

Bushido ethos in the contemporary culture of budo / Etos bushidō we współczesnej kulturze budō

Submission: 30.09.2006, acceptance: 18.10.2006

Key words: ethos, budo, bushido

At present the world of elite sport concentrates mainly on the physical aspect of performance, to lesser extent, on psychological conditions of success. Spiritual countenance of a competition has persisted in budo. The question should be asked whether such an assumption is true. To answer the question reference to samurai's bushido code and comparison it with the code of European and English knights ought to be done to acknowledge universal values which have remained in combat sports and martial arts. The code of bushido is in many ways similar to the code of knights although the backgrounds are different. Bravery, loyalty, honour, scorn of death, continuous training in aim to develop utmost skill were common to both, samurai and knights. These virtues, though highly valued in eastern and western culture, kept on waning with terminating of feudalism. But the spirit of bushido found its place in budo. Proclamation of Japanese emperor in 1882 depriving shoguns, daymios and samurais of their power converged with the foundation of famous judo school Kodokan. Dangerous jujutsu techniques were replaced with safe judo ones, kendo bamboo shinai substituted sharp as a razor katana, full contact karate gradually became semi contact to avoid deadly battle and replace it with sport competition.

Westernization of sport has changed the concept of budo spirit. It is clearly visible on judo example. Judo after joining Olympic programme in 1972 became similar to all other sports. It lost specificity of budo to a great extent. Best results in continental, world and Olympic competitions have become much more important than self-defence, forms of kata and technical perfection for the sake of study. Even the colour of uniforms has been changed to receive better media reception.

Nevertheless, the spirit of budo, though transformed, has been persevered in martial arts like aikido, iaido, karate and others, hopefully because adepts of budo martial arts train to achieve perfection of physis and spirit but not to compete for medals.

In our current world, in every sphere of human activity, success is only achieved by talent supported by hard work. But talent has many facets, some physical, some emotional and some spiritual. Contemporary elite sport concentrates mainly on the physical and to some lesser extent psychological facets; the spiritual is all but forgotten.

Sport science continues to develop amazingly quickly [Sozański 1989]. Every day it seems we know more about sport physiology, more about methods of developing and testing strength, speed and endurance etc. Sport has become almost qualitatively different, since the best results and world records cannot be achieved merely by increasing the quantity of work but by its quality and intensity [Sikorski 2004]. Scientists conducting their sports research have concentrated exclusively on the physiological and psychological markers of success; they have neglected the spiritual dimension of people.

It is our conviction that the spiritual power has survived in budo. The question is to what extent. To reply the question let us refer to the Code of Bushido, way of samurai, which inspired the combat sports and martial arts originating in Japan.

The Code of Bushido may be compared to the Code of European knights. It is true that there are similarities between these two codes, the Code of Bushido and the code of the medieval knights, but because of their cultural, philosophical geographical backgrounds there are also dissimilarities. While European knights served God and Catholic church, samurai's main obligation was to defend his own country and his sovereign. To the Samurai love of women was of minor importance, but for the knights women were targets of worship and reverence. Sakura,

a cherry bloom was a symbol of samurai, while the red rose was a favourite flower of European knights. Samurai did not care for material goods, but European knights hardly neglected wealth and possessions. If a samurai “lost face” he penalised himself and committed seppuku; there was no direct equivalent in mediavel culture of European knights.

Both knights and samurai wore armour and carried swords. Though the knights’ armour was of much higher quality, the Japanese sword called katana was superior. The katana was as sharp as a razor and it is often said that they could cut into two the legendary Spanish, Toledo sword. They were made with the utmost care, not by craftsmen but armourer`s artists and noblemen.

Katana were treated not as a tool but as an object of great reverence. Katana embodied the “spirit of samurai”, therefore they were admired and treated as if they were a samurai`s friend [Sikorski, Tokarski 1988].

Despite these worldly differences samurais and knights had much spiritually in common. They shared the virtues of bravery, loyalty, honour, and the scorn of death. They strove for excellence in fencing [Potkowski 1995; Takagi 2004; Seward 2000]. These virtues though highly valued in both mediavel cultures gradually eroded over time in the West, but in Japan the Bushido spirit, literally “The Way of the Warrior” did not disappear, it changed to find its place in budo, the spiritual foundation of the Eastern martial arts [Cynarski 2004].

