

Bushidō as a Hybrid: Hybridity and Transculturation in the *Bushidō* Discourse

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Abstract

Since Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, many of traditions have been exposed as invented or reinvented in modernity. *Bushidō* is no exception. Many have argued for its modernity and constructedness, and some even for its hybridity. The present paper takes modern constructedness of *bushidō* as a starting point, and focuses its analysis on the process of hybridisation. In the *bushidō* theories I take up in this paper, *bushidō* is constructed as a hybrid right from the start, and their attempts to legitimatise *bushidō* and Japanese tradition inevitably involve its hybridisation. To shed light on what happens when *bushidō* is hybridised, I adopt the concept of transculturation. Transculturation helps us to analyse the mediation process and cultural change involved with hybridisation. Eventually, I contend that it is not because of its purity but its hybridity that *bushidō* has appeared so persuasive and attractive.

Keywords: *bushidō*, hybridity, transculturation, modernity, tradition

Bushidō kot hibrid: hibridnost in transkulturacija v diskurzu o *bushidōju*

Izvilleček

Vse od Hobsbawmvega in Rangerjevega vplivnega zbornika *The Invention of Tradition* so bile številne tradicije prepoznane kot izmišljene ali ponovno odkrite v modernosti. *Bushidō* ni pri tem nikakršna izjema. Številni so dokazovali njegovo modernost in konstruiranost, včasih tudi njegovo hibridnost. *Bushidō* kot modern konstrukt v tem prispevku služi kot izhodišče za analizo procesa njegove hibridizacije. V obravnavanih teorijah *bushidōja* je ta koncept zgrajen kot hibrid že v izhodišču in njihovi poskusi legitimizacije *bushidōja* in japonske tradicije nujno vključujejo hibridizacijo. Da bi prikazal, kaj se zgodi, ko se *bushidō* hibridizira, uporabljam koncept transkulturacije. Tako lažje analiziramo procesa mediacije in kulturne spremembe, ki sta povezana s hibridizacijo. Na koncu sledi poudarek, da *bushidō* ni prepričljiv in privlačen zaradi svoje izjemnosti, temveč prav zaradi svoje hibridnosti.

Gljučne besede: *bushidō*, hibridnost, transkulturacija, modernost, tradicija

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Transculturation and Hybridity of *Bushidō*

The discourse on *bushidō* in the late Meiji period shows the entangled needs of traditional societies in the face of inevitable modernisation. On the one hand, the project of modernisation requires the modernising societies to be cut off from their premodern traditions. On the other hand, for the new modernised regime to be maintained, it is necessary to establish the legitimacy of the new order by relying on continuing cultural traditions. This is especially true in the case of countries like Meiji Japan, where the modernising forces were mostly seen as foreign and the dominant elites were overwhelmingly constituted by the former ruling class. Another ideological agony in the face of modernisation is apparent in *bushidō*, which fluctuates between universalism and particularism. In the wave of Western modernisation, it was not enough for Japan to hold fast to the uniqueness of its own cultural traditions. It was necessary to find universally valid criteria or values in Japanese culture. The discourse on *bushidō* can thus be seen as a response to this ideological necessity. In *bushidō*, supposedly incongruous elements such as the West and Japan, or tradition and modernity, are interdependent upon and interconnected with each other in a process of mutual construction. *Bushidō* is both traditional and modern, national and international, and particular and universal. In a word, *bushidō* is a hybrid. I would insist that this hybrid character of *bushidō* is not adequately focused upon in the previous literature on *bushidō*, and this is because most of these arguments centre around unearthing its modern constructedness.

Many *bushidō* researchers (Suzuki 2001; Kanno 2004; Saeki 2004; Taniguchi 2007; Benesch 2014) agree upon its modern invented character. In fact, this was first pointed out by a contemporary of Nitobe. B. H. Chamberlain (1912) claimed that *bushidō* was a newly invented word. It was only after the Sino-Japanese War that the word *bushidō* became in vogue and started to be used widely. Until around the start of the twentieth century, *bushidō* remained an unusual term. It is also stressed in the literature on *bushidō* that the modern usage of the word is almost unrelated to the actual deeds and ethics of the samurai in the Middle Ages. For example, in arguing about Nitobe's *Bushido*, Ota (1986, 68) clearly refers to the "ahistorical character of *bushidō*", and claims that "what he named *bushidō* was fairly different from the historical values of samurai". Such analysis does not, however, provide a sufficient account of how *bushidō* was ideologically reconstructed, because they tend to see Meiji *bushidō* as a mere modern myth, rather than a hybrid between modernity and tradition. This is the flip side of the same coin of traditionalism. Modern constructionists tend to see *bushidō* as simply a product of modernity, while traditionalists see it as cultural essence rooted in the national past. One way or another, *bushidō* is constructed as purity.

To grasp what escapes from sight, I turn to Mary Louise Pratt's discussion (1992) about transculturation. Transculturation is a concept that was elaborated through her in-depth examination of European travel writings on the African and American continents. She devoted a chapter on Alexander von Humboldt's famous trip to the new continent. In this, she criticised a traditional account of that trip that explains Humboldt's conception of the American continent as prime nature in terms of the influence of Romanticism. For her, this kind of argument does not really theorise encounters between different cultures. In this scheme, the arrow of influence points in one direction only. In other words, agency is only allowed for the side that brings about change. The other side, stripped of any capacity of meaningful action, is merely waiting to be influenced and changed.

