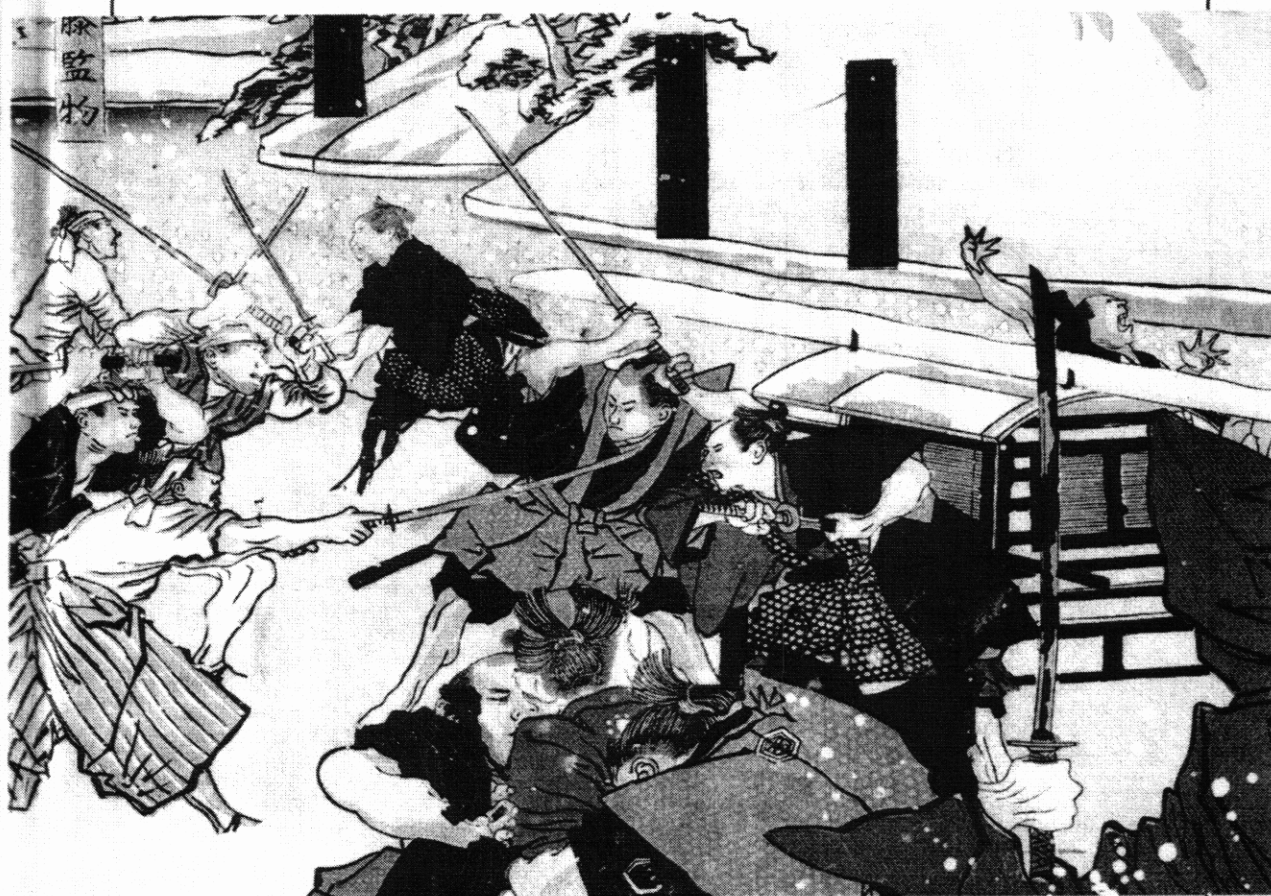


# JAPAN *at* WAR

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA



LOUIS G. PEREZ, EDITOR

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### Bushidō in Japanese Sports

Like the American cowboy, the samurai has served as a symbol of Japanese masculinity for hundreds of years. Although the samurai and their "warrior code of ethics," called *bushidō*, are often seen as the wellspring of the values of Japanese athletes, their current place in Japanese sports is actually the product of various claims by a few influential men in Japanese baseball history. These men were seeking to justify their own participation in the sport by appealing to this powerful symbol. *Bushidō*'s legend grew the more they appealed to its symbolism.

