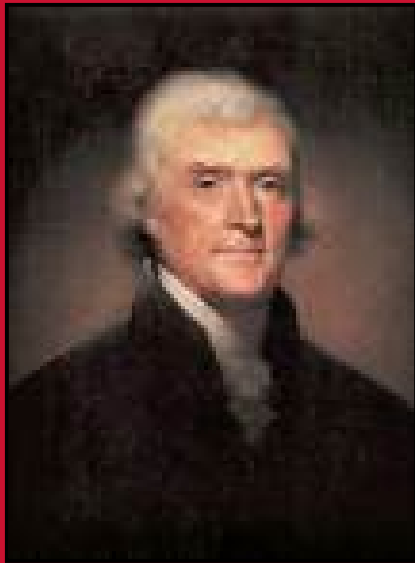
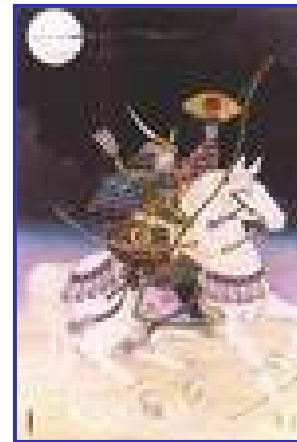


Thomas Jefferson: Personality, Character and Public Life



Thomas
Jefferson
and the
samurai
spirit

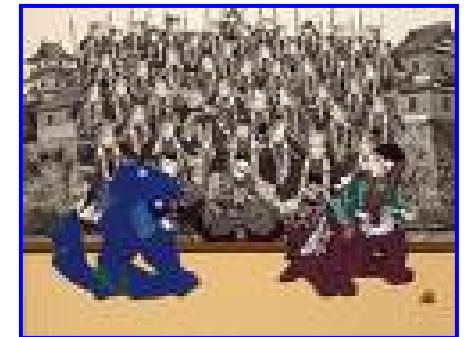


Thomas Jefferson April 2, 1743 – July 4, 1826 wished to be remembered as a politician, philosopher and writer (author of the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom) and educator (founder of the University of Virginia.)

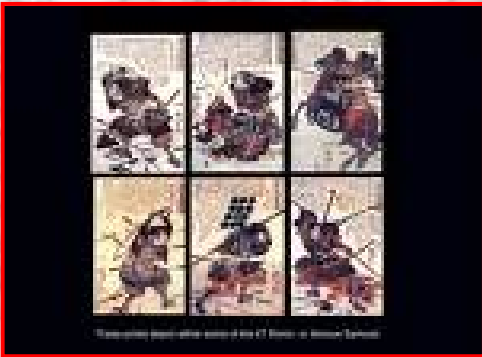


Jefferson sacrificed much for these principles. In the struggle to achieve and maintain these values, he shares samurai codes and ethics.

“We hold these truths to be self evident. . .” Thomas Jefferson



The 18th century epic tale of the 47 *ronin* (masterless warriors) is a good place to begin the illustration of Jefferson as American samurai.



So when young noble, Lord Asano, drew a blade against an abusive court teacher, Kira Yoshinaka, Asano was ordered to commit *seppuku*. Asano's lands were confiscated, his samurai were disowned and now called *ronin*.



For drawing a blade in a palace, Asano had to commit seppuku.



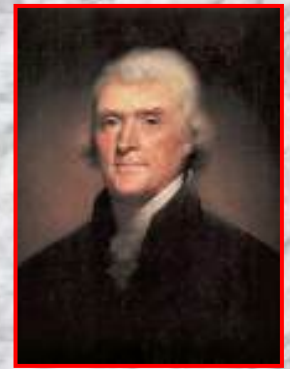
In 1701 Japan was controlled by the Tokugawa shogunate which declared all crimes, great or small, capital offenses.



Tokugawa Ieyasu laid down a severe set of laws once he became shogun in 1603.

