

# 武士道とは

大規模自然災害が相次ぐ日本。被災地報道を通して世界からせられるのが、不安な状況下でも秩序ある行動や社会生活の規範を見失わない日本人に対する共感の声です。2011年3月11日の東日本大震災後には世界で静かな武士道ブームが起きました。悲しみにあってなお、互いに助け合い節度を守る被災地の皆さんの姿に海外の人達は敬意を抱くと共に、日本人ならではの共有感覚として武士道的な精神を感じたからです。そもそも武士道とは何か？簡単に説明するのは難しいことですが、武士道精神の本質に少しでも近付けるよう、その意味を探っていきましょう。

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## 「武士道とは何ですか？」聞かれても、簡単には答えられない

仕事や留学、観光などで海外に行ったとき、日本人でありながら、日本のことを何も知らないと感じさせられることはないでしょうか。日本への関心や知識が深い海外の友人から、日本文化や歴史について尋ねられ答えに窮することも少なくありません。

例えば「武士道とはどのようなものですか？」と尋ねられて、即答できる人はどのくらいいるのでしょうか？武士道から連想するのは、厳格さや信義を重んじる精神、年長者を敬い、弱者をいたわり、不正を許さず、誇りを守るためには命をも厭わない……。とっさに思い浮かべるのは、なかなか厳格な世界で、現代人の私達にはどこか近寄り難いものを感じさせます。

## 武士道とは？まずは辞書を引いてみよう

国語辞典では、武士道をどのように表しているのでしょうか？代表的な2つの辞書をあたってみると、以下のように説明されています。

日本において武士の間に形成された道徳。鎌倉時代に始まり、江戸時代、儒教、特に朱子学に裏付けされつつ発展し、明治維新後国民道徳として強調された。主君に対する絶対的忠節を重視し、犠牲・礼儀・質素・儉約・尚武などが求められた。士道。

「大辞林 第四版」三省堂

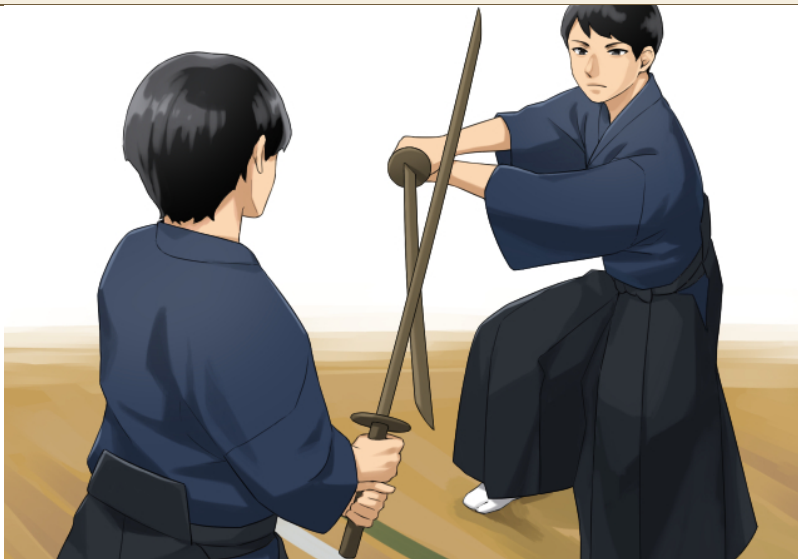
日本の武士階層に発達した道徳。鎌倉時代から「弓矢の道」としてあり、江戸時代に儒教とくに朱子学に裏付けられて確立、封建体制の精神的な柱となり、明治以降国民道徳の中心とされた。主君への絶対的な忠誠のほか、信義・尚武・名誉などを重んずる。葉隠「一と云ふは死ぬ事と見付たり」

「広辞苑 第七版」岩波書店

「犠牲・礼儀・質素・儉約・尚武 [しょうぶ：武事・軍事を尊ぶこと] などが求められ」「信義・尚武・名誉などを重んずる」など、武士道と聞いて思い浮かべる要素と道徳・倫理が深い関係にあることは間違いのないようです。

気になるのは「主君に対する絶対的忠節を重視」「明治以降国民道徳の中心とされ」という記述。これは幕府が瓦解してから明治維新を経て富国強兵の道を歩み、国民が戦争にかり出され、多くの犠牲を払った歴史と、国家統制に武士道が用いられた経緯を想起させます。

これぞ「武士道」という定義はない？！



鍛錬により培われる武士道

武士道は、明文化され、定義付けられた教えではありません。辞書にも記されていた「武士道と云ふは死ぬ事と見付たり」という有名な一節で知られる、「山本常朝」（やまもとつねとも）の「葉隠」（はがくれ）は、[佐賀藩鍋島家](#)代々の武士の心得を記したものの。

