
Japan through SS Eyes: Cultural Dialogue and Instrumentalization of a Wartime Ally

Danny Orbach

The question of Japan's image in the Third Reich (1933–1945) and its function as a "cultural icon" in National-Socialist discourse, has won relatively little attention from scholars of contemporary history. Most works on German Japanese relations, such as the efforts of Carl Boyd ¹, Bernd Martin ², Ernst Presseinen ³, Theo Sommer ⁴, Johanna Menzel-Meskill ⁵, tend to focus on the political, diplomatic and economic dimensions. Their treatment of cultural questions in general, and image making process in particular, is relatively negligible. Nakano Yoshiyuki studied different German images of Japan from medieval times to the present, yet the lexical nature of his work allows only a general description of different publications without in-depth analysis ⁶.

To this day, **the question of Japan's image in the Third Reich** has been address extensively by one research only, *Samurai and Supermen- National Socialist Views of Japan*, a PHD dissertation by the literary scholar Bill Maltarich ⁷. However, this research, as I will argue below, is methodically problematic. In the following article I wish to contribute, if only partially, to the correction of Maltarich's perspective. Furthermore, I would like to raise ideas which might contribute to further research of the questions in focus.

In his dissertation, first published in 2002, Maltarich attempts to examine the image of Japan in National-Socialist Germany from multiple viewpoints: psychological, political, cultural and literary. To this end, he analyzes a wide variety of texts about Japan, fictional and non-fictional, written in Germany between 1933 and 1945, as well as official memoranda about the Japanese race, its essence, quality and affinity to the Germans. Throughout his writing, Maltarich perceives the German image of Japan as an **internal** German question. Thus, he asserts that the German writings on Japan, fictional and non-fictional alike, have very little to do with Japanese reality. They represent, on the contrary, a western exotic image of Japan, as well as its instrumentalization for ideological and political purposes.⁸

In order to define this phenomenon, Maltarich uses the term "captioning", namely- the German author captions, or in other words- interprets, a Japanese picture, voiceless and meaningless for his readers, according to his own ideological taste. Maltarich does not perceive the "captioning" process as a dialogue between a Japanese reality and a German interpretation, but rather as a unilateral process, an instrumentalization of Japan in an internal German discourse. Therefore, Maltarich's own research is about Germany, not about Japan. The author makes it clear in his introduction, when he states that "a study of this nature requires no thorough knowledge of Japanese culture (although some knowledge is indeed helpful), but of German culture, which in the end is the object of this study." ⁹

Maltarich indeed sticks to this frame throughout his work. When he analyzes German

texts, he does not attempt to examine their congruity to Japanese reality, nor he addresses the question, how the various German authors distort this reality to their ideological purposes. Japanese cultural icons that appear in German works, as Geisha, Cherry trees, hot springs, Samurai, temples and shrines, are mostly described as western fantasies. The German writing on Japan is usually perceived as an attempt to justify the German-Japanese alliance, or to meet some other ideological purpose. In that respect, Maltarich is not completely wrong. The National-Socialist writings on Japan did have a conspicuous ideological dimension. However, this is only a partial truth.

In his introduction, Maltarich mentions Edward W. Said's classic work, *Orientalism*, as theoretical authority, and indeed, it seems that he is considerably influenced by the later's views. According to Said, the cultural intercourse between orient and occident is usually one-sided. Occidental scholars, far from having a real dialogue with the orient, are creating an artificial cultural construct for their own needs. This imagined "orient", usually depicted as weak, passive and feminine, is nothing more than a voiceless object, "studied" and "analyzed" in order to create a negative "other" for the west to strengthen its enlightened image:

"Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: [...] In brief, because of orientalism the orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore already involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity, "the orient", is in question. How this happens is what this book tries to demonstrate. It also tries to show that European culture gain strength and identity by setting itself off against the orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self¹⁰."

And later in his book he writes, concerning the treatment of the Orient as a voiceless object in orientalist scholarship:

"[The Orient] is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks¹¹."

Said recognizes that the orientalist scholarship does not exist in a void, but rather has a relationship to a certain "oriental" reality. However, already in his introduction he chooses to "acknowledge it tacitly"¹², and indeed refrains from mentioning it again. Therefore the image creating process is depicted by Said as one-sided western conspiracy, which its main purpose is to "contain the Orient in dominating frameworks", objectify its culture and oppress its natives.

Maltarich, on his part, openly claims that this rather simplistic model is not very useful when analyzing German-Japanese relations. Japan, writes Maltarich, was not a voiceless object, but rather a partner with a voice and influence on the creation of its own image¹³. Thus, it is surprising that Maltarich, throughout his book, ignores the Japanese voice and its

influence on the creation of Japan's image in National-Socialist Germany. The influence of dominant Japanese discourse on the National-Socialist image of Japan, to note just one example, is not even mentioned, let alone analyzed.

The Japanese side completely disappears, as it had no influence over the creation of its own image. Notwithstanding the well proven tendency of National-Socialist authors to distort Japanese reality, Maltarich does not address the interesting question, **how** do they do it, and what is the gap between reality and image.

As a result of that, I would like to propose an alternative approach to image creating processes, as well as to their ideological instrumentalization, distortion and abuse. Thus, I claim that image creation is usually a **bilateral process**, namely- a dialogue between the image creator and its object. This dialogue, needless to say, does not always take place between equal partners but rather, quite often (as proven again and again by Said) is influenced by power-based relationships. However, the National-Socialist dialogue with Japan **did** take place on a more or less equal basis. Though both Germany and Japan held perceptions of self-superiority, each one towards its own race and culture, neither of them had the power to coerce the other or contain it in a "dominating framework".