Accounting for the image of the American continent as prime nature through transculturation enables all the elements in the scheme to have agency. Pratt's following statement clearly shows this:

[...] to the extent that Humboldt "is" a Romantic, Romanticism "is" Humboldt; to the extent that something called Romanticism constitutes or "explains" Humboldt's writing on America, those writings constitute and "explain" that something. (1992, 134)

It is in this sense that Pratt stressed the importance of "travelees", who are usually not represented as influential figures in the written text but nevertheless leave traces in the discourse. As she notes, "(s)uch traces of the everyday interaction between American inhabitants and European visitors suggest the heterogeneous and heteroglossic relationships that produced the European's seeing and knowing" (ibid., 132). She also points out that creole intellectuals had already started to glorify wildness and the sublimity of great nature in the Americas. The image of Latin American prime nature should be regarded as a product of a heteroglossic moment¹ that emerged in Humboldt from his encounter with at least three different agents: European Romanticism, Latin American intellectuals, and the natural scenery of the new continent. In other words, it was a hybrid.

There is an analogous interpretative scheme in the discussion about the constructedness of *bushidō*. The air of militarism and fervent nationalism that was so prevalent in the Japanese empire is often referred to as a main explanatory factor. Kanno's argument (2004) exemplifies this. After depicting the practical ethics of the samurai through a closer look at the historical materials of the Middle Ages and early modernity, he concludes that Meiji *bushidō* was in fact false *bushidō*

1 "Heteroglossia" is a concept of Mikhail Bakhtin that refers to a condition of encounters and conflicts between different social languages. See Bakhtin (1981).

in the sense that the core of the samurai spirit was removed from it. Moreover, *bushidō* was remodelled to satisfy the military needs of the Meiji government to build its national army.² In this scheme, *bushidō* theory is exhaustively explained by the nationalistic motive behind it. Agency is taken away both from *bushidō* theorists and the concept of *bushidō*. If we take nationalism as the only or final cause, both nationalism and *bushidō* become a Latourian black box (Latour 1987), a transparent intermediary that just passes agency from one side to another. The hybridity of *bushidō* thus disappears. There is also the reverse-side risk. Modern constructionists like Ota tend to explain Meiji *bushidō* theories, especially those of Nitobe, as made up by Western influences, as if it was conjured up from thin air.

It is thus necessary to build a theoretical framework focusing on intercultural encounters in and hybridity of *bushidō*. This framework needs to go somewhat beyond Hobsbawm and Ranger's famous theory of "the invention of tradition" (1983), which tends to focus on exposing the modernity and constructedness of supposedly continuing and unchanging traditions. It is necessary to examine what happens when tradition is invented in modernity. As such, the invention of tradition in modernity is not the goal of this discussion. It is rather the starting point of our analysis. It is necessary to examine by what logic the *bushidō* theorists of the time invented a new tradition, and through what rhetoric they justified their act of the invention. As I demonstrate in the following discussion, a key to understanding their invention is the hybridity of *bushidō*. It is hybridity rather than purity that authorises and provides discursive force to their argument.

To bring *bushidō's* hybridity to light, it is necessary to examine how it is made hybrid. To put it differently, our analysis needs to be focused on the process of hybridisation. This enables us to see why *bushidō* had to be constructed as a hybrid rather than a pure entity. It is necessary to point out here that hybridisation and transculturation are in some sense overlapping concepts, rather than two neatly separated categories. I thus utilise both concepts in the following discussion because they have different but interrelated analytical focuses. While the concept of hybridisation centres around the issue of how the supposedly fixed boundaries are dissolved and the supposedly pure entities are intermingled, the concept of transculturation concentrates its analysis on the process of mediation and cultural change.

Pratt's concept of transculturation is a useful analytical tool to dig more deeply in the process of hybridisation. Its conceptual efficacy rests on its focus upon the

2 Following this perspective, Harada (2017) demonstrates the connection of the Meiji *bushidō* with militarism in light of the rescripts to soldiers. Ota (1986, 61–2) more clearly states that "most of the *bushidō* literature of the time seems to be written in support of the universal conscription system when the military draft was obligatory". Exceptional to this trend is Kasaya, who searches for the intellectual roots of *bushidō* in the *bushidō* literature of the Edo period, which seems closer to the conventional view.

mediation process. In the *bushidō* discourse analysed below, the supposedly different entities are connected. For this connection to be made, there has to be mediators which reconcile difference. Through identifying these mediators and how they function, we can understand the processes and consequences of intercultural encounters. To analyse the cultural change resulting from an intercultural encounter, I add an Ortisian dimension to transculturation. Fernand Ortis was the Cuban anthropologist who coined the term transculturation (1940). Ortis's original intention behind inventing a new word for analysing cultural transformation was simple: to counter the then-dominant discourse of acculturation that emphasised assimilation and integration. He submitted a new concept to grasp cultural change more comprehensively. He did not deny acculturation, but rather subsumed it under transculturation with two additional moments: "deculturation", or uprooting from its original context; "neoculturation", or the creation of new cultural phenomenon. Identifying these three moments helps us to better understand the dynamics of cultural change through decomposing the complex process of transculturation.

In the analysis that follows, I focus on the *bushidō* articles that were written in the late Meiji period. It was not only a time of "*bushidō*'s boom", in which discourse on *bushidō* spread, but it was in this period that the incongruities between modernity and tradition were very acutely felt. It should also be noted that I take up only some of the authors on Meiji *bushidō*. I selected them among many others because their arguments, in different ways, are best able to demonstrate *bushidō*'s hybridity. I admit that this selection excludes several important works on *bushidō*, such as Adachi Ritsuen (1901), although it is one of several books in the Meiji era devoted to this subject. The selection was made for the sake of clarity. I must add that my contention is not that all the *bushidō* theories are hybrid, but that *bushidō* was constructed as a hybrid in some, though important, contexts, and that this hybridity is one of the crucial reasons why it seemed so attractive and persuasive.

