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The Confucian Elements in the *Book of Five Rings*

Abstract

Confucianism arrived in Japan at the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Confucianism influenced the growth of feudalism and the creation of *bushidō*, the code of moral principles and an inspiration for Japanese warriors. Miyamoto Musashi was one of the most famous samurai in Japanese history. He established the Niten Ichi Ryū *kendō* school. In the *Book of Five Rings*, Musashi set down his own principles, in the belief that each of his students should live by them. Some Confucian elements were included in the *Book of Five Rings*.

Confucianism appeared in Japan in 402 AD with the *Analects of Confucius*.[1] Confucianism probably had a strong influence on the development of the *Bushidō*, the unwritten collection of warriors' moral rules.[2] Thus, Confucian ethics soon became the framework for the education of samurai. This article makes an attempt to discern the crucial Confucian elements existing in the *Gorin-no Sho* (The Book of Five Rings), a work written by one of the most renowned Japanese warriors. The principles contained in the *Dokkōdō* (The Way to be Followed Alone) will serve as a guide here. Throughout the article the traditional Hepburn transcription[3] has been applied. The goal of this article is to present the Confucian elements in the *Book of Five Rings*.

Confucianism is a system of teachings started by Confucius, and continued by his students.[4] According to Confucius, each person should live according to the 'Way of Heaven'.[5] This means the procedure of moral norms, such as obedience to parents, kindness, righteousness and loyalty[6]. As Professor Rodney L. Taylor explains: 'The focus of all of Classical Confucianism lay in understanding the Way of *T'ien*, which emphasized the need

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[1] Japanese Confucian Philosophy: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/japanese-confucian/ (accessed 29.06.2013).

[2] John Whitney Hall (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 4, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 92.

[3] James Curtis Hepburn, *A Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary*, Tōkyō: Maruya, 1888.

[4] *Konfucjanizm* [Confucianism], in Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych* [Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases in Foreign Languages], Warszawa: Muza SA, 2001, p. 272.

[5] Rodney L. Taylor, *Religion of the World. Confucianism*, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003, p. 10.

[6] *Konfucjanizm*…, p. 272.

for moral education for individuals and the establishment of moral rule to bring peace and order to the world'.[7]

Miyamoto Musashi, one of the most famous warriors, was born in 1584. His life remains a mystery to modern scholars, beyond the fact of his existence almost nothing is known.[8] The first important question is the warrior's place of birth. In the Introduction he mentions that he was born in Harima province: 'I am a warrior of Harima province, Shinmen Musashi No Kami Fujiwara No Genshin'.[9] However, most of the researchers think that Musashi was not born in Harima province, proof of this including the samurai monument on Temuki Mountain in Kokura, Kyūshū, founded by Musashi's adopted son Miyamoto Iori (1612–1677).[10] There is an inscription on this monument: 'Musashi Genshin from the Shinmen family, a descendant of the House of Akiyama. He came for the first time to Harima as a thirteen year old boy in order to fight against Arima Kihei...'.[11] It can be assumed that the son of the samurai knew the father's past. Therefore, it is hard to deny that unreliable information was issued there. Why then is such a fact given in the introduction? Some scholars believe that the *Gorin-no Sho* was written by one of Musashi's apprentices, or at least the Introduction to the book was.[12] It seems be very probable that the Introduction is not of Musashi's authorship, which would also explain the mistake concerning his place of birth. Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish that the work as a whole was not written by the samurai. However, were it to be true, one would recognise a similarity to the *Analects* of Confucius, which were most probably actually noted down by Confucius' apprentices.[13] Obviously, this conjectural resemblance does not indicate any Confucian element in *Gorin-no Sho*. Hence, Musashi was in all likelihood born in Miyamoto village as Bennosuke.[14] His father, Shinmen Munisai Taketo, was a samurai, regarded with respect by the shōgun Ashikaga Yoshiaki (1537–1597).[15] Musashi never knew his mother, who had died because of postpartum complications.[16]

The samurai's childhood, or, to be more specific, his upbringing, poses another problem for researchers. According to the legend, Dōrin (Dōrimbō) was supposed to be his teacher.[17]

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[7] Taylor, *Religion*…, p. 10.

[8] Arkadiusz Izdebski, Witold Nowakowski, 'Życie Musashiego Miyamoto (1584–1645)' [Miyamoto Musashi's Life (1584–1645)], in *Gorin-no Sho. Księga Pięciu Kręgów* [The Book of Five Rings], Musashi Miyamoto, Bydgoszcz: Diamond Books, 2010, p. 11.

