

## 1: Inside Seppuku, The Ancient Samurai Ritual Suicide Tradition

*Often called "hara-kiri" in the West, "seppuku" is a form of ritual suicide that originated with Japan's ancient samurai warrior class.*

In this illustration, a warrior prepares himself to perform seppuku. In this story, warrior Minamoto no Tametomo was said to have reacted to defeat by cutting his own stomach open. In this colorized photo possibly a reenactment, a warrior performs seppuku. Wikimedia Commons 3 of 20 By the middle of the 19th century, seppuku was on the decline along with the samurai way of life. However, it would still be roughly years before its practice had all but been phased out of Japanese culture. Here a samurai is shown in the process of committing seppuku, his death poem at his feet. Getty Images 4 of 20 "Seppuku" is translated as "stomach cutting" and would be performed with a tanto, a short dagger. This photo shows a disassembled antique tanto and its smaller dagger counterpart. The blade would be thrust into the left side of the belly and pulled to the right with a sharp upward cut at the end. This image from a kabuki play depicts a warrior committing seppuku as armed soldiers pursue him. Wikimedia Commons 6 of 20 Prior to the 17th century, the practice was less formal and often resulted in a slower and more painful death as participants bled out. Around 1600, a helping-hand was incorporated with the addition of a kaishakunin or "second." Wikimedia Commons 7 of 20 The kaishakunin was not supposed to fully sever the head, but leave it still slightly attached at the throat. Failure to do so earned one a bad reputation. The distraught face of the kaishakunin above possibly shows his embarrassment in his less than ideal performance. Library of Congress 8 of 20 A modified version of seppuku would occasionally be used as a form of protest against the actions of a ruler. Known as kanshi, this version would see the samurai commit the act and then quickly bandage the wound. He would later appear before his lord and state his grievances before removing the bandage to expose the mortal wound. Wikimedia Commons 9 of 20 Isao Inokuma, second from the left won a gold medal for Japan in martial arts at the Olympics and is the last known person to have performed ritualistic seppuku. Appearing on the balcony of the building, Mishima delivered a speech to 2, soldiers who surrounded it. He then disappeared into the building and committed seppuku. One of these was writing his death poem, which was supposed to be eloquent and attest to their emotions, but not directly mention death. In this illustration, General Akashi Gidayu prepares to commit seppuku after losing a battle for his master in 1632. His death poem is visible in the upper right corner. Wikimedia Commons 14 of 20 Wives of samurai had their own suicide ritual known as jigai. Carried out in a very similar way with a knife to the belly, women would perform this if their husbands had carried out seppuku or if capture by an enemy was imminent, so as to prevent rape. The participant would be properly groomed and bathed and dressed in white to symbolize purity. Wikimedia Commons 16 of 20 A servant would typically place a small wooden table in front of the participant that would be set with a sake cup, tanto, and a piece of paper for writing the death poem. Even the way in which the sake was consumed was of the utmost importance. The sake would be consumed in two drinks of two sips each. One sip would show greed, and three or more would show hesitation. The total of four sips, or shi, would symbolize death. Wikimedia Commons 17 of 20 Seppuku illustration. Library of Congress 18 of 20 Rendering of a man contemplating seppuku. Library of Congress 19 of 20 Several people gather together to commit seppuku. Library of Congress 20 of 20

*The history of seppuku – Japanese ritual suicide by cutting the stomach, sometimes referred to as hara-kiri – spans a millennium, and came to be favored by samurai as an honorable form of death.*

Mass suicide at Pilenai: Lithuanian Defenders Choose Death over Enslavement

A servant would place a wooden table before the samurai, which would contain a sake rice wine cup, a sheaf of washi paper handmade from mulberry bark and writing utensils, as well as the kozuka disemboweling blade although the samurai would be allowed to use his own sword if he preferred. The sake cup was then filled from the left by an attendant. The samurai then emptied the cup in two drinks of exactly two sips each, as one sip would show greed, and three or more sips would show hesitation. A tanto blade for the seppuku ritual. The poem should be graceful and natural, usually in the theme of transient emotions. This was also important for the samurai as the poem would serve as a written glimpse into his nobility of character and how he wished to be remembered after his death. He would then lift the knife with one hand and unsheathe it with the other, setting the sheathe to one side. After mentally preparing himself, he would drive the knife into the left side of his stomach, then draw it across to the right. He would then turn the blade in his wound and bring it upward. Most samurai did not have to endure this last agony, as the kaishakunin would cut their heads off at the first sign of pain. The cut in seppuku carried out to its finish was known as the jumonji crosswise cut, and to perform it in its entirety was considered a particularly impressive seppuku. A samurai must keep his composure even on the brink of death, showing strength and full control of his mind and body in his last moments. Any previous reputation of a samurai would be meaningless if he were to die in an unseemly manner. However, although a calm and composed state was ideal for the samurai committing this act, the eighteenth century book Hagakure and other Edo works relate stories of samurai losing their composure just before committing seppuku, and in some cases had to be forcibly decapitated.