Legitimatising the Traditional through Hybridisation and Transculturation

Entangled and sometimes contradictory ideological needs are clearly observable in *bushidō* theorists' search for the equivalent in Western culture. Among the most eloquent speakers about *bushidō* in this respect were Japanese Christians³, including Uemura Masahisa (1858–1925) and Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933),

3 Although Ukita Kazutami (1859–1946) and Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930) are Japanese Christians who were also eloquent about *bushidō*, I do not have space here to examine their arguments. Regarding these, see Benesch (2014).

whom I take up in this section and the next, respectively. During the 1890s, Uemura delivered a series of articles on *bushidō* to a Christian newspaper (*Fukuin-shinpō*), which he founded himself. His aim was to relate *bushidō*, in his fundamental argumentation, to the foreign religion that he followed. This intention is quite apparent in the titles of two of these articles, “Kirisutokyō to *bushidō*” (Christianity and *bushidō*), and “Kirisutokyō no *bushidō*” (*Bushidō* of Christianity). In the following discussion, I focus on the first of these, in which the hybridity of *bushidō* is more clearly seen.

To connect these two seemingly alien systems of belief, Uemura not only finds *bushidō*'s counterpart in the West but also simplifies both concepts. On the one hand, he reduces the concept of *bushidō* to the point of being devoid of any meaningful cultural content other than willingness to protect one's honour through the exercise of martial actions. This simplification separates *bushidō* from the complex whole of the samurai's lived experience, from which practical lessons and ethics are drawn, and turns it into a theoretical philosophy governed by a set of principles, thus giving it universally valid criteria. This theoretical manoeuvre makes it easy to identify *bushidō* with analogous deeds and values that can be found in the tradition of Western culture. On the other hand, he invokes the image of European chivalry, depicting it as “holding a sword in the right hand and Bible in the left.” In other words, its essence lies in martial deeds on the one hand and religiosity on the other. This simplified image of a knight is easy to identify with that of a samurai, who was supposedly also pious.

Finding its equivalent in and establishing similarities with Western culture is a common and useful tactic for valorising *bushidō* in Meiji Japan. In an article titled *Shinshi* (*On Gentlemen*) published in 1888, Ozaki Yukio (1858–1954) made an analogy between being a gentleman and *bushidō*.⁴ Ozaki presented several characteristics that were supposed to be common to *bushidō* and gentlemanship: *bushi* and gentlemen “do not neglect one's duty in search of self-interest”, “value honour and do not speak coarsely nor behave meanly”, “do not submit to the strong nor contempt the weak”, “keep promises and devote oneself to the public”, and find “glory in honourable poverty”. He did not forget to add at the end that “if we count commonalities, the list could go on and on” (Ozaki 1955, 746).

Even though the characteristics recounted by Ozaki are more numerous than those of Uemura's discourse, their ways of valorising *bushidō* are same: by reducing a complex ethos of one particular class to a set of universal principles through abstraction. The commonalities of their argumentation go further. They both saw in

4 Ozaki seemed to like the analogy of *bushidō* with gentlemanship and repeated it afterwards in his speeches and writings. See Ozaki (1913).

bushidō an ideal past totally distinct from contemporary Japanese society. Uemura lauded *bushidō* as “a beautiful flower and a fruit nourished by Japanese people for several hundred years”, and lamented that it perished overnight (1966, 395). He argued that contemporary society was deeply affected by materialism, partisanship, the pursuit of self-interest, and momentary pleasure. His argument is characterised by grief over the lost soul of an idealized society that supposedly existed until it was modernised. Similarly, Ozaki lamented how different *shinshi* were in Japan from gentlemen in England, although the term *shinshi* was a Japanese translation of the English “gentleman”. He poignantly remarked that in Japanese *shinshi* was just another name for a rich person whose deeds were characterised by immorality. In this respect, it was not appropriate for Ozaki to parallel Japanese *shinshi* with English gentlemen. In a similar vein to Uemura, Ozaki regarded this as a sign of spreading moral degradation in Japanese society. In contrast, an English gentleman was supposed to be defined not by his wealth, but by his moral behaviour. He “does not fear the strong nor contempt the weak” and “values honour and trust so that he does not deceive his conscience” (Ozaki 1955, 745).

Uemura’s and Ozaki’s arguments thus show a remarkable resemblance in their rhetoric: poignant criticism of contemporary society as excessively materialistic and morally degraded; praise for orthodox Western cultural tradition as honourable and righteous; the characterisation of chivalry and *bushidō* in terms of their feudal origins; and clear nostalgia for the lost tradition. This kind of search for an ideal in a historical past is far from unique. Bringing up the idealised past to criticise the present is one of the most typical strategies intellectuals adopt when they face inevitable modernisation. We can call it Romantic, “modern traditionalist”,⁵ or just conservative. However, their discourse about *bushidō* was not solely framed by a Romantic traditionalist thinking that praises a purely endogenous tradition. What is not typical is that this idealised past was connected to the foreign. The endogenous tradition itself, even in the purified form, was not enough to legitimise their argument. This partly explains why they established the equivalence of *bushidō* with something in the Western orthodoxy.

