

Representation of Bushido Values in Isaburo Sasahara's Character in Samurai Rebellion

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Abstract. Bushido is an ethics, morality and way of life of Samurai's life. Bushido originates from Buddhism concept, Zen. In Samurai Rebellion Film (1967) directed by Masaki Kobayashi tells about how Samurai rebels from it's feudal system. This study aims to analyze the representation of Bushido in Samurai Rebellion (1967) by Masaki Kobayashi. Descriptive-qualitative method is used in this study by gathering data and observing the film Samurai Rebellion. The result of this study proves there's four bushido principles found in the film, such as Chugi (loyalty), Gi (Morality), Meiyo (Pride) and Yu (bravery).

Keywords: Bushido, representation, movie

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

One of the most influential ethical frameworks in Japanese culture is Bushido, commonly understood as the moral code of the samurai. Bushido emphasizes key values such as loyalty, honor, righteousness, courage, and self-discipline, which historically guided samurai behavior and contributed significantly to the formation of Japanese cultural identity (Nitobe, 2004). In contemporary contexts, these values continue to be represented and reinterpreted through various forms of media, particularly film.

The film *Samurai Rebellion*, directed by Masaki Kobayashi, offers a compelling narrative that reflects these tensions. The character of Isaburo Sasahara is portrayed as a samurai who initially adheres to feudal authority but ultimately resists it when confronted with injustice affecting his family. His actions illustrate the conflict between loyalty (*chūgi*) and righteousness (*gi*), as well as the importance of honor (*meiyo*) and courage (*yū*). This makes his character a significant subject for examining how Bushido values are represented.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of Bushido has been widely discussed as a fundamental ethical system that shaped the behavior and identity of the samurai in Japanese history. According to Inazo Nitobe, Bushido represents a moral code that emphasizes values such as loyalty, honor, courage, and righteousness, which are deeply influenced by Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto philosophies (Nitobe, 1900/2004). These principles serve not only as personal ethical guidelines but also as a framework for social order and discipline.

In addition, Ruth Benedict highlights that Japanese culture places strong importance on honor and obligation, particularly in hierarchical relationships, which aligns closely with the values embedded in Bushido (Benedict, 1946/2005). This perspective helps explain why loyalty and obedience are

often central themes in narratives involving samurai characters. However, such values can also create internal conflict when personal morality contradicts social expectations.

From a cinematic perspective, films function as cultural texts that represent and reinterpret traditional values. As argued by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, film narratives construct meaning through character actions, dialogue, and visual elements, allowing audiences to understand complex moral and cultural issues (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). This makes film a relevant medium for analyzing how Bushido values are portrayed and transformed in modern storytelling.

Specifically, the film *Samurai Rebellion*, directed by Masaki Kobayashi, has been recognized for its critical perspective on feudal authority and its exploration of individual resistance. The character of Isaburo Sasahara represents a nuanced interpretation of Bushido, as he both embodies and challenges its principles. Previous studies have suggested that Kobayashi's works often question traditional power structures and emphasize humanistic values over blind loyalty (Prince, 2001).

Therefore, existing literature indicates that Bushido is not a static or monolithic code, but rather a dynamic ethical system that can be interpreted differently depending on context. This study builds upon these perspectives by focusing specifically on how Bushido values are represented in the character of Isaburo Sasahara, particularly in relation to moral conflict and character development within the film.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative-descriptive method, which aims to describe and understanding the meaning of a phenomenon in depth-based on qualitative data in the form of text, dialogue, and visual symbols.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the author's observations, the author concludes that there are four types of bushido values embodied in the film "Samurai Rebellion"

義 (Gi) - Integrity



Integrity, or justice, is a fundamental principle within the samurai code that refers to the capacity to address problems and make decisions through logical and reasoned judgment.

伊三郎： 誓え、与五郎。どのようなことがあっても壱を離さぬ。壱も誓うのだどのようなことがあっても与五郎から離るんだ

Isaburo: Chikae, Yogoro. Dono youna koto ga attemo Ichi o hanasanu. Ichi mo chikau noda dono you na koto ga atte mo yogoro kara hanarerunda

Isaburo: Swear, Yogoro. No matter what happens, you will not leave Ichi. Ichi, you too swear. No matter what happens you will stay by Yogoros side

Isaburo prohibit Ichi and Yogoro to leave each other, as Ichi was about to be taken by her former husband's family. In these scene Isaburo ask Ichi and Yogoro to run away because Isaburo felt that was the right decision

忠 (Chū) – Loyalty



Chū 忠 or chūgi 忠義 refer to fidelity to your clan and superiors within bushidō. Chū means loyal.. This is represented by the character chū 忠. Chūgi is a deeper loyalty that might be translated as devotion or righteous fidelity.

伊三郎： 拙者 もそう思う、しかし向けに断っては、どっちどっち面倒なことは送りそうやな

Isaburo: sessha mo so omou. shikashi mukeni kotowatte wa, docchi docchi ni mendou na koto wa okuri sou ya na

Isaburo : I think so. But if I refuse, It will be a trouble

“Mendou na koto” means trouble. The “trouble” that Isaburo means is the problem between Sasahara family. This means, Isaburo doesn't want a problem happened. Also it's the lord's order. A samurai must show a loyalty, although he doesn't agree, but he still obey the order.

名誉 (Meiyo) – Honorary



Honor can be understood as the effort to maintain one's reputation, personal integrity, and dignity, while remaining aware of the consequences of shame, in order to cultivate a society grounded in strong moral values.

伊三郎: では、いさぎよく

Isaburo: Dewa, isagi yoku

Isaburo: We will bravely do it

the “it” in the sentence, means they will bravely commits seppuku or suicide in Japanese tradition for their lord, although they weren't wrong for their action. His bravery to commits seppuku represents Meiyo (honorary).

勇 (Yū) – Bravery



He continues to fight courageously without showing any fear, even after being shot multiple times. Despite his injuries, he remains determined to stand his ground and protect what he believes is right. His confrontation with Tawewaki clearly illustrates the value of *Yū* (bravery), as he faces danger and death with unwavering resolve and commitment to his principles.

CONCLUSION

The Bushido values reflected in the character of Isaburo Sasahara include Chū (loyalty), Gi (righteousness), Meiyo (honor), and Yū (bravery). These principles are consistently conveyed through his responses and decisions in several pivotal moments throughout the film.

Rather than demonstrating blind obedience to his lord, Isaburo prioritizes his moral convictions, especially when authority contradicts justice. His actions illustrate a strong commitment to righteousness, as he chooses to act in accordance with what he believes is ethically right. In addition, his sense of honor is evident in his willingness to accept the consequences of his defiance, including the possibility of death.

Furthermore, Isaburo's bravery is demonstrated through his readiness to confront his enemies despite overwhelming odds. This courage is ultimately reinforced by his preparedness to perform seppuku (ritual suicide), reflecting his adherence to the samurai code and his determination to uphold his dignity and principles until the very end.

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