

The Power of Music. Cultural life in the German prisoner-of-war camp Bando in Japan between 1917 and 1919

**A special exhibition in the Beethoven House Bonn
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Particularly in such psychologically disturbing situations as internment in a prisoner-of-war camp, the value of culture as a source of strength cannot be overestimated. This can be demonstrated using the example of the German prisoner-of-war camp Bando in Japan. The opening up and development of Eastern Asia as a trading area played a vitally important role in the colonial policy of the German Empire. The murder of two German missionaries in 1897 provided a welcome excuse for Emperor Wilhelm II to occupy the Bay of Kiautschou (Jiaozhou) on the east coast, which his admirals had singled out as being a suitable site for a naval base. In March 1898 an agreement was signed with China over a 99 year lease on the Kiautschou area, including the little fishing village of Tsingtao. To protect it the Imperial Navy formed the

III. Marine Battalion, an infantry unit with additional naval artillery, which was stationed in Tsingtao. With the help of substantial financial support the colony developed within a short time into a prosperous port, commercial centre and university town. In only 11 years the population grew from 15,600 to 55,000, and the non-chinese population from 2,500 to 4,500. At the outbreak of the First World War the Army gathered German reservists and volunteers from all over China in Tsingtao. On the 10th August 1914 Japan, which was allied with Great Britain, issued an ultimatum demanding the complete capitulation of the colony. This ultimatum remained unanswered, leading to a conflict which lasted many weeks, at first with limited skirmishes but which from the end of October developed into a major Japanese offensive, ending on 7th November 1914 with the surrender of the 5,000 beleaguered soldiers, who by that time faced 60,000 Japanese troops. And so the colony existed for a mere 16 years. The Japanese lithography on the wall on the right depicts the scene of the battle at Tsingtao, and the large Chinese hand drawing gives a general view of how the town looked, with the pre-war imperial red, white and black flags.

The approximately 4,700 prisoners-of-war who were well enough to be moved (including the 400-man Austrian-Hungarian crew of the “Empress Elisabeth”), were transported to Japan on three cargo ships. The journey took three to four days, depending on the destination. The Japanese newspaper cuttings from December 1914 show the victory parade in front of the former Hotel Prinz Heinrich and the overcrowded conditions on board the ships. Since it was generally believed that the war, and therefore the internment, would soon be over, the prisoners were accommodated in makeshift camps in public buildings and temples. One of these temple-camps was in Marugame. The photos show the temple compound and the traditional Japanese rooms, which were carpeted with tatami (rice straw mats) and which served as bedroom, living-room and dining-room. Since the prisoners were not obliged to work, they could occupy themselves physically and mentally. There were gymnastic displays, concerts given by the Marugame Orchestra, led by the violinist Paul Engel, and evenings of chamber music. The first symphonic concert, the programme and introductory text for which are on display in Showcase1, included Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major op. 19. Additionally on display is Beethoven’s carefully made manuscript of the solo part, as well as a cadenza for the first movement, which he wrote down for his pupil Archduke Rudolph. The general map in Showcase2 shows the location of the 12 provisional camps, which were closed however, one after another, when it became evident that the war would not end so quickly and when neutral observers began to criticise the inadequate and overcrowded conditions. In their place six more or less identical large barrack camps were newly built (marked in red on the map): Kurume, Nagoya, Narashino, Aonogahara, Ninoshima und

Bando. In April 1917 the 1,000 prisoners of the three camps Marugame, Matsuyama and Tokushima on the island of Shikoku were transferred to Bando (approx. 12 km from the prefectural capital Tokushima and today a part of the city of Naruto). The camp's commander was Matsue Toyohisa (photo on the wall), who had already distinguished himself as commander of the camp in Tokushima. He governed the camp humanely and liberally, allowed the prisoners many different activities and leased additional acreage for agricultural use and for sporting activities. Because of the camp's remote rural location on an island which did not even have an international port, there was little risk of prisoners fleeing, which meant that regulations could be somewhat more relaxed than in other camps. This led to an active contact with the Japanese peasantry. And the Japanese government consciously developed Bando as a "showpiece" camp, a perception which has survived until today, although it has never really been justified. The photographs of the string ensemble of Narashino and the orchestra of Nagoya show that there was also plenty of cultural life in the other camps. Each camp had its own printing press. In August 1918, when 90 prisoners were transferred from Kurume, a "guide" to Bando camp was published. The open map has a tour of the camp marked on it, the numerals are explained in the guide. A business quarter grew up in the south-west of the camp (the shantytown Tapautau, named after a shopping street in Tsingtao), where prisoners practised their trades and supplied one another with different services as well as food and speciality items. The guide also lists the names of the camp's different music groups and gives a brief outline of theatre performances. There were two orchestras, each with 45 musicians, the Tokushima and Engel Orchestras, two brass ensembles and two choirs, each with 60 singers. The photographs on the wall opposite show the different music groups. On the two hills within the camp, prisoners built huts for their private use. Heinrich Thies, from whose estate most of these documents originate, had his own hut. The Japanese camp commanders supported self-administration and each „district“ (East Bando and West Bando) elected its own mayor. Thies was a candidate in 1918, and his election posters hang on the wall. According to the guide however, Karl Haack won in the second ballot.