それ以前にも、[武田家](#)の軍学書「甲陽軍鑑」（こうようぐんかん）、「宮本武蔵」が兵法の奥義を記した「五輪書」など、武士の心得を描いた書物は数多くあります。

また、琵琶法師の語りで平家一門の盛衰を描いた「[平家物語](#)」にも、武士道精神を感じさせる場面がしばしば登場しました。しかし、いずれも「武士道とは何か」を定める決定的な書物ではありません。

武士道は、武士が武道に励む鍛錬の場や戦場で重ねた様々な経験。日頃の暮らしや家庭教育、ときには先祖や先人達の体験談や家々などの口伝を通して、年月をかけて育まれ、醸成されたものとされています。

## 近代の視点で「武士道」を解釈。海外に伝えた人



新渡戸稲造像

日本人にとっても極めて曖昧だった武士道を、日本的な生き方の美学や社会における道徳・倫理観、宗教的要素も含めた死生観などを包み込

む考え方として近代人の視点で捉え直し、海外に紹介したのが「新渡戸稲造」（にとべいなぞう）の著書「武士道」です。

著書・武士道は、1899年（明治32年）アメリカのフィラデルフィアで出版され、「岡倉天心」（おかくらてんしん）の「茶の本」と並び、明治期に日本人が英語で日本人の心と文化を海外に紹介した重要な著作となりました。

### 異文化交流の先駆者。スケールの大きな明治の国際人

新渡戸稲造は、[岩手県盛岡市](#)に生まれた教育者、思想家、農学・農政経済学者です。13歳で東京英語学校に学び、そののち札幌農学校、東京帝国大学を経て「太平洋の架け橋になりたい」と米国私費留学を決意し、ジョンズ・ホプキンス大学に入学。生涯の伴侶となる「メアリー・エルキントン」（日本名・新渡戸万里子）と出会います。

そののち、母校札幌農学校へ赴任し、官費ドイツ留学でハレ大学にて農業経済学の博士号を取得。同郷、「後藤新平」（ごとうしんぺい）の招聘で赴いた台湾総督府では製糖事業の基礎を築き、その後、京都帝国大学教授、第一高等学校（旧制一高）校長、[東京女子大学](#)初代学長、東京女子経済専門学校初代校長などを歴任し、のちに国際連盟事務次長も務めます。

明治期に広く世界を見渡し、教育、とりわけ明治～大正期に、女子教育に熱心に取り組むような先進的な意識を持ったスケールの大きな国際人でした。

### 若き日の海外体験が、著書・武士道の執筆につながる

新渡戸稲造の著書・武士道、その執筆のきっかけとなったのはドイツ留学時、尊敬するベルギーの高名な法学者エミール・ド・ラブレーによる「宗教教育がない日本では、どのように道德教育を授けているのか？」という問いかけでした。その場で即答できず困惑した新渡戸稲造は、少年時代に学んだ道德上の戒めや正邪善悪の観念を形作った根底に「武士道があった」ことに思い当たります。

さらに武士道を執筆する契機となったのは、妻・メアリー・エルキントンからの質問。序文では「なぜ日本ではそのような考え方や習慣が一般的なのか？」とことあるごとに問われることがあったと記しています。



## 日本への誤解を解き、実像を国際社会に伝えたかった

新渡戸稲造がドイツに留学している時代、日本は日清戦争に続き日露戦争で大国ロシアに勝利するなど軍事大国化していきます。世界の関心が、極東の新興国日本に集まる一方で、幕末期の外国人殺傷事件やサムライの国という固定的イメージは払拭されないままでした。

新渡戸稲造は著書・武士道を通して、日本人の道德観や倫理観の根底にあるものを捉え直し、その普遍性を通して、国際社会に向けて日本人の実像を伝えようとしたのです。そして、尊敬するエミール・ド・ラブレーと妻のメアリー・エルキントンに納得して貰えるよう答えに努めているうちに「封建制と武士道とが分からなくては、現代日本の道德思想は封印された書物と同じ」だということに気付かされます。

## 封建時代の道德思想を通して、日本人の心を世界に紹介



封建時代の道德思想が武士道を育んだ

新渡戸稲造は、武士道を「わが国土に根ざした花」＝日本を代表する桜になぞらえ、封建時代の忘れられた遺物とは異なる「いまだに力と美を持つ活きた存在」として、日本人の心に根を下ろしていることを伝えます。

さらに武士道は「文字に書かれた掟ではない」と断言。「口伝によって受け継がれたものや、有名な武士や学者が書いたいくつかの格言によって成り立っているもの」であるとし、武士道が明確に定義付けられたものではないことにも言及しています。

### 武士道とはnoblesse・obligation（高貴な身分に伴う義務）のこと

明文化されていない掟を海外の人に分かりやすく伝えるために、新渡戸稲造は武士道に「シヴァルリー＝chivalry」（礼儀正しく勇敢な騎士道精神）という訳語をあてます。