But their aim seemed not to be legitimising *bushidō* itself. Their more apparent intention was to attack the moral degradation of a modernising society from both sides, from the idealised past extracted from the endogenous tradition on the one hand, and the idealised foreign that leads to civilisation and modernity on the other. In this attempt, *bushidō* was identified and amalgamated with the foreign. *Bushidō* was, in other words, constructed as a hybrid. It is at once

5 I use this oxymoronic term to point to the modern character of traditionalist thinking. We can simply call it “traditionalist” as Levenson (1958) does.

Japanese and European, endogenous and foreign, and traditional and modern. This hybridity is produced through blurring supposedly fixed boundaries at a highly abstract level. It is for this hybridity that *bushidō* appeared attractive to Uemura and Ozaki, and this also gave a critical edge and persuasive power to their argument, even if they were not conscious of this at all. If it were constructed as a purely endogenous tradition, *bushidō*'s power would be rather limited as the feudal tradition became more and more powerless in the context of civilization and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*).

While *bushidō* plays the role of a powerful critical tool in their discourse, it also functions as a versatile mediator. In Uemura's discourse, *bushidō* mediates Japanese cultural tradition and chivalry which is deeply connected with Christianity ("holding a sword in the right hand and Bible in the left"). In Ozaki's argument, it mediates Japanese tradition and being a gentleman, which is considered as an honourable tradition of a renowned civilisation. *Bushidō* and chivalry, or gentlemanship, are mediated through universal principles at the abstract level. In this schema of mediation, Uemura's and Ozaki's arguments look almost identical. Through *bushidō*, the advanced modernity of the West and belated modernity of Japan are connected. Therefore, recovering the supposedly lost tradition paves the way for future modernisation. This transculturation of *bushidō* subsuming three moments constitutes an Ortisian conception. *Bushidō* was uprooted from the real lives of samurai through abstraction, acculturated into Euro-American cultural language by analogy, and neoculturated as a hybrid between Japan and the West. In all those moments, *bushidō* undergoes a change, and these changes are produced by the other mediators.

In sum, by the power of hybridisation and mediation, *bushidō* is transculturated and revived as a powerful cultural ideal that can serve as the basis for criticism about the moral degradation of Japanese society, and as a key to its future improvement. Through finding *bushidō*'s equivalent in Western cultures and recognising that they have simplified principles in common, not only is the civilisational status of Japan elevated to equal to that of the West, or rather, to a level of universality, but its uniqueness is also protected by being seen as valuable. Moreover, the continuance of an endogenous cultural tradition is legitimised and assured, and Japan's potential for future modernisation is apparently demonstrated.

Yet, to attain this acrobatic valorisation, it was necessary to assume *bushidō*'s general validity to the Japanese nation as a whole. Since *bushidō* was originally a class ethic only valid for a minority of the samurai class, some sort of rhetorical device was demanded to make this assumption plausible. In the fourth section, we will see an oblique solution to this problem in the *bushidō* discourse of Inoue.

Encounter between Japan and the West and Transculturation of *Bushidō*

The invocation of images from Western cultures is a widely used tactic in Nitobe's famous book *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Nitobe's work is outstanding in the *bushidō* discourse not only due to its long-standing popularity and international fame, but also due to its systematic composition and the experiential fertility generated by its numerous impressive tales and legends. The first edition of the book was published in English in 1900, reflecting the fact that it was written for Euro-American readers from English-speaking countries. This supposed addressee is a sign of the fundamentally transculturating character of Nitobe's book. In fact, references to Western cultures can be found all over his work. Analogies that liken Japanese culture to Western cultures are frequently utilised and established. By this, I do not just mean that he was using these references and analogies to translate and recount "the Soul of Japan" for those who were not familiar with it. But instead I contend that this process of translation involves transculturation and hybridisation of *bushidō*.

This is exemplified by Nitobe's treatment of the famous warlord Uesugi Kenshin's tale. Uesugi sent salt to his long-time rival, Takeda Shingen, and thus saved him from his plight, saying, "I do not fight with salt, but with the sword". This legend is likened to Marcus Furius Camillus' famous phrase "we Romans do not fight with gold, but with iron", and then to Nietzsche's words "You are to be proud of your enemy; then, the success of your enemy is your success also" (Nitobe 2008, 24). Especially in terms of honour, the correspondence between *bushidō* and the European knightly tradition was so obvious to Nitobe that he wrote:

It is indeed striking how closely the code of knightly honour of one country coincides with that of others; in other words, how the much-abused oriental ideas of morals find their counterparts in the noblest maxims of European literature. If the well-known lines "Hae tibi erunt artes—pacificus imponere morem, Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos," were shown a Japanese gentleman, he might readily accuse the Mantuan bard of plagiarising from the literature of his own country. (Nitobe 2008, 27)

Clearly, the fact that Vergilius, the "Mantuan bard", had written this poem far before the time of samurai did not bother Nitobe, for his intention was not to point out plagiarism but to stress that such similarity existed between Japanese and Western cultural traditions, and that a famous phrase of the renowned Roman poet would have sounded very familiar to the Japanese.