Behind the cultural dialogue's façade there hides a complex process which the simplistic term of "captioning" fails to explain in full. When one encounters an external reality, in our case, a foreign culture, he receives a certain input from his senses. Following that, he or she interprets, filters and processes it through a pre-existing frame of mind. **Frame of mind is defined here, as the original opinions of the onlooker, prior to the investigation of the target culture.** In addition, her or she is often exposed to writings, opinions or local propaganda, namely, the local discourse, whose influence on his/her frame of mind may be considerable. The final output, or in other words, the image finally produced, is a combination of the original input, the pre-existing frame of mind, and the local discourse's influence. Any analysis of image, done without giving adequate consideration to the original input (in our case, the Japanese reality), or the local (Japanese) discourse, will be only partial at best.

However, the relative power and influence of each component (input, frame of mind and local discourse) may vary greatly from case to case, and hence the diversity of images created by different people, during different cultural encounters. In one sides of the spectrum there are images which consist almost fully of pre-existing frame of mind, with a minimal influence of input and local discourse. On the other side of the spectrum we may classify Western scholars as Lafcadio Hearn, who lived many years in Japan, delved into its language and culture and socialized with its people without let or hinderance. Therefore, he received a considerable amount of input and was constantly exposed to local discourse. Under these conditions, pre existing frames of mind could change considerably, even drastically.

Thus, the influence of local discourse is a crucial question, which completely disappears in Maltarich's analysis. National-Socialists who wrote about their Japanese ally usually visited Japan or read Japanese works (usually in German translation). In any case, they must have been exposed to local discourse, heavily influenced by the Shintoist, emperor-centric and

nationalistic propaganda of Meiji (1868–1912) and Taisho (1912–1926) eras, as well as the first part of Showa era (1929–1945) until the final defeat in World War II. Many of them, indeed, may have come to Japan with a strong, pre existing National-Socialist frame of mind, but in their writings, as I will try to demonstrate, one can discern significant traces not only of German, but also of **Japanese** official ideology.

From here we may move to another question of important consequences: The process of instrumentalization. After the German writer filtered the Japanese input through his National-Socialist frame of mind, was influenced by local discourse and created an image, he consequently tried to convey the final output to his German audience. As the image created was not a private one, but intended for consumption on the public sphere, it was used by the authors, usually deliberately, for different ideological and political purposes. In order to cook this ideological "**broth**", one has to process the image output and change it somehow. In order to meet this end, three techniques were mainly used: **exemplification**, isolation and intensification.

Exemplification is the only one among the three techniques, which is analyzed and dealt with adequately by Maltarich. This is, no doubt, a crucial tool in the instrumentalization process: An attempt to use the image of the other as an **example** for an eternal truth, underlying the nature of the universe. This technique is very useful if one wishes to create a unification of interests, hearts and minds between two problematic allies (As far as National-Socialist racial thought is concerned) like Germany and Japan. If the two nations represent the same eternal truth, they justly belong to the same political and military camp. Although the **exemplification** is heavily influenced by the pre-existing, National-Socialist frame of mind, the influence of local discourse is far from being negligible. The nature of the eternal truth is determined by the Nazi frame of mind, but the local discourse has a say concerning its relationship with Japanese culture.

Isolation is by far the most common technique. Here, the original Japanese input has a decisive significance. The foreign author encounters a human culture, namely- a web of ever changing, mutually dependent psychological and social factors. The foreign observer is often being exposed to different social factors, without giving adequate consideration to their context and the linkage between them and their original culture. Thus, the observer isolates a certain factor from the foreign culture, and sometimes (conscientiously or unconscientiously) plants it to his own culture. This phenomena, though varies in level and intensity, exists in a considerable part of the National-Socialist writings on Japan.

Intensification is the minor companion of isolation. Sometimes, the foreign observer does not only isolate a certain phenomenon, but endows it with much more importance than it actually has in its original culture. Hence, in the writings of the foreign observer, a marginal phenomenon may turn to be the center or the essence of the culture as a whole.

In the following chapter, we will examine the phenomena described above through one non-fictional National-Socialist text, *Samurai- knights of the Reich in honor and loyalty*, by

Heinz Corazza, with an introduction by SS chief Heinrich Himmler. Corazza, as we shall see, tried to promote not only general National-Socialist ideas, but also specific SS ideological interests. Therefore, it would be prudent to restrict the henceforth analysis only to the SS image of Japan, without necessarily concluding on National-Socialist Japanologist discourse in general.

Samurai: Knights of the Reich through the eyes of Heinz Corazza

It would not be exaggerated to claim, that admiration of Japan and its culture was fairly common in general SS discourse. Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler himself, as Perry W. Pierik writes, admired Japan from a relatively early stage, and not only due to calculations of foreign policy.¹⁴ This admiration, as we shall see below, was closely related to the self-view and particular interests of the SS, as well as to a highly selective perception of Japan's Samurai tradition.

Himmler's positive, even enthusiastic view of Japan was mainly indebted, strangely, to his view of race and nation. Usually, racial thought was considered as a hinderance to German-Japanese relations. The Japanese were seen by Gobinaeu and other classical race theoreticians as "preservers of culture" as opposed to "creators of culture", an idea that found its way to Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and National-Socialist ideology. The rising power of Japan was viewed by many Germans, from the beginning of the twentieth century on, as a "yellow peril", first and foremost due to the racial difference of the Japanese and the threat that they pose to the white race. Himmler, however, turned the tables. It is useful to imitate the Japanese race, not because of its inferiority in the general racial hierarchy (Himmler did not address this question), but because of its strict self-segregation and racial purity. Thus, Himmler followed racial theoretician Hans F.K. Günther, who wrote that some elite groups in the Far East preserved their racial character by social segregation and therefore kept some of their ancient Arian blood.¹⁵ Hence, Japan's Samurai tradition was perceived by Himmler as a first grade example for the education of his own SS racial elite. Instead of ignoring Japan's racial problem, Himmler decided to use it for his own purpose.

