



SAMURAI - AN INTEGRAL PART OF JAPANESE HISTORY

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Abstract

In the presented work are discussed and analyzed life and activities of samurai - the specific Japanese phenomenon, their rise in the military arena, and finally - the end. In this context, attention is focused on their code of moral and ethical behavior - bushido, ideology, lifestyle, military art, etc. From the very beginning, it should be emphasized that the samurai layer is an integral component of Japanese history, as throughout the long period of the Middle Ages it was one of the main actors in the political, military and socio-economic life of the country. The samurai first appeared in the arena of history in the 8th century as armed squads of individual feudal lords. Since that time, their status and importance gradually increased, which was directly related to the current processes in the country. This includes, first of all, permanent internal wars between feudal clans, the main actors of which were the samurai. They were obliged to serve faithfully their master, protecting his interests both in times of war and in times of peace.

Samurais reached the zenith of their power in the 16th century, when they became one of the most privileged classes of the

country. However, later, their status changed radically, which was connected with the bourgeois revolution of 1867/1868 and with the current so-called Meiji reforms. The result of the mentioned events was the overthrow of the military-feudal system - the Shogunate and restoration of the sole rule of the emperor in Japan. In the new historical reality, when Japan embarked on the path of Westernization of development, the military units of the samurai were already recognized as a time-worn remnant of the feudal system. That is why the samurai army was declared abolished, and therefore, it has already become a part of history.

Keywords: Samurai; Japan; Zen-Buddhism; Bushido; Shogunate.

Introduction

Analogies of the existence of a professional warrior stratum can be found in abundance in the history of European and Asian countries of the feudal age. Among them, the layer of Japanese samurai stands out its specific and original characteristics. That's why there is an inexhaustible interest in it both in the historical past and in the modern period. This is evidenced by existence of a large number of scientific works, fiction, films of various genres and theatrical performances dedicated to the life and activities of samurai, their selfless battles, heroic deeds, military art, etc. Nevertheless, in general, the topic of samurai is so all-embracing that it contains still inexhaustible material for research and study. This is exactly the purpose of the presented paper. In particular, there are presented the main stages of the life and activities of the samurai, the ground of their origin and the circumstances of their rise in chronological order. The mentioned processes started in the 8th century and obtained finished appearance in the 16th century, when the military layer of the samurai became one of the most privileged classes in Japan. The flourishing period in the middle of the 19th century was followed by the limitation of the spheres of influence and privileges of the samurai, and finally this process was crowned with the overthrow of the samurai layer. In 1867/1868, one

of the most important in the list of Meiji reforms, carried out in Japan according to the Western model, was the issue of the samurai. In particular, the combat formations of the samurai under individual feudal lords were declared illegal, and the samurai themselves were given the opportunity to enter the government state service. Dissatisfied with the reforms, the samurai started an armed rebellion to restore their rights, but this did not have the desired result - the government suppressed the rebellion with the harshest methods. In such a way ended the historical epic of the samurai, who were at their zenith for centuries. The above-mentioned issues are presented in the work, based on the study of various scientific literature, comparison and critical analysis of the information about the life and activities full of dramatic events of the samurai, preserved in them.

Methods

In order to study the issues presented in the paper, we have used the historical-descriptive method, which means finding cause-effect relationships of historical facts and events, presenting their characteristics objectively and analyzing them, on the basis of which it becomes possible to draw appropriate conclusions. In the research process is also used the historical-comparative, content understanding and research method based on mutual comparison of scientific literature and critical analysis of their data.

Discussion

A unique phenomenon in the history of the peoples of the world is the warrior class of the Japanese samurai, which is radically different from the military forces of the European or Asian countries of the feudal age with its originality, specific characteristics, mysterious way of life, ideology and culture. It was the strict historical conditions of Japan of the feudal age, which conditioned appearance of the mentioned layer, interest in which never dies away. This is evidenced by a great number of scientific works and fiction, as well as films and theater performances of various genres, dedicated to the life and activities of the samurai, their self-sacrificing battles, heroic deeds, military art, etc. However, in general, the subject of the samurai is so

multifaceted that it continues to be an inexhaustible source of material for research and study.

