

Bushidō, (Japanese: “Way of the Warrior”) the code of conduct of the samurai, or *bushi* (warrior), class of pre-modern Japan. In the mid-19th century, however, the precepts of Bushidō were made the basis of ethical training for the whole society, with the emperor replacing the feudal lord, or daimyo, as the focus of loyalty and sacrifice. As such it contributed to the rise of Japanese nationalism following the Meiji Restoration (1868) and to the strengthening of civilian morale during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) and World War II. Instruction in the code was officially abandoned with Japan’s defeat in 1945. Elements of the code remain, however, in the practice of Japanese martial arts and in the sport of sumo wrestling.

The name Bushidō was not used until the 16th century, but the idea of the code developed during the Kamakura period (1192–1333), as did the practice of *seppuku* (ritual disembowelment). At that time the Minamoto family established Japan’s first military government (*bakufu*), headed by a hereditary leader called the shogun. The precise content of the Bushidō code varied historically as the samurai class came under the influence of Zen Buddhist and Confucian thought, but its one unchanging ideal was martial spirit, including athletic and military skills as well as fearlessness toward the enemy in battle. Frugal living, kindness, honesty, and personal honour were also highly regarded, as was filial piety. However, the supreme obligation of the samurai was to his lord, even if this might cause suffering to his parents.