さらに、高い身分や地位ある立場にある者が担う責任や高い意識のあり方として、武士道と「noblesse・obligation＝noblesse oblige [仏]」という西欧の考え方を比肩しました。それは、「高貴さは[義務を]強制する」といった意味で、権力や社会的地位を保持する貴族など高い身分の者が担う社会的責任のことです。

武士道もまた「戦士がその職業や日常生活において守るべき道」を意味し、「高貴な身分に伴う義務」として、武士が守るように「教えられた道徳の掟」であると伝えました。

# What is Bushido?

Japan has been hit by a series of major natural disasters. The world has responded to reports of the disaster areas with sympathy for the Japanese people, who have not lost sight of the norms of orderly behavior and social life even in these uncertain times. After the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, there was a quiet boom in Bushido around the world. People overseas felt respect for the people in the disaster areas who helped each other and maintained a sense of moderation even in the midst of their grief, and they also felt a sense of Bushido-like spirit as a shared sense unique to the Japanese. What is Bushido in the first place? It's difficult to explain simply, but let's explore the meaning of Bushido to get a little closer to the essence of the Bushido spirit.

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## It seems like you understand it, but you don't. That's Bushido

### When asked “What is Bushido?”, it's not easy to answer

When you go overseas for work, study abroad or sightseeing, don't you sometimes feel that, even though you are Japanese, you don't know anything about Japan? There are many times when you are asked about Japanese culture or history by a foreign friend who has a deep interest in Japan and a lot of knowledge about it, and you find yourself at a loss for an answer.

For example, how many people can answer immediately when asked “What is Bushido? When we think of Bushido, we think of a strict code of honor, a spirit that values loyalty, respect for the elderly, compassion for the weak, a refusal to tolerate injustice, and a willingness to sacrifice one's life to protect one's honor. It is a world that seems quite strict, and somehow difficult for us modern people to approach.

### What is Bushido? Let's look it up in the dictionary first

How is Bushido expressed in Japanese dictionaries? If you look up two representative dictionaries, you will find the following explanations

A code of ethics that developed among the samurai in Japan. It began in the Kamakura period and developed during the Edo period, supported by Confucianism, particularly [Zhu Xi's](#) teachings, and was emphasized as a national code of ethics after the [Meiji Restoration](#). It

emphasized absolute loyalty to one's lord, and demanded sacrifice, politeness, simplicity, thrift, and a love of war. Bushido.

“Daijirin, 4th edition” Sanseido

A code of ethics that developed among the samurai class in Japan. It was known as the ‘way of the [bow and arrow](#)’ from the Kamakura period, and was established in the Edo period with the support of Confucianism, particularly the teachings of Zhu Xi. It became the spiritual pillar of the feudal system, and after the Meiji period it was considered the center of national morality. In addition to absolute loyalty to one's lord, it also emphasizes faith, a love of war, and honor. Hagakure ”It has been said that to die is to find oneself”

“Kojien, 7th edition“, Iwanami Shoten

“Sacrifice, politeness, simplicity, thrift, and valuing military affairs are required”, “Valuing faith, valuing military affairs, valuing honor, etc.”. It seems that there is definitely a deep relationship between the elements that come to mind when you hear the word Bushido and morality and ethics.

What is interesting is the description that “absolute loyalty to one's lord was emphasized” and that “it was considered the center of national morality from the Meiji period onwards”. This reminds us of the history of the Meiji Restoration and the path of [national prosperity and military strength](#) that followed the collapse of the shogunate, when the people were conscripted into war and many sacrifices were made, and the circumstances in which Bushido was used for state control.

## **Is there no definition of Bushido?**

Bushido cultivated through training

Bushido is not a set of teachings that have been clearly defined and codified. Yamamoto Tsunetomo's Hagakure, which is known for the famous passage “Bushido is found in dying” that is also included in dictionaries, is a book that describes the mindset of the [Saga clan Nabeshima family](#)'s successive generations of samurai.

There were also many other books that described the code of the samurai, such as the [Takeda family](#)'s military text “Koyo Gunkan” and “Gorinsho”, in which Miyamoto Musashi wrote about the secrets of military strategy.

In addition, the “[Tale of the Heike](#)”, which describes the rise and fall of the Heike clan through the recitations of the Biwa-hoshi (biwa players), also often features scenes that evoke the spirit of bushido. However, none of these books are definitive in defining what bushido is.



Bushido is the various experiences that warriors gained through their training in martial arts and on the battlefield. It is said that it was nurtured and cultivated over the years through daily life, family education, and sometimes through oral traditions such as the stories of experiences of ancestors and predecessors, and the houses they lived in.