[9] *Gorin-no Sho: The Book of Five Rings*, http://www.uvm.edu/~asnider/IDAS_2011_CD/Teachers/Steve%20Llano's%20Materials/Strategy%20Books/Book%20of%20Five%20Rings%20-%20Musashi.pdf (accessed 29.06.2013), p. 2.

[10] Izdebski, Nowakowski, 'Życie Musashiego…', p. 12.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] Ibid., p. 11.

[13] Confucius: http://asianhistory.about.com/od/ancientchina/p/Confucius.htm (accessed 29.06.2013).

[14] Jinichi Tokeshi, *Kendo. Podstawy, filozofia i zasady walki* [Kendo. Basics, Philosophy and Rules of Combat], Bydgoszcz: Diamond Books, 2008, p. 241.

[15] G. Cameron Hurst III, 'Samuraj na Wall Street' [Samurai on Wall Street], in *Gorin-no Sho. Księga Pięciu Kręgów* [The Book of Five Rings], Musashi Miyamoto, Bydgoszcz: Diamond Books, 2010, p. 113.

[16] Izdebski, Nowakowski, 'Życie Musashiego…', p. 12.

[17] Ibid., p. 13.

However, scholars reject this theory, as they do the one in which the monk Takuan was Musashi's master.[18] For some of the researchers, Musashi's father was his master, although he did not die until the year 1607.[19] Had Munisai died earlier, then Bennosuke's uncle must have been teaching him.[20]

During his life, Musashi fought over sixty duels.[21] According to legend he fought his first duel at the age of thirteen. His opponent was the aforementioned Arima Kihei. Musashi naturally won, but it is impossible to establish the authenticity of that duel.[22] It should be added that in the Introduction to the *Book of Five Rings* there is a note concerning that single combat: 'My first duel was when I was thirteen, I struck down a strategist of the Shinto school, one Arima Kihei'.[23] Unfortunately, it is impossible to confirm the authenticity of the duel on the basis of this note alone. As mentioned above, we do not know who the author of the Introduction is. If it was one of Musashi's apprentices this note might be based on legend as well. Of course, one can also assume that even if Musashi himself was the author he may have given unreliable information. It is worth observing that since his early years the samurai attached importance to learning, in this particular case the study of fencing. There is a very important and significant resemblance to Confucius here. It can also be acknowledged that Musashi is not an exception, and the fact that he devoted himself to learning was linked to the deeply rooted Confucian ethics in Japanese culture. In any case, this education made him achieve good results, and in consequence Musashi has been acknowledged as one of the best fencers in the history of Japan. In the introduction to the *Book of Five Rings* the author stresses that he had never failed in a duel.[24]

It should be added that he did go to war, though he always supported the Toyotomi House against the Tokugawa, eventually resulting in him standing on the defeated side. He participated in the battle of Sekigahara in 1600[25] as well as in the Siege of Ōsaka in 1615.[26] Without any doubts, these events shaped his political views, which had a direct influence on his later life.

The fact that Musashi was a *rōnin* is crucial. In the introduction to the *Book of Five Rings* he writes: 'Since then I have lived without following any particular Way. Thus with the virtue of strategy I practice many arts and abilities – all things with no teacher'.[27] In this place another problem appears. At the end of his life, at the age of fifty seven, Musashi became military advisor to the Hosokawa court in Kumamoto.[28] Therefore it can be supposed that he followed his own words, as he states in the aforementioned quotation. He never abandoned the art of war. The only question is his status. Could he, while serving for the House of Hosokawa as the military advisor, be treated as a *rōnin*? It should be observed

[18] Hurst III, 'Samuraj…', p. 118.
[19] Ibid., p. 113.
[20] Ibid., p. 114.
[21] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 3.
[22] Hurst III, 'Samuraj…', p. 114.
[23] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 3.
[24] Ibidem.
[25] Hurst III, 'Samuraj…', pp. 114–115.
[26] Izdebski, Nowakowski, 'Życie Musashiego…', p. 16.
[27] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 3.
[28] Hurst III, 'Samuraj…', p. 115.

that even if the Introduction was written by one of Musashi's apprentices they must have known whether their master had been a *rōnin* or not. Hence, it can be assumed that at the end of his life the sword master had found a lord for himself, and as a result was no longer a masterless samurai. Such a hypothesis does not fit the passing reference in the Introduction. In this case it should be treated as a mistake made subconsciously. One may also assume that Musashi remained a *rōnin* for his entire life. This issue is undoubtedly important, although it is not the main topic of this paper, but it may serve as an inspiration for further research.

