

Example of the warriors of ancient Japan and their legacy in research paper

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JAPANESE SOCIETY TODAY

The Warriors of Ancient Japan and Their Legacy in Japanese Society Today

Nihongi is the origin myth of Japan. After centuries of being passed down through generations by storytellers it was written down in 8 C. E. The Japanese islands were formed by droplets from a jeweled spear that had been dipped into the ocean by two Gods, Izanagi-no-Mikoto and Izanami-no-Mikoto. The first mythical emperor of Japan had to fight humans and demons to reach the throne. He is Jimmu the " Divine Warrior." (Gabriel, 2002, 315-316)

Manga graphic novels and anime cartoons have many series using the classic lone Japanese warriors including the Rurouni (or ronin) named Himura Kenshin an assassin trained during the Meiji restoration (Rurouni, n. d.). The Japanese loner warrior is trying to redeem their honor or seeking justice for themselves, their families or a vulnerable victim of crime. Warriors in Japan may be killed but they do not ever lose their moral stance for justice.

The first section is about the weapon the nagamaki which is one of the first weapons known to be used in Japan and is still being used in modern times.

Nagamaki

Japanese warriors were first described in the Annals of the Chinese Han Empire. The Han Empire lasted from 206 B. C. E. to 8 C. E. Japan was called the Island of Wa. The Han Empire knew about the warriors because they visited China to offer tribute gifts and archeological studies have also

discovered artifacts of weapons in the Iron Age. They were called Kuni. Both male and female Kuni warriors existed. Tombs of the Kuni leaders display very decorative carvings and artistic war scenes. The Kuni were discovered to derive their lineage from the Sun Goddess starting the fourteenth century B. C. E.. The highest political office was the emperor who was described as the tenno, heavenly sovereign. Each Kuni warrior held military, political and religious powers in the state. The Shinto religion derived from their history. (Gabriel, 2002, 315-316)

According to the Chinese records they “ fought with halberds, shields and wooden bows shorter below than above the hand grip.” (Gabriel, 2002, 315-316) A halberd is a

a shaft or pole with a long sword attached at the end and may have other blades attached at either side of the tip of the spear, like. The Japanese polearm was called a nagamaki and carried in a hilt with a strap to sling over the soldier's shoulder. (Friday, 2004, 88) The first historical Japanese records show that the nagamaki has been used since the seventh century B. C. E. It was used

among warrior-monks (sohei), low-ranking aristocratic warriors (bushi), and peasant soldiers (ashigaru). The military weapon was robust. It had a curved blade 30 to 60 centimeters in length that was forged using the same methods as swords. The blades were inserted in oak shafts ranging from 120 to 140 centimeters in length, secured with bamboo pegs and bound tightly in place using cord and metal rings. The butt of the oval shaft, known as the ishizuki, was an important part of the weapon and was capped in metal, to

be used for bludgeoning fallen enemies. (Green & Synithe, 2010, 158-159)

The nagamaki was not important as a war weapon in the field during the Middle Ages, but it was passed down from generation to generation in warrior families. Mothers would pass the family nagamaki to their daughters in dowries. The shafts were shorter than the original design and some of the nagamaki were beautifully embellished with mother of pearl. During the 1800s the nagamaki was used to defend the home if necessary by women or men. Then in the Mid 1900s the nagamaki began to be taught to the children in public schools. Today a modern sport has been developed around the nagamaki which is called the New Naginata, Atarashii Naginata. (Green & Synithe, 2010)

Samurai Chinese Buddhism was seriously introduced into the Yamato state of Japan in the sixth century C. E. During that period other cultural, religious and administrative practices were introduced as well as military techniques such as using the horse on the battlefield. This heralded the beginning of the Imperial Japanese Army. During the seventh century C. E. the Emperor Temmu, Heavenly Warrior, brought all the different factions of soldiers and military leader in Yamato state under the Emperor's leadership. These units dissolved and by the eighth century

