissatisfaction. The rebels had initially hoped that their actions would spur other samurai to rebel and spark a wave, a wave that never came, as it was one thing to criticize the government but to actually rebel was not something they were willing to do. The newly conscripted army would also showcase their effectiveness with their vastly superior numbers and equipment against the samurai and showed that military modernization was more important than keeping the old ways. In honor of Saigo Takamori a statue of him and his dog was erected in Tokyo at Ueno Park which became a popular tourist attraction (Duus, 1998, p. 107 & Hunter, 1989, p. 209). Despite the samurai fading as part of history their legacy, values and spirit lived on in the coming generation of Japanese. The traditions and values that made the samurai who they were, their code of honor, the *bushido* would become a part of the nation (Cook, 1993, p. 5).

**Bushido, the Way of the Warrior**

During the feudal Japan, it was highly emphasized that warriors should focus on their duties and loyalties to their lords, to fight till their deaths and avenge their lord should they have to. They would also adhere to a warrior code which was unwritten at the time. Before the warrior code was written, the samurai would just follow a set of values that was the social norm for the warriors between the 12th and the 13th century. Military leaders who developed those values of the samurai would also grow in political power (Joy, 2013, p. 13 & Kennedy, 1964, p. 54). During early 14th century the samurai began balancing both military and civil arts which became the norm for samurai as they aspired to be a refined warrior. Hayashi Razan an adviser to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa government urged the balance of both arts of peace and the art of war. Hayashi Razan stated that having the arts of peace but not the art of war was to lack courage but to have arts of war but not the arts of peace was to lack wisdom. Both arts had to be mastered as a moral guidance for the samurai as it allowed them to be able
to assist their lords not only on the battlefield but also govern the land of their lord (Hurst, 1997, p. 209-10).

The samurai would form their own unique culture over time and with it their own code of conduct and behavior that would become known as bushido, the way of the warrior. The code of honor had developed over centuries before it was actually written and has often been compared to the chivalry of the knights during medieval Europe. Both the chivalry of the knights and the bushido of the samurai followed the virtues of bravery, loyalty and honor. These warriors were loyal to their lords and protected the life and honor of their lord while also protecting their own honor even at the cost of their own lives (Hunter, 1989, p. 266-67).

During times of turmoil the bushido code would be used for military purposes, the code of conduct and practices was used by the government so that it would make their army fight more efficiently. By the end of the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) bushido ceased to be the code of honor that only samurai adhered to as the code had been taught to the Japanese population by the government (Hunter, 1989, p. 266-67). The bushido code began as a system that emphasized loyalty and self-sacrifice but started to change after the Meiji Restoration Period (1868-1912) where it begun to be about patriotism and loyalty towards the emperor and the nation. The code would become a part of the national policy and was instilled into the nation through means of education and encouragement and was modernized to suit modern Japan (Shillony, 2008, p. 4). Before the change only the warrior class were associated with military virtues and bushido, but after the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) it would become a moral concept that applied to anyone in service of the Japanese nation (Gössmann, 2004, p. 184-185). After the Meiji Restoration Period (1868-1912) bushido would evolve to become the way of loyalty and patriotism and would become the spirit of the Imperial forces (Bary & Keene, 1964, p. 285).

According to Storry (1976) Western countries during the Pacific War (1941-1945) would claim that the bushido ideology was a recent concept that was developed by Japanese nationalists as early as the 19th century and wasn’t popularized until 1890 (p. 80-81). That claim was only partially true as the concept and the word bushido had been around at least 300 years earlier and has existed as an ideology before the concept and term had even existed but wasn’t popularized until late 19th century. The ideology began in the 12th century and its origins could be traced back several hundred years
before the 12\textsuperscript{th} century. It wasn’t until the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) that \textit{bushido} would receive a semi-religious status due to the government making Confucianism an orthodox ideology of the state (Storry, 1976, p. 80-81). Samurai were influenced by Neo-Confucianism during the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) and would emphasize on the virtues of courage, self-sacrifice, obedience, filial piety and loyalty. At the time Japan was heavily influenced by Confucianism which would be changed to suit the Japanese people better, making the Japanese Confucianism very different from the Chinese Confucianism (Hunter, 1989, p. 66-67).