*Bushidō* has taken hold in Japanese sports for a variety of reasons. First, many point to the powerful links between competitive sport and the spiritualism of and mental preparation demanded by Zen Buddhism, which *bushidō* draws upon. Second, *bushidō*'s lasting influence owes much to the fact that Japanese sports competitions are perceived to be "battles," "contests," or "wars." Third, the practical wisdom offered by these ancient warriors, especially in terms of battle strategy, patience and poise in competition, and honor in defeat, have all appealed to modern-day

"samurai-athletes." But above all, *bushidō* persists because it remains the dominant form of masculinity into which young Japanese athletes, especially baseball players, are socialized.

Sports were introduced to Japan after it opened itself to the West in the late 19th century. *Bushidō* was thereafter appropriated to defend the playing of baseball, a Western sport not initially well received by all Japanese people at the time. Some thought the sport was immoral because it lauded "stealing" bases. Infusing *bushidō* into baseball solved this problem because it showed how Japanese could play this Western import in a Japanese—and thus a moral—way. *Bushidō* was called upon to "Japanize" baseball. Because Japan was a relatively new member of the global community and was seeking to establish a national identity, many saw *bushidō* as the "essence" of Japan, that which made the country "unique." It did not hurt that foreigners who visited Japan around this time often said the same thing.

One baseball coach who played a particularly significant role in equating baseball with *bushidō* was Tobita Suishū (1886–1965), of Waseda University. Tobita asserted a link between education and sports and believed that baseball coaches had the power to inculcate samurai values. He argued that coaches should teach "athletic *bushidō*," in part because his father was against his own participation in the sport and wanted him to instead follow a traditional Japanese martial art. Borrowing spiritual practices from Buddhism, Tobita was a proponent of "ascetic training," professed the importance of instilling "guts" in his players, and has been referred to as the "god of [Japanese] baseball."

The idea that baseball should be used to inculcate *bushidō* values has since come to hold significant sway over coaches in many

Japanese sports. The masculine stoicism asserted by *bushidō* appeals to many modern Japanese athletes, even in lesser-known sports. For example, Kai Shūji insists that the “samurai spirit” helped him become the *futsal* champion. The terms “samurai” and “*bushidō*” are also used in titles of golf books and by sprinters such as Tamesue Dai, who calls himself a “samurai hurdler.”

Baseball, however, has been most prone to samurai and *bushidō* invocations, none more influential than the work of the bestselling author and journalist Robert Whiting. The Japanese have embraced Whiting’s prose, translating much of it back into their native tongue. The mass media today refer to the national baseball team as “Samurai Japan.”

Some argue that the idea of *bushidō* is strongest in baseball because baseball bats symbolize samurai swords, and because the battle between pitcher and batter is like a battle between dueling samurai. Japanese professional baseball teams are arms of

large corporations, meaning baseball players serve their employers in the same way that samurai used to serve their feudal masters. Playing baseball is, therefore, said to foster the *bushidō* values of loyalty, honor, and courage. *Bushidō*’s place in Japanese sports is secure thanks to this perception.

Aaron L. Miller

**See also:** *Bushidō*; Nitobe Inazō; Orientalism; Zen Buddhism in Japanese Sports.

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1861, the shōgunate asked Nishi, together with Tsuda, to concentrate their efforts on Western humanities and social science disciplines. The shōgunate also asked the U.S. government for help in placing Nishi and Tsuda at a university in the United States. U.S. authorities agreed, but the outbreak of the American Civil War prevented realization of this plan. Instead, the shōgunate dispatched Nishi and Tsuda to the Netherlands in 1863 to study law at Leiden University. This was the first time the Japanese government had sent any students to study formally at an overseas institution. Nishi and Tsuda were dispatched together with a party of shōgunal naval officers who went to Rotterdam to study naval engineering and observe Dutch construction of steamships for the shōgunate. In Leiden, Nishi and Tsuda studied law and politics under the liberal professor Simon Visseling, Minister of Finance of the Netherlands. While in Leiden, they had the opportunity to observe the Netherlands during a period in which it was ruled by a reformist liberal government under Prime Minister Thorbecke. Nishi stayed two years in Leiden.