The term “samurai” comes from the Japanese verb “saburau”. later it underwent transformation into the form of “samurai”, which means service, protection of the master. From here, a military serviceman of a noble person or a feudal lord was called samurai. At first, the terms “samurai” and “bushi” (in Japanese it means - a warrior) were used for mentioning those persons, who served as sentinels in the Imperial Palace, patrolling in the streets of the city, on the squares and they also fulfilled the functions of the police (Iskenderov, 1984: 337-339; Teims, 2009: 81-84). Later, as a result of strengthening of feudal relationships in Japan, they called “samurai” the members of the armed squads, formed by the owners of the shioens – specific kinds of estate for protecting their territories from the attacks of the opposing feudal lords and suppressing the riots of the peasants.

Samurai belonged to the class of peasants, that is, they were of populace origin, who first were attached to the ground. Some of them, mostly physically strong peasants, voluntarily joined the suzerain’s military service as guards. The first samurai squads appeared in Japan in the 8th century. Their main obligation was serving their master with devotion both in the period of peace and war. In the wake of the aggravation of the relations between the feudal clans, a small number of samurai troops were spreading out and becoming an army. In return for faithful service, they were receiving food, shelter, and sometimes - even a land with peasants. So, a certain part of the samurai with time were becoming influential feudal lords, who exploited their former comrades - peasants. The samurai of that time were already far away from the land and the peasant class. (Gelashvili, 2012: 162). The significant contributing factors to the formation of the military layer were the incessant feudal internal wars, peasants’ riots, as well as wars against Ainu people – descendants of the ancient settlers of Japan, living in the north-west part of the country. In these battles were also actively involved peasants, evicted from the state lands, who were uniting in the samurai squads (Spevakovsky, 1981: 11). More often in

the country were the military oppositions between the feudal clans, more urgent was becoming the necessity of the samurais' force. So, wars were their main source of livelihood.

In consequence strengthening, the samurai stratum was formed into a complex hierarchical system: it was divided into ranks of different levels, whose rights and obligations, property and material condition were different from each other. Also, each of them had its own name. From the political processes in Japan of the Middle Ages, the privileges of the samurai became more and more wide, and finally they were formed into an independent class. Accordingly, they were moving higher and higher on the hierarchical ladder, they were competing with the old family aristocracy in the power and privileges. Some of them had penetrated into the highest echelons of the governmental pyramid and were included in the nearest circle of Shogun (Teims, 2009: 100-101). The aforementioned processes started in the 12th century and were completed in the 16th century, when the military layer of the samurai has reached the peak of its strength and turned into the most privileged class in Japan.

The formation of the layer of the samurai was followed by creation of codex of their moral and ethical norms – Bushido³, in which were included the rights and obligations of the samurai, the norms of behavior, system of moral principles, worldview etc. According to Bushido, a samurai should have three main traits: wisdom, humanity and courage. The moral principles which were mentioned in the codex were built on these features. Among them, a special attention was focused on such spiritual values as: devotion to work, principledness, courage, honesty, modesty, ability to self-control, abstinence, hatred for personal profit and money (Japan in Modern History, 1995: 89-90; Inazo, 2012: 56). Bushido instilled in his followers the feeling of love and respect towards weapon, and at the same

³Bushido is made of three hieroglyphs: 1. Bu - stopping a spear; 2. Shi – warrior, knight, a noble man, that is, bushi is a man who is able to maintain peace either by fighting or by any other means. 3. Do – way. In short, the term “Bushido” is translated as “the way of the warrior”.

time, scolded its inappropriate use. Based on the ethic norms of Bushido the highest appreciation for a samurai was such kind of epitaph on his grave: "He had never oppressed a weak and never retreated before a strong" (Pictorial Encyclopedia of Japanese Culture, 1990: 34-35). Bushido has become a tradition throughout the ages and accomplishes a regulating function in Japan in modern times as well. Its spirit governs the behavior of Japanese people in many ways, consciously or unconsciously they follow it (Pronikov, Ladanov, 1991: 131). So, the roots of Bushido are deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Japanese.

Chinese treatises played an important role in the formation of the tactics and strategies of the samurai battle. The treatise about military art of Sun Tzu, a great Chinese military chief of the 6th-5th centuries B.C. is recognized as the best of all them, which for a long time was the main guide of the military science not only in China, but also beyond its borders, including in Japan. It describes in detail all the peculiarities of war tactics and strategy. Due to its importance, the mentioned work has been translated into many languages of the world, including Georgian (Sun Tsu, 2009: 5-7).