Miyamoto Musashi earned his reputation for the most part as a founder of a martial arts school, the Niten Ichi Ryū school *of kendō*.[29] Teaching became very important for him; in addition, when he finished the endless duels of the earlier stage of his life, he took interest in art and self-improvement.[30] At the end of his life he wrote three compositions: *Hyoho Sanju Go* (*Thirty-Five Instructions on Strategy*, 1641), the abovementioned *Gorin-no Sho* (*The Book of Five Rings*, 1965) and *Dokugyodo* (*The Way to Be Followed Alone*). Musashi died in 1645.[31]

The *Book of Five Rings* is written in extremely simple language[32], and the readership should not have any problems understanding the content of it. Naturally, one may bear in mind that any note written down by the author can be interpreted in many ways – on one hand, as the literal reference to the situation presented by the author, and on the other, as a general observation on life, and not necessarily that of warriors alone. Nevertheless, a reader who is able to discover different interpretations of the given pieces will be able to cherish a far richer reading and comprehension of the piece. It is worth noting that understanding the hidden points is not difficult. Additionally, any person can interpret the pieces in a different way, with the only exception to be made for the literal content.

In the *Book of Five Rings*, the samurai particularly wanted to include rules important for the young warriors. He neither eschewed philosophical reflections nor elements of the Confucian ethics. One observes that Musashi himself states in the Introduction that he is not going to use them as a basis: 'To write this book, I did not use the law of Buddha or the teachings of Confucius'.[33] It has to be highlighted that the author does not refer to Confucian ethics explicitly. Nonetheless, such elements are often mentioned in this particular work, which is probably caused by the samurai's upbringing. As already mentioned, his childhood was mysterious, much as his entire life was. Most probably, he obtained a similar education to that of other warriors. It means that apart from learning practical skills he must have acquired some various theories, including Confucian ethics. In addition, he was supposed to learn the rules of *bushidō*, though he did not relate to them in the *Book of Five Rings*. One should remember that in this period of Japanese history there was no distinction between practice and theory, education was uniform. It was not possible to practice without knowing the theory, and vice versa. Other famous warriors have made similar remarks. For instance, the author of *Heihō Okugisho* (*The Secret of High Strategy*) wrote:

[29] Tokeshi, *Kendo*…, p. 99.
[30] Hurst III, 'Samuraj…', p. 115.
[31] Izdebski, Nowakowski, 'Życie Musashiego…', p. 17.
[32] Ibid., p. 18.
[33] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 3.

> It is said that there are three things important in the art of war. First, the sight to let you observe the opponent. Second, the mind so as to value him. Third, the body to let you fight against him. People want to split it into three parts, but I tell them: it is always the mind that is first, then goes the body. Although you look at your opponent through your eyes, you observe him with your mind, and the body is obedient to one's thoughts.[34]

The above quotation is crucial for this work as it shows both the urge to learn and its manners of educating. Musashi is no exception here; for him exercising one's mind and body are equally important, but not as much as for the author of *Heihō Okugisho* who reckons that the body is fully obedient to the human mind. That explains why the theory is so vital. The aforementioned, legendary Yamamoto Kanasuke (1501–1561?) believes that one wins battles and wars due to theory, rather than military and physical might.[35]

Even Confucius himself recommended mental exercises: "Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous".[36] The foregoing dictum shows an observable similarity between the samurai, in particular, Yamamoto Kanasuke, and Confucius. The author of *Gorin-no Sho* will also be no exception here.

The fact that Musashi concentrates mostly on physical aspects does not necessarily mean that he rejects the theoretical ones, otherwise writing the *Book of Five Rings* would have been pointless.

Returning to the Confucian elements themselves, it is very probable that Musashi's upbringing had a subconscious influence on him putting those elements into the *Book*. Generally speaking, Confucian ethics has a great impact on the author's background and his outlook on life, regardless of his intentions, suggesting that he might have included the Confucian elements in The Book of Five Rings unconsciously. Most warriors drew on the tradition[37], and if Confucian ethics was inculcated in it, they would follow it as well. However, the note in the Introduction to *Gorin-no Sho* is, to say the least, problematic. Still, there is an alternative possibility. As mentioned above, some scholars believe that the Introduction was written not by Musashi, but by one of his students. It can even be assumed that the Introduction was prepared by Iori, his adopted son. Nevertheless, even if Musashi had not written that he would draw on Confucian ethics, one can presume that he himself did so, and one of his followers provided such information in the Introduction for reasons unknown.

The first element worth concentrating upon is Musashi's aforesaid attitude towards learning. For samurai this was of vital importance. *Bushidō* contained very detailed instructions on what the education of a young samurai should look like. The book also explains why education is so significant for samurai:

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[34] Kansuke Yamamoto, *Tajemnice strategii. Heihō Okugisho* [The Secret of High Strategy. Heihō Okugisho], Bydgoszcz: Diamond Books, 2008, p. 90.