During the 1930's the government would implement various methods for the sake of making the ideals of the samurai class and the code of \textit{bushido} a national ideology. The government would make \textit{Kokutai no hongi}, a nationalistic text written in 1937 by the Department of Education a compulsory reading for students and teachers. \textit{Kokutai no hongi} glorified the samurai and the code of \textit{bushido} and was used as a way to make the samurai ideology a national ideology. The government would encourage and teach the Japanese nation the values of loyalty, obedience and self-sacrifice through the media and various organizations. The government would portray the image of the samurai through various texts and writings as a loyal warrior, obedient and ready to sacrifice themselves for the nation and the emperor for the sake of imbuing these values into the Japanese people (Narroway, 2008, p. 65-8).

\textbf{The Founders of Bushido}

Yamaga Soko (1622-95) was devoted to martial arts and studied military science and was believed to be the founder of modern \textit{bushido} and the man that coined the term \textit{bushido}. Yamaga Soko wrote an older \textit{bushido} code that followed Confucianism and focused on loyalty and obedience towards ones lord, his code was systematized and focused on practical action. Yamaga Soko believed that the ideal samurai was a combination of a Confucian scholar and the ideals of the early samurai, those that were moral leaders and were devoted to their moral duties even at the cost of their own life (Sansom, 1943, p. 499, 508 & Schirokauer, 1993, p. 147 & Jones, 2008, p. 51). Yamaga Soko developed the code of the warrior which became the foundation of the modern \textit{bushido} which taught samurai about ethics, their rights and their responsibilities. Yamaga Soko believed that discipline in military arts was valuable and that in times of
peace the samurai should discipline themselves so they could become a leader and a model for the nation (Bary & Keene, 1964, p. 109 & Totman, 1993, p. 171-172).

Bushido can be seen as expressing the most remarkable feature of our national morality...
To embrace life and death as one, to fulfill the Way of Loyalty [to the Emperor], that is our bushido (Eikichi, 1937, p. 110-11).

Yamaga Soko was instrumental in the foundation of what became known as bushido that is known today as explained that the role of the samurai was to master the “Way of the Warrior“. He stated that despite the fact that samurai did not cultivate, did not manufacture or engage in trade, their duty was to reflect on their own place in life and serve their master loyally while contemplating on his own position. To devote themselves to their duty above all else and to practice their bushido while upholding the law and morals in the land, punishing those who would break the laws and morals. He believed that the duty of samurai was to rule righteously and that the political system was the means that their rule would be exercised through (Totman, 2000, p. 221).

Yamaga Soko was inspired by Confucius and studied his teachings and would apply his own version of Confucianism to the samurai. Confucianism was not the only teachings that bushido absorbed into its system, Shinto and Buddhism with the Zen doctrines in particular were also a part of bushido (Inazo, 1931, p. 360-61).

