

SPACE JAPAN BOOK REVIEW

From a satcom researcher point of view

Reviewer: Takashi Iida, Editorial Advisor

Inazo Nitobe: "Bushido, The Soul of Japan", 1899, Merchant Books, 2009.

In this column the book above is picked up as a topic different from the past one this time. Recently, I feel that the violence against the weak people such as bullying is getting worse more and more in Japan. I have read this book with the recognition that the basic spirit of Bushido is to want to leave the name as a fellow who never bullied a little boy or turned his back on a big one. Since this book was published 117 years ago and it is a very famous book, it does not seem that I can write a book review like this book, but I am interested how much communication and engineering people have read this book. Actually, I learned this book because I read "The dignity of the nation" (in Japanese) [1]. I had not known that this book was written in English, but I have carefully read the translated into Japanese version which is close to the first edition this time. Since we are engaged in space development and act on the basis of engineering knowledge, we act according to logical consideration. However, it is sometimes necessary to take action criteria as human beings, form of spirit as a criterion, and morality. As a form of spirit of nurturing such emotions, it seems to be meaningful for Japanese to recognize having Bushido since ancient times [1]. So, I think that there is a significance to pick up this book in this column.

This book written in English was published in 1899. The first Japanese translation of this book was published in 1908, but this book review is made by the book of Japanese translation that was published in 1938 [2]. However, it has still somewhat literary-style. Furthermore, recently a book of modern language translation has also been published [3], and a bilingual translation with English has also been published [4] [5].

Inazo Nitobe, the author of this book, was born in 1862 and died in 1933. He was an educator and philosopher, who was graduated from the Sapporo Agricultural College and quited Imperial University (later Tokyo Imperial University). In 1884, he studied abroad at Johns Hopkins University in the U.S. by his private expense. By this time he became skeptical of the traditional Christian faith and begun attending the Quakers' meeting and became an official member of the Quaker group. He met Mary Erkington (Japanese name, Mariko Nitobe) who later becomes Nitobe's wife through friendship with Quakers. The book "Bushido: The Soul of Japan" was written in fluent English text, and when its first edition was published in 1900, it was later translated into national languages such as German and French, became the best selling, and it gave a great impression to President Theodore Roosevelt and others. After his returning to Japan, he was Headmaster of the First High School, Professor of Imperial University, Under-Secretary General of the League of Nations, and Primary President of Tokyo Women's Christian University [6]. Tadao Yanaibara, translator, was born in 1893 and died in 1961. He was an economist and colonialist scholar, who was graduated from Tokyo Imperial University law school political science in 1917. He was President of the University of Tokyo and a member of the Japan Academy. He is also known as a church-less Christian leader [7].

The motivation for writing this book is that when Nitobe was asked from De Lavray, Belgian law school principal, "If there is no religious education in Japanese schools, how do you give moral education without religion," Nitobe could not immediately answer this question. In addition, the direct trigger is due to that Nitobe's wife frequently asked him what the thoughts and customs prevailing in Japan are based on. Nitobe's attempting to give satisfactory answer to De Lavray and his wife was the motivation for this book.

This book reveals Bushido and its position based on chivalry, Christianity, and many other philosophical thoughts. The Bushido is described under consecutive concepts like ethical system, source, justice, courage, benevolence, politeness, veracity, honor, loyalty, education, self-control, harakiri and revenge, and sword. Further advancing thinking about women's education, the influence of Bushido, and its future. This book has a big consideration of the scale. There are some esoteric aspects for me, so below I will list the parts left in my impression.

Bushido is not stipulated in sentences but is established as an unwritten law that has accumulated over the past 700 years (since 1900). Bushido is a law of morals taught and requested by samurai guides. Originally it was what should be protected as a warrior, later became a preparation of the top samurai in feudalism system. The Buddhism is listed first in this book as a basic idea of Bushido. It contributed the Bushido as a calm feeling to leave it to fate, quiet obedience to inevitability, stoic deposit in the face of dangerous disasters, fresh life and deeply conscious of death. Also, loyalty to the lord, respect for the ancestors, and filial piety against parents, which were not given in Buddhism were fulfilled in Shinto. By this, obedience character of samurai was given compliance. Furthermore, regarding moral doctrine, the lesson of Confucius was the most abundant root of Bushido. He gave five moral relationships (the five Confucian filial-piety relationships) of the relationship between priests, father and son, couple, brothers and friends.