Formation of necessary skills for a samurai was determined by a specially developed system of teaching and training, which consisted of a wide range of different disciplines. In schools for future samurai, together with military subjects (fencing, archery, horse riding and various martial arts), were taught: psychology, ethics, Chinese and Japanese history, literature, philosophy, Chinese language, etc. The purpose of this was that samurai should be not only a good warrior, but also educated and intellectually sophisticated person. Samurai's title was hereditary: Samurai's son obligatorily should become samurai (initially this concerned the girls too) and he was aware about this from his childhood That's why the greatest attention was paid to the upbringing of the next generation in the spirit of Bushido. The son became the heir of the family, the successor of the family name, and accordingly, his birth was celebrated pompously. When he was one year old, his father offered him a toy sword as a symbol. From the childhood they

taught a future samurai to respect adults and above all his parents, were cultivating a sense of loyalty to his suzerain (Spevakovsky, 1981: 19). The teachers of young samurai were highly respected, who were training in them such qualities as: courage, endurance, calmness, strong will. They were given such tasks which were related to overcoming fear, for example: they were sending them to the cemetery at night, were making them walk barefoot in winter, spend the night in the open air, they were periodically forbidden to eat, etc.

At the age of 15, a samurai was already considered an adult and he was given a real weapon (before that he was not allowed to carry a weapon), first of all it was a sword, and girls were given a small dagger. At the same time, the new samurai hairstyle sakayaki was made to them: the upper part of the head was shaved, the rest of the hair was polished with grease, tied on the back of the head like a ponytail, and either braided or tied together. (Clavell, 1977: 34-35). A special head-dress was put on the young man's head (eboshi - in Japanese) and he was dressed in the clothes of an older samurai. During this solemn ceremony the whole family was going to the temple, where the son was baptized with a new name (Spevakovsky, 1981: 38-39). From now on, the young samurai gained freedom in his actions and decisions, he became a full-fledged member of his class. In this context, it is worth noting that the word of a samurai was believed without any guarantee, he was not taking an oath, as it was considered a violation of his honor. In order to develop the necessary skills, the samurai was obliged to train his soul and body, to take care of self-perfection. He had to limit his personal needs as much as possible and he had to keep himself with dignity in society. At the same time, he should not reveal his inner feelings - his facial expression was devoid of emotions, like an immovable mask, so that the opponent would not know his spiritual mood.

Not only the inner spiritual world and the lifestyle of the samurai were outstanding, he also differed visually from other layers of society. In every day life samurai wore a gray kimono, wide trousers (hakama) and a robe (heoso) of the traditional pattern. Their Kimono

was decorated with a coat of arms or moni, which depicted some geometric figure or even animals and celestial bodies, often moni was applied to helmets and weapons. In a ceremonial situation, a samurai above his clothes was wearing a starched cloak (haori hakama), which had raised shoulders like wings, and on the back of it was a coat of arms of a certain samurai master (Turnbull, 2007: 6).

The samurai must always be exceptionally neat: in dress, hairstyle, cleanliness, to which he devoted a certain amount of time in his daily routine, he was obliged to get up at six o'clock every morning, then bathe, rub his hands and feet with pumice stone, cut his nails, shave the hair on his forehead (as above it was noted the samurai had a special hairstyle), he sprayed a special liquid on himself. His food ration consisted mainly of fish, rice, algae, fruits and vegetables, soy products were also widely used. During peacetime, samurai spent most of their time in combat training. Different combat techniques created at that time laid the foundation for many modern military arts, for example: fencing, aikido, kendo, judo, karate, sumo... Most of them nowadays have turned from a military art into a sport, however, at the same time, in them are included religious philosophy, as well as spiritual and moral aspects (Naoki Takei, 2001: 58-59).

Along with the exercises, the samurai had appropriate time for rest. At such a time, they were busy with various arts, for example: painting, poetry, listening to music and storytellers of epic works, playing Japanese chess - shogi and Chinese board game - Go. The latter were not only simple means of entertainment, but also serious intellectual, mental exercises in the strategy and tactics of fighting. The best way to relax was the tea drinking ceremony in the teahouses. The samurai were entertaining themselves also with the so-called Kemari – It was a game with a ball (made of a deer skin and filled with sawdust) that spread from China and was popular among the aristocrats of the palace court. It is worth noting that the samurai, fond of noisy entertainment, preferred to drink alcoholic beverages, and spending time with beauties in joy quarters (Turnbull, 2009: 53). Among the spectacular entertainments, the No Theater was the most

favorite for them, which was based on the ideology of the samurai - the principles of Zen Buddhism.