A notable example in this respect is Nitobe's interpretation of the tale of Ōta Dōkan, a warlord in the Muromachi period, who, while mortally wounded, added his lines to the couplet cast by his enemy. "Ah! How in moments like these, Our heart doth grudge the light of life", asked his enemy. Dōkan replied, "Had not in hours of peace, it learned to lightly look on life". Nitobe interpreted this tale as showing "a sportive element in a courageous nature" for "[t]hings which are serious to ordinary people, may be but play to the valiant" (ibid., 23). Bloody life-and-death situations were thus reread as being merely "sportive". This interpretation is made plausible by finding commonality at the most abstract level: the playfulness and necessity of a capacious mind and courage. At the same time, the word "sportive" is vested with connotations that are in accord with this context. It is not only courage but also playfulness that is related to fearlessness in the face of a life-or-death fight. The capacious mind is coloured with its readiness for death. This sort of analogy with sport is in a certain sense fundamental to Nitobe's *bushidō* theory. In the last paragraph of the first chapter, titled "Bushido as an Ethical System", he takes up Tom Brown's words, seeing the spirit of fair play in them, and asks: "Is it not the root of all military and civic virtue?"

However, a closer look into *bushidō* eventually leads to the discovery of difference. Nitobe admits that there are some elements in *bushidō* and the Japanese cultural tradition which seem odd or grotesque to the eyes of Europeans and Americans. Especially important in this respect are *seppuku*, *katataki-uchi* (revenge), and the social position of women. He allots two chapters to account for these subjects and reconcile the differences. Reflecting the difficulty of such a reconciliation, these are the two longest chapters in *Bushido*.

Because of its barbarity in conduct and incompatibility with the Christian injunction against suicide, *seppuku* certainly appeared as a pressing issue for Nitobe. He made a two-step argument to overcome its uncivility. Firstly, he neutralizes the brutality and bloodiness of *seppuku*. He starts this by citing Brutus's words from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "Thy (Caesar's) spirit walks abroad and turns our swords into our proper entrails" (ibid., 56). In this citation, Nitobe establishes equivalences between the samurai's conduct in reality and an epic act of Ancient Roman in the theatrical spectacle. Through this equivalence, the brutality of *seppuku* that constitutes and symbolizes *bushidō* is aesthetised. Nitobe then goes on to spiritualise *seppuku* by referring the traditional belief of seeing the human abdomen as "the seat of the soul and of the affections". The bloody image of stabbing and cutting through one's belly with a dagger is thus transformed into the symbolism of the following sentence: "I will open the seat of my soul and show you how it fares with it" (ibid., 57). The aesthetisation and spiritualisation introduced here cleanse the bloodiness of *seppuku* and *bushidō*. Secondly, Nitobe attempts to

justify the suicidal logic of *seppuku*. Given his strong faith in Christianity this is utterly surprising, and it seems that he made much effort to argue the point here. Here again, bringing up the cases of honourable suicide from Western history and culture works as an effective tactic. Nitobe thus refers to Cato the Younger, Petronius and Socrates, besides Brutus, all of who died in legendary tragedies and whose suicides have been repeatedly and vividly described in drama, paintings, literature, history books, and so on. Nitobe also compares Japanese suicides to Christian martyrs. However, it is only after *seppuku*'s bloodiness is cleansed that its oddness and incompatibility with Christian faith are mitigated through identifying commonalities like these.

Through these tactics, Nitobe reconciles differences and justifies the conduct of Japanese people that would have been despised by, or at least appeared odd to, the Europeans and Americans of the day. Although the difference between Japan and the West is manifestly stated, this is neutralised in the next instance. This is accomplished by several different tactics: aesthetisation, spiritualisation, identifying commonality and establishing equivalence at the abstract level. Through these approaches, the barbarousness of *bushidō* is neutralised and its access to the civilised world is secured. In other words, it is translated into Euro-American cultural language and becomes connected to the foreign.

Nitobe's entire book is engaged with the same task as the articles of Uemura and Ozaki—that is, the task of legitimising Japanese cultural tradition and accounting for it from two contradictory points of view: its particularity as well as excellence on the one hand, and on the other, its similarity to Western cultural tradition and, in cases where it seems plausible, its universality. What can be more clearly seen in Nitobe's discourse is that achieving this seemingly impossible goal involves not only accounting for Japanese cultural traditions according to Euro-American cultural language, but also in rereading the latter in relation to the former. In other words, the terms and concepts that are of Euro-American origin are reinterpreted in the light of Japanese narratives and cultural frameworks.

The analogies referred to above are just a small part of the whole. If we enlist the many figures and things from Western culture that Nitobe raises, the list could go on and on. In other words, Nitobe's argument is full of cultural mediators. These mediators are more varied and the mediation they perform is more complex than seen in Uemura's and Ozaki's arguments. The mediators here are not historical figures or notable intellectuals from Europe, like Nietzsche or Vergilius, but rather their words and anecdotes, since equivalences are established between the latter. The mediators sometimes take the form of concepts of Western origin, such as "sport" or "fair play". Either way, they function as mediators for *bushidō* and transculturate it in a way that

sounds familiar to a Euro-American public. Mediating between outright difference needs complicated processes. As shown in the case of *seppuku*, the reconciliation of difference involves a neutralising process like spiritualisation or aesthetisation. Only after being mediated through such a process is the bloodiness of *seppuku* cleansed. *Bushidō*, composed of brutal behaviour, is thus transculturated in a civilised fashion. Here again, we can identify three moments but in a rather different way than we have seen in Uemura and Ozaki. In the process of the aesthetisation of *seppuku*, these three moments appear simultaneously. *Bushidō* is deculturated by erasing its bloodiness and being disembodied,⁶ acculturated to a Euro-American cultural context through being overlaid on the image of a Shakespearean drama, neoculturated as a hybrid that appears familiar and attractive to the foreign public. The hybridity of *bushidō* is useful to make it more persuasive to Western audience. In this respect, Nitobe was not only “a bridge across the Pacific”, as he himself wished to be, but also a transculturator, as Pratt called Humboldt.