The SS booklet, *Samurai- Knights of the Reich in Honor and Loyalty*, by Heinz Corazza, was intended mainly for the SS tropps, and therefore loyally followed Himmler's ideological line. Corazza published his book in the Zentralverlag of the NSDAP in 1937, after it has already appeared in sequels in the SS journal *Das Schwarze Korps* throughout 1936. The author was not a member of the SS, but nevertheless, the mere fact that his work was published in a SS journal, not to mention the introduction by Himmler, testifies to his absolute ideological conformity. His short historical survey is an attempt to portray important milestones in the history of the Samurai class, using long quotes from historical and literary Japanese sources. The quotes are endowing the text with alleged reliability, but the author does not mention his sources in footnotes. Moreover, it is not clear whether Corazza read his sources in Japanese or

in German translation. Therefore, Corazza's work is not academic but rather popular.

Heinz Corazza was born on 11.6.1908 in the Sudeten town Iglau, then still under Austro-Hungarian rule. In 1931, while his homeland was still part of Czechoslovakia, he joined the local Nazi party. Two years later he left for Germany, allegedly in order to avoid Czech military conscription. During the Thirties he lived in Berlin, and wrote his dissertation on an unknown subject. Corazza lived in dire poverty, and barely supported himself by writing propaganda booklets against the Czechoslovakian government, stories about Indians in North America and popular booklets and articles on Japan, while sending numerous letters to various Nazi organs, begging for money or work. The propaganda ministry officials did not think highly of his booklets, but decided that as a propagandist he may be useful in the future and therefore should receive a modest financial support.¹⁶ In 1935 he published his first book, *Japan- Wonder of the Sword*, a popular account on Japanese history, relying solely on German secondary sources. After a short introduction on Japan's geography, the author surveys the origins of the Japanese race, as well as the island's religion, culture and history from the Neolithic period to World War II. The account is far from being balanced, and Corazza emphasizes as much as possible the "manly" and "heroic" traits in Japanese history and culture. The opening sentence of the book is: "In the beginning there was the sword" ¹⁷.

In his booklet, *Samurai- Knights of the Reich in Honor and Loyalty*, Corazza's ideas are represented in a shorter, more focused manner. Contrary to *Wonder of the Sword*, in *Samurai* he deals only with the Japanese warrior order, completely ignoring even Samurai affiliated literature. The text is accompanied with a short introduction by Himmler, portraying the main ideological outlines of the booklet:

"It is always useful for us, to learn occasionally from the lives of other peoples. Using this short history of the Samurai, we wish to call to mind some long forgotten [truths]: The fact, that even in antiquity, this Far-Eastern nation had the same honorary laws as our forefathers [...], and moreover, recognizing that these are usually elite minority groups that endows the worldly existence of a nation with eternal life. This is the meaning of the following reprinted booklet, and it therefore should be read by many, above all by SS men." ¹⁸

Here, the **exemplification** is implied. Himmler perceives the Samurai as an example for "elite minority groups that endows the worldly existence of a nation with eternal life." The SS reader does not have to read "between the lines", in order to think about himself. From this very reason, the racial issue does not deter Himmler and Corazza from praising the Japanese Samurai. It is not the question of Arians versus Japanese (Arian superiority was an undebatable dictum in SS circles), but one of the role of an elite minority group **within** the race. The instrumentalization techniques applied by Corazza in his booklet, were mainly used for justifying this very idea: The Samurai as an ancient version of the SS. How does he treat Japanese history in order to do so? We will deal with this question in length below.

The first interesting thing that we should be aware of is the title of the booklet: *Samurai-Knights of the Reich in Honor and Loyalty*. The keyword here, I believe, is the word **Reich**. The Samurai, according to Corazza, were first and foremost vassals of the state. The German

word **Reich** has multiple meanings, but in National-Socialist context, the most obvious one is the **bureaucratic Nazi state**. The author chose this very word, instead of other fitting German words as **Kaiserreich** or **Königreich**, which better conveys the idea of an ancient kingdom, in order to more easily equate the Samurai, in the eyes of his readers, to another elite group that serves the Reich "*in honor and loyalty*", namely- the SS. Here it may be useful to note, that the phrase "*My honor is loyalty*" (*Meine Ehre heisst Treue*) was widely used in the SS. Corazza repeats it in the title he chose for his booklet, almost literally - and probably on purpose.

So, true to Himmler's outline, Corazza tries to use his sources in order to depict the Samurai as servants of the government, knights of the Reich. In order to do so, he applied a manipulation I shall call hereafter **double isolation**. First of all, he isolated the Samurai ideal from Samurai reality, and afterwards, isolated again certain elements from the Samurai ideal. This reoccurring isolation process distorted Samurai history unrecognizably, and turned the ancient Japanese warriors to a mirror image of the SS troops. We shall illustrate this by discussion of four different questions: individualism versus collectivism, religion, the aristocratic state and finally- the influence of the Japanese dominant discourse on Corazza's narrative.

A. Double Isolation: Individualism versus collectivism

Corazza opens his booklet with the so called Japanese riddle:

"The rise of Japan is unprecedented in world history. In a short span of only eighty years, she upgraded herself from an exotic, marginal state to the status of a first grade superpower. Often, this phenomenon is being described in the west, in arrogant superficiality, as an undeserved miracle. However, exactly we Germans know very well, that such miracles and undeserved strokes of luck do not exist in reality. Destiny is generous only to tireless strugglers." ¹⁹

Indeed, according to National-Socialist worldview, historical developments cannot be mere coincidences, because greatness is always achieved by constant struggle. And who is responsible for Japan's meteoric rise? Corazza does not let his readers wonder too long before he credits Japan's success as being "the result of centuries of strenuous labor by a very specific order of warriors: the Samurai order."²⁰ Moreover, this is not merely an order, but a segregated group, keeping fanatically on the purity of its blood. Here Corazza forces his pervious frame of mind on his Japanese input: The term "race" was completely foreign to pre-modern Japanese culture, and the Samurai order was not hermetically close for newcomers, as Corazza claims. Already in the first lines of his booklet, Corazza prefer his own frame of mind to his input.