## **Inazo Nitobe pondered the future of Japan from a global perspective**

**and interpreted Bushido from a modern perspective. He was the person who introduced it to the world**

Inazo Nitobe

Inazo Nitobe's book "Bushido" re-examined Bushido, a concept that was extremely vague even for the Japanese, from a modern perspective, and introduced it to the world as a way of thinking that encompassed the aesthetics of the Japanese way of life, morality and ethics in society, and a view of life and death that also included religious elements.

The book Bushido was published in Philadelphia, USA, in 1899 (Meiji 32), and, along with Okakura Tenshin's The Book of Tea, it became an important work that introduced the hearts and culture of the Japanese to the world in English during the Meiji period.

### **A pioneer of cross-cultural exchange. A large-scale international figure of the Meiji era**

Inazo Nitobe was an educator, thinker, agricultural scientist and agricultural economist born in [Iwate Prefecture Morioka City](#). At the age of 13, he studied at the Tokyo English School, and later attended Sapporo Agricultural College and Tokyo Imperial University. He then decided to study abroad in the United States at his own expense, saying that he wanted to "become a bridge between the Pacific Ocean and Japan", and enrolled at Johns Hopkins University. There he met Mary Elkinston (Japanese name: Nitobe Mariko), who would become his lifelong companion.

After that, he was appointed to his alma mater, Sapporo Agricultural College, and went on to study in Germany at Halle University, where he received a doctorate in agricultural economics. At the invitation of his fellow countryman Goto Shinpei, he went to Taiwan to work for the Taiwan Governor's Office, where he laid the foundations for the sugar industry. He later held a number of positions, including professor at Kyoto Imperial University, principal of the First High School (the old First High School), the first principal of [Tokyo Women's University](#), and the first principal of Tokyo Women's College of Economics, and later served as the Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

He was a cosmopolitan man of great scale who looked widely at the world during the Meiji period, and who had a progressive awareness of education, particularly in the Meiji and Taisho periods, and was passionate about women's education.

## **His experiences abroad as a young man led to the writing of his book Bushido**

The trigger for the writing of Inazo Nitobe's book Bushido was a question he was asked by the famous Belgian jurist Emile de Laveley, whom he greatly respected, during his time studying in Germany: “In Japan, where there is no religious education, how do you impart moral education? . Not being able to answer immediately, he was puzzled, and then he realized that Bushido was the foundation of the moral precepts and concepts of right and wrong that he had learned as a boy.

Furthermore, the question from his wife, Mary Elkinston, was the trigger for writing Bushido. In the preface, he wrote that he was often asked “Why are such ideas and customs common in Japan?”

## **Communicating to the world: What Inazo Nitobe's book Bushido tried to convey**

### **I wanted to dispel misunderstandings about Japan and convey its true image to the international community**

During the time when Inazo Nitobe was studying in Germany, Japan was becoming a military power, winning the [Sino-Japanese War](#) and then the [Russo-Japanese War](#) against the great power of Russia. While the world's attention was focused on the newly emerging country of Japan in the Far East, the fixed image of Japan as a country of samurai and of incidents in which foreigners were killed or injured during the end of the Edo period remained.

In his book Bushido, Inazo Nitobe sought to re-examine the foundations of the Japanese moral and ethical outlook, and to convey the true image of the Japanese people to the international community through the universality of these values. In the course of trying to find an answer that would satisfy his esteemed friend, Emile de La Brière, and his wife, Mary Elkinston, he came to realize that “without an understanding of feudalism and bushido, the moral philosophy of modern Japan is like a book sealed with a lock”.

### **Introducing the Japanese spirit to the world through the moral philosophy of the feudal era**

The moral philosophy of the feudal era gave birth to Bushido

Inazo Nitobe likens Bushido to a flower that has taken root in our land, or a cherry blossom that represents Japan, and conveys that it is a living entity that still has power and beauty, and that it has taken root in the hearts of the Japanese people, unlike the forgotten relics of the feudal era.

Furthermore, he asserts that Bushido is “not a code written in letters”. He states that it is “something that has been passed down through oral tradition and is made up of a number of maxims written by famous warriors and scholars”, and also mentions that Bushido is not something that can be clearly defined.

## **Bushido is a concept of noblesse oblige (the obligations that come with a noble status)**

In order to convey the unwritten code to people overseas in an easy-to-understand way, Inazo Nitobe uses the translation “chivalry” (a spirit of chivalry that is both courteous and brave) for bushido.

Furthermore, he compares bushido with the Western concept of “noblesse oblige” as a way of thinking about the responsibilities and high level of awareness that those in high social positions and statuses should have. It means “nobility obliges [one to fulfill one's duties]”, and refers to the social responsibilities borne by those of high social standing, such as nobles who hold power and social status.

Bushido also means “the way that warriors should follow in their occupation and daily lives”, and it is said to be “a moral code that was taught to warriors to follow” as “a duty that comes with noble status”.