Nishi returned to Japan on the brink of the Meiji revolution. Nonetheless, in 1868, he managed to have his first major work published—*Bankoku kōhō*, a treatise explaining the principles of international law. Immediately after the Meiji Restoration, Nishi sided with Tokugawa loyalists as they withdrew to their fiefs in present-day Shizuoka. Nishi was appointed the head of the post-restoration Tokugawa Military Academy at their new base in Numazu, present-day Shizuoka Prefecture.

In 1870, when it became clear that no counter-revolution would materialize, Nishi joined other former Tokugawa loyalists in taking up offers of employment in the new Meiji government. He moved to Tokyo and

became an official of the Ministry of the Army. In addition to his work drafting new military laws, he was active in Tokyo intellectual life as one of the founders of the Meiroku Group. During this period he authored a number of major works, including *Hyaku ichi shinron* and *Hyakugaku renkan*, which laid the basis of modern Japanese philosophical and social sciences. Through these works he famously “created” a number of key words in Sino-Japanese as translations for major Western academic words—notably the word *tetsugaku* (*zhixue* in Chinese) as a translation for philosophy. In the early 1880s, Nishi drafted a number of key documents for the emperor and military, including the Imperial Rescript for Soldiers and Sailors. In 1890, he was appointed a member of the House of Peers.

Nishi was a prime example of the *bunbu ryōdō* ethos of combining the scholarly and military arts. In the modern period, he managed to somehow combine two seemingly opposing roles in public life, one as a Westernizing liberal intellectual and the other as a military ideologue.

*Kiri Paramore*

**See also:** Imperial Rescript for Soldiers and Sailors; Perry, Matthew.

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#### Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933)

Nitobe Inazō was a scholar, diplomat, and educator. He was a devout Christian convert who lived in the West, married a Quaker

woman, and was deeply influenced by Western thought. Nevertheless, he is perhaps best known for authoring one of the most influential books about Japan ever to be published in English, entitled *Bushidō*. In it, Nitobe explained that the “essence” of Japan was in large measure shaped by the “samurai warrior code of ethics” called *Bushidō* (the term literally means “way of the warrior”). While many Westerners take Nitobe’s *Bushidō* to represent an old, authentic, and pure Japanese spirit, few know that his ideas were the product of both his Japanese roots and his Western learning.

*Bushidō* is a relatively recent idea, dating no earlier than the 19th century. Among the first significant contributions to the construction of this idea was Nitobe’s *Bushidō*, first published in the United States in English (1899) and then in Japanese (1900). The book was highly influential in both countries. President Theodore Roosevelt enjoyed it so much he bought 60 copies to share with friends.

Samurai, or *bushi*, existed between the 9th and 19th centuries—warriors whose sole occupation was battle. The character “*bu*” in *bushi* consists of the elements for “halberd,” a type of sword, and “stop”—thus it means “to stop a halberd” or “to make peace.” The “*shi*” in *bushi* means “gentleman.” While the social rank of *bushi* disappeared with the collapse of the Edo shōgunate and the Meiji Restoration in the latter half of the 19th century, the spirit of the *bushi* that existed in Japan for more 1,000 years continued to carry considerable influence.

Ironically, it was only *after* the samurai class ceased to exist that their legend truly began to grow. Various writers—Nitobe at the fore—created a powerful myth of this “warrior code,” romanticizing the samurai’s achievements. Writers painted an ideal picture of who the samurai had been, why they

were remarkable, and why they should be emulated. *Bushidō* came to represent a sort of “national ethic” for modern Japan and began to form the basis for much Japanese behavior we see today.

Various scholars have criticized Nitobe’s *Bushidō* in recent years, in part because he ignored the viciousness and deception characteristic of all warrior classes. Some do not care for Nitobe’s philosophizing about *Bushidō*, saying that he took his theory too far, perplexing many Japanese readers. Others say that his characterization of *Bushidō* stands in opposition to what others took to be Japan’s “authentic *Bushidō*.” Still others say that Nitobe unduly recast the “code” so that it could be better understood internationally.

Nitobe was not alone in constructing the *Bushidō* ideal, however. The appropriation of *Bushidō* by the Japanese military also played a significant role in constructing the *Bushidō* myth. The “Imperial Instructions to Soldiers and Sailors” (*Gunjin Chokuyū*), issued by the Emperor Meiji in 1882, was influential in spreading *Bushidō*’s tenets, though it was not actually called *Bushidō* in the document itself. The *Gunjin Chokuyū* commanded Japanese soldiers to be loyal, brave, have faith, be simple, and be decorous—all characteristics said to have aptly described the samurai. In the age of national conscription, many young Japanese men were enamored by this idealized version of Japanese masculinity.

