

A Study on the Development of the Martial Arts Morality in Korea

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Abstract

Martial arts morality is a moral and ethical rule or regulation. This study examined the development and historical values of the martial arts morality in Korea through a literature review and the results are as follows. In ancient times, Korea's martial arts morality culture was formed through Chinese Confucianism and Chinese martial arts was established. During the Joseon Dynasty, a characteristic of the Joseon-style of the martial arts morality culture was revealed. But during the Japanese occupation, through the Budo(Japanese martial arts) of education, the martial arts morality of Budo was introduced into Korea. No martial arts morality other than Budo was studied. After the Japanese occupation period, the Korean style martial arts morality was created under the influence of the morality of the Chinese and Japanese martial arts culture. Korea's martial arts morality was influenced by China and Japan, and the Korean style martial arts morality was passed down to this day and that has its own historical value.

Key words: Korea's Martial Arts Morality, Confucianism, Chinese, Japan

Introduction

The traditional culture related to the martial arts(武) is the lifestyle which was formed during the long history of each people or each country. When humans appeared on this Earth, the physical culture started to appear as it is used to protect humans from animals and the outside environment and to collect and hunt the resources and animals in order to survive. Later, the physical culture gradually developed into the martial arts.

These martial arts are recognized for their values by many people in the East and the West and especially, people started to understand the educational value in the martial arts. That is because martial arts education can help people to form good personalities such as courage, sense of pride, humbleness, discipline, cooperation and self-control.[1] It means that the physical activities specific to the martial arts help people to get socialized and help people to get a positive personality, thus helping them to learn ethical values in that frame.

But the martial arts in the past had the basic goal of killing and their ideological purpose was to realize social justice. Though the martial arts were born with the goal of killing, it has changed into various forms according to the demands of the

times. The martial arts having the basic goal of killing require people to prepare for risks or be ready for any sudden death. So the martial arts sometimes needed comfort through religion or the trust between tribes and they targeted the goal of "making an ordinary life be a rightful life (平常心是道)" and "equipping oneself with both the martial arts and liberal arts (文武兼全)" as affected by Confucianism (儒), Buddhism (佛) and Taoism (道), which were then expressed and emphasized as the martial arts morality (武德) and the martial arts ethics (道).[2] Therefore, the martial arts can be said to be made up of the technical skill of the martial arts and the martial arts ethics and morality which a martial person man be equipped with. Though they vary depending on the time, they still exist.

This study examined the development and historical values of the martial arts morality in Korea. So this study would focus on the martial arts morality from ancient times to the Goryeo Dynasty, martial arts morality during the Joseon Dynasty, martial arts morality during and after Japanese occupation period. And in this study, the related documents would be collected, analyzed and reviewed which are located in Korea, China, Taiwan and Japan etc.

Martial arts morality from ancient times to the Goryeo Dynasty

The ancient times in Korea were established being assisted by the martial arts at all times.

First of all, the martial arts in the Three Kingdoms period were developed as a part of military training while the Three Kingdoms such as Goguryeo(BC.37-668), Baekje(BC.18-660) and Shilla(BC.75-935) developed and conflicted with each other for hegemony. The Three Kingdoms all appointed the personnel who have excellent martial abilities as commanders and put all people into the military organizations and organized the educational system for them. The records related to the martial arts morality in the Three Kingdoms period are found in the diplomatic documents which was sent by King Munmu as shown in the book *Samguksagi*(三國史記) and *Gyewonpilgyeong*(桂苑筆耕)[3] which is the collection of writings authored by Choi Chiwon. the diplomatic documents sent by King Munmu said "(Omitted) As you have not only the prestige of hero and a good personality as the military commander and an excellent minister but also have the seven virtues and learned nine subjects, you would not randomly exercise the emperor's power to any innocent people." [4] This

diplomatic document shows why the Shilla and Chinses Dang Dynasty started to conflict with each other on the issue of the territory in the Korean peninsula after Baekje and Goguryeo were defeated and destroyed due to the joint attacks made by the Shilla and Dang Dynasty and how the Shilla had to fight Dang Dynasty for 7 years for survival. In addition, in the collection of the writings *Gyewonpilgyeong*, there is a record stating "I think that there are four seasons in a year. In the autumn, the order of killing shall be declared. But in the concept of martial arts, there are seven virtues so, the military values to protect people from riot." [5]

