Paper Title: Self-Sacrifice and Stoicism in Face of Calamity - Bushido and Education in Modern Japan -

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Abstract
The Great East Japan Earthquake (Higashi Nihon Daishinsai) occurred off the coast of Japan on 11th March 2011. Soon after the earthquake, it was reported that "The world is stunned to see how Japanese people, while they are in agony after loosing their loved ones and saddened by the deadly catastrophe, manage to stay calm and do their best amid the calamity" and that "the national character of the Japanese people, which holds even in the most difficult situations, must be responsible for this distinctive discipline in the face of calamity."

The spirit of self-control and self-sacrifice displayed by Japanese people in the disaster has been regarded as the spirit of bushido inherited in the Japanese tradition. That way, the spirit of bushido, which was once cherished by the samurai of the feudal age, seems to be still shared among the Japanese people of today. However, it should be noted that the concept of bushido has been changed throughout history and is not monolithic, but multifaceted.

Although the spirit of bushido displayed in face of calamity is praised by some observers, bushido has often been regarded as something negative and militaristic. In opposition to those who blindly admired bushido, the intellectual historian Tsuda Sōkichi (1873-1961) pointed out the violent and immoral nature of bushido and argued that the spirit of bushido was not splendid as many people thought because it
promoted violent actions, treachery and supplanting one’s superior. In 1932, the Chinese political leader Chiang Kaishek (1887-1975), who studied military affairs in pre-war Japan, wrote that the spirit of bushido contributed to Japan’s rise as a great power in Asia and it’s becoming a military state. In fact, Japanese moral education and military training were incorporated with the spirit of bushido since the Meiji Restoration, which aroused the rise of “militarism and the spirit of soldiers” among the people. The Taiwanese scholar Hsu Jielin noticed the dual-faceted nature of bushido and saw in it both “anti-humanistic,” “cruel” elements as well as humanistic virtues such as justice, endurance, courage, courtesy, honesty, honor and loyalty. One could see two aspects of the spirit of bushido: It can be alleged to be the spiritual core of Japanese militarism or violent activism while it can be valued as moral virtues inherent in Japanese culture.

In this paper, I will discuss conflicting views of bushido and education expressed by eminent intellectuals including Nitobe Inazô, Inoue Tetsujirô, Asakawa Kan’ichi and Yamaji Aizan around the turn of the century. I will argue that Nitobe and Inoue attempted to establish the spirit of bushido as the core of Japanese morals while Asakawa and Yamaji clearly noted the dual-faceted nature of bushido. In doing so, I would suggest that the independent spirit of self-sacrifice which was advocated by Yamaji and Nitobe is still alive today and contributes to the calm and stoic behaviour of the Japanese in face of calamity.