[35] Ibid., p. 23.

[36] *The Analects of Confucius*, http://old-site.clsp.jhu.edu/~yisu/files/cnfnl10u.pdf (accessed 29.06.2013) p. 8.

[37] Munenori Yagyū, *Heihō Kadensho. Księga przekazów rodzinnych o sztuce wojny* [The Life-Giving Sword: Secret Teachings from the House of the Shogun], Bydgoszcz: Diamond Books, 2002, p. 65.

> Bearing in mind the fact that the samurai's position within the society is higher than the three other groups and they have to administer duties, it is essential for them to be well-educated and have broad general knowledge in many aspects of life'.[38]

Education was therefore their basis. Every self-respecting samurai had to be skilled. The only exception was the war period when there was no time for proper learning. Daidōji Yūzan Taira-no Shigesuke (1639–1730), a famous Japanese strategist, claims that during wartime there were many illiterate warriors.[39] This was caused by the emphasis during that time on pure military knowledge. However, what should be stressed here is the fact that even during wartime education was important for the samurai families. Daidōji Yūzan Taira-no Shigesuke also argues that their illiteracy was a result of educational mistakes, not the war itself.[40] Confucius assigned importance to learning also.[41] Musashi's attitude was almost the same; broadening one's mind was definitely his priority. It can thus be said that the need of learning bears the closest resemblance in the *Book of Five Rings* to a point of Confucian ethics. Evidently, Musashi's priority was to advise internalizing military knowledge. The period in which the sword master lived had an influence on him. In his work he wrote:

> 'It is said the warrior's is the twofold Way of pen and sword, and he should have a taste for both Ways. Even if a man has no natural ability he can be a warrior by sticking assiduously to both divisions of the Way'.[42]

It is clear that the warrior must concentrate on the practical exercises, but at the same time, this does not exclude the contemplation of theory. Musashi, in agreement with the *Bushidō* rules mentioned earlier, favoured samurai in the social hierarchy as well. A warrior could not miss training sessions. We can observe that Musashi accused others of misconceiving the role of theory as totally unnecessary. The aforementioned uniformity of education should be now considered. It seems that there were people who believed that practice cannot exist without theory and the reverse. It is very unlikely that Musashi's accusation is unjustified. Unfortunately, the author does not specify who the recipient of it is; he even highlights his sole responsibility for such a hypothesis. Still, it is hard to state whether his remark has no true foundations, therefore one can assume that his views must have been based on something.

Although there is a great similarity to Confucius here, there is a clearly stated difference, too. The author of the *Book of Five Rings*, much as Daidōji Yūzan Taira-no Shigesuke, focuses mostly on the military education, which was often exclusively dedicated to warriors. Naturally, Miyamoto Musashi attaches greater importance to that education. Confucius did not distinguish military knowledge, for him general education was more important[43] and should not be decomposed into autonomous domains. However, it does not mean that

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[38] Yūzan Daidōji, *Wprowadzenie do Bushidō. Budō Shoshinshū* [The Beginner's Book of Bushido], Bydgoszcz: Diamond Books, 2009, p. 15.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] Ibid., p. 16.

[41] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 72.

[42] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 3.

[43] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 72.

he does not appreciate the value of the art of war. In fact, the situation is contrary, for Confucius every discipline seems to be significant and serious.

For Musashi education was so important that he kept repeating about it almost all the time in his *Book of Five Rings.* He might have believed that but for education nobody would have achieved anything. Thus, most of his ideas end in commands: 'If you want to learn this Way, deeply consider the things written in this book one at a time. You must do sufficient research.[44] (...) These are things you must learn thoroughly.[45] (...) You must research this well.[46] (...) You must understand the application of this method'.[47]

One should add that the above-mentioned excerpts concern not only mental exercises but physical ones as well. The samurai's devotion to education is again noticeable. It is very probable that the author knew that without broadening one's mind it was impossible to achieve anything. Another aspect should be taken into consideration here, namely discipline. This is clearly another aspect that connects the swordmaster with Confucius, though in the case of the second philosopher the word 'obedience' should be used. The Chinese even believed that full submission to one's parents is crucial.[48] This does not imply that obedience towards the teacher was unnecessary as the situation was completely different. Musashi's reasoning was the same. Discipline helps an individual to develop oneself, strong will is obviously indispensable, as the foregoing quotation proves. Discipline may also mean a natural craving for self-improvement.