This is tendency is further enhanced by Corazza's insistence to portray the Samurai as servants of a central government. In his first chapter, he tells in detail the story of the

ideal fourteenth century Samurai Kusunoki Masashige, surely one of the most celebrated heroes of Japanese history. In the 1430s, Corazza informs his readers, the Japanese Reich was on the brink of ruin due to the prodigal ways of the unworthy emperor Go Daigo. One of his servants, a treacherous Samurai, abused the situation in order to usurp the government and declare himself as military ruler (Shogun). In order to stop this traitor, so Corazza writes, there rose the brave Samurai Kusunoki Masashige, who fought valiantly to the death for his unworthy master. Corazza quotes in length from an anonymous Japanese chronicle, telling on Kusunoki's last battle: How he kept on fighting in full knowledge of his fate, ordered his son to fight until the bitter end and finally disemboweled himself along with his retainers.²¹ The ideal character of Kusunoki is used by Corazza to convey to his readers three important lessons: 1. Loyalty to the government is above all else. The ideal fighter is loyal to the death, even if his master is unworthy as emperor Go-Daigo was. 2. The ideal Samurai fights for the collective. He ignores his own interests, and even sacrifices his life, in order to serve the imperial throne. It is not a matter of personal feudal loyalty to a certain emperor (because Go-Daigo was unworthy) but adherence to the throne as a political entity. 3. **The war is being fought to the bitter end.**

This story, told in great pathos by Corazza, is a highly shortened version of a known historical affair, namely- The Kemmu restoration, or the war between the northern and the southern courts. During the fourteenth century, Japan was torn by the military struggle between the emperor Go-Daigo and his loyalists, who wished to return power to the Kyoto court, and the supporters of the general Ashikaga Takauji, the "traitorous Samurai" mentioned by Corazza. The most celebrated figure in the loyalist camp was indeed Kusunoki Masashige, who was known in his loyalty to the emperor and disemboweled himself after his defeat in July 1336.

Looking on this context, it is not difficult to see the first isolation applied by Corazza: isolating ideal from reality. The ideal was indeed loyalty to the emperor, but the historical affair was all about **personal** relationships. Kusunoki's was personally loyal to Go-Daigo, Ashikaga was personally in feud with Go Daigo and Kusunoki. One of the roots of the war was indeed in personal arguments between the Ashikaga clan and some of the loyalist clans. In other words, the individualist factor, personal loyalty and personal feuds, was the decisive one. The same rule applies also to other armed conflict in medieval Japan. Although the different central governments, imperial and shogunal alike, demanded an absolute monopole on violence, their demand went usually unheeded. Actually, personal fights were so common as to cause the central shogunal government during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) to forbid them again and again.²² Furthermore, the Japanese chronicles tell us not only touching stories of loyalty, like Kusunoki's one, but even more stories of debauchery, treachery and deceit. Corazza simplified the story as it was a duel between a noble loyalist (Kusunoki) and an evil traitor (Ashikaga), isolated the factor of loyalty from its context and intensified it.

However, as already noted, Corazza does not merely isolate ideal from history. In similar vein, he isolates certain elements in the ideal itself. His decision to tell in such length about Kusunoki, without mentioning other ideal Samurai (and there are not a few in Japanese history and folklore) is not accidental at all. The story of Kusunoki can easily be represented as a story of loyalty to state and emperor, and indeed - it was widely represented as an educational, patriotic story in modern Japan.²³ However, in Samurai lore there are also other heroes, more important than Kusunoki, who are not mentioned at all in Corazza's text. The characteristic common to all of them is their strong individualism, a very important component in the Samurai ideal completely ignored by Corazza. Heroes such as Minamoto no Yoshinaka, Minamoto no Yoshitsune, and Saito Musashibo Benkei ended their lives as romantic outlaws, persecuted by the government which they have fought for in the past. The unequal struggle against a cruel, ungrateful ruler, the long flight along deep forests, ravines and snowy mountains, in short - the sympathy for the defeated, persecuted hero, are an integral part of medieval Samurai ideals. Let us note that the *Tale of Heike*, one of the most important Samurai epic stories, was named in honor of the defeated Heike (or Taira) clan, and not of the victorious Minamoto clan. Jacob Raz emphasized it, when he wrote that sympathy for the weak and the defeated are central components in traditional Samurai ethos.²⁴

That is not to say that Samurai traditional ethos does not have any values of collective loyalty. Nothing can be further from the truth. Corazza does not invent, nor writes in a void, but isolate and intensify elements which are out there. The adherence to clan and master, even to the death, can also be considered as important Samurai ideals. In this vein, sociologist Ikegami Eiko has seen the Samurai ideal as a constant balance between personal sense of honor and social adaptability, first and foremost between the loyalty to authority on one side, and the honor of the Samurai as individual on the other²⁵. Corazza's intention in describing the Kusunoki story, while isolating it from other important Samurai traditions, was intended to bypass this very dilemma. His samurai is no longer an individual fighter, but only part of a greater whole.

B. Samurai, Buddhism and Christianity

After conveying to his reader a one-sided picture of Samurai collectivism and loyalty to government, Corazza turns to the era known in Japanese historiography as the "country in war" (Sengoku) at the fifteenth century, and the following unification era under Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, and parallels them to the Bauernkriege in Germany. In a chapter titled, "The Samurai Hideyoshi unites the Reich", he writes:

"Sixteenth century Japan was deteriorating from day to day. While the black banners of the peasants were carried through the regions of Germany, and Florian Geyer, Engel Hiltensprenger, Ulrich von Hutten and Franz von Sickingen fought throughout

the Reich, in Japan there was a wild struggle of all against all. More than two hundred independent feudal lords (Daimyo) turned the island Reich to a seething pandemonium with their endless feuds. The Shogun, virtually dependent on the goodwill of his Generals, resided in the old imperial capital Kyoto, suitcases packed for flight in any given moment." ²⁶