*Bushidō* is also supported by tenets borrowed from Zen Buddhism, giving it greater spiritual weight and influence over Japanese soldiers. Tapping into some of the most fundamental spiritual foundations supporting Japanese society, *Bushidō* incorporates Zen ideas of self-control, including *fudōchi* (“immovable wisdom”), *mushin* (“no mind”), and *muga* (“no self”). Like Zen monks, the

samurai were supposed to seek and attain “enlightenment” (*satori*) to become role models and set a moral example. In the lead-up to World War II, these ideas were used to persuade Japanese soldiers to be stoic and brave and to put the nation before themselves. The *Bushidō* myth, which held that the samurai were role models because they were dutiful, were loyal, and set their master’s well-being before their own, was thereby used to send Japanese soldiers into battle and, for some, to their deaths. Given that he saw himself as a bridge between Japan and the West, this was likely not Nitobe’s intention.

Aaron L. Miller

**See also:** *Bushidō*; *Bushidō* in Japanese Sports; Imperial Rescript on Education; Zen Buddhism and Militarism.

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## Nitta Yoshisada (1301–1338)

Nitta Yoshisada was one of the first warlords who responded to Emperor Go-Daigo’s call to arms in the early stages of the Kemmu Restoration. Although his family had long been allied to the Minamoto house, he turned against the Kamakura *bakufu* and rallied to the “loyalist” forces surrounding the emperor. Nitta had long been a rival to Ashikaga Takauji, but chose to ally himself with him after Ashikaga had also turned against the *bakufu*.

Nitta led a force against Kamakura. When he was unable to approach the city from the landward side, he mounted a seaside attack. A myth sprang up surrounding that invasion in which he was reputed to have cast his golden sword into the waters to magically stem the approaching high tide. The defending Hōjō samurai, when faced with this surprise attack, refused to surrender. Nearly 900 of the defenders, including the last three *Shikken*, committed suicide rather than be taken prisoner.

Nitta was rewarded handsomely by Go-Daigo, becoming one of the imperial favorites. Indeed, historians suggest that it was Nitta’s support that encouraged the emperor to defy Ashikaga, who had ambitions of his own. When Ashikaga turned against the emperor, Nitta rode against him while Go-Daigo fled Kyoto for Yoshino, where he established his “Southern Court” at Yoshino. Finally, in 1338, Nitta was surrounded and pinned under his fallen horse. Rather than be taken prisoner, Nitta tossed his famous sword into the air, magically decapitating himself. A number of his loyal samurai were awed by this new magic and chose to commit *junshi seppuku* (“suicide to accompany one’s lord”), establishing a precedent for future stalwarts like Nogi Maresuke, who also committed *seppuku* after the death of the Meiji emperor in 1912.

Nitta became something of the paragon of imperial loyalty in later years. The adherents of *sonno-jōi* in the 1860s and the Young Officer *kōdōha* (“Imperial Way Faction”) terrorists in the 1930s both invoked his memory.

Louis G. Perez

**See also:** Ashikaga Takauji; Go-Daigo; *Harakiri (Seppuku)*; Kamakura *Bakufu*; Nogi Maresuke; *Sonno-jōi*; Southern Court (Yoshino); Young Officer Movement.

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### Zen Buddhism in Japanese Sports

The samurai “warrior code of ethics,” called *bushidō*, is supported by ideas borrowed from Zen Buddhism, and both Zen and *bushidō* occupy important positions in Japanese sports. The samurai sought to become role models and “set a moral example and to do so they borrowed Zen ideas of self-control, such as *fudōchi* (“immovable wisdom”), *mushin* (“no mind”), and *muga* (“no self”) and strived to reach “enlightenment” (*satori*) through Zen practice. This transfer of idea (from Zen to *bushidō*) gave *bushidō* greater spiritual weight and influence over Japanese soldiers and, later, athletes. Throughout the 20th century, *bushidō* became both an ethic of self-restraint and the masculine ideal. Because of an intimate link seen between mind and body in both Zen meditation (and Zen “ascetic practice”) and in sports, Zen Buddhism came to carry considerable influence in modern Japanese sports.