Musashi stressed that every warrior should 'become acquainted with every art'[49] and every human being should 'know the Ways of professions'.[50] In these pieces of advice one can clearly recognise the dictation to deepen knowledge. It must be stressed, however, that for Musashi only the samurai could deal with the art of war, so that warriors' priority was to gain, both military and, concerning other aspects, skills. The author does pay attention to other people, though. According to his reasoning every person is supposed to acquire knowledge. As a result, it is possible to attain perfection or perfect harmony. This should be also treated as a feature similar to Confucius' philosophy. As mentioned before, the old master did advocate studying without splitting it into separate disciplines. Generally speaking, one must learn everything.

The social division is another very important Confucian element in the *Book of Five Rings*. Musashi stayed in agreement with *bushidō* as well as with the Confucian ethics which stated that every person has its own place within the society. One can claim that it was conditioned by an individual's birth or even by their destiny. This is distinguishable in the aforementioned quotation. Musashi observes how high the position occupied by the samurai is in Japanese society. All in all, they were on the top of the social ladder.[51] Clearly, any change in this hierarchy would be like a disaster for the author. Theoretically, this

[44] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 5.
[45] Ibid., p. 7.
[46] Ibid., p. 9.
[47] Ibid., p. 15.
[48] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 20.
[49] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 8.
[50] Ibidem.
[51] Conrad Totman, *Historia Japonii* [A History of Japan], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2009, p. 113.

would ruin the contemporary social order. Musashi is no different from other samurai here. Even Daidōji Yūzan Taira-no Shigesuke was able to discern how important the binding social order was. Samurai were on the top, and nothing should disturb this situation.[52] Additionally, every social group had their own duties, so no-one can say that samurai as the leaders had no obligations. For many, they had the greatest number of duties. Eventually, apart from the administrative position they occupied, they had to fight.[53] They were expected to be ready to sacrifice their lives at any moment. Musashi in the *Book of Five Rings* constantly repeats that. Master Confucius also believes that every citizen should have their own obligations and perform some kind of function.[54] Furthermore, if everybody does what they are expected to do, and, more importantly, stay in accordance with their social status, peace among people will come and the country would develop quickly.[55] Hence, the order in the country can be regarded as harmony. It is worth analysing what might happen if something disturbed the existing social order or what the consequences of that would be. In the end, the state known to Confucius, Musashi or to other samurai no longer exists, no matter if one has China or Japan in mind. Those considerations are not the topic of this paper, although they present new research possibilities. It should also be considered whether the order prevalent in the Middle Kingdom or the land of the Rising Sun at that time was, according to Musashi, good, viewing chances for development. The following issues will be discussed in the forthcoming sections of this paper.

Now, we should concentrate on a matter that has already been mentioned many times, namely harmony. What was it specifically? Did Confucius and Musashi perceive it in a similar way? Those questions require a little analysis. Were one to suggest that master Confucius recommends harmony in every aspect of life, more precisely, he reckons that it leads to all kinds of development.[56] In the *Book of Five Rings* Musashi turns his attention to this problem as well. He acknowledges that the rhythm should be responsible for showing the path a human must follow: 'Timing is important in dancing and pipe or string music, for they are in rhythm only if timing is good. Timing and rhythm are also involved in the military arts, shooting bows and guns, and riding horses. In all skills and abilities there is timing'.[57]

Clearly, like Confucius, Musashi thinks that harmony or rhythm (timing) or order, all being instances of the same aspect, should not be distorted. It has to be highlighted that he talks mostly about warriors, but not exclusively. As he himself says, the description applies to other people, too. That relates to many other aspects, for instance, the aforementioned distortion of order in the country. In this particular case, Musashi is most probably thinking of human conduct. Apparently, the warrior is the key figure, but the passing reference shows its link to other social groups. After all, every human is guided by some kind of rhythm, either deliberately or not. Distorting this 'rhythm' may lead to serious, yet very often irreversible changes. For example, a warrior who unexpectedly decides to

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[52] Daidōji, *Wprowadzenie do...*, p. 15.

[53] *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, http://wordlist.narod.ru/bushido.pdf (accessed 29.06.2013), p. 49.

[54] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 14.

[55] Ibid., p. 104.

[56] Ibidem.

[57] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 7.

stop practising the art of war, no matter if one thinks of the theory or practice, will soon become weak, and his skills will deteriorate. The same applies to a farmer who chooses not to cultivate. It is impossible for the soil to bring forth crops. This is how the distortion of the rhythm manifests. One should also consider the awareness of harmony. Both Confucius and Musashi points out how important harmony and rhythm are. Since every person is expected to explore the heart of the matter, it automatically denotes the awareness of its existence. Without any doubt, an unaware entity can perturb its life more easily when compared to a fully conscious individual. Thus, Confucius and Musashi both recommend two things: keeping order and the very awareness of its existence. The aspect of harmony in other contexts should also be considered. For instance, harmony is extremely important in family life, in the hearth and home specifically. The life of every family is guided by the given rhythm. The distortion might cause many unpleasant results. Similarly, harmony is necessary in the social life, not to mention other concerns. From the very beginning Confucius states that harmony is indispensable in every aspect. Musashi makes general remarks, too. He literally highlights that no matter who the person is and what he does in his life, it is the rhythm that is important. Hence, it is true to claim that both Confucius and Musashi were fully aware of the presence of this kind of order in their lives. They themselves had to follow it, thereby recommending harmony to their apprentices, and in the case of Masashi, to his readers as well.