Now, Corazza hints that in this dark era, the Samurai may have been able to cope with the situation, unless a dark, external force suddenly came upon them:

"Far from unsuspecting Japan, which was busy tearing her own flesh apart, in 1540 there arose a new power in the West. Exactly as the red Komintern four hundred years later, this new power was not willing to be restrained by any people or nation on earth: The black International of the Jesuit General Ignaz of Loyola." ²⁷

The priests of the Jesuit international, Corazza tells his readers, steadily went on in their course of conquest. They intentionally aggravated the Japanese civil war and waged a war of destruction against the ancient Japanese culture:

"Dark fate was approaching the land of the rising sun. In 1549, the Jesuit Xavier landed in Kagoshima (south Japan), and immediately began his missionary activity. Completely unscrupulous, he took his propaganda wave right into the heart of the main island. Any feudal prince, who wished to acquire Portuguese firearms, was forced to allow unrestricted missionary activity in his domain. Thus, naturally, the fratricidal war became ever and ever bitterer. Japan reached her lowest point of national disgrace around 1570, when the baptized Shogun Yoshiaki organized a public (theological) debate between the Jesuit father Ludwig Frois and a Buddhist monk. The monk, as expected, crumbled before the brilliant, hair-splitting dialectics of the Jesuit." ²⁸

In this paragraph, one of the most interesting in the whole booklet, Corazza is referring to the religious situation in sixteenth century Japan. Here it would be useful to note that the atmosphere in SS circles was anti-Christian, and vehemently anti-Catholic. The roman church, and above all the Jesuit order, was perceived by the SS authors as a "black international" and dire enemies of the new Germany. Already in Corazza's last book, *Japan- Wonder of the Sword*, he vehemently attacks the Jesuits and blames them in every possible crime, from deepening the tragedy of the Japanese civil war, to causing Germany's defeat in World War I.²⁹ In *Samurai*, however, he also derides the incompetence of the Buddhist establishment, as seen by the failure of the priest in the public debate, as a weak religion which is not able to stop the Christian invasion.

And indeed, the wave of invasion is going on with no one to stop it. Oda Nobunaga, the strong leader of the period, is not aware of the danger, and an increasing number of Samurai are bubbling with fury. According to Corazza, this is the true reason for Nobunaga's murder by one of his retainers. His heir and "Chief of Staff", Toyotomi Hideyoshi, hates Christianity, but nevertheless avenges his fallen lord. Here again, the principle of unconditional loyalty is praised by Corazza. The samurai is loyal to his lord, even when the lord is leading the country

to ruin. But contrary to Nobunaga, Hideyoshi is well aware of the Christian danger. He brutally suppresses the Jesuits, and the wave of religious invasion is blocked. Having blocked the Christian danger, Hideyoshi assembles his forces to occupy Korea and China. Corazza enthusiastically describes the campaigns, and mentions laconically their ultimate failure.³⁰ The war, according to the SS author, does not need a special excuse, in accordance with Nazi view of armed struggle as a necessary activity for any living nation.

The war is described by Corazza as a duty, and the killing - as a quasi-religious activity. All the while, the Buddhist factor in Samurai thought is completely ignored. Buddhism, as we have already seen, appears one time only in the text, as a weak religion which does not deserve further notice. This is another technique of isolation employed by the author. Corazza emphasizes values as self discipline, disregard of life and readiness to die at any given moment, without mentioning the link between these ideas to the Buddhist notion of life as transient and dreamlike.

In contrast to Corazza's text, Buddhist ideas and values, in their Samurai rendering, are constantly mentioned in Japanese sources. Every reader of the *Tale of Heike*, regarded by some critics as the most important work of Samurai lore, immediately feels the melancholic Buddhist atmosphere of the story. Success, occupation, war and heroism are nothing but illusions, like a passing shadow. Thus the opening sentence of the book:

"The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the sāla flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind." ³¹

The Samurai reality, of course, was sometimes diametrically opposed to Buddhist ideals, but this religious way of thinking was always at the sbackground. Even Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the great general and conquerer, wrote on his deathbed that all his achievements and military exploits were nothing than "a dream inside a dream." ³² The self-denying evident in this song demonstrates the softer side of Samurai tradition, which Corazza disregards and ignores. He describes Hideyoshi's deathbed scene in length, and yet does not bother to quote this song or even to mentions it.

C. The Tokugawa Shogunate as an ideal SS regime

The lengthy description of Japan's unification by the Samurai, while emphasizing values as loyalty, collectivism, war and cruelty, leads Corazza to his next chapter - description of the ideal country built by Tokugawa Ieyasu at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Corazza describes in detail the class system of the Tokugawa regime. The most venerated class is, naturally, the Samurai: a socially segregated warrior's elite. The next in line are the productive farmers and artisans, and after them the "despised" merchants. The lowest of the lowest are, of course, the "non-human", namely- Eta, Geisha and foreigners.³³ The parallel between the

Samurai, as the ruling military elite, to the SS, though not explicit, is implied from the text, **for example through the use of the words from the SS slogan "My honor is loyalty", already mentioned above.** Here Corazza does not need to isolate specific elements or to distort his input, although he ignores the important role of the Buddhist establishment under the Tokugawa regime. It is easy to imagine the readers, SS soldiers and officers, delightfully reading about closed knitted ruling elite of warriors. Corazza's description of the Tokugawa Samurai must have reminded them of themselves.