On display in Showcases 3 to 7 are concert programmes featuring works by Beethoven. In Bando there were two printing works: the Stone Printers and the Camp Printers, who produced most of the publications shown here. Instead of the hectographic process with plates and die used in Marugame, the printers in Tokushima and consequently in Bando used a complicated wax copying process, which enabled them to produce impressive coloured programmes, postcards, maps, camp postage stamps and money, and even books and brochures. The colourful concert programmes are historically important documents which provide an insight into the impressive diversity of cultural activity in the camp. More than 100 concerts, chamber music evenings, recitals and shows are known to have taken place during the

32 months of internment in Bando. In addition, at least 21 different stage plays were performed. Joining an orchestra, choir or theatre group was one way of escaping the boredom of life as a prisoner (they were not forced to work) and avoiding "camp fever", and for the audiences the performances provided a welcome break from everyday camp-life. Some of the musicians had brought their instruments with them from China, additional instruments were bought, made in the camp's carpentry workshops, or donated, either by German citizens living in Japan, or even by Japanese soldiers. Usually performances contained a mixed-bag of lighter pieces of music, for instance popular works from Viennese operettas by Johann Strauss, Franz von Suppé and Carl Zeller, marches and waltzes by contemporary composers such as Leon Jessel and Paul Lincke (the latter famous for being the father of the Berlin operetta due to his song "Das ist die Berliner Luft, Luft, Luft" from the successful operetta "Frau Luna"), but also overtures by composers such as Offenbach and Rossini. Only 18 of the still existing 68 programmes are for more demanding, genuinely "classical" concerts, 7 of which were evenings of chamber music. Two of those consisted entirely of works by

Beethoven, one other contained pieces by him. Of the remaining 11 symphony concerts, an impressive total of 4 were devoted entirely to Beethoven, and two others contained works of his. The perception of Beethoven as a national saint, hero and titan appealed to the patriotic sentiments of the prisoners-of-war. As Beethoven himself had done, they performed his music for charitable purposes, in this case the Prometheus Overture op. 43, in aid of the camp's sickness fund. The Tokushima Orchestra performed what was probably the Japanese premiere of the 4th Symphony op. 60; the music was accompanied by a introductory text based on Max Chop's 1910 publication "The Symphonies of Ludwig van Beethoven". A senior mate of the naval music corps, Hermann Richard Hansen from Flensburg, directed both the choir of the naval artillery in Kiautschou, and the Tokushima Orchestra. He played the violin and several brass instruments. The evening of chamber music by Beethoven on 3rd February 1919 featured not only a performance of the Quintett for Piano and winds op. 16, but also the "Kreutzer" Sonata op. 47, the original hand-written score of which is on display in Showcase 3.

At the end of April 1918 the Engel Orchestra gave a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which in the previous year had also been performed in Kurume Camp, where the level of musical activity was particularly high. It was there that the Eighth (1916) and the Seventh Symphonies (1919) were given their Japanese premieres. Paul Engel, whose photo is in Showcase 4, gave music lessons in the camp and was allowed twice a week to give lessons to Japanese students outside the camp. After the opening up of Japan, forced upon it by the USA in the 1860s, the country had undergone a radical, western-style modernisation, which included a widespread interest in Western music, originally brought to Japan by Portuguese missionaries in the mid-16th century.

Showcase 5 is devoted to the Japanese premiere of the Ninth Symphony on 1st June 1918. A full year earlier, the "Ode to Joy" had been performed by the Tokushima Orchestra, obviously in an adaptation for a male choir, during a evening of music which also featured Paul Engel's own composition, the "Tsingtao Soldier's March". According to a report in the "Bando Daily Telegraph", rehearsals for the performance of the complete symphony began on 3rd April, and on 31st May there was a public rehearsal together with the 80-strong choir. As was usual, this took place in the "Multipurpose Hall" as Shed No.1 on the postcard was called.

Significantly, the concert programme is illustrated with Max Klinger's statue of Beethoven as a god of antiquity, which had first been displayed during the 1902 exhibition of the Vienna Secession. Klinger's original model is to be seen in the pavillion in the Beethoven House courtyard. The lyrics of the ode were provided together with the programme, and the performers were given a written introduction to the work, again based on Max Chop's analysis. The lengthy printed text about the symphony is possibly the transcript of a lecture. It is strongly influenced by Wagner's reception of Beethoven and reproduces in part the "programme" phrased by him. Untypically, the weekly camp newspaper (later published monthly) "Die Baracke" did not review the concert, but did in the next two issues print a lengthy dissertation by Peter Spurzem on the subject of "Schiller – Beethoven – Goethe". Shortly afterwards the symphony was also performed in the Kurume and Narashino camps. However, it was not until after the war that the "Daiku", as the Ninth is known in Japan, could enjoy its triumphal march through the country. Only when the symphony was performed outside the camps (for instance in the girls' school at Kurume), did it become generally better known. It has since then enjoyed unbroken popularity with mass performances each year. The sheet of manuscript with part of the coda of the second movement written in Beethoven's handwriting belongs today to what UNESCO describes as "Memory of the World".

On display in Showcase 6 is a repeat performance of the Fifth Symphony, which was then combined with the First. This concert was reviewed in the camp newspaper. The programme of chamber music performed on 26th March 1919 included the Violin Sonata op. 30 no. 2, the original handwritten score of which is also on display here.

Nearly a year after the Armistice (the prisoners' return home was delayed by administrative complications and logistic difficulties) several charity concerts were given for the benefit of needy prisoners-of-war in Siberia (Showcase 7). The Engel Orchestra gave its second Beethoven evening with the Violin Concerto op. 61 (soloist was Paul Engel, the orchestra was conducted by Willy Werner who was director of a choir too) and the Sixth Symphony. Not only is Beethoven's original handwritten score of this unusual work in the Beethoven House collection, but also a score which the composer himself proofread and which with its many red corrections served as the master for the first printed edition.

Showcase 8 contains a selection of other interesting concert programmes. In March 1919 a public German-Japanese concert took place in Tokushima with the Engel Orchestra. Presumably the Japanese performers were recruited from among Engel's pupils. All patriotic occasions were celebrated with concerts of military music. Examples of these are the concert for the