This relation, or the attitude towards others, deserves a separate mention. Among many things, one should concentrate primarily on respect. This is one of the most significant similarities. Master Confucius said "I will not be afflicted at men's not knowing me; I will be afflicted that I do not know men".[58] Evidently, for Confucian ethics relations with other people are vital. It seems obvious to state that in order to achieve the level of harmony in a country, there has to be harmony among citizens. In the *Book of Five Rings* Musashi also stressed the need for such respect: "(…) people are always under the impression that the enemy is strong, and so tend to become cautious".[59] For Musashi, respect towards one's opponent is as important as the respect towards the art of war. The lack of it would lead to ignorance resulting in loss. Respect, then, is another Confucian element in the *Book of Five Rings.* It should be borne in mind, however, that Musashi's respect has a different facet when compared to Confucius' idea who recommended respecting others, regardless of their situation, whereas Musashi talks about combat exclusively. All in all, Musashi was a samurai and his work was a military-philosophical treatise. That is the reason why the following difference exists. One may also want to consider the meaning of this respect for Confucius and Musashi. The fragments mentioned above deal with the advice to respect others only, but do Confucius and Musashi advocate self-respect? This issue shall be now analysed. The Chinese philosopher states "Let his words be sincere and truthful, and his actions honourable and careful".[60] Once again, one can see the dictates calling for respect. In this particular case, it is worth concentrating on a different issue, though. Confucius demands that people be reliable. This very advice is a clear indication to show self-respect towards oneself. It is impossible to be loyal to other people if a person does not respect

[58] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 5.
[59] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 20.
[60] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 96.

their own dignity. In most cases, an individual unable to respect himself is incapable of admiring others, therefore the issue of loyalty no longer exist. Musashi does not relate to loyalty at all. It is possible that this is the outcome of him being, at least for most of his life, a *ronin.* He does not state verbatim whether a person should respect oneself. Most probably, he thought that this was the way people should behave. This can be deduced from all his pieces of advice, even the ones concerning discipline. A human who does not respect himself usually does not work well in any field, let alone maintaining discipline. Consequently, it is to be stated that both Confucius and Musashi recommend showing respect not only to other people but also towards oneself.

The advice to be temperate in every aspect except study[61] is another Confucian element present in the *Book of Five Rings* though they are literally expounded in *Dokkōdō* (The Way to Be Followed Alone): "Be detached from desire your whole life. (...) Do not pursue the taste of good food".[62] Apparently, the samurai also insists on rejecting pleasure instead of useful things. In the case of Musashi, what he bears in mind is the deep care for maintaining decent physical condition, concordant to the military Way. If the samurai paid too much attention to mundane dreams, seeking their own comfort, their skills would deteriorate. Undoubtedly, education was of the utmost importance, therefore no samurai could forget about exercising restraint. In addition, Musashi orders "do nothing which is of no use".[63] An aloof person does not do such things. Simultaneously, the samurai suggests "Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters".[64] This is a feature of a temperate individual as well. Furthermore, these people are supposed to behave justly. This is the samurai's precept, to 'develop intuitive judgement and understanding for everything'.[65] On the basis of the following extracts, one can observe a great similarity between the samurai and the old master. On the other hand, there is another aspect to be considered; Musashi was a samurai and he fought about sixty duels during his life. Was it possible for a warrior to be temperate? Could a warrior let himself be aloof? Most probably the answer is no, as his life depended upon it. During the duel it was relatively easy to be composed, whereas during battle it was barely possible, and in the turmoil of battle the task would seem insurmountable. It must be added, however, that the behaviour of Japanese warriors was different from the European ones. Due to those differences it is justifiable to claim that samurai could be restrained. Is this reasoning correct? Such a hypothesis opens new research possibilities. The warriors' behaviour may be the subject of further analyses for scholars. Even Musashi did not necessarily have to be reserved, the proof of it being the number of duels and the way he won them. Nobody can question his determination, but was he temperate? According to the legends describing him, he was brutal, direct and crude.[66] Thus, it should be taken into consideration whether Musashi could have recommended restraint at all. The abovementioned features of the character have little to

[61] Ibid., p. 21.