Different Reasons for a Samurai to Commit Suicide

Of course, there were circumstances where there was not enough time for the samurai to undergo the whole ritual of seppuku. Therefore, acts such as cutting his own throat, throwing himself from a running horse with a sword in his mouth, or throwing himself off cliffs were also allowed. With the final confrontation of the Gempei War imminent and all hope lost, general Taira Tomomori resolved to end his life. He summoned his foster brother who then assisted Tomomori into a second suit of armor and donned another himself. Hand in hand, they then jumped into the sea. Seeing this, at least twenty samurai then put on their heavy armors, bore weighty objects on their backs to make sure they would sink, took one another by the hand and jumped, determined not to stay behind after their master was gone. A well-known occurrence was in 1906, when the novelist Mishima Yukio disemboweled himself in protest against what he believed was the loss of traditional values in his country. However, as the act of seppuku was abolished in 1873, his suicide was mostly seen as anachronistic and something of a national embarrassment.

General Akashi Gidayu preparing to commit Seppuku after losing a battle for his master in 1637. He had just written his death poem, which is also visible in the upper right corner. Public Domain

Kanshi, is an act of suicide due to remonstrance. A samurai would commit suicide to state his case or make his point to a lord when all other forms of persuasion had been proven ineffective. This was done by Hirate Nakatsukasa Kiyohide in 1600 who committed suicide to make his master Oda Nobunaga change his ways. Hirate wrote a letter urging Nobunaga to change his ways and then committed Kanshi. His death is said to have had a dramatic effect on Nobunaga. He did mend his ways, and built the Seisyu-ji in Owari to honor Hirate.

## 3: Seppuku - Wikipedia

*While martial suicide is a practice found in a lot of cultures, the act of seppuku, or ritual self-disembowelment, is peculiar to www.enganchecubano.com earliest known acts of seppuku were the deaths of samurai Minamoto Tametomo and poet Minamoto Yorimasa in the latter part of the 12th century.*

Ross notes, It is commonly pointed out that hara-kiri is a vulgarism , but this is a misunderstanding. Hara-kiri is a Japanese reading or Kun-yomi of the characters; as it became customary to prefer Chinese readings in official announcements, only the term seppuku was ever used in writing. So hara-kiri is a spoken term, but only to commoners and seppuku a written term, but spoken amongst higher classes for the same act. In some popular western texts, such as martial arts magazines, the term is associated with suicide of samurai wives. An Attempt at Interpretation, [7] an understanding which has since been translated into Japanese. Mostow notes that Hearn misunderstood the term jigai to be the female equivalent of seppuku. Later, disgraced warriors were sometimes allowed to carry out seppuku rather than be executed in the normal manner. The most common form of seppuku for men was composed of the cutting of the abdomen, and when the samurai was finished, he stretched out his neck for an assistant to sever his spinal cord by cutting halfway into the neck. Those who did not belong to the samurai caste were never ordered or expected to carry out seppuku. Samurai generally could carry out the act only with permission. This weakened the defeated clan so that resistance effectively ceased. In the 12th and 13th centuries, such as with the seppuku of Minamoto no Yorimasa, the practice of a kaishakunin idiomatically, his "second" had not yet emerged, thus the rite was considered far more painful. In the absence of a kaishakunin, the samurai would then remove the blade, and stab himself in the throat, or fall from a standing position with the blade positioned against his heart. During the Edo Period “”, carrying out seppuku came to involve a detailed ritual. This was usually performed in front of spectators if it was a planned seppuku, not one performed on a battlefield. A samurai was bathed, dressed in white robes, and served his favorite foods for a last meal. When he had finished, the knife and cloth were placed on another sanbo and given to the warrior. Dressed ceremonially, with his sword placed in front of him and sometimes seated on special clothes, the warrior would prepare for death by writing a death poem. He had just written his death poem, which is also visible in the upper right corner. By Tsukioka Yoshitoshi around Prior to this, he would probably consume an important ceremonial drink of sake. He would also give his attendant a cup meant for sake. The maneuver should be done in the manners of dakikubi lit. Because of the precision necessary for such a maneuver, the second was a skilled swordsman. The principal and the kaishakunin agreed in advance when the latter was to make his cut. Usually dakikubi would occur as soon as the dagger was plunged into the abdomen. The process became so highly ritualised that as soon as the samurai reached for his blade the kaishakunin would strike. Eventually even the blade became unnecessary and the samurai could reach for something symbolic like a fan and this would trigger the killing stroke from his second. The fan was likely used when the samurai was too old to use the blade or in situations where it was too dangerous to give him a weapon. The second was usually, but not always, a friend. If a defeated warrior had fought honourably and well, an opponent who wanted to salute his bravery would volunteer to act as his second. In the Hagakure , Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote: From ages past it has been considered an ill-omen by samurai to be requested as kaishaku. The reason for this is that one gains no fame even if the job is well done. Further, if one should blunder, it becomes a lifetime disgrace. In the practice of past times, there were instances when the head flew off. It was said that it was best to cut leaving a little skin remaining so that it did not fly off in the direction of the verifying officials. The retainer would make one deep, horizontal cut into his abdomen, then quickly bandage the wound. It involves a second and more painful vertical cut on the belly. The main purpose was to achieve a quick and certain death in order to avoid capture. Before committing suicide, a woman would often tie her knees together so her body would be found in a dignified pose, despite the convulsions of death. Invading armies would often enter homes to find the lady of the house seated alone, facing away from the door. On approaching her, they would find that she had ended her life long before they reached her. Turnbull provides extensive evidence for the practice of female ritual suicide, notably of samurai wives, in pre-modern

