

Kurosawa, Takafumi (Hrsg.): *Churitsukoku suisu to nachizumu: dainiji taissen to rekishi ninshiki. Neutral Switzerland and Nazism: World War II and Historical Knowledge*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press 2010. ISBN: -.

Rezensiert von: Pierre-Yves Donzé

The recent publication of a Japanese translation of the Final Report of the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland – Second World War (known as the Bergier Report) will probably surprise many scholars in Switzerland. As there are already four official versions (English, French, German, Italian), it may indeed be hard to understand the reason for such a translation and its impact on historical research and the historiographical debate in Japan.

In fact, this undertaking stems from a three-fold influence. First, one should recall that the translation of foreign academic works into Japanese is a common practice. Indeed, it is an old tradition, dating back to at least the early Edo period (1603–1868) and initially designed to inject some knowledge from the outside world into Japan.¹ This old custom, which primarily concerned medicine, science and technique, has also come to the social sciences. Even today, the translation of scientific books is seen as a plus for any academic career in Japan.

Second, the lively nature of research into Swiss history in Japan must be underscored. For example, there is a Society of Swiss History (Suisu-shi kenkyukai, www.swiss-history.info), directed by Yasukazu Morita, professor emeritus at Nihon Joshi University. In addition, the four translators/authors of the book presented here are all recognized researchers in the field of Swiss history. The person in charge of coordinating the translation was Takafumi Kurosawa, professor at Kyoto University and a specialist in European economic and industrial history, particularly with regard to Switzerland.² The three other contributors are Akiko Kawasaki, a lecturer at Tokai University who has written on the history of Jews in Alsace (France); Mayako Ozaki, assistant professor at Kokugakuin University and the author of research works on the cross-border area in Geneva in the 18th

and 19th centuries; and Yoko Akiyama, assistant professor at the University of Tokyo and a specialist on the question of foreigners and multiculturalism in Switzerland since the end of the 19th century. With the translation into Japanese and the scholarly edition of the Bergier Report, these four historians have furthered understanding of Swiss history in Japan. The translation is accompanied by numerous biographical and thematic notes on key figures and the main institutions of Swiss modern history.

Third, this book feeds into the public debate on Japan's role during World War II. Such questions as Japanese imperialism in East Asia, the exactions committed by the Imperial Army (Nanking Massacre, comfort women, etc.), and the impact of Japanese colonialism on the industrialization of Taiwan and Korea are burning issues in Japanese and Far Eastern politics.³ As a result, the publication of the Bergier Report also provides a good opportunity to contribute to the public controversy on the need to know one's own history, via a presentation of Swiss policy in the second half of the 1990s. In the foreword to the Japanese translation, written shortly before his passing, Jean-François Bergier reminds himself of this necessity to face one's own past, declaring that „in my view, all countries – and this also means Japan – bear part of this heavy duty. [...] Knowing the past lights the way for the future. This is also an important step towards peace in the world.“

This Japanese edition of the Bergier Report takes the form of a book of more than 700 pages, in two parts: the translation itself and some annexes. There is not much to say about the translation itself, except that it is

¹Marius B. Jansen, „Rangaku and Wetsermization“, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 18, 1984, pp. 541–553.

²See the review of the published version of his PhD thesis, *Kindai Suisu Keizai no Keisei: chiikisuken to Kourain Chiiki no Sangyo Kakumei* [The Formation of the Modern Swiss Economy: Regionalism and Industrial Revolution in the High Rhine Area], Kyoto, Kyoto University Press, 2002, in the *Revue suisse d'histoire*, no. 57, vol. 3, 2007, pp. 367–368.

³Elizabeth S. Dale, „Is Japan Facing Its Past? The Case of Japan and Its Neighbors“, in Mark Gibney e.a. (ed.), *The Age of Apology: Facing Up to the Past*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, pp. 241–255.

work of a high calibre: rigorous, precise and meticulous. One of the main problems the translators faced was the choice of the original version to be translated. As the Independent Commission of Experts did not explicitly specify which of its four versions was deemed the original one, the authors used the German, French and English edition, setting aside the Italian one on linguistic grounds. Due to some divergences between the various versions, they established their own version, mentioning dissimilarities and shortcuts in other versions, mainly in the French one, as well as some minor mistakes (for example, the American subsidiary of Nestlé is situated at Stamford and not Stanford as quoted in the four versions of Bergier Report). In all, it was a work of art that took some four years.