In short a young man of means risked death for opposing a perceived tyrant.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.



Asano's seppuku created a quandary for the ronin. By custom they had to avenge their master's death. Yet by Tokugawa edict, they would commit a capital crime by fulfilling their obligation to kill Kira.



Moreover, fully aware of the *ronin's* obligation, Kira fortified his estate and surrounded himself with guards.

*Kira
Yoshinaka*



Accordingly, under the direction of Oishi Kuranosuke, the ronin began a public life of debauchery in order to buy revenge time and to deceive Kira.



For this deception Oishi lost his wife, was spat upon in public and reviled by peers.



Frequenting brothels and taverns brought scorn and ridicule at a time when death before dishonor was not an accepted way of life – it was the only way of life.

Jefferson, too, knew well contemporary critics' stings who likened him to chickens and prairie dogs for his politics.



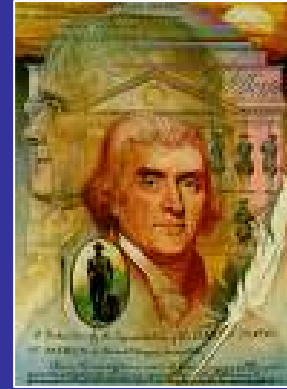
... and as this verse shows,
he was particularly
condemned for an alleged
relationship with a slave,
Sally Hemmings!



*Thick pouting lips! how sweet
their grace!
When passion fires to kiss
them!
Wide spreading over half the
face,
Impossible to miss them.*



Alone, insulted
with honor
assaulted, how
does one find the
courage to soldier
on?



Like his
Japanese
predecessor,
Jefferson lost
his wife during
public service.



For Thomas
Jefferson and
Oishi
Kuranosuke
the answer is
found in action
and legacy!



Oishi Kuranosuke and his 47 ronin answered in less than two years when the samurai emerged from their debauched exile to attack Kira on Dec. 14, 1702 in Edo.

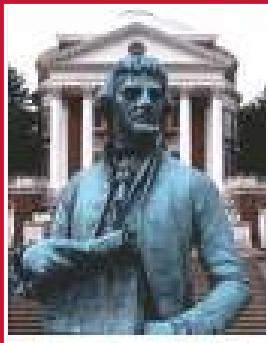


After several hours of battle, Oishi's ronin defeated Kira's forces. Kira was discovered cringing among wailing women in a crawl space. Oishi offered his foe the honor of committing seppuku. Kira, however, cried and begged for his life. In disgust, Oishi cut off Kira's head, washed it and marched across Edo and laid it on his master's grave. As they expected, Oishi and his men, including his teenage son, were ordered to commit mass seppuku for their honorable revenge.



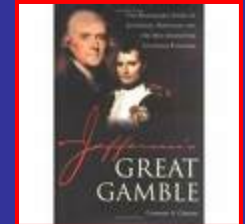
The decapitation and the well where Oishi washed Kira's severed head

Jefferson's answers include the doubling of the size of the United States, eight years peace as president, and the founding of a major university.



Oishi Kuranosuke's actions included epitomizing honor even at the expense of his wife, his son and his followers.

Each leaves much-visited monuments, legends, books and films.



Perhaps the samurai
you to consider as
both Jefferson and
these words.

***I have sworn upon
the altar of God
eternal hostility
against every form of
tyranny over the
mind of man.***


legacy that I urge
properly befitting
Oishi is found in

*natsukusa ya
tsuwamono domo ga
yume no ato*

Matsuo Basho

Summer grasses,
All that remains
Of soldiers' dreams

(trans. Lucien Stryk)

A large black and white Yin-Yang symbol is centered on the page. The symbol is a circle divided into two halves by a curved line. The top half is black and contains the text "Thank you, Gil Mueller". The bottom half is white and contains the text "Domo arigato".

Thank you,
Gil Mueller

**Domo
arigato**