It is clear that along with all of the above, special attention was paid to having the weapons in order, which had to be in constant combat readiness. Each one was carefully cleaned, polished, inspected and kept in a safe place. As for the samurai's military equipment, in the early times the main weapon was the bow, a little later the sword and the spear were added to it. In the middle of the 16th century, firearms entered Japan from Europe (through Portuguese traders), which made a real revolution in the military field, the tactics and strategy of the battle were changed, and the military art was refined. (Ebrey and others, 2009: 182-183). Incessant internal wars, current in Japan were redounding to perfection of the martial art, refinement of production of various equipment and weapons, which, in its turn was a result of development at the highest level of applied craftsmanship

The technology of making samurai weapons was raised to the rank of art, which was possessed only by a select group of masters. In this context, first of all, we should mention the legendary sword of samurai - katana. It should be emphasized that the samurai sword was not an ordinary weapon, it was considered a sacred object, and the art of making it was considered one of the most honorable and prestigious profession. That is why these masters benefited from the special protection of the great feudals (i.e. daimyos). As their craft was considered sacred, before starting work on the manufacture of each weapon, the craftsman was performing a particular ritual of purification, praying and putting on clean white clothes. According to an established belief, during making of the sword the master instilled benevolent wishes into him, which was perceived as a harbinger of success and victory in battle. Hence, the defeat or the success of a samurai on the battlefield was attributed to the strength of the spirit of the sword and the professionalism of the craftsman (İskenderov, 1984: 56; Stanley-Baker, 2002: 112). The technology of making a sword was a very difficult process. Numerous very thin layers of iron and steel should be welded together so tightly that the sword obtains a very strong and sharp

blade. For this reason, long and diligent work was necessary. It is interesting that when the sword was handed to the owner, no one but him should have touched it, as this was considered a great insult. In the event of samurai's death, his sword was buried with him, and in a broken form, so that no one could use it again. Samurai spears, bows and exotic headdresses were also works of art. Special types of wood and plants were used to make spears and bows, which were carefully processed, polished and varnished. The samurai battle helmet (kabuto) was made of iron, the upper part of it was richly and pompously decorated with deer and bull horns, colorful feathers, papier-mâché sea shells, theatrical masks and other decorations to give a more impressive battle appearance and make a visual effect (Turnbull, 2007: 33). All this made the helmet a fine piece of art.

The warrior brought up in the spirit of Bushido was very well aware about his obligations and responsibilities towards his suzerain. A true samurai was considered one who was ready to die on the battlefield or kill himself, but not to be captured. In this regard, the Japanese samurai were sharply different from the Western European Medieval knights. If the fact that he was in captivity did not cast a shadow of shame on this latter, for a samurai it was simply unimaginable: he preferred to die than to be captured. If he showed cowardice and tried to stay alive at any cost, he and his whole family, would be disgraced and dishonored forever (Varley and Nobuko, 1970: 32-33). That's why there were frequent cases when soldiers killed themselves on the battlefield to escape the enemy's hands. This brutal ritual, which is well known, is called hara-kiri. Hara – in Japanese literally means the stomach, while figuratively means the soul, mind, hidden thoughts; kiri means to dissect, open, disembowel. Thus, harakiri means disembowelment of the stomach. However, there was a deeper meaning in this term; in particular, traditionally, the Japanese consider the stomach as the seat of a person's emotional existence its dissection was perceived as revealing of hidden and true intentions. By this action, the warrior was likely liberating his burdened with sins soul from his body (Pronikov, Ladanov, 1991: 131-132). We note also

here that Japanese themselves more often use the terms – “sepuku” or “kapuku” to indicate the mentioned ritual and in the Western world - it became known as “harakiri”. It is right that both words (sepuku and harakiri) are written with the same hieroglyphs, but they are read in different ways. This is explained by the fact that, in one case, hieroglyphs are read according to Chinese language (sepuku) and in the second case – according to Japanese i.e. harakiri (Kodex Bushido, 2003: 12).