Japan. One of the largest mass suicides was the 25 April final defeat of Taira no Tomomori establishing Minamoto power. An Attempt at Interpretation, [7] an understanding which has since been translated into Japanese and Hearn seen through Japanese eyes. Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. The samurai were generally told of their offense in full and given a set time to commit seppuku, usually before sunset on a given day. On occasion, if the sentenced individuals were uncooperative or outright refused to end their own lives, it was not unheard of for them to be restrained and the seppuku carried out by an executioner, or for the actual execution to be carried out instead by decapitation while retaining only the trappings of seppuku; even the short sword laid out in front of the offender could be replaced with a fan. Depending on the severity of the crime, all or part of the property of the condemned could be confiscated, and the family would be punished by being stripped of rank, sold into long-term servitude, or execution. Seppuku was considered the most honorable capital punishment apportioned to Samurai. European witness[ edit ] The first recorded time a European saw formal seppuku was the " Sakai Incident " of On February 15, eleven French sailors of the Duplex entered a Japanese town called Sakai without official permission. Their presence caused panic among the residents. Security forces were dispatched to turn the sailors back to their ship, but a fight broke out and the sailors were shot dead. Upon the protest of the French representative, financial compensation was paid and those responsible were sentenced to death. The French captain was present to observe the execution. As each samurai committed ritual disembowelment, the violent act shocked the captain,[ citation needed ] and he requested a pardon, as a result of which nine of the samurai were spared. In his book Tales of Old Japan, he describes a man who had come to the graves to kill himself: I will add one anecdote to show the sanctity which is attached to the graves of the Forty-seven. In the month of September , a certain man came to pray before the grave of Oishi Chikara. Having finished his prayers, he deliberately performed hara-kiri, and, the belly wound not being mortal, dispatched himself by cutting his throat. Upon his person were found papers setting forth that, being a Ronin and without means of earning a living, he had petitioned to be allowed to enter the clan of the Prince of Choshu , which he looked upon as the noblest clan in the realm; his petition having been refused, nothing remained for him but to die, for to be a Ronin was hateful to him, and he would serve no other master than the Prince of Choshu: There are many stories on record of extraordinary heroism being displayed in the harakiri. The case of a young fellow, only twenty years old, of the Choshu clan, which was told me the other day by an eye-witness, deserves mention as a marvellous instance of determination. Not content with giving himself the one necessary cut, he slashed himself thrice horizontally and twice vertically. Then he stabbed himself in the throat until the dirk protruded on the other side, with its sharp edge to the front; setting his teeth in one supreme effort, he drove the knife forward with both hands through his throat, and fell dead. One more story and I have done. During the revolution, when the Taikun Supreme Commander , beaten on every side, fled ignominiously to Yedo , he is said to have determined to fight no more, but to yield everything. A member of his second council went to him and said, "Sir, the only way for you now to retrieve the honour of the family of Tokugawa is to disembowel yourself; and to prove to you that I am sincere and disinterested in what I say, I am here ready to disembowel myself with you. His faithful retainer, to prove his honesty, retired to another part of the castle, and solemnly performed the harakiri. In his book Tales of Old Japan, Mitford describes witnessing a hara-kiri: The ceremony, which was ordered by the Mikado Emperor himself, took place at A witness was sent from each of the foreign legations. We were seven foreigners in all. After another profound obeisance, Taki Zenzaburo, in a voice which betrayed just so much emotion and hesitation as might be expected from a man who is making a painful confession, but with no sign of either in his face or manner, spoke as follows: I, and I alone, unwarrantably gave the order to fire on the foreigners at Kobe , and again as they tried to escape. For this crime I disembowel myself, and I beg you who are present to do me the honour of witnessing the act. Bowing once more, the speaker allowed his upper garments to slip down to his girdle, and remained naked to the waist. Carefully, according to custom, he tucked his sleeves under his knees to prevent himself from falling backwards; for a noble Japanese gentleman should die falling forwards. Deliberately, with a steady hand, he took the dirk that lay before him; he looked at it wistfully, almost affectionately; for a moment he seemed to collect his thoughts for the last time, and then stabbing himself