The 1882 Proclamation of the Japanese Emperor deprived shoguns, daymios and samurais of their power just at the time of the foundation and development of the budo disciplines. The first famous judo school, Kodokan, was founded in Tokyo in that same year, that is in 1882. Jigoro Kano, one of the most educated men of his time, created a new budo sport. Some of the dangerous techniques found amongst a number of ju-jutsu schools were rejected, some other techniques were changed and judo as a gentle art of self-defence emerged as a new modern discipline and sport based on old samurai traditions. Not just the techniques were retained but the ancient virtues of gallantry, bravery, self-improvement and physical excellence were propagated.

From then new budo disciplines began to develop rapidly. The katana were either replaced with bamboo shinai in Kendo, or used only in Kata form in Iaido. At this time the gentle and refined art of Aikido was born. The deadly schools of atemiwaza changed first into an art and later into the sport of karate. Gradually budo disciplines, promoting universal moral virtues, became increasingly popular as martial arts and combat sports. Sport competitions replaced deadly battles and budo sports left borders of Japan [Tokarski 1989].

In the West the spirit of budo slowly continued to change. This change is most easily seen in judo. At its beginnings judo was more an art of self-defence than a sport. Due to the endeavours of its founder Jigoro Kano, many years after his death, judo joined the Olympic programme in 1972. The dream of Kano had come true. But then judo lost a lot from specificity of budo. Striving for excellence as the only virtue was substituted by striving for Olympic and championship medals. Sport results became more important then budo ideals and tradition. Even the colour of judogi, of the budo clothing has been changed to make the sports more attractive to the broadcasting media.

Nevertheless, budo spirit though modified persists in some budo sports and martial arts; aikido, iaido, jodo, karate, kendo, judo all retain a spiritual dimension. Some forms of Kata, that is studying techinques for the sake of study are also a remainder of the past. Film buffs are particularly exposed to the spirit of budo or bushido in such films as those of the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa “Throne of Darkness”, “Seven Samurais”, and “Red Beard” or more westernized Hollywood pictures “Ghost Dog San”, “Last Samurai” to name but two.

Currently the “westernized” budo spirit is at some times, and in some places carefully nursed and nurtuted by trainers and competitors of aikido, karate and judo. The westernized spirit is closer to traditional budo than that which remains in the cradle of budo, Japan. Japanese competitors and athletes are no longer exclusively dominant in budo disciplines as they were before such sports became so widely practised by people in most countries of the world.

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Słowa kluczowe: etos, budō, bushidō

STRESZCZENIE

Obecnie sport najwyższego wyczynu koncentruje się głównie na fizycznych, w mniejszym zakresie psychologicznych uwarunkowaniach sukcesu. Duchowy wymiar rywalizacji sportowej przetrwał w budō. Zachodzi pytanie, czy takie założenie jest prawdziwe. Ażeby na nie odpowiedzieć, cofnijmy się do czasów średniowiecza, kiedy japońscy samurajowie podporządkowani byli kodeksowi bushidō, a europejscy rycerze mieli również własny kodeks postępowania. Zastanówmy się, które z uniwersalnych wartości przetrwały w budō.

Kodeks bushidō na pierwszy rzut oka w wielu aspektach podobny jest do rycerskiego, chociaż uwarunkowania ich powstania były różne. Rycerzy i samurajów cechowała odwaga, lojalność, honor, pogarda dla śmierci, stałe doskonalenie się w sztuce wojennej. Wartości te blakną z upływem czasu, lecz duch bushidō wcielił się w budō. Gdy cesarz japoński pozbawił szogunów, daymio i samurajów prawa noszenia broni w 1882 r., powstała słynna szkoła jūdō Kōdōkan. Niebezpieczne techniki stosowane w jujutsu zastąpione zostały bezpiecznymi w jūdō, ostrą jak brzytwa katana zastąpił bambusowy shinai w kendo, *full contact* karate przerodziło się w *semi-contact*, aby śmiertelną walkę zamienić na sportową.

Westernizacja sportów walki zmieniła ducha budō. Jest to szczególnie widoczne na przykładzie judo, które po włączeniu na stałe do programu Igrzysk Olimpijskich w 1972 r. upodobiło się do innych dyscyplin sportowych, tracąc wiele ze specyfiki budō.

Rezultaty sportowe stały się ważniejsze od samoobrony, form kata czy doskonałości technicznej. Zmieniono nawet kolor jūdōgi, aby uzyskać lepszą percepcję w mediach. Jednakże duch budō, chociaż przekształcony, przetrwał w sztukach walki takich jak aikidō, iaidō, karate i wielu innych, bowiem adepci tych sztuk walki trenują nie żeby wygrywać, lecz by dążyć do osiągnięcia perfekcji fizycznej i duchowej.