[62] *Dōkkodō* [独行道; The Way to Be Followed Alone]: http://martinjd.tetradyn.com/mgt-work-ethic-philosophy/Dokkodo.pdf (accessed 29.06.2013).

[63] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 8.

[64] Ibidem.

[65] Ibidem.

[66] Hurst III, 'Samuraj…', pp. 119–120.

do with restraint. Obviously, any person may have their own views on this matter. There are many possibilities concerning this problem, but unfortunately there are not enough sources to provide an answer to the question.

What will be now analysed is the internal situation in the country. As mentioned before, maintaining order leads to prosperity. The question is: were Confucius and Musashi pleased with the condition of the country at that time? Was it developing, in their personal opinion? The answer to the following questions may somehow distort the idea of harmony. Master Confucius believed that the omnipresent evil exists due to the failure to observe the customs.[67] More specifically, he disliked the Middle Kingdom's condition. He was born in Lu county (now Shandong province). He had to flee from there when the rebellion started, and when he returned he became a political figure.[68] What is crucial here is that during his life he often had a chance to observe the poor, let alone the fact that he also experienced poverty.[69] This all may have allowed him to create his own vision of the world. He thought that the then ruling order was far from being perfect. It is the lack of respect towards the tradition that causes corruption. The direct outcome of this is worth discussing. According to Confucius, it might have resulted in bad treatment of the subjects. It is what could be defined as one of the most fundamental criteria that suggest the bad state of a given country. In the *Analects* there is a short note that concerns this issue:

> If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good.[70]

As mentioned above, discipline was very important for Confucius. It is worth considering how, according to the philosopher, this discipline should be introduced. Talking about punishments is forbidden. Since the sage used to observe people, he often had a chance to look at the boys during the punishment dispensing. This must have had the biggest influence on his attitude towards discipline. It is clear that customs and traditions were vital. Obeying or rather remembering them leads to development. However, if one forgets about these things and does not adhere to them, the country will be affected in some way. A country where people neglect their culture and traditions is on a direct path to decline, either physical or moral. Musashi also believed that Japan was in a bad condition. Bearing in mind that he participated in a war against the House of Tokugawa, the later *shōgunate,* their assumption of power was a disaster for Musashi. Many other warriors did not think in the same way, though. For example Yagyū Munenori (1571–1646), who participated in the same war but represented the house of Tokugawa, did not complain about the state of the country. He became *daimyō* and taught fencing to Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632) the later *shōgun*.[71]

Hence, the way one perceived the situation in the country depended upon the individual's personal state. It is obvious that a person who is not well-off would criticise the current

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[67] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 113.
[68] Tadeusz Żbikowski, *Konfucjusz* [Confucius], Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1960, p. 83.
[69] Ibid., p. 79.
[70] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 5.
[71] Tokeshi, *Kendo...*, p. 217.

condition of the country. Nevertheless, no one can claim that such people exaggerate, as they may be right as well. In the end, their position is related to the country. Musashi should not be blamed for his complaints concerning his own country at that time. He even provides a clear explanation of his attitude. According to him, the bad state Japan was in was triggered by the loss of national awareness: 'If we look at the world we see arts for sale. Men use equipment to sell their own selves'.[72] This shows that Musashi both blames and explains the loss of national awareness by people's pursuit of money collecting or even amassing great fortunes. People who abandoned art and tradition for the sake of money were being affected by depravity. According to the author of *Gorin-no Sho*, humans themselves became objects. Without any doubt, it must have been difficult for a man who used to behave according to his honour. What should be added now is the fact that the samurai sees here the biggest threat to the art of war. Naturally, he could have always exaggerated the problem. It is impossible to reach any consensus on this matter. Some researchers would agree with the samurai, whereas some would not. All in all, one can claim that the above mentioned quotation highlights how Musashi was similar to Confucius, but not the Confucian elements in the *Book of Five Rings*. Eventually, both the sage and the samurai reckoned that the situation in their countries was not good. Confucius did not praise excessive gains, either: 'The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain'.[73] It seems apparent for Confucius that the person who aims at his own profits is inferior. The Chinese master and the swordmaster both think that people should follow the path that guarantees the development of their country. Still, it is possible to observe the trace of Confucian ethics, ingrained in the precept to respect tradition. Both Confucius and Musashi assume that respecting culture and tradition helps attain prosperity. The samurai, which is fairly understandable, paid more attention to military issues, but that was due to his profession.