The ideology of bushido was a blend of the older medieval samurai who were more violent and the later samurai who were men of virtue and followed Confucianism. The ideology would combine the medieval samurai and their virtues of fearlessness, self-sacrifice, magnanimity, Confucianism and the moral guide Hagakure (Under the shadow). Yamamoto Tsunemoto wrote Hagakure in 1716 which was one of the last essay on samurai ethics and purpose at the time. Confucianism taught the samurai to be men of virtue, to provide moral guidance and leadership for their society. Confucianism also stressed the importance of civic virtues of literacy, fortitude, prudence, industry and austerity which were a necessity for samurai to serve as officials. Despite the ideology of the early samurai seeming to be contradictory to the moral guide and the Confucian teachings, the lords of samurai would encourage the samurai to train in both military and civil arts (Duus, 1998, p. 30 & Totman, 1993, p. 350).
While Yamaga Soko wrote what became the foundation of modern bushido, Nitobe Inazo popularized and codified bushido. Nitobe Inazo wrote Bushido: The Soul of Japan in 1899, where he praised the nature of the noble samurai tradition. As Nitobe's book was the only way for western readers to get any insight on the concept of bushido it would cause some misconception regarding the code of bushido. His book would cause writers to believe that bushido was the “soul of japan“ and a code of honor that samurai would use during pre-modern times as early as the 12th century. Part of the reason for the misconception was because the only source on bushido that was available to western readers at the time was the book Bushido: The Soul of Japan as it was the only book on bushido at the time that was written in English. Instead of a code like Nitobe believed it to be, it was rather a behavioral norm for the samurai during the 12th century (Hurst, 1997, p. 214 & Shillony, 2008, p. 165-166 & Jones, 2008, p. 25-26).

Nitobe believed that bushido was not a system of thought but rather a code of honor that it was not only a philosophy, but also a way of life for the samurai (Nitobe, 1931, p. 351-53 & 360-61). He believed that bushido was built on the seven virtues of justice, courage, benevolence, politeness, truthfulness, honor and loyalty. Samurai would place great emphasis on those seven virtues and try to uphold them as they could, especially the virtues of courage, honor and loyalty (Inazo, 1908).

Nitobe has been criticized for knowing little about Japanese history and ethics and that his ideas and ideals about bushido were unreliable, though his bushido was credited to be the foundation of bushido in the 20th century. Nitobe would also be criticized for his lack of credible sources and without providing any textual basis on bushido being the soul of Japan. It has also been argued that his version of bushido was linked to ultra-nationalism for national purity. Despite his faults he was regarded as the one who brought the ideology to a wider audience as well as introducing it to the western world and popularizing it (Jones, 2008, p. 25-6).
Bushido and the Imperial army

During the Pacific War (1941-1945) the code of bushido was used as means to facilitate part of the atrocities and disaster caused by the Japanese imperial army. Many Japanese commanders during the Pacific War would ignore the Geneva Convention and treat their prisoners of war with cruelty (Storry, 1976, p. 217). Japanese soldiers would be taught from the book Hagakure, as a disciplinary manual which glorified samurai as heroes and the virtues of bushido (Narroway, 2008, p. 65). Japanese soldiers from early to mid-19th century were taught from the code of bushido as part of their training that dying for the sake of their emperor and the Japanese nation was a great honor for both them and their family. The code would also teach them that fleeing from their enemies and surrendering to their enemies was the act of a coward. Surrendering and fleeing from the enemy was thought to bring shame to them and their family and was an act that was frowned upon publically (Russell, 1958, p. 55-57).

Japanese soldiers would fight to their dying breath and would usually never surrender, they would even save a single bullet to kill themselves or charge in for a final suicidal assault as their last act. Japanese soldiers would even kill their own wounded soldiers rather than to let them fall into the hands of their enemies and suffer the shame of captivity (Dower, 1999, p. 22). The brutal treatment of prisoners of war had roots in the warrior code as the code would teach warriors that there was nothing more shameful to a warrior than to surrender. The Allied forces were more open to the idea of surrendering which caused them to be treated like animals at the hands of the Japanese (Kennedy, 1964, p. 54). Should a Japanese soldiers ever be taken prisoner they would never be able to hold their head up proudly, as they had been disgraced due to their captivity. Japanese soldiers would look at their prisoners of war with contempt and believed that they had lost any honor they had prior to their capture as it did not matter how valiantly or honorably they had fought, they were all the same to them, dishonorable men. They thought that their prisoners were entitled to no respect from their side and would kill them for any minor mistakes they made during their captivity (Russell, 1958, p. 55-57).
Hierarchy in Japanese society
The *senpai/kohai* (senior/junior) system also known as the *oyabun/kobun* (father/son) is a relationship of loyalty and kindness and is based on the lord-vassal relationship of the samurai. This type of relationship is used as an expression for when a young person is guided by a senior in his career or other aspect of his life. The senior would help his junior who would grow indebted to his senior and would pay his senior with his loyalty and support (Tasker, 1989, p. 353-354). The senior would guide his junior and give them advice in turn their junior would provide them their service and loyalty. Professor Chie Nakane, professor of social anthropology stated that the *senpai/kohai* or the *oyabun/kobun* relationship is the basic principle which Japan's social hierarchy is based upon and can be found in various aspect of Japanese life (Joy, 2013, p. 105-107, 154)