Purification by Separation and Selective Hybridisation

Nitobe recognised that *bushidō* was a product of “an organic growth of decades and centuries of military career”, and admitted “its intricate nature” (Nitobe 2008, 26). This makes *bushidō* ambiguous, because being a product of something organic logically suggests its premodern character, while *bushidō* theorists demanded that it be a representational virtue of modern Japan. The ambiguity of *bushidō* was worsened by the permeation of Euro-American cultural elements, for which Nitobe himself was responsible by playing the role of cultural mediator. In this case, the purity of *bushidō* as a Japanese cultural tradition, not its capacity to be modern, was threatened. It is no wonder then that uncertainty and discontent about what the word *bushidō* signifies were still openly manifested in 1905. One of the elder statesmen of the Meiji Restoration, Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), claimed: “the word *bushidō* is really queer” (Ōkuma 1905, 7). For him, *bushidō* was a term that was groundlessly coined by the scholars of Han learning, irredeemably Chinese in nature, and coming into vogue due to the military fervour of the Russo-Japanese war. To him, what everyone saw as the spirit of *bushidō*, valuing righteousness (*gi*) and courage (*yū*), was actually a common characteristic of all Japanese people, and not restricted to the minority warrior class (just four hundred thousand among forty million, by his estimate). Ōkuma claimed that popular samurai tales like *Chūshingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*) had played the role

6 It is probably interesting to think of *bushidō* as “disemboweled” by aesthetisation and spiritualisation.

of national instruction for the Japanese people, implicitly teaching them the values of righteousness and courage. For him, the very popularity of these tales was evidence that the Japanese people had long respected these values.

Ōkuma's article shows the strong demand for a double separation: separation from the Chinese tradition on the one hand, and from the *ancien régime* tradition of Tokugawa Bakufu on the other. This double separation purifies *bushidō* by removing it from the alien others who, in reality, directly influenced it. Thus purified, *bushidō* supposedly becomes capable of representing the new nation of Meiji Japan.

Although Ōkuma himself is not regarded as an ultra-nationalist, the demand for separation and purification seen in his argument is one of the key drives behind the ultra-nationalistic discourse on *bushidō*. This drive can be regarded as a response to the uncertainty and ambiguity of *bushidō*. *Bushidō* could have been regarded as a legitimate manifestation of Japanese particularity only after the traces of foreign influence, which were contaminating its cultural purity, were wiped away. As shown in Ōkuma's article, contaminating remnants were regarded as having a two-fold origin: on the one hand, from the feudal past that binds it to the fallen class, and on the other, from the Chinese cultural tradition that had more or less dominated the intellectual field before the waves of Westernisation came to Japan. In both cases, *bushidō* is not only contaminated and thus somewhat unqualified, but is also related to the premodern past that would foreclose the modernisation of Japanese society. We can see the oblique resolution of this problem in the *bushidō* discourse of Inoue Tetsujirō (1856–1944), the first Japanese professor of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University.

Given his position as a major exponent of ultra-nationalist *bushidō*, it is curious that Inoue showed recognition of its shortcomings in his 1901 article. These are said to be *kataki-uchi* and *seppuku*, upon which “all the civilised people frowned” (Inoue 1905a, 60). However, he immediately dismissed these practices as mere formal superficiality. To Inoue, these practices were just misdeeds despite the fact that they were historically held as essential values for the samurai class. According to Inoue, what was significant was not *bushidō*'s formality but its spirit, and its spirit lies in the disposition of the Japanese people, as recently proven by the military accomplishments of the Japanese army in the Sino-Japanese War and the Boxer Rebellion. This identification of *bushidō* with the entire nation of Japan was justified as follows: “*Bushidō* did not originate from an individual advocator, but is a product of the Japanese nation” (ibid., 60).

It is also curious that Inoue's discourse looks very similar to Nitobe's when we observe some uses of the cultural traditions of the West. *Bushidō* was likened to Stoic

philosophy and chivalry. However, Inoue differs from Nitobe in that he quickly noted *bushidō's* distinctiveness from these traditions. *Bushidō* is different from Stoicism since it is “not theoretical, but decisive in execution”, and from chivalry because it “does not worship women” (ibid., 59). It is clear from this statement that the Western cultural traditions were referred to not to identify *bushidō* with them, but to stress its uniqueness.

Both instances show a fast change in logic, which is a characteristic of Inoue's form of argument. The rather abrupt change suggests that *bushidō's* shortcomings and its equivalents in Western culture are brought up as a rhetorical device to balance his argument and, more importantly, to clarify *bushidō's* essence. This is one of the distinctive characteristics of Inoue's discourse that separates him from the other *bushidō* theorists discussed above, who sought similarities between *bushidō* and the orthodox traditions of Western culture. Negating certain actions that had been thought to be a part of *bushidō's* distinguishing marks and differentiating it from similar cultural traditions are useful tools for extracting *bushidō* in its purest form. From this pure form, it is distinguished from equivalents in Western culture, and the deeds and thoughts of the samurai are also thus differentiated.