deeply below the waist on the left-hand side, he drew the dirk slowly across to the right side, and, turning it in the wound, gave a slight cut upwards. During this sickeningly painful operation he never moved a muscle of his face. When he drew out the dirk, he leaned forward and stretched out his neck; an expression of pain for the first time crossed his face, but he uttered no sound. At that moment the kaishaku, who, still crouching by his side, had been keenly watching his every movement, sprang to his feet, poised his sword for a second in the air; there was a flash, a heavy, ugly thud, a crashing fall; with one blow the head had been severed from the body. A dead silence followed, broken only by the hideous noise of the blood throbbing out of the inert heap before us, which but a moment before had been a brave and chivalrous man. The kaishaku made a low bow, wiped his sword with a piece of rice paper which he had ready for the purpose, and retired from the raised floor; and the stained dirk was solemnly borne away, a bloody proof of the execution. The two representatives of the Mikado then left their places, and, crossing over to where the foreign witnesses sat, called us to witness that the sentence of death upon Taki Zenzaburo had been faithfully carried out. The ceremony being at an end, we left the temple. The ceremony, to which the place and the hour gave an additional solemnity, was characterized throughout by that extreme dignity and punctiliousness which are the distinctive marks of the proceedings of Japanese gentlemen of rank; and it is important to note this fact, because it carries with it the conviction that the dead man was indeed the officer who had committed the crime, and no substitute. While profoundly impressed by the terrible scene it was impossible at the same time not to be filled with admiration of the firm and manly bearing of the sufferer, and of the nerve with which the kaishaku performed his last duty to his master. Dozens of people are known to have committed seppuku since then, including some military men who committed suicide in as a protest against the return of a conquered territory to China; [ citation needed ] by General Nogi and his wife on the death of Emperor Meiji in ; and by numerous soldiers and civilians who chose to die rather than surrender at the end of World War II. This behavior had been widely praised by propaganda, which made a soldier captured in the Shanghai Incident return to the site of his capture to perform seppuku. Mishima performed seppuku in the office of General Kanetoshi Mashita. His second, a year-old man named Masakatsu Morita , tried three times to ritually behead Mishima but failed; his head was finally severed by Hiroyasu Koga , a former kendo champion. Morita then attempted to perform seppuku himself, and when his own cuts were too shallow to be fatal, he gave the signal and he too was beheaded by Koga.

#### 4: Seppuku: Ritual Suicide in Samurai Japan - Social In Rockville

*The book "Sepukku: history of samurai suicide" explores a morbidly multi-colored spectrum of a suicide tradition within the Japanese martial way; through expanding into the whole of the Japanese way of life it shows us that perhaps it is not suicide that we are looking at, but rather a spiritual tool used by different people of high birth in.*

#### 5: seppuku | Definition, History, & Facts | www.enganchecubano.com

*Seppuku (腹切, "cutting [the] belly"), sometimes referred to as harakiri (腹切, "abdomen/belly cutting", a native Japanese kun reading), is a form of Japanese ritual suicide by disembowelment.*

#### 6: Seppuku: A History of Samurai Suicide - Japan Today

*The tradition of seppuku "Japanese ritual suicide by cutting the stomach, sometimes referred to as hara-kiri" spans a millennium. Samurai revered seppuku as the most honorable form of death. Here, for the first time in English, is a book that charts the history of samurai suicide from antiquity to.*

#### 7: Coroner's Report: Seppuku - HISTORY

*Seppuku, translated as "Stomach Cutting", is a ritualistic Japanese suicide done through disembowelment, initially only*

## SEPPUKU A HISTORY OF SAMURAI SUICIDE pdf

*used for Samurai. Also known as "Harikiri", or "Cutting of the belly", this method of death followed the Bushido code of the samurai.*

### 8: What is Seppuku? - HISTORY

*Seppuku: Inside The Ancient Samurai Suicide Ritual View Gallery The Japanese samurai tradition of Seppuku is one of the grisliest and most painful ways to end one's life.*

### 9: Seppuku: A History Of Samurai Suicide : Andrew Rankin :

*Seppuku, also known less formally as harakiri, is a form of ritual suicide that was practiced by the samurai and daimyo of Japan. It usually involved cutting the abdomen open with a short sword, which was believed to immediately release the samurai's spirit to the afterlife.*

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