About "Courage", it is said as "Courage is to do right thing". Often it is considered brave for acts that make all kinds of dangers and bet their own lives, but in the teachings of Bushido it is different and it is said to die "dog death" for reasons not worth dying to die. A truly brave man is always calm. When Dokan Ohta, a great builder of Edo castle, was stabbed with a spear, the assassin who knew Dokan's poetical predilection, while stabbing, accompanied his thrust with this couplet-- "Ah! how in moments like these, Our heart doth grudge the light of life". The hero who is trying to breathe exactly when hearing this is that he did not hurt a little even by a fatal injury aside and added the

lines-- "Had not in hours of peace, It learned to lightly look on life".

Regarding "Benevolence", it is repeated that the highest necessary condition of the person who governs is the perfect virtue. The virtue for vulnerable people, inferior people, losers was ever praised as peculiarly becoming to a samurai. The story is stated that Naomi Kumagai of famous Kabuki of "Ichinomiya Futabagunki - Kumagai Jinya" has already taken over the young Atsumori Taira and left his home to become a priest afterwards. Regarding "Truth", lies and deception were both regarded as cowardice. Like saying as "Bushido no ichi-gon", the word of the Bushido is sufficient guaranty, and the promise was generally tied and fulfilled without a testimony. Regarding "Education", the first point emphasized in samurai education was the formation of personality.

Regarding "Sword", Bushido made a sword to be a mark of its status and bravery. Here, as an aside, I could not understand the meaning of a sentence at the beginning of this chapter. It seems to be due to my superficiality, but I hope that someone can tell me.

In the final part of this book, it is described about the current status and future of Bushido. I can only introduce its outline as follows: The ethical system fruited as a Bushido has attracted followers from the masses over time. It is argued whether or not the Western civilization that has invaded Japan like madness has already washed away traces of old training. It would be sad if the soul of a nation dies so soon. If we succumb to the influence from outside so easily, it is a poor soul. The persistence of the Japanese body, the spirit of inflexibility and bravery were proved fully by the Sino-Japanese War. Regarding the future of Bushido, if the history repeats, it is certain that the fate of Bushido will follow the fate of the chivalry. Contemporary maintained military organizations may place Bushido under protection, but there is no room for contemporary warfare to continue to grow Bushido. Even with the great tide of democracy that increases power, there is the power to swallow the remnants of Bushido. Democracy does not allow any form or any shape of monopoly group. But Bushido was organized by people exclusively owning the capital of intelligence and education and was a monopoly group that determines moral grade and value. The battle instinct within human beings is a universal and natural thing, which produced lofty feelings and masculine virtue, but that is not human as a whole. Within the battle instinct, more sacred instincts, love is hiding. Our current mission is to protect this heritage and not to spoil the old spirit, and the mission in the future is to apply it to all actions and relationships of life. The feudal Japanese moral system has been predicted to collapse like a castle or weapon and become dust, and a new morality will resurrect like a phoenix in order to guide the way of new-generation Japan's progress. It is not the fate of Bushido to completely extinct. Although Bushido is dead as a system, it is alive as a virtue.

Although this book was written at the time just after the end of the Sino-Japanese War, the reason why I did not have a feeling of old about the quotation of overseas experts and stated matters is that the theme of this book is very high level. The Imperial Rescript on Education has been promulgated in Japan shortly before (in 1890) this book was published, but it was not quoted at all in this book. This may be a reason why this book seems not to feel to be old.

Although I mentioned that the violence against the weak people such as bullying is getting worse more and more, there is an article to oppose the argue of whether Bushido is necessary or not, because Bushido is the idea of rulers [8]. In Ref. [1], it is said that the Japan-China war before World War II invaded the weak is more embarrassing, cowardly as well, in light of the Bushido spirit. There is an opinion that Bushido's "heart of compassion for others who can not lose anytime" is just like Samurai and a virtue to the weak and losers and the spirit of "the worship of the warrior" should be used for foreign diplomacy to neighboring countries [9]. In addition, the latest Nikkei Shimbun has carried an article that an young actor was influenced by Bushido [10]. The benevolence is thought of Confucius, but there is a novel to know Confucius even a little [11].

References

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