Here, the underlying ideals of the Tokugawa regime become very important, not just as the spiritual basis of modern Japan, but also as a role and model for the SS readers. Hence, Corazza takes pains to describe them in full:

"Tokugawa Ieyasu imprinted the belief in unconditional loyalty in the soul of the Samurai, and demanded adherence to this loyalty to the death. Thus, he did not only create steadfast powerbase for his dynasty, but also a new human type- a role-model for the whole contemporary Japanese people." ³⁴

From here, Corazza moves on to describe the strict education of young Samurai:

"Erudition and martial skill alone did not make one a Samurai, when the child was lacking in character. Without love of honor, uprightness, benevolence toward the weak and defenseless (namely the unarmed masses of the Japanese people), even the best swordsman and the most erudite expert in classical philosophy could not become true Samurai" ³⁵

Now, lest someone will err, Corazza must stress that "benevolence toward the weak and defenseless", "the unarmed masses of the Japanese people" and not for defenseless human beings in general. Universal values of any kind were despised by the National-Socialists, and therefore must not be permitted into the education of the budding SS elite.

Indeed, more than describing Japanese values, Corazza is using them as an **example** for eternal truths, which are underlying also the SS spiritual world. However, in order to process his input and adapt it to SS values, he keeps on isolating certain factors from their context. Sometimes he applies this distortion technique skillfully, but in other cases he fails. One notable example is his account of the famous story on the forty seven retainers.

"As a radiant example of this sense of honor, contemporary Japanese still remember an incident, which took place at 21 April 1701 in the Shogun's palace. The daimyo of Ako was insulted by one Kira Yoshinaka. Ako drew his sword in order to slash his rival, but was prevented by guards from doing so. As it was forbidden to draw a weapon in the Shogun's palace, Ako was forced to disembowel himself on the same day. His retainers, forty seven Samurai, wandered without a master all around Japan. They worked by farmers and artisans to acquire money for new weapons. In the beginning of December 1702, forty five retainers out of forty seven met by their leader Oishi Koranosuke and after a few days stormed the castle of the offender Kira Yoshinaka; he was slashed until no one could recognize him. Then, the forty seven Samurai disemboweled themselves in cold blooded obviousness." ³⁶

One can wonder how Corazza did not notice that this story, which is indeed recognized

as one of the most popular in Japanese literature, may be subversive for his own ideological aims. The SS author isolated elements required for his **exemplification**: the cruelty of the warrior, his resolution and loyalty to his lord. But all the while, he ignored the subversive message of the story: The consent of warriors to become outlaws and defy their government obeying their personal values. A resolute and cruel Samurai may be a good role model for SS soldiers, but a non-conformist Samurai may prove as somewhat problematic. Corazza's readers do not need to be Japan experts in order to know, that people like the forty seven retainers were executed, not venerated in the Third Reich. In this case, Corazza's narrative substantially subverts his ideological purpose.

D. Japanese narrative or German narrative? Influence of the local discourse

In the paragraphs above we have seen, how Corazza distorts the Samurai tradition, emphasize certain elements while ignoring their context and using them for his ideological purpose. Nevertheless, as specified in the introduction to this article, the image creating process is much more complex and multi-layered. This process is not a unilateral one, working with a voiceless Japanese raw material. The dominant Japanese discourse was heard well in Germany, may it be through cultural events organized by the Japanese embassy, or the publications of Japan related bodies as the DJG. Germans as Heinz Corazza, who took interest in Japanese culture, were also exposed to this Japanese dominant discourse. Therefore, the Japanese input received by Corazza was processed not only by his own frame of mind, but also by the formal Japanese propaganda machine. And indeed, the Samurai image held by Corazza is greatly influenced by the modern Samurai myth of the Meiji era.

Following the 1868 Meiji restoration, Japan experienced a hasty modernization process, turning the feudal Tokugawa regime to a modern, industrial superpower. One of the first policies of the new regime was to abolish the feudal classes, including the Samurai order, in order to replace it by general military conscription. The Shogun was removed, and the emperor became the object of public worship and veneration. The budding modern country did not hesitate to render old values and to use them to promote the reforms. Thus, the main ideological "glue" for the new national army was the Samurai values, represented by the formal propaganda as the guiding spirit of the nation as a whole. The "Imperial rescript for soldiers and sailors", required to be memorized by every soldier and sailor, stressed values as discipline, loyalty to the death, self sacrifice, modesty and frugality, taken directly from the Samurai ethos. In the trainings of the Japanese army, from the 1870th to the end of World War II, these values were promoted as a role model for the entire army and navy.³⁷ The official propaganda claimed, based on the writings of thinkers as Yoshida Shoin, that the Samurai values oblige the people as a whole and not just a narrow group, as in the past. However, the government did not accept the "problematic" sides of the Samurai tradition, as the exaggerated emphasis on one's personal

honor, even when it clashes with the authority of the state. Thus, the "imperial rescript for soldiers and sailors" define the soldiers and sailors as the arms and legs of the emperor, and warn them to subordinate their courage and sense of honor to orders and regulations, lest they will turn to be "wild animals".³⁸ Hence, the Japanese government used Samurai values cautiously, changing them according to the ethos of the new era.

Considering this context, it is interesting to compare between Heinz Corazza's *Samurai*, and *Bushido- the soul of Japan*, the classic work by the Christian intellectual and diplomat Nitobe Inazo. This book was published in 1900, while the public atmosphere in Japan was still relatively optimistic. During the closing years of the nineteenth century Japan became, in many respects, a modern country, the radical reforms of the government bore results and the public mood was overtly nationalistic, but still not radical as in the Thirties and Forties. Nitobe Inazo, as some other Japanese intellectuals, felt a need to enlighten the educated western readers concerning Japanese culture. First and foremost, he wished to prove that Japanese modernity is, far from being a mere imitation of the west, a unique phenomenon based on an independent rich tradition. This tradition, according to Nitobe, is "Bushido", the way of the warrior, defined by him as "the soul of Japan": a way of honor, endurance, sense of justice, politeness, self-control, loyalty, spiritual depth and moral discipline.³⁹

Nitobe's book, one of the first Japanese accounts of the Samurai intended for English speaking readership, became very popular in the west and influenced the western image of Samurai for years to come. Moreover, this book was written especially as a statement of defense on Japanese culture for the western readership, and therefore included numerous quotes from the bible, Greek and Roman philosophy, as well as French, English, British and German authors and philosophers. Through these quotes, Nitobe tried to find western parallels for the Bushido values and to represent them accordingly as positively as possible, including subtle issues as vendetta or ritual suicide (disembowelment) ⁴⁰. Despite being written for foreign audience, Nitobe's book was being naturally influenced from inter-Japanese discourse, as manifested in documents as the "imperial precepts for soldiers and sailors" and Yoshida Shoin's ideas. Furthermore, ten months after the English edition was published, *Bushido* was translated into Japanese and proved to be an integral part of the historical conscience of many educated readers in Japan ⁴¹.