The term *senpai* would first appear in ancient Chinese texts and would refer to people who were older or those who were superior in ability. In Japan the term is used for those who are older in companies or at school. The term *kohai* is used for juniors who entered the school or company after their senior and are considered inferior to the senior due to their lack of experience. The term *kohai* would be used to denote those who are younger or a subordinate of their more experienced senior. The usage of the *senpai/kohai* hierarchical system is not utilized by Japanese children until they enter junior high school where they are expected to follow the *senpai/kohai* system and would continue when they enter Japanese society. The senior expects that their junior respects them at their job or in club activities as they are older, thus more experienced. This system is not only prevalent in Japanese schools but also in companies and various social groups. Japanese companies would also put more emphasis on seniority rather than actual ability and pay wages based on seniority (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 187-188, 191).

A year difference in age is all it takes to decide the hierarchy between a *senpai* and a *kohai*. The *kohai* is expected to speak to their *senpai* in a polite manner, those that do not speak politely or state their dissatisfaction with their seniors are ostracized, expelled from their clubs or even fired from their jobs for speaking out against their *senpai* (Sano, 2014, p. 59-61). Should a *kohai* ever go against their *senpai* they would be prone to punishment or bullying for not respecting their *senpai* as they are expected to be loyal and obedient towards their *senpai* (Nippoda, 2012, p. 4). Outside of school the *kohai* has to greet their *senpai* with a bow while inside the school they are expected
to follow the instructions of their senpai. The kohai would also have to clean during and after club activities and assist their senpai during practice by doing menial tasks. The senpai/kohai systems is used as means to foster group unity by eliminating competition among individuals and increasing long term performance. The hierarchy would also teach students and adults to be compliant, cooperative and responsible people by instilling in them respect, humility and subservience towards their seniors. Younger employees would also usually shy away from promotion ahead of their seniors as they would feel uncomfortable being promoted ahead of their seniors. Japanese employers would refrain from giving promotion until the employee has gained more seniority and age so they would not feel uncomfortable about their promotion (Matsumoto, 2005, p. 384-385 & Sugimoto, 2010, p. 142).

While the senpai/kohai relationship still remains in Japanese society, the respect from the kohai towards the senpai figure has been declining. While the kohai still uses polite expressions towards their senpai, the respect is merely superficial as the Japanese people have begun considering that age is less important in schools and companies. Japanese companies have begun prioritizing actual ability above seniority and promote based on capability rather than seniority (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 192).