Buddhism came to Japan from China in 552. By then it was already more than 1,000 years old. The teachings of Gautama, the historic Buddha, noted that the world was a place of suffering caused by man’s desires and acquisitiveness, and suggested that a man could be released from this suffering if he could achieve enlightenment. Doing so required following an “eightfold path” of right views, right intentions, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Following this path could be difficult if one was plagued by bad karma from a previous life.

Although many sects exist in Japanese Buddhism, Zen has had the most influence on the samurai and on Japanese sports because of the attention paid to mental training and preparation. The “mindlessness” advised by Zen meditation is considered an essential means toward achieving enlightenment—and for some athletes, the calm needed to perform under pressure. Japanese divers, for example, cite samurai Miyamoto Musashi’s concept of *munenmusō* (“free from all ideas and thoughts”) as the state of “consciousness” that they take down to the depths of the ocean.

The connection between Zen and sports is perhaps most evident in Japanese baseball. The samurai’s sword is often referred to as his “soul and many Japanese talk about their baseball bats as if they were sacred in the same way. Baseball great Oh Sadaharu, for example, recommends the virtues of a Zen approach to hitting. The Zen monk Takuan (1573–1645), who was said to have influenced many samurai, including Munenori (1571–1646), once wrote a book entitled *Fudōchi Shinmyōroku* (“Divine Record of Immovable Wisdom”), a remarkably similar title to that of superstar baseball player Hideki Matsui’s 2007 autobiography, *Fudōshin* (“An Immovable Mind”). Both books emphasize the importance of an unwavering mental attitude and a sense of calm, poise, and stability. This suggests that the bridge between Takuan and Matsui, Zen and baseball, and the four centuries that stand between them, is *bushidō*.

The emphasis on “ascetic practice” (*shūgyō*), a Zen practice, is the spiritual justification lurking behind much of Japanese sports training. The idea of *shūgyō* originated among Zen Buddhist monks, and has come to be one of the primary means through which many Japanese coaches build the character of their charges. *Shūgyō* has

many meanings: (1) following the Buddhist commandments and finding enlightenment through specific religious actions, practicing Buddhist teachings, and concentrating one's efforts on the Buddhist path; (2) taking religious action that aims to make union with the existence of gods and to purify the spirit through repression of the bodily desires; or (3) the pilgrimage that scholars and artists take to perfect their trade. Oki, a kendo coach, writes:

When I think of *shūgyō*, I think of the image of a master swordsman, climbing a mountain, sipping a valley river's water, receiving instruction from a teacher, and swinging a wooden sword against an imaginary opponent. (Oki 2001:146)

In the martial arts, such imaginary training was for the purpose of learning *kata*—"form." Because there were no "practice games," apprentices had to train themselves by *imagining* battle. These ideas have also found relevance in modern Japanese sports. The "monastic tradition" (*shūdō*) has been integral in helping invent tradition in modern Japanese sports. One example of *shūgyō* in Japanese sports is the ritual of shaving one's head to symbolize membership on a team. This practice is rather common in high school baseball and boys' basketball. The ritual derives its legitimacy from Buddhism. Buddhist monks (*obōsan*) shave their heads in an undertaking called *teihatsu* to remind themselves of their many duties. Thus *shūgyō* is related to the body, and as with the shaving of one's head, the body is altered to indicate that someone is undertaking special, serious training toward a specific goal (e.g., victory in a battle, sports match, or enlightenment).

Aaron L. Miller

**See also:** *Bushidō*; *Bushidō* in Japanese Sports; Nitobe Inazō; Zen Buddhism and Militarism.

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## Zengakuren

Zengakuren was an expansive student governing body representing numerous student groups from around Japan. At present, Zengakuren might best be defined as an amorphous political identity currently used as a foundational myth for many dissident groups. Its full title is *Zen Nihon Gakusei Jichi-kai Sorengo*, or All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Government Association. While the Zengakuren still exists, its primary period of political activity and social influence was from the postwar period to the 1970s.

During the Allied occupation era, the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP) sponsored the formation of student groups to encourage democracy in schools around Japan. In September 1948, incensed over administrative disagreements, rising tuition, and the privatization of education