Samurai killed himself with hara-kiri in the following cases: if he would violate the norms of Bushido, dishonor would be brought upon his dignity, he would be captured by an adversaire, he would sell the pass or could not fulfill his master's task for any reason, as well as in case of his suzerain's death. It should be emphasized that hara-kiri was prerogative only of the samurai, thus it was underlined that they were extremely brave, fearless and strong-willed. Tsukahara Bohuden, the recognized master of samurai sword making, wrote: “Dying with one's own sword is the greatest honor for a true samurai, his sword never is a suicide weapon, it is an executive instrument of spiritual self-determination and self-discipline: know your soul, master your thought, and death will turn into nothingness, emptiness, the moment of your glory” (Ratiani, 2000: 65).

It should be emphasized that hara-kiri was not a simple suicide, but represented the ritual, equal of a theatrical performance, raised to the rank of art. It was performed in night hours in the residence of the lord of a convicted samurai, in a solemn situation. With the accompaniment of musical instruments, sitting on his knees on a red silken cushion (rarely, standing) samurai with a special sword (in Japanese - kusungobo), which was 25 cm long and was the family relic, was cutting his stomach first from left to right, then vertically. In addition, the stomach should be cut in such a way that its insides were visible for the people around him (although, there were existing other kinds of wounds too). It was believed that in this way the warrior was freeing his soul from his body, at the same time proving that he was a brave and fearless knight. Later, especially in the period before the restoration of Meiji

(1867/1868) the aforementioned procedure was simplified: one forcing of a dagger into the stomach was enough, or an assistant person (in Japanese - kaishiaku) was cutting the head of a condemned to death with a sword. Over time, this function was assigned to the executioner (Pronikov, Ladanov, 1991: 133-134; Gelashvili, 2012: 171). In general, the way of wounding depended on the samurai himself, his endurance, willpower and patience. In the event when the hara-kiri process was procrastinating, or the wounded samurai did not die, the assistant person ended his suffering by cutting his throat. This mission was a prerogative of a close friend or relative of the suicider. In addition to this, two more people were participating in the ritual: one of them gave a small sword to the samurai and the second one was showing his head to the present people for identifying (Spevakovsky, 1981: 41; Kodex Bushido 2003: 15).

The mentioned ceremony got its finished appearance at the beginning of the Edo period, that is, from the beginning of the 17th century, when it was being accomplished with great pompousness. Every detail was strictly defined, dressing of the participants of the ritual, the procedure scenario and regulations. In addition, for samurais of different material abilities the place of its fulfillment was different, where beforehand they were building special stall. Despite the brutality of hara-kiri's act, special attention should be paid to its aesthetic aspect and, as a whole, the procedure had solemn character. The samurai, who was condemned to death, invited his relatives the night before, had fun with them and was drinking sake, and at the end he addressed the audience with a farewell speech. The method of performing hara-kiri and the necessary skills were taught to the children of a samurai, both, girls and boys, from their childhood. (Inazo, 2012: 107). In old times, samurai's wife cut her throat together with him with a dagger, which was offered by her husband as a wedding gift, or with a sword, which her father gave her on her birthday, when she became of major age. Samurai's wife had to kill herself not only in the case of her husband's death, but also in the case of offending her self-esteem or breaking a promise. Fortunately, as time went on, this heaviest obligation was rem-

oved from samurai's wives, but after becoming a widow, they had not right to remarry.

When talking about hara-kiri, there is one more circumstance which merits attention; it is known that according to Christian faith, suicide is considered a great sin. In Japan, it was traditionally considered a symbol of courage and bravery, and the person, who encroached on his life with his own hand, thereby proved his spiritual and physical strength. That's why eternal glory awaited him. The result of such an approach to the issue was that the entire history of Japan is full of various kinds of suicidal deaths, which often were of collective character. At the first place among them were those who were in love with each other, which is called *shinjiu* (agreed upon self-murder in Japanese). It was also called *deaioshi* (in Japanese – romantic suicide) (Pronikov, Ladanov, 1991: 135). It is true that from the second half of the 17th century, these kind self-murders were officially forbidden, but they have taken such deep roots in the consciousness of the Japanese people that they have not disappeared even afterwards. It seems, that it was partly determined by the social environment, the special national traits and traditions, from this point of view, the moral and ethical norms of Bushido were playing no less important role. It should be also taken into consideration that the Japanese believed from ancient times that a man can be born for many times. Hence, to leave life in this world with dignity was considered as a determining condition for the better following life (Kodex Busido, 2003: 14).