Court officials in Japan and other wealthy individuals soon turned to creating private military guards. Over time, the military skills of these units became associated with the families, giving rise to a hereditary military aristocracy. (Gabriel, 2002, 319)

The dressing of the samurai was a very serious ritual. Both rich and poor men were trained as samurai. Their reputation was measured in terms of courage and skill. This could be determined by the testimony of the warrior's friends or by the number of heads of slain enemies he had killed. If a samurai was captured he was expected to kill himself using the method of stabbing themselves and ripping open their own belly. This practice was still taking place at the end of WWII. It was not until the mid 1800s that the feudal military evolved into a modern military. (Gabriel, 2002, 325)

Ninja The Ninja were trained as special agents to provide espionage and gain intelligence, they also performed guerilla missions so today they would be called spies (Masazuni et al., 2009, 170). The main difference between samurai and ninja is the way they were trained. The samurai were all taught to use the same techniques and strategies but the ninja were taught individually. Therefore the ninja's own personality and even moods were an integral part of the training and the military strategy that evolved.

The training of ninjas is called the School of Ninjutsu and may have been originally developed in China or Korea. The famous books of strategy, Sun Tzu's The Art of War and the Wu xing refer to the teachings based on the five elements which must have been allusions to Ninjutsu. (Masazuni et al., 2009, 170) Because it was a technique for training spies the lessons were highly secret. The five elements are wood, fire, earth, water and metal. Each element represents a part of the warrior's personality and/or mood. There is a hierarchy attached to the five metals which is the cycle of generation. Wood produces fire (the log burns); fire produces

earth (in the form of powdered ash); earth produces metal (mineral extracts that form the soil); metal produces water (by liquefying when it is melted); and water produces wood (by causing the trees and other vegetation to grow). (The) cycle of destruction or domination: Water extinguishes fire; fire melts metal; metal cuts wood; wood covers the earth (by growing in the form of trees); and the earth absorbs water. (Masazuni et al., 2009, 308)

The ninja must learn to know about themselves, understand the seven states of the heart and learn how to let go. (Masazuni et al., 2009) The training has everything to do with self-knowledge so that whatever the challenge may be the ninja can deal with it in their own unique way. On the other hand the ninja must learn to recognize characteristics in the personalities and facial expressions of their enemies to enable to reach their goals. A big emphasis was placed on the human physiognomy as in later centuries the West would also do. But ninjas learned during the lessons of Shinso No Koto (The Emotional States) that

If you solely use human physiognomy in your evaluations, you will make mistakes. But if a shinobi manages to penetrate the emotional states of the heart, he will no longer commit any errors. (Masazuni et al., 2009, 1443)

The seven states of the heart are joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, love, hate and desire. These match to seven concepts in Buddhism of joy, anger, sorrow, will, pain, fear and wonder. (Masazuni et al., 2009, 1457) These examples demonstrate the emphasis on sensitivity to gaining information through the senses that was necessary to become a ninja.

Because the ninja was taught to use their personal strengths in fights and when spying they could accomplish amazing tasks. A ninja needed to walk without leaving any foot tracks - even in snow. Some ninjas were known to scale castle walls and other incredible feats. In order to accomplish these strategies self-discipline was the main strength of a ninja.

Conclusion

Himura Kenshin is a modern day fictional character who is a ronin. Literally ronin means "wave men." Ronin may be trained as samurai or in some other fighting style but for some reason they no longer have a master or sponsor. Perhaps his master has died from war, old age or suicide whatever the reason the ronin is on his own finding his own adventures as a "free-lance samurai." (Scherer, 1928, 193) The research on Japanese warriors has shown that the heart of Japan's creation was from the warrior spirit. Japan was only influenced by China in the development of its military feudal system. The feudal system lasted into modern times probably because of the isolation of the Japanese islands. The ancient Japanese warriors still influence our contemporary times.

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