The double separation that Inoue made here is not the same as that demanded by Ōkuma, and the difference is not slight. Both made attempts to separate *bushidō* from its feudal past, and did so by identifying it with the spirit of the Japanese nation as a whole. Inoue's argument differs from Ōkuma's in that he did not resort to concrete evidence. Instead, he relied on the philosophical distinction between form and content, or the superficial and the essential. This categorical manoeuvre allowed Inoue to construct an idealized *bushidō* in which the deeds of the samurai are no longer relevant, since they are not essential. It gave him the absolute cognitive capacity to negate any of the deeds of the samurai.

Inoue's discourse is also different from Ōkuma's in that Chinese influences were almost completely disregarded, because the logic he deployed precludes the possibility that such influences contaminated *bushidō's* essence. This is seen in perhaps the most remarkable part of his article. Here, Inoue insisted that Western moral theories like Kant or Hegel's philosophy should be “grafted” onto *bushidō*. To him, the Japanese spirit lies in “its power of assimilation which had always absorbed foreign thoughts” (ibid., 62). It was in this context that he claimed that the “future purpose of our nation should be a consequence of conjugation between Western and Eastern moralities like these” (ibid., 63). This sentence does not sound like that of a parochial ultra-nationalist, in that it highly regards foreign values. He was quick, however, to add that selecting the most valid among them is necessary to avoid contradiction with Japanese values.

Inoue did not present the Western values that he thought would be most valid nor did he propose selection criteria. Still, his intention behind the proposed selection is clear in the latter part of the article, which is devoted to criticism of “Yasegaman no setsu”, an article written by the founder of Keio University and one of the most influential intellectuals of the era, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901). Inoue’s criticism was not about the content of the article itself but about Fukuzawa’s way of life in general. He accused Fukuzawa of too much Westernisation and the abandonment of his own traditions. Inoue poignantly remarked,

once exposed to Western moralism, Fukuzawa renounced all traditional moralism and became a promoter of Western values [...] We cannot find any independence in his thought. If one valued *bushidō* highly, he would have known that the historically developed thought of the nation should never have been easily discarded. (ibid., 65)

The problem for Inoue was not Westernisation, but discarding one’s own tradition all together. These two things were clearly differentiated in his mind. While the latter attitude eliminates the possibility of retaining one’s national identity, the intention of adopting the former, if done carefully, would certainly maintain that possibility. Words like assimilation and graft are an effective rhetoric in this respect, since anything imported from outside can be regarded as “only branches, not the tree itself”.

In this respect, the logical structure of Inoue’s discourse closely resembles the national slogan of the time, *wakon yōsai* (Japanese soul with Western competence). The soul of the Japanese nation could have been kept intact even if it imported and grafted onto itself things and ideas of Western origin. For the soul was regarded to reside in an inner area which should be untouched by the outside influences of the technological change and institutional shifts brought about by Western modernisation. By the same token, *bushidō* was constructed in Inoue’s discourse as essentially and unchangeably Japanese despite its absorption of outside influences. Even if *bushidō* became hybridised by grafting Western moral theories onto it, it still retains its purity since such foreign thoughts or values were “only branches, not the tree itself”. Inoue clearly states in another article about *bushidō* (1905b, 135) that

however much is learned from the (Western) theories of ethics, they are executed by the Japanese spirit. By the same token, the Japanese soldiers in the Russo-Japanese war won not only by using machines. If the machines alone had won, the achievements of victory belong to the machines, not to the soldiers. These machines are, however, operated by the spirit of the Japanese nation. Elaborated theories of ethics are the same

as delicate machines. They are operated by the Japanese people. The spirit of their operation must rely on *bushidō*.

It is no wonder then that Inoue was ready to admit the influence of Confucianism on *bushidō*. It was regarded as a constitutive element of *bushidō* that was absorbed into the Japanese national consciousness, whose essence remains intact in the very act of absorption.

In Inoue's discourse, questions about the ambiguity of *bushidō* that had been manifested in Ōkuma's work were settled, or rather, made meaningless, through its purification and by establishing the Japanese national spirit as the subject of hybridisation. By the same token, the double separation that Ōkuma considered necessary was made irrelevant. On the one hand, *bushidō's* continuity with the feudal tradition of the Tokugawa Bakufu was unproblematised through Inoue's distinction between superficial formality and essential spirit. On the other hand, foreign influences from China were incapacitated by the power of assimilation. They were regarded as absorbed into the Japanese spirit. The uncertainty of *bushidō* was fixed, and the ambiguity clarified. Conceptual operations like these essentialise *bushidō* and thus confer onto it the potential for becoming a national ideology. We shall not forget, however, that this was all done by admitting the hybridity of *bushidō* and the national spirit.

In a certain sense, Inoue's theory of *bushidō* makes a sharp contrast with Uemura's and Ozaki's arguments. Their logic goes inversely. While Inoue consciously hybridises *bushidō* and then renders its hybridity meaningless through the power of assimilation, the other two theorists purify *bushidō* and then hybridise it by identification with the foreign. Conversely, their conceptual manipulations are quite similar, and the only difference is their sequence. Inoue's argument also seems to be contrasting with Nitobe's discourse. While Inoue argues nationalistically for pure tradition and tries to make *bushidō* as nationalistic as possible, Nitobe presents *bushidō* for an international public and translates it into Euro-American cultural language. If we pay closer attention to the legitimatisation process, however, their arguments are not so dissimilar either. Inoue explicitly hybridises *bushidō* to legitimatise it as a purely Japanese tradition. Nitobe hybridises *bushidō* to make it valid and acceptable to the Western cultural context. Consciously or unconsciously, they thus both legitimatise *bushidō* through hybridisation.