The two records above jointly referred to 7 virtues. The 7 virtues mean the 7 virtues in martial arts as shown in *Zuozhuan Xuan Gong Shiernian* (左傳·宣公十二年). The two records above cannot represent all martial arts morality during those days in Korea. But if we consider the situation at that time, it can be assumed that Korea's martial arts morality was affected by the Chinese martial arts morality during the formation. In addition, the book reading and archery performed at Gyeongdang(經堂) in Goguryeo and Hwarang-do during the Shilla show that they emphasized the training of the physical virtue based on the philosophy putting value on the harmony of the mind and body. Hwarang of Shilla made the rule which was affected by not only Korea's traditional Pungryu ideology but also Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and aimed to train an ethical human.

Next, the martial arts of Goryeo(918-1392) were transferred from Goguryeo, Baekje and Shilla and as a part of the national defense strategy, they were more developed. On the other hand, it has the characteristics in which the military martial arts were spin off into civilian play. The martial arts man's spirit was based on loyalty, filial piety and righteousness during the Goryeo period. This spirit was the virtue required of the warriors at that time. In addition, the fact that 'Gangyeje(講藝齋)' was the place for giving lessons on the martial arts training though it was temporary means that the mental aspect of the training of martial arts was based on Confucianism.[6]

The martial arts class was lower than the liberal arts class in terms of power and status and the trend of ignoring the martial arts was deepened. So, the martial arts morality which had been passed down from the ancient times were ignored and the martial arts were developed into a new aspect.[7] The martial arts were changed for the performance by martial artists for audiences and the warriors made the demonstration in the demonstration ground for amusement purposes.

Martial arts morality during the Joseon Dynasty

The force leading the establishment of Joseon Danasty(1392-1910) was the new noblemen group and military classes. King Taejo thought that there should be harmony between the martial arts and liberal arts in the operation of a nation. He tried to manage the nation through the balance of martial arts and liberal arts. In addition, for the recruitment and selection of the excellent martial arts men, he referred to the method of training the martial arts and the selection of personnel in details.

At that time, an applicant for military commander equipped with both martial arts and liberal arts was subject to take the examination. In December of the 4th year of King Sejong

(1422), the subjects such as *Mugyeongchilseo*(武經七書), *Nine Chinese Classics* (四書五經) were added.[8] It means that the applicant was recommended to read one of *Nine Chinese Classics* in the final exam to get scores in the examination. In addition, it means that even if the applicant lacks the martial arts skill, he can get selected if he is good at book reading. The testing of the military book was conducted in order to help the military commander to get the strategy and the practical virtue. As such, we can know that the lesson on the military books was obtained through the training of warrior on the basic ideology and talent. So, the essential virtues for the warrior are both for the applicant to get both the military arts and liberal arts skills.

Byeongjangseol(兵將說) is a book on King Sejo's description of the military strategy, which was easily noted by the vassals. This book contains only 569 letters. But as it has prefaces and notes, we can know what kind of view the scholars at that time had.[9]

As shown above, we can know that the essential virtues for a military commander in the Joseon dynasty was the harmony of the leadership equipped with both martial arts and liberal arts and the military. In addition, based on the dual use of martial arts and liberal arts, they put emphasis on benevolence and righteousness(仁義), courtesy(禮), loyalty and filial piety(忠孝), three bonds(三綱) and five relationships(五倫). Especially the military books published in the Joseon dynasty maximizes its efficiency as it not only adopts and quotes the Chinese military books but also adding the cases appropriate for Korea's situation to the book for application.

Martial arts morality during and after the Japanese occupation

During the open-door policy by the Joseon dynasty and the Japanese occupation period over Joseon, Korea's martial arts morality started to get developed into a new thing. In 1876, the Treaty of Ganghwa Island was made and then the Western cultures were introduced including various sports and cultures. But, after forceful annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, Japan installed the Japanese Government General of Korea and adopted various ruling policies such as forceful rule, cultural rule, policy of making Korean people under Japanese occupation period or destroying Korean people, thus trying to colonize Joseon. This kind of ruling policy was accomplished through education and Japanese colonial government published the Joseon Education Decree on Aug. 23, 1911, which had the objective of making Korean people become a part of Japanese people proper to the situation and level of education for the people. The Education Decree focused on the ordinary education, employment education and professional education to establish the colonial education system. At this time, the Judo and the Kendo were taught to the Korean students.[10] The martial arts morality at this period put emphasis not on the combat technique but the technique of stopping the spear or the self-training having the peaceful concept.