The Bergier Report will likely prompt a re-thinking of the traditional – and sometimes idyllic – image of Switzerland in Japan. Consequently, it appeared necessary to give Japanese readers some tools for understanding the broader context of this new reading of Swiss history during World War II. Therefore, together with the publication of a reference list of some 50 books and articles in Japanese, most of them released since 2000, each translator wrote a thematic article related to his/her research topic. Three contributions of some 10 pages each, based on literature published in the 1990s and 2000s as well as Swiss and French archives, aim at placing some key problems raised in the Bergier Report in perspective. To start off, Mayako Ozaki introduces the problem of the border between a neutral country and Nazi Germany. Using the Swiss-French border at Geneva as a case study, she emphasizes its relative permeability and highlights the issues of the movement of persons and railway transit in wartime. Next, Akiko Kawasaki tackles the emancipation of the Jews in Switzerland from the Helvetic Republic (1798) at the end of the 19th century, with a view to showing Japanese readers the place this community occupied in Switzerland and its difficult emancipation. Finally, Yoko Akiyama presents the problem of Switzerland's policy towards foreigners from the 19th century to the 1930s, providing a long-term perspective and analyzing the emergence and signification of *Überfrem-*

dung (literally „over-foreignization“, a concept that reflects widespread fear in Swiss society during the interwar years of the social impact of massive immigration).

Most noteworthy is the long (86-page) article by Takafumi Kurosawa on the attitude of Swiss multinational enterprises (MNEs) and small European economies towards Nazism, a contribution whose impact may be wider than the only Japanese academic world and which would be worth translating into a major Western language. During the 1990s, in the historiographic and public debate, Swiss enterprises attracted much attention, arousing criticism due to their attitude during the war, often judged as overly lenient towards Germany. Kurosawa proposes a business history approach centered on a few case studies (Georg Fischer, Roche, Nestlé), for which he enlarges the geographical dimension (global strategy of the firms) and temporal scope (from the end of the 19th century to World War II). The point is to measure the impact of war on Swiss MNEs from a comparative perspective with other small European countries and to confirm Margrit Müller's words, namely, „for Swiss business history, the problem of World War II and of relationships with Nazism is secondary“ (interview quoted on p. 492).

It is very difficult indeed to summarize this dense and innovative contribution in a few lines. To focus on the essential, let us say that Kurosawa showed that the key issue for MNEs from small European countries like Switzerland or the Netherlands was to have an organization that enabled them to remain active throughout the world despite the war. The answer they came up with was the dual structure organization (double headquarters). The coexistence of two holding companies, one in continental Europe supervising subsidiaries active in countries occupied by Germany and the other in an Allied country (UK, USA) controlling companies active elsewhere in the world, enabled some MNEs from small neutral European countries to maintain a global organizational structure. However, a comparative analysis of the Swiss companies Roche and Nestlé, on the one hand, and the Anglo-Dutch company Unilever, on the other hand, sheds light on one specific fea-

ture of Swiss firms. The creation of this dual structure reflected several strategies. First of all, there was a real desire to avoid unfavorable tax policies by transferring holding companies to Panama or Lichtenstein. Yet the double structure organization did not merely stem from a desire to hide a firm's activities from the State.⁴ Risk management strategy in an unstable political world was also a factor. This particular structure made it possible, in the course of political and military changes, to transfer the legal property of any subsidiary from one holding to the other, thus avoiding confiscations, requisition and blacklisting. It was adopted by Roche in 1927, then by Nestlé in 1936. The comparison with Unilever highlights a similar use during the war but a different origin of this structure. Unilever came into being in 1930 as a result of the merger of two MNEs, the British firm Lever Brothers and the Dutch company Margarine Union. Despite the merger, the management kept the double structure – but with a single management until the war – due to different strategies related to the characteristics of products and markets of the two former companies. This organizational system was instrumentalized after Germany's invasion of the Netherlands with a view to pursuing the firm's activities throughout the world.

So, as Kurosawa sees it, Swiss MNEs did indeed face difficulties during World War II but these did not threaten their existence. Macroeconomic analysis further reveals that the manufacturing industry tended to stagnate overall during the war despite sectoral differences. Finally, he concludes that, as far as Swiss companies are concerned, „World War II did not appear as a decisive break“ (p. 575). Its most important impact must be understood in terms of corporate organization: the political instability of the interwar years, followed by World War II, provided an opportunity to set up a structural organization that would subsequently facilitate the global expansion of Swiss MNEs after 1945. But this dual headquarters organizational structure was by no means specific to Switzerland. Other European MNEs also adopted it as a way to cope with political risk management. Further research must tackle this key issue to give a better understanding of the question.

Pierre-Yves Donzé über Kurosawa, Takafumi (Hrsg.): *Churitsukoku suisu to nachizumu: dainiji taisen to rekishi ninshiki. Neutral Switzerland and Nazism: World War II and Historical Knowledge*. Kyoto 2010, in: H-Soz-u-Kult .

⁴On this question, see Sébastien Guex, „Introduction. De la Suisse comme un petit Etat faible: jalons pour sortir d'une image en trompe-l'oeil“, in Sébastien Guex (ed.), *La Suisse et les Grandes puissances, 1914–1945*, Geneva, Droz, 1999, p. 11.

Zitierweise:

Pierre-Yves Donzé: Rezension zu: Takafumi Kurosawa (ed.): *Churitsukoku suisu to nachizumu: dainiji taisen to rekishi ninshiki* [Neutral Switzerland and Nazism: World War II and Historical Knowledge]. Kyoto, Kyoto University Press, 2010. Zuerst erschienen in: , Vol. 61 Nr. 3, 2011, S. 377-380