Confucius, in mentioning this tradition, had in mind the sacral rites as well.[74] He supported paying homage to the deceased and to Heaven. The worldly life should be determined by the divine plan.[75] But what in fact is this divine plan? Confucius suggests that every person must at least try to comprehend it: 'Heaven. I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven; that knows me![76] On the basis of the above quotation it seems that Confucius' 'divine plan' means exactly the same thing as the sense of life. The person who is able to grasp and follow it will retain harmony in their life. The aforementioned distortion of rhythm, regardless of the aspect (governmental or personal), is caused by a lack of understanding of this divine plan. There is another interesting aspect to this problem; the person who flouts the divine plan, destroying the harmony in one's life, does it only to oneself. In such a case, there is only one person affected by it; ultimately his or her family or friends may suffer, whereas people who do not follow the divine plan when it comes to their state of life are ruining the whole country. In consequence, all people suffer, although most of them did not participate in wrong activities.

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[72] Miyamoto, *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 4.
[73] *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 19.
[74] Ibid., p. 13.
[75] Ibid., p. 129.
[76] Ibid., p. 92.

The person who discovers the aims of a particular country will be able to follow the right path. The same goes with any human life. In the *Book of Five Rings* there is only one reference to the sacred, in the Introduction: 'I have climbed Mount Iwato of Higo in Kyushu to pay homage to Heaven, pray to Kwannon, and kneel before Buddha'.[77] Taking care of the rites was also very important for Musashi. However, they are slightly different. The *Book of Five Rings* does not contain any pieces of information concerning the ancestor cult. The samurai obviously praises Heaven, but his praise remains unmotivated. It seems that Musashi also wanted to comprehend God's will. In his work he advocates: 'Perceive those things which cannot be seen'.[78] This bears a great resemblance to Confucian's understanding of the divine plan. It is not fully confirmed, though, and so such a suggestion should be treated only as a hypothesis. Generally speaking, the rite itself is the biggest similarity. Additionally, praising Heaven is an instance of the ancestor cult. Samurai could glorify them in this way, or by means of Shintō rites. The place where he mentions those things is also problematic. As has been mentioned many times before, the Introduction may have been written by somebody else. That would mean Musashi made absolutely no reference to sacred rites in the *Book of Five Rings*. All the same, he makes a direct mention in *Dokkōdō*: 'Respect Buddha and the gods without counting on their help'.[79] Clearly, Musashi recommends participation in religious rites. He does not determine what they should look like, but, in this case, it does not matter. The aforementioned note requires analysis. Not only does the samurai recommend but also insists on praising the acts of God. At the same time, he advises us not to rely on them. It seems that he believed in people taking care of their own lives; they need to study hard to achieve something. Indolence coupled with waiting for divine forces to intervene leads to nothing. This may be why Musashi does not suggest people's decisions should be based solely upon the acts of God. Naturally, not every person has to agree with such a thesis. This is another example of a note that has more than just one interpretation.

The divine plan deserves another paragraph. It thus authenticates the deeper meaning, that there is a huge similarity between Confucius and Musashi. Having read *Gorin-no Sho* one can safely claim that the samurai tried to understand the sense of life all the time. This is mostly recognisable in the Introduction[80], but if that was written by Musashi a serious problem would appear. Eventually, the very advice to experience and understand what remains uncovered indicates the necessity to discover the sense.[81] Confucius and Musashi therefore both believe in praising supreme forces, even if their motivations were different. It is extremely likely that they were both looking for the sense of life. One can but debate whether they managed to find it.

To sum up, there are many elements of the Confucian ethics in the *Book of Five Rings.* It should be analysed why they were put there anyway. Musashi declared he would not refer to Confucian ethics, which suggests that incorporating them within the work could be caused by his upbringing. That is, if he himself was the author of the Introduction, the

[77] *Gorin-no Sho*…, p. 2.
[78] Ibid., p. 8.
[79] *Dōkkodō*…
[80] *Gorin-no Sho*…, pp. 2–3.
[81] Ibid., p. 8.

samurai might have included them subconsciously. However, we can find many more such elements within the *Book of Five Rings*; this article aims to present only the most significant ones. Naturally, some researchers are welcome to claim that there are absolutely no elements of Confucian ethics in *Gorin-no Sho*. Nevertheless, the assumptions made throughout this paper state that the elements of Confucianism can really be found in the book, regardless of whether the author included them deliberately or not. Many aspects give the impression of how similar the samurai was to Confucius. It is also interesting to analyse what those elements meant to the samurai. This is the reason why it is justifiable to stress that perhaps for Musashi the Confucian elements were so ingrained in Japanese culture that he was unable to distinguish them as separate entities. There may be a huge difference in the perception of the Confucian elements. Musashi may have understood them in a way that differs wholly from that of the modern scholars.