It was the means of introducing the Japanese martial arts morality into Korea and this concept of Japanese martial arts has been transferred to Korea and used along with the martial arts skill. During the Japanese occupation period over Korea, the Japanese put emphasis on the excellence of the Japanese

martial arts and tried to remove Korea's culture. So, it changed the term with the adoption of Japanese martial arts education from martial arts through martial arts skill to the martial arts morality in a developmental and evolutionary term. That has been partially passed down up to the current time. In the modern world, the martial arts generally refer to various kinds of martial arts and contain the concepts of training, mind development and personality development. In addition, it contains the ethics and morality of Japanese samurai and sometimes has the concept of both martial arts and the martial arts morality.

After the liberation from Japanese occupation period, the concept of Japanese martial arts has passed down without any restriction and accepted to the newly formed elite sports and daily sports in the modern society and has been performed to the current period for health and self-protection. But as our interest in Korean martial arts as Taekgyeon and Taekwondo etc. got increased after the liberation, Koreans could realize their identity in the martial arts and get the motivation.

Conclusion

Korea's martial arts morality started to form in the Three Kingdoms period and people trained their minds and body for the harmony between body and mind at the education centers in each country such as Gyeongdang in Goguryeo and Hwarang in Shilla. Especially, Hwarang of Shilla trained themselves under the influence of Pungryudo which had been in existence in Korea from ancient times along with the filial piety from Confucianism, Nothingness from Taoism and Good behavior from Buddhism along with the influence of five secular injunctions, which were their ethical and practical rule. Through the martial arts and various physical activities, they practiced the good things and trained their bodies and minds. In addition, the diplomatic document of Shilla, and the collection of writings authored by Choi Chiwon show that that was also influenced by Chinese martial arts morality.

In the Goryeo dynasty, due to the emergency of the trend of ignoring the martial arts, the martial arts got severely ignored so that the martial arts morality which had passed down from the ancient times gradually disappeared. On such backdrop, the martial arts in Goryeo changed into the form of performance for audiences and this caused the martial class to riot. After the martial class's riot, the martial arts were used as a part of military drill with its characteristics becoming a part of amusement. In addition, considering that the martial arts were lectured along with the book reading in the national education centers, they got the Confucian ideology.

In the Joseon dynasty, the applicants for the military officers were supposed to take the test on the *Mugyeongchilseo*, *Nine Chinese Classics* for the selection of military officers. Even though the applicant lacks in the martial arts skill, he would be qualified as a military officer if he was good at book reading skills. That shows that during that period, the military officers were recommended to get both the liberal arts and martial arts as the practical virtues in order to help them to get the basic ideology and expertise as military men. The purpose of education during the Joseon dynasty was to equip people with both the liberal arts and martial arts at the same time. For this purpose, they put emphasis on benevolence and

righteousness(仁義), courtesy(禮樂), loyalty and filial piety(忠孝), three bonds(三綱), and five relationships(五倫). In addition, for the training on the military strategy books, Korean people did not adopt the Chinese books as they were but changed them to the specific Korean situation, thus getting away from the Chinese influence but forming Korea's own unique martial arts morality. Especially, the Korean military book maximizes its practical effectiveness by not just stopping or quoting the adoption of the Chinese books as they were but adding, suggesting and adopting the Korean cases to the Korean situation.

During the Japanese occupation period over the Korean peninsula, Japan introduced its own martial arts to the Korean people as a means of ruling Korea. With no clear concept of martial arts or martial arts morality existing at that time in Korea, the Japanese martial arts and their concepts were accepted by Koreans without any criticism or rejection and spread over the general public and have taken root as the general concept of the martial arts or martial arts morality. As such, Korea's martial arts morality underwent the change during the Japanese occupation period and got passed down to the current ones.

After the Japanese occupation, with Korea's traditional martial arts getting spotlight such as Korean martial arts; Taekgyeon and Taekwondo etc., the environment was made in a way that the identity and tradition of Korea's traditional martial arts can be confirmed. The researches on the martial arts were conducted regularly and from that, not only the theoretical background of the martial arts but also the terms and concept started to get established.

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