

The Bushi/Samurai society in Japan can be seen as a very interesting one. Different clans throughout the course of history came into power and had their decline after being in power for some time. Many aspects made the Bushi/Samurai society eye catching. These aspects varied from the significant clans that came to power, family name rules, and common characteristics/behaviors. Complex, yet simple historical figures of Japanese history, Samurai have left their imprint on history which continues to make the study of them relevant today. This can be seen through history books, historic monuments, as well as pop culture. Worldwide the phenomenon that the Samurai is continues to astonish both the older and younger generations of the world.

Q#1 The lecture in class explained that in the Samurai world there was a decline of the Fujiwara power due to the indulgent and corrupted life of aristocrats. These Samurais were armed with bows, arrows, and swords. The decline of the Fujiwara led to the Taira and Minamoto compete for power. Both of these clans were two of the most important if not the most important in Japan during this time period. Another key aspect covered in lecture was the fact that lineage was of great significance to the Samurai clans. The decline of the Samurai period was during the Meiji Period which took place from the 11th c to the 19th c. During the lecture common characteristics of the Samurai were also covered, which included how the Japanese warrior class was included as well as codes, morality, and philosophies. Samurai also typically justified their actions or practices they had. But mainly they served people who worked for court nobles and were straightforward about indicating they worked for aristocratic people. We also learned during lecture that there were different Samurai/Bushi classes and depending on the class that one was categorized as was the type of battle gear one got to wear. We also reviewed in

class the last Samurai period or the Edo Period. In the Edo period there were no more wars in the battlefield which meant that the Bushi/Samurai as warriors were gone. Where their weapons like the swords, spears, bows, and arrows became symbolic artifacts and property of Samurai-style architecture. Overall, the Samurai/Bushi society had many components in every aspect of their character that made them very complex yet fascinating historical figures.

Another perspective of the Samurai/Bushi society was provided through media. In this case, two films that we were shown in class. One film providing a contemporary view of Samurai society, while the other one provided a modern view of Samurai. The first film we watched in class is called “Chonmage Pudding”. The storyline of this movie was interesting because it was providing insight on how even though the Samurai culture is an important part of Japanese history; present day much of the impact the Samurai had on Japanese society is not being valued. Due to industrialization and modernization much of the essence of what it means to be a Samurai and the protagonist through the mother and the young boy learn to appreciate the values and morals of the Japanese Samurai. In this particular movie, the art of baking is used to show the discipline and appreciation for their culture that the Samurai had. As well as influenced the young boy and the mother to look into a culture that was part of their ancestors but is relevant to shaping Japan as a whole. The second movie we watched is called “After the Rain” and this movie focuses more on the historical time period that the Samurai were most relevant. This movie follows a Ronin through the struggles he has gone through since he does not have a clan to serve. But in particular focuses on the character of this particular Ronin. He enjoys life more by not having a clan to serve even though it's in his code to have a family to serve. Even though it's against his code to engage in any type of battle, when he sees that the people he's staying

with in need he moves out of his way to get these people food. He genuinely helps individuals without expecting anything in return. In summary, this movie did an excellent job in portraying the character of the Ronin and that not having a clan does not mean that a Samurai will have an unhappy life. On the contrary, the character of a Ronin can be as valued and appreciated as that of the Samurai.

Japanese Samurai literature also provides an insightful view of the Samurai through a variety of novels and short stories. Three particular stories that gave the reader another point of view through fiction novels and short stories depicting Samurai life. In the first short story, *A Passing Shower* is a short story that talks about the double life of a life sharpener named Kakichi who works as a knife sharpener during the day but burglarizes houses during the night (Fujisawa, 41). In the story the reader is able to witness how the cruel intentions of the protagonist, Kakichi are changed once he comes across an old woman and her daughter that are only trying to get home. This short story shows how the character of the individual living during the Samurai period can even go against the codes that a society has established. But also how a very small act of kindness can change the essence of an individual. Another short story is *Dancing Hands* which is the story of a young Shinji boy whom witnesses how a childhood friend leaves out of the blue and the only person left behind is the family. The grandmother goes through a series of bullying due to her family's debt. Everyone wants to tend to the grandmother that was left behind but the grandmother only let the boy tend to him. In the end, the boy witnesses that the grandmother's family comes back for her to be with them (Fujisawa, 237). This short story provides an insight on how even though the family originally forgot the grandmother in the end they eventually came back and showed how important family is. Also, debt was seen as an

unforgivable and shameful thing to have. It was of dishonor for the family to have left so randomly having that big amount of debt. In another story read, *All for a Melon* two samurai warriors had the task of killing another member of a Samurai clan for a noble. The noble promised these a special prize if they killed the member of the Samurai clan. They killed the member and in the end their prize was only a melon. Overall, the main lesson learned from the story was to not always believe what you are told because you could be deceived. It's not always worth taking away the life of another individual just for monetary gain.

Q #2 After having studied the Samurai/Bushi society in Japan for the past couple of weeks I have gotten a general idea of what this society lived like. Some of the most fascinating aspects of the Samurai that stood out to me were the war gear they wore. As shown in the Japanology video, the traditional Samurai war outfit consisted of very intricate pieces that were very face. It just makes someone wonder how these warriors were able to carry the big suits. Another interesting aspect is their codes that they lived by. For a Samurai, it was of great significance to be following the specific family house rules that were being set.

I believe that Samurais attract people because they are characterized to be the strong warriors with the intricate outfits that are Japan's defenders. The portrayal that the Samurai have also received through the media like movies also makes it a phenomenon and very popular with people. They are portrayed as the heroes that will be coming to save the day and are tough and no one can bring them down. Swords or any other type of weapon are typically what the Samurai are armed with. These tough characters are portrayed in animations that are aimed at young children.

The Samurai are people overall popular to Japanese culture because literature, media, and history because they have different aspects that make them very simple and complex figures.