Centuries ago, when the samurai were the leading avant-garde of the country, they were in the area of proper attention of artists and writers as well. Theatrical performances, fiction works, odes, portraits of famous samurai, etc. were dedicated to their life and achievements. At the end of the 12th century, historical and heroic fiction was widely spread in literature. Its newest genre was *Gunka* (in Japanese, it means – recordings about the warriors), in which was shown the courage of the samurai on the field of battle, the episodes depicting their loyalty for their suzerains, their indifferent attitude towards death. In them were also described some dramatic scenes of domestic wars. It is also

noteworthy that the author of some of the gunks also recorded the negative aspects of actions and behavior of the samurai, as: treachery, severeness, rude behavior, care about personal profit and prosperity (Iskenderov, 1984: 64). It is clear, that such an image of samurai was very different from the morality of Bushido. It is possible that the authors of the military epos were pointing to the fact that the samurai like mere mortals had both, positive and negative traits of character. It is the genre of Gunka, to which belong the best literary works of Kamakura Period (1192-1333) in which the various segments of the battle epic are presented in depth and completeness.

In this context, the historical-literary monument “Hagakure” (“Hidden under the Leaves”), which has been translated into various languages of the world, including Georgian (Yamamoto Tsunetomo, 2010), merits a special attention. The texts included in the work were written by the heads of the samurai clan and are addressed to the warriors. They were published as a collection in the 18th century. The leitmotif of the work are admonitions and appeals to receive education, to study, to obey the parents and the lord, to be faithful and honest. In total, discussions, described events and advices, presented in “Hagakure” are recognized as the standards of samurai’s honesty, dignity, intelligence and wisdom.

The ideology of the samurai. As well as the topic of samurai in general, their ideology is of interest, which completely determined their way of life and credo. At the beginning, the object of faith of the samurai was the god of the Buddhist sect - Jiodo - Amida (the same Amitabha). First it should be said that the samurai took those elements from all the religious doctrines, spread in Japan, which were especially close to their spiritual world. Bushido itself was also closely related with Eastern religious and was fed with their philosophical and ethical doctrines. For example, Buddhism included in Bushido the belief in the inevitability of fate, the feeling of strength towards danger and trouble, calm attitude towards life and a cold-hearted attitude towards death. From Shintoism, the ancient national faith of Japan Bushido adopted love of the homeland, the cult of the ancestors, modesty and

obligations of children towards the parents. Characteristic for Shintoism deification of certain things, such as swords, was directly suiting the samurai fighting spirit. (Spevakovsky, 1981: 38). Confucianism also significantly influenced their worldview, in particular, five dogmas regarding the relationship between humans: the younger obeys the elder, the son obeys his father, the servant - his master, the wife obeys her husband, among the friends the relations are egalitarian. So, the samurai religious worldview was forming on the basis of the synthesis of Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucian dogmas, that is, by combining their specific elements (Inazo, 2012: 50-51). Finally, the dominant position in the samurai life took one of original trends of Buddhism (some authors also call it a sect) Zen-Buddhism⁴, which became their main ideology.

The structure of Zen-Buddhism includes both religious and social-psychological foundations, as well as worldview, which is related with different aspects of human life and activities. In the 12th century, Zen got into Japan from China, where it was divided into several directions. Among them, Rinzai and Soto became the most powerful and important. Their founders were Buddhist monks Eisai (1141-1215) and Dogen (1200-1253), who in China received the title of "Teacher of Zen" and after returning to their homeland, began to preach new doctrines. It should be noted that Eisai is considered as the founder of the ritual ceremony of drinking tea in Japan, as the integral component of Zen (The Cambridge History of Japan, 3, 1997: 585-587; Sources of Japanese Tradition, I, 2001: 308-309). From the two mentioned directions of Zen, Soto became more popular in the villages, among middle rank samurai and peasants, and Rinzai was widely spread in the intellectual layer of the society and in the highest-rank samurai (Kaiten, 2002: 5-7). Zen-Buddhism, together with religion, has got a great socio-psychological and aesthetic importance, and in the modern

⁴ Zen-Buddhism - the term "Zen" (in Chinese - Chan) comes from the Sanskrit "Dhyana", which has become "Zen" according to the phonetic norms of the Japanese language. Zen means self-immersion, meditation, concentration of attention, gaze. Its founder is considered to be the Indian Buddhist monk Bodhidharma, who came to China from India at the beginning of the 6th century and started preaching.

period, it became close to sociology, psychology and psychiatry. On the whole, the ideas of Zen Buddhism have become the integral part of the Japanese reality during the centuries, that is, their presence is so natural that they are perceived as independently existing and indispensable segment.

