

The tradition of Japanese *Budo*: Praying to the deities - training *Yamatodamashii* (Japanese spirit)

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The word *Budo* is known by every Japanese, and it is also widely known among Non-Japanese. However, explaining what *Budo* is is not easy. Furthermore, defining *Budo* as tradition and culture is difficult.

Even if it is not taught in schools, if one does not grasp by oneself what *Budo* is, what martial culture is, one will end up lacking the understanding of a large part of Japan's culture and history.

Also, speaking from the dimension of actually training *Budo*, if a sense of seriousness (the flavour of the real sword) does not enter the daily training, continuation is not possible and the tradition and culture end. If that happens, we become unable to understand the mind of the people of ancient times and thus the power which integrates people becomes weaker and weaker.

As it has been since the defeat of 1945 that in such a way *Budo* came to a state close to extinction of tradition, one can say that a major cause was the fact that after the war the Japanese people's attitude towards *Budo* changed. If we do not rectify this consciousness of the people which avoids martial spirit, which can also be called an aftereffect of the defeat in war and the incurred occupation, neither history nor tradition will become normal. Correcting the post-war distortions one by one is an extremely important issue.

The word *Budo* has been used from considerably older times than the word *Bushido*, and it can be found for example in the 13th century war chronicles "*Heike monogatari*" ("The Tale of the Heike") and "*Azuma kagami*" ("The Mirror of the East", chronicle of the Kamakura shogunate). It is a comprehensive term the meaning of which comprised preparedness of the mind as *Bushi* (warriors) of the Kamakura period as well as *Bujutsu* (martial skills), knowledge of tactics etc.

When this later became Muromachi period and Edo period, the warrior-class *Bushi* started using it as comprising both dimensions of training: the *Bujutsu* training and the cultivation of *Bushido* (it is also ok to say chivalry).

From this process, one can say that *Budo* is the way of life of—as a *Bushi* with the sense of tension of determining life or death in actual fighting—pursuing one's own *Bushido*, developing skills in *Bujutsu*, strategy etc., and putting them into practice.

The reign of Emperor Meiji was a period in which domestically *Bushido* was encouraged throughout the country and in which the emerging modern state Japan appeared on the international stage and demonstrated *Bushido* as the flower of *Yamatodamashii*.

A soldier who is a representative example of this, General Maresuke Nogi, is famous for treating the commander of the defeated army, General Stessel, *Bushido*-wise with honour and respect when he won in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/1905.

Born in a warrior family of Choshu, General Nogi had been educated as *Bushi* in his childhood days, and therefore perceived *Bushi* and soldiers in the same way; and he said the following about *Bushido*:

I believe that *Bushido* is to be said (without any personal opinion) certainly nothing else than the implementation of loyalty and courage. In summary, I believe that *Bushido* was carried out among the *Bushi* (warriors) of ancient times, that it [*Bushido*] was transmitting the oral tradition of good customs and the excellent spirit that wished to be unsurpassed, and that it [*Bushido*] is the essence of *Yamatodamashii* (Japanese spirit).

("Bushido dialogue", 1907, in "Maresuke Nogi's diary", published by Kin'ensha)

The essence of *Yamatodamashii* mentioned here is tightly linked to the nature of the martial spirit of the Japanese nation, which made the Imperial Family its centre; and it has a meaning close to the great spirit of founding a nation, in which the concept of loyalty and patriotism became the path which people should always keep. This is the interpretation that this attitude towards *Bushido* expresses the basis of the *Budo* of the times of warrior families and of the period of modern-times national armed forces from Meiji until the defeat in the Great East-Asian War, and [that this attitude towards *Bushido*] becomes one opinion in the case of correcting today's *Budo*, which has been distorted after the occupation. So, how might General Nogi have thought about *Bushido* and *Bujutsu*?

In "*Bushido* dialogue", this relation is expressed a clear and simple way as follows:

Bujutsu (martial techniques) are the techniques the *Bushi* (warriors) have to know and do; *Bushi* (warriors) train their mind and body due to them; therefore, in the old days, the *Bushi* (warriors) trained *Bujutsu* throughout their lives, and there was definitely no shirking. And thus, in many cases the degree of sincerity in *Bujutsu* training was like a direct indicator for the type of *Bushido* education. If *Bujutsu* is mastered somehow somewhat, by some chance with time, it becomes possible to develop the ability of devoting loyal service to the master; actually in *Bujutsu* there should not be a lack of nurturing bravery and forging courage (having that), and besides cultivation of *Bushido*, the training-development of *Yamatodamashii* (Japanese spirit), too, ought to be regarded as extremely important.

Training the mind and body with martial techniques (*Bujutsu*) which are deeply linked to *Bushido*, and cultivating *Yamatodamashii* (Japanese spirit), this, as it is, can be called "*Budo*". Here, in order to revive *Budo*, which looks as if it lost sight of historical tradition, in a modern way, to its original appearance of nurturing bravery, forging courage, cultivating personality, confirmation of the components that are in common beyond time is necessary. If trying to tentatively compile them into a list, one can say:

1. praying highly and strongly to the deities
2. master martial techniques (*Bujutsu*)
3. train the mind and body, and polish the soul
4. contribute to nation and society

These could be called the objectives of the tradition of Japanese *Budo*. If, after having recognized them firmly, one goes measuring the progress of training, should it not be possible to revive the *Budo* of traditional culture? I would like to hope this.