

Hōjō Sōun's Twenty-One Articles (Code of Conduct for Samurai), 1495

Background: Sometime after 1495, Hōjō Sōun, a daimyo, wrote articles as conduct guidelines for the people who served him. Many warrior leaders left instructions, but Sōun's are especially interesting because he lived such a long life (1432-1519) and did many things.

Sōun composed his Twenty-One Articles sometime after 1495 as a code of conduct for all persons who owed him service. You will likely recognize elements of both Buddhism and Confucianism in the codes.

Bu (boo) and Bun (boon)

Bu 武 encompasses all martial skills not having to do with archery or horsemanship, principally sword and glaive (*naginata*) skills, and later musketry. Samurai were expected to be proficient in these areas, and indeed, the mastery of *bu* along with equestrian and archery skills was one of the chief means of distinguishing between samurai and peasant-soldiers with little training or discipline.

Bun 文 encompasses literary arts and culture, and became an important area for leading and high-ranking samurai to study very early in the medieval era. As the medieval period dragged on, and particularly after the burning of Kyōto in 1467 at the start of the Ōnin War, poets diffusing into the provinces and samurai lords seeking to attain cultural prestige began to create notable literary productions of their own, mostly in the linked verse form of *renga*. Aside from producing formal poetry, however, familiarity with the poetic forms and landscape inherited from the Heian period and earlier--and the ability to produce a correct and appropriate poem as needed--was one of the chief marks of education and refinement at least until the end of the Edo period. Samurai needed to be educated so they were not taken advantage of by other literate people e.g. bureaucrats who did secretarial duties.

Bu was necessary for survival and a warrior's only "ticket to power"; Bun was seen as a "tool of power".

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Read each article. With a partner, write what each means in your own words. Write your questions and conclusions.

Article #	What the article (code of conduct) says	What this means in my own words	Questions? Conclusions
XXI (21)	It is not necessary to write here about the 'Arts of Peace and War, including Archery and Horsemanship' for to pursue these is a matter of course. From of old, the rule has been, 'Practice the Arts of Peace on the left hand, and the Arts of War on the right. 'Mastery of both is required.		
VI (6)	As for swords and clothes, you should not try to look splendid when you appear before others. To think that one's plain possessions are a dishonor, and borrow others' [finery] is needless ostentation and invites ridicule.		
IX (9)	If your lord says something to you, show respect [i.e., bow] even though you are still far away from him. First of all, answer 'Yes, Sir,' quickly; approach him on your knees, then receive his order respectfully and withdraw quickly.		
XII (12)	If you have a little leisure, read books. But hide your reading matter in your breast-fold; in general, you should not let people see you read. But whether in bed or up and about [i.e., in every free moment], you must always practice writing otherwise you will forget how to read and write characters.		
XVI (16)	In your off-duty hours, practice riding. First you should become skilled in the essentials and then practice the standard techniques for guiding the horse.		

Question: What parts of being a samurai did Hōjō Sōun think were important?

Name: _____

We began by creating a KWL chart. Now is the time for you to demonstrate what you have **learned** (the **L** portion.) Use this writing framework to provide evidence from the past three activities supporting the thesis statement.

Thesis statement: *Japan changed dramatically during the Kamakura period when the military controlled the government and gave power to shoguns and samurai. Samurai often capture people's imagination; however, the life of a samurai is typically misrepresented.*

Statement 1 (Kamakura Google Map):
Evidence 1:
Statement 2 (Tale of Heike):
Evidence 2:
Statement 3 (Code of Conduct):
Evidence 3:
Conclusion:

Possible Teacher KEY Hōjō Sōun's Twenty-One Articles (Code of Conduct for Samurai), 1495

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VI (6)	As for swords and clothes, you should not try to look splendid when you appear before others. To think that one's plain possessions are a dishonor, and borrow others' [finery] is needless ostentation and invites ridicule.	Plain clothing is fine. Trying to look splendid (fancy) is showy. You're asking for people to make fun of you.	Would people be out to get you if you "looked too good"? Be modest, not showy.
IX (9)	If your lord says something to you, show respect [i.e., bow] even though you are still far away from him. First of all, answer 'Yes, Sir,' quickly; approach him on your knees, then receive his order respectfully and withdraw quickly.	Show respect to your lord, bow and answer "Yes, sir", and approach him on your knees. Take orders and leave quickly.	Loyalty to your lord is assumed. What would happen if you didn't do that?
XII (12)	If you have a little leisure, read books. But hide your reading matter in your breast-fold; in general, you should not let people see you read. But whether in bed or up and about [i.e., in every free moment], you must always practice writing otherwise you will forget how to read and write characters.	Read books in your free time. Don't show off your book and reading. Always practice writing.	Reading and writing are important. Don't be a show off about it. Be modest. Being literate means someone cannot take advantage of you.
XVI (16)	In your off-duty hours, practice riding. First you should become skilled in the essentials and then practice the standard techniques for guiding the horse.	Practice riding horses. Know the basics first and then practice steering your horse.	From the intro video- not all samurai had horses, just the more advanced ones. This must be for leaders (officers).

What parts of being a samurai did Hōjō Sōun think were important? Hōjō Sōun thought samurai should be modest, loyal and respectful, educated in reading and writing, and practice riding horses. Both the Arts of Peace and War, Bun and Bu, were important.