The samurai interest in Zen Buddhism was not accidental, as its requirements were strangely perfectly adapted to the lifestyle of the warrior class, in particular: strict self-discipline, bravery, mercy, parsimony, loyalty of a vassal to his suzerain, simplicity, and most importantly, Zen Buddhism considered military service as the main obligation of a man (Kaiten, 2002: 12). In addition to this, Zen Buddhism saw the way of liberation from suffering only in interior radiance, in apostasy from all worldly pleasures and luxuries. It is worth noting that Zen contained the Confucian ideas as well in connection with the obedience of younger to older and the eternity of the existing social laws (Michiko Yusa, 2002: 96). Zen preached that everything in this world is transient and limited to a short period of time. And death is inevitable and eternal, so the sooner its time comes, the more beautiful life is. According to Zen, a person who is always ready to die is perfect. Death is not dangerous, doubt is dangerous – as the decision is made, there shouldn't be any way back. (Ratiani, 2000: 61). From this came the cold-hearted and fearless attitude of the samurai towards death. “Life is short, death is eternal” - the samurai were guided by this motto. Zen inspired the warrior to be unperturbed and restrained in the face of the enemy, thanks to his iron will he would overcome any obstacle and win easily.

During the long existence of the military layer of the samurai there were the periods of their flourishing, success, decline, and finally fall that was directly related with political and socio-economic processes in Japan. In the 16th century, the samurai layer reached the zenith of its strength, and as one of the main components of the highest echelons of the state got to the top step of the social ladder. This, first of all, was due to the perpetual feudal internal wars, the main driving force of which were the samurai. It is from the golden age of the

samurai that comes the well-known Japanese proverb: “Among the flowers - cherry, among the humans - samurai” (Spevakovsky, 1981: 19).

The samurai's situation in Japan was radically changed in the 19th century, in particular, when the country transitioned from a war-like militarized lifestyle to a peaceful, civilian lifestyle the samurai gradually lost their status and privileges. New events in the political and socio-economic fields, especially the bourgeois revolution of 1867-1868, finally determined their fate: at the end of 1867 Tokugawa dynasty was overthrown and the Shogunate history ended. With this act, the imperial government was restored in Japan and the country moved to a new level of development. In the background of the reforms, the samurai lost their ground and their intense career came to an end. Of course, this did not happen without pain, and the samurai did not willingly yield their positions. They demanded the restoration of their privileges and rights, there were local riots and conflicts with state army units (Ravina, 2004: 188). The largest rebellion started in 1877, which was led by former Japanese Minister of War Saigo Takamori (1838-1877). The reason for the rebellion was a law issued by the government banning carrying of weapons by those, who were not in official military service. The samurai considered this as a personal insult, and the army of Saigo Takamori, concentrated in the Satsuma principality, moved from the south to the north - towards the capital. The bloody conflict which continued for several months between the military formations of the government and the rebelled samurai ended with the defeat of the latter on September 24, 1877. Wounded in battle, Saigo Takamori, as a decent samurai, chose death rather than being captured by the enemy and ended his life with hara-kiri - he asked one of his comrades to cut off his head (Papinot, 1972: 526; Ravina, 2004: 191-193). The Japanese people made his name a legend and in 1899, as a national hero, a monument was erected to him at the entrance of one of Tokyo's central parks - Ueno.

Conclusion

After the failure of the aforementioned rebellion, a large number of samurai entered the service of the bourgeois monarchy (in

particular, the government army, police, military schools, fire brigades, etc.), a small number of them found refuge in underground terrorist groups and were killing unwanted political figures. A certain part of the samurai, due to the lack of material wealth, lowered themselves, some engaged in trade and craftsmanship, which until then were considered as the dishonorable activities. Some of them moved to the village and started working on the land (Varley, 1984: 213-214; Ebrey and others, 2009: 342). In this way ended the epic saga of samurai in Japan, full of dramatic events. As this layer in the created political reality became one of the main remnants of the feudal regime, therefore, logically, at the specific stage of the historical development, it should become a part of history and so it happened. However, in any case, the ideology of the samurai and their traditional moral values remained the essential criterion of the spiritual life of the Japanese nation. It should also be noted that, as time went on, Bushido has become a tradition, and to some extent it is still fulfilling a regulatory function in Japan, its soul governs the actions of Japanese people in many ways, consciously or subconsciously they follow its principles.

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