Corazza does not mention *Bushido* in his booklet, but it hard to assume that he had not read this very famous book, which was written in English for the educated readership abroad. In fact, large portions of *Samurai* seem as being influenced, if not virtually copied from Nitobe's book. For example, when Corazza claims that education and swordsmanship alone do not make a good Samurai, it closely resembles the second chapter of Nitobe's book, "sources of Bushido", where it is written that true Samurai despise the scholar who does not implement the moral principles of Bushido in life, because "a knowledge becomes really such only when it is assimilated in the mind of the learner and shows in his character."⁴² Other similarities between *Bushido* and *Samurai* are the reoccurring tendency to represent the Samurai ideals as abstract, a-historical ideas, and thus isolate them from actual history,

exaggerated emphasis of few, unrepresentative role models (As Kusunoki Masashige), as well as the claim that the Samurai values are the spiritual and moral basis for the people also in modern Japan.⁴³

Nonetheless, there are crucial differences between the two books. Corazza did not only copy the Meiji era's Samurai ideal, but isolated certain parts of it in order to adapt them to SS thought. For example, he ignored the Buddhist and Confucian roots of Samurai ideals, a point greatly emphasized by Nitobe.⁴⁴ Nitobe, unlike Corazza, understands complexity, and warns that Samurai values, good as they are, may be misused for evil purposes. For example, he writes that bravery in battle for an unjust cause is not a true one, and that the celebrated sense of honor of the Samurai can easily deteriorate to senseless, murderous violence. Samurai values, according to Nitobe, are a harmonious system of checks and balances. Self-restraint balances the sense of honor, sincerity prevents politeness from becoming sheer hypocrisy, and rectitude bounds duty less it will deteriorate to blind obedience.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Nitobe's book has an evident cosmopolitan dimension, and he describes Samurai ideals as derived from Chinese Confucian thought and parallel to Judeo-Christian morality.⁴⁶ Therefore, the Samurai's identity is not purely Japanese. Corazza, whose ideology despised every foreign (not to mention Jewish!) influence on "pure" national culture, completely ignored this cosmopolitan dimension.

Corazza, though considerably influenced by dominant Japanese discourse, conveys to his readers a simplified, sterile version of it. His samurai is a cruel, fanatic warrior, detached from his Japanese and Chinese philosophical and religious roots, resolute and unconditionally obedient to the government. His values, in accordance with SS ethics, are not a harmonious system of checks and balances, but rather a codex of rules intended for serving his ruler. This point is crucial for understanding Corazza's conclusion. The Samurai, as represented by him, fit inside the National-Socialist ideological frame of mind. And because they are the spiritual ancestors of modern Japan, and their "unwritten laws form nowadays the honor principles of the 'Reich of the rising sun'", Japan is Germany's natural ally. The two wartime allies are united in a spiritual and ideological bond. Both of them are bounded by an ancient tradition of loyalty, obedience, war, cruelty, honor and strict observance of racial laws.⁴⁷ Moreover, as stressed by Himmler in the introduction, the masses must be guided in these values by an ideological elite, "endows the worldly existence of a nation with eternal life."⁴⁸ Though, according to Corazza, "The Samurai order is no more"⁴⁹, a similar order still exists in National-Socialist Germany. The SS troops are not only the spiritual brethren of the Samurai - they are their European successors.

- 1 Carl Boyd, *The extraordinary envoy : General Hiroshi Ōshima and diplomacy in the Third Reich, 1934–1939*. (Washington, 1980).
- 2 Bernd Martin, *Deutschland und Japan im Zweiten Weltkrieg : vom Angriff auf Pearl Harbor bis zur deutschen Kapitulation* (Göttingen, 1969).
- 3 Ernst Presseinen, *Germany and Japan; a study in totalitarian diplomacy, 1933–1941*. (New York, 1969).
- 4 Theo Sommer, *Deutschland und Japan zwischen den Mächten, 1935–1940 : vom Antikominternpakt zum Dreimächtepakt : eine Studie zur diplomatischen Vorgeschichte des Zweiten Weltkriegs*. (Tübingen, 1962).
- 5 Johanna Menzel-Meskill, *Hitler & Japan : the hollow alliance*. (New York, 1966).
- 6 Nakano Yoshiyuki, *Doitsujin ga mita Nihon: Doitsujin no Nihonkankeisei ni kansuru shiteki kenkyu*. (Tokyo, 2005).
- 7 Bill Maltarich, *Samurai and Supermen- National Socialist Views of Japan*. (New York, 2005).
- 8 Ibid, pp.12,321.
- 9 Ibid, p.20. For a similar attitude see also: Gerhard Schepers, "Exoticism in Early Twentieth Century German Literature", in Christian W. Spand, Rolf H. Wippich (Ed.), *Japanese German Relations 1895–1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, eds. Christian W. Spand, Rolf H. Wippich, London 2006, pp.98–113.
- 10 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. (London and Henley, 1978). p.3.
- 11 Ibid, p.40.
- 12 Ibid, p.3.
- 13 Maltarich, p.19.
- 14 Perry Winjnand Pierik, *Karl Haushofer en het Nationaal-Socialisme- Tijd, Werk en Invloed*. Proeschrift, Erasmus Universiteit. 12 Jan 2006. pp. 153–4. I am grateful to my friend, Sven Groot, a fellow student in Tokyo University, for translating the relevant paragraphs from Dutch.
- 15 Hans F.K. Günther, *Rassenkunde Europas- mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rassengeschichte der Hauptvölker indogermanischer Sprache*. (München, 1929). pp.178-89. Pringle, p.145.
- 16 Heinz Corazza an die Reichsschrifttumskammer, IIC-04330-Ja, 16.12.1938. Franz Thomas an Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propoganda VIII 8200/6/12/37/1532-1/8. Unbekannte an die Deutsche Schillerstiftung, IIC-0433, 30.3.1938. Ihde an Reichsminister, II-0433, 14.3.1938. I.RK/RSK, Corazza Heinz, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- 17 Heinz Corazza, *Japan- Wunder des Schwertes*. (Berlin, 1935).
- 18 Heinz Corazza, *Die Samurai- Ritter des Reiches in Ehre und Treue- Mit einem Vorwort des Reichsführer SS und Chefs der deutschen Polizei Heinrich Himmler*. (Berlin, 1937). P.4
- 19 Corazza, p.5.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid, pp.5–6.
- 22 Karl F. Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*. (New York, 2004). pp. 25–8, 60.
- 23 Hardacre, pp.62,90.
- 24 Jacob Raz, *Ha-Mitologia Ha-Yapanit*. (The Japanese mythology) (Tel Aviv, 2000). p.174.
- 25 Ikegami Eiko, *Meiyo to Junno: Samurai Seishin no Rekishi*. (Tokyo, 2000).
- 26 Corazza, p.8.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Corazza, *Wunder*. pp.89,145.
- 30 Corazza, *Samurai*. pp.9–10.
- 31 Heike Monogatary, 1:1. Trans: Helen C. McCullough.
- 32 Walter Dening, *The Life of Toyotomi Hideyoshi*. (Kobe&London, 1930). p.281.
- 33 Corazza, p.14.
- 34 Ibid, p.20.
- 35 Ibid.