Ideological Function and the Hybridity of *Bushidō*

Bruno Latour (1993) revealed a profound paradox that the "modern constitution" has long had. According to him, the modern constitution rests on two

types of completely different practices: purification and translation. The first “creates two entirely distinct ontological zones” (Latour 1993, 10). The second, which can also be called hybridisation, mixes these supposedly distinct zones and creates hybrids. Purification has been openly manifested while hybridisation has been hidden, since modernist thinking does not tolerate such chaos of classification. The paradox between these practices is that “the more we forbid ourselves to conceive of hybrids, the more possible their interbreeding becomes” (ibid., 12). Therefore, purification and hybridisation are two sides of the same coin, and in modern history have developed hand in hand. It is in this sense that “we have never been modern”.

Even though Latour’s main aim is to problematize the nature–society divide and the corresponding nonhuman–human divide, and to show that such divides are and have always been a deceit, the core insight of the quotation above is applicable to our discussion here. The same rule can be applied to the tradition–modernity divide. The more we try to provide it with an outlook of pure tradition, the more modern it becomes. The *bushidō* discourse is a remarkable example of this. To make *bushidō* look like a pure tradition, some theorists have used the strategy of separation, and many have resorted to abstract simplification. One even openly attempted to purify *bushidō* by hybridising it. Their very act of purification approximates *bushidō* to a constructed modern tradition. The more they idealise *bushidō* by simplification, the more it becomes distant from the samurai way of life. The more they try to make *bushidō* suitable for contemporary Japanese society, the more it loses its traditional roots in the real lives of samurai. The more they try to purify *bushidō*, the more its hybridity becomes undeniable.

This obliqueness of *bushidō* discourse reflects the contradictory situation that Japanese society of the Meiji era found itself in. In the mid-Meiji period, the rapid pace of modernisation and Westernisation had already deeply changed Japanese society, creating a Romantic nostalgia for the time before the great transformations. This situation would easily arouse moral resentment against contemporary society, as most of the texts on *bushidō* are decorated with images of grief over materialism and moral degradation. In this situation, what was called upon was a cultural discourse capable of at once sustaining its own culture and universalising it, simultaneously protecting tradition and making it adaptable to modernisation. Japanese society had to modernise itself while maintaining its traditions. In order to modernise, it had to accept foreign influences against which moral resentment was aroused while constructing a national identity based on its own uniqueness. The intellectuals of the time would have faced inescapably paradoxical ideological needs. Driven by these, the *bushidō* theorists made an attempt to modernise *bushidō* while simultaneously attempting to turn it into a pure tradition.

This ideological necessity is acutely manifested in the discourse on *bushidō*. All the *bushidō* theorists discussed here would have fulfilled this ideological function, but their logic and rhetoric differed. In Uemura, Ozaki, and Nitobe's discourses, *bushidō* was universalised by demonstrating *bushidō's* similarity to its Western counterparts. Due to this type of universalisation, the traditional outlook of Japanese society was sustained while also showing its potential for future modernisation. However, in this mostly unconscious act of translation and transculturation, two changes were made to *bushidō*: it was disconnected from the complex whole of the lived experiences of the samurai and simplified and reduced to its principles, and it was reinterpreted according to Western cultural language.

While valorising *bushidō*, the question of the uniqueness of the Japanese nation was overlooked. Separated from the ways of the samurai that certainly included rules of conduct incomparable with the modern principles, it was made comparable to other cultural traditions in the West. *Bushidō's* ideological status in the civilised world was clearly elevated. In turn, however, *bushidō* became something indistinguishable from certain Western cultural traditions. *Bushidō's* capacity to represent the particularity of Japanese culture was thus ruined. In Inoue's discourse, *bushidō* fulfilled its role as a truly national ideology. Inoue purified *bushidō* through the distinction between superficial formality and the essential spirit. This distinction made the deeds of the samurai irrelevant. The use of vocabulary such as "assimilation", "absorption", or "graft", on the other hand, made foreign influences meaningless. This was much more of a complete separation than Ōkuma had wanted. This purified cultural tradition was, however, in an essential sense a hybrid since it "grafted" foreign cultures onto it, and integrated them as its own constitutive elements. By this logic, *bushidō* attained its legitimate position as a tradition capable of "absorbing" modern advanced thoughts and technologies from the West.

How shall we understand this oblique hybridity of *bushidō*? A conventional account would posit that the *bushidō* theorists represented the real way of the samurai on the assumption that *bushidō* is a historical substance. A critical analysis would disclose that *bushidō* was made up from nowhere, merely reflecting Western influences and driven by the fervour of military nationalism. Although both accounts are somewhat true, and the first account is much more naïve and the second much more sophisticated, both overlook something important. For in both cases *bushidō* is postulated as a transparent intermediary. Our analysis so far has clearly shown that the *bushidō* theories taken up here are neither puppets nor transparent intermediaries. They are the meeting points where different agencies encounter each other and mediators in which hybrids interbreed.

As I have shown above, the hybridity of *bushidō* is what makes it persuasive, acceptable, and attractive. As such, hybridity would presumably be a key to its survival in modern Japan, where its original bearers have long vanished. If *bushidō* had continued as a pure ethic of the traditional samurai class it could not have lasted in modern society. In this respect, *bushidō*'s resilience, which Benesch (2014) points out as one of its key characteristics, comes from its hybridity. Implicitly or explicitly, *bushidō* has been a useful vessel capable of containing under the same banner different and often contradictory moments: martial values and literacy (文武両道), universality and particularity, nationalism and internationalism, the West and Japan, and modernity and tradition.

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