The Yakuza and the samurai
The Japanese gangsters, the yakuza are unique amongst gangs in the way that they have their own unique sets of rituals and customs designed to build up group identity based on samurai ideology. The ideology that they derived from the samurai is their own code called the jingi which dictates their general behavior which is based off of the principle of justice and benevolence (Tasker, 1989, p. 88, 90-91). The yakuza would build their hierarchy based on the lord-vassal relationship of the samurai. After the Tokugawa Period (1598-1868) the lord-vassal relationship of the lord and the samurai would become a model for communities to imitate. Underdogs of society would use it as a way to rely on a strong leader for security and welfare. The leader of the community was known as the oyabun (father) and would provide necessities such as clothes, food and protection for his men who were known as kobun (son). The kobun would give the oyabun their loyalty and obedience in return for his protection. The oyabun-kobun system is ranked by seniority; older kobun would be ranked as anibun (older brother)
and the younger *ototobun* (younger brother) as a way to reinforce hierarchical relations. These *oyabun-kobun* groups would eventually become fraternities of ruffians, labor gangs and brokers who would often get involved in the black market and gambling operation and would eventually become the *yakuza*. The lord-vassal system has also integrated in Japanese society and can be found in various aspect of Japanese life. The system can be seen in any hierarchical social system in Japanese society for example employer and employee relationship in Japan follows the leader-follower system. Individuals that wish to advance in the hierarchy of their group are expected to serve the people that are higher than them on the hierarchy to advance in the hierarchy (Tasker, 1989, p. 353-354). The *yakuza* have a firmly established hierarchical structure which would allow the misfits and dropouts of the Japanese society to have a sense of belonging and security within the organization. Their established hierarchical structure is believed to have kept the crime caused by the *yakuza* in Japan in order (Joy, 2013, p. 218).
Conclusion

The samurai were great warriors, loyal and ready to give up their own lives in service of their master. Not only were the samurai masters of the sword but they were highly educated and experts of various artistic professions. The samurai were unafraid of death and were ready to commit ritual suicide in order to atone for their failures in order to preserve their honor and pride intact after their death through the ritual suicide known as seppuku. During the late 19th century when Japan began modernizing and the need for the samurai was slowly declining the age of the samurai would come to an end. The Japanese government would make various reforms that would lead the samurai to rebel against the government in which would lead an end to the samurai warriors. Despite the samurai warrior class having ended the samurai and their ideology would continue influencing Japanese society to this day in various ways.

The samurai had a code of honor known as the bushido, the code was an unwritten code of conduct of the 12th century samurai. The code remained unwritten until the 17th century when it was written by Yamaga Soko, his code was a combination of Confucianism and the code of conduct of the 12th century samurai. The code would emphasize loyalty towards ones lord and courage in the face of death. It would teach samurai that they had to master both civil and military arts so they could become refined warriors who could aid their lord not only on the battlefield but also govern the lands of their lord. The Japanese government would eventually instill the values of the samurai and the code of bushido within the Japanese nation causing the ideology of the samurai to become a part of the Japanese nation. The ideology of the samurai was used as means to control the Japanese nation and to make their armies fight more efficiently.

My research has lead me to the conclusion that the samurai influenced the hierarchy in Japanese society as their lord-servant relationship in various aspect of Japanese life. The lord-servant relationship of the samurai can be seen incorporated in schools and various corporations and organizations, even gangs would incorporate their hierarchy to their organization. The lord-servant relationship would be used as means to foster group unity and foster respect towards their senior whilst teaching humility and subservience towards their seniors as they are older and thus more experienced. The lord-servant relationship has as of late become less important as the Japanese people have begun thinking that age is less important. This thesis found that various aspects of the samurai
and their ideology has lived on in modern Japan and can be seen remaining in the Japanese people and in various aspects of their life.

The purpose of this essay was for the sake of understanding the samurai and their importance and influence of the samurai to this day in Japanese society and how they continue influencing the Japanese society. Their importance can be seen in the way Japan functions today due to their influence on the hierarchy in Japanese society and the lingering influence in the values and mindset that the samurai imparted on the Japanese nation. This thesis can be used as a basis for further study on samurai with the emphasis on the influence of the samurai in modern Japan, whether it be their code of conduct or ideology that has influenced modern Japan as this thesis only skimmed the surface. Further studies could be about more in-depth study on the yakuza and the samurai, more in-depth study on the hierarchy in Japan or the code of bushido in modern Japan and the influence of samurai on suicide and its acceptance in Japanese society or the successors of the samurai.
Bibliography