- 36 Ibid, pp.20–1.
- 37 Diaries, autobiographies and testimonies of contemporaries demonstrate once and again how the Samurai values, as perceived in the Meiji era, dominated both military and civilian discourse. As one example among many, see the autobiography of Kuwahara Yasuo, imperial air-force pilot annexed to the notorious Kamikaze squadrons. Yasuo Kuwahara, Gordon T. Alfred, *Kamikaze*. (New York, 1957). pp.22–6, 46–7, 54, 89, 96, 101
- 38 R. Tsunoda, Wm. T. de Bary, D. Keene (eds), *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. (New York, 1958). pp.705–6.
- 39 Nitobe Inazo, *Bushido- The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought*. (Bilingual edition, Japanese translation by Tokuhei Suchi. Tokyo, 1998). pp.29–43, 273–7.
- 40 Ibid, pp.25, 187–213.
- 41 George Oshiro, *Nitobe Inazo: Kokusaishugi no Kaitakusha: Meiyo, Doryko, Jimu*. (Chuo Daigaku Shupanbu, 1992). pp. 90–1.
- 42 Nitobe, p.51.
- 43 Ibid, pp 65–9, 73–7, 90–3, 115, 163–5, 251–7. Though Nitobe, as a Christian, writes that Bushido is bound to disappear in the future. Only few of its values may be integrated in Christian ethics and enrich it somehow.
- 44 Ibid, pp.43–59.
- 45 Ibid, pp.67–9, 137–41.
- 46 Ibid, pp. 47, 51–3, 187, 297.
- 47 Corazza, pp.5, 24–5, 28, 31.
- 48 Ibid, p.4.
- 49 Ibid, p.31.

親衛隊の目を通して見た日本

ダニー・オルバツハ

既存の現代史研究では、ナチ・ドイツ(1933-1945)における日本のイメージ、あるいはそのイメージがナチ党の言説のなかで果たした「文化的なアイコン」としての機能についてはあまり分析されてこなかった。一般に、日独関係についての研究は、政治、外交、経済などの問題に偏っており、文化的な問題、特にイメージの形成過程については関心を払ってこなかった。本論では、このようないまだに研究の進展していない問題について分析を行う。

第三帝国における日本イメージは決して単純ではなく、矛盾に満ちていた。ドイツでは伝統的に日本は「黄禍」を引き起こす国のひとつであり、白色人種にとっての脅威とみなされてきた。また、ナチ・ドイツの重要なイデオロギー的著作である『我が闘争』で、ヒトラーは日本を下等人種と記していた。一方で、日本は敵対する世界に対抗するためのナチ・ドイツの同盟国でもあった。そのためナチ知識人の多くは、日本は、人種的な純粋性、精神力、男性性、そして、ドイツの「英雄」的伝統に類似する武士道のような戦闘的伝統を持ち、ドイツとは「自然の同盟関係(Natural Alliance)」にあると考えていた。

ナチ党の親衛隊(SS)の日本に対する態度は極めて共感的なものであった。親衛隊帝国長官ハインリヒ・ヒムラーや彼のお抱え知識人たちが日本に興味をもった理由はさまざまだが、その最大の理由は親衛隊のロールモデルとみなされた武士道の伝統であった。そこで、本論では、ヒムラーの支援を受けた著述家ハインツ・コラザの『侍：名誉と忠誠の帝国の騎士』(Die Samurai: Ritter des Reiches in Ehre und Treue)を題材として、親衛隊の日本イメージがどのような動機や思想、イデオロギーによって形成されたかを分析する。

イメージ形成過程に関する先行研究では、たとえば親衛隊の日本のイメージは、日本の現実とはまったく関係のない、ドイツ人が膨らませたイメージに過ぎないというような分析がされることが多い。しかし、本論では、コラザのテキストに描写された日本のイメージは単なるナチ党のプロパガンダではなく、武士道の歴史とナチ・ドイツのイデオロギー、ドイツ人のもつイメージと日本の現実の間の複雑な相互関係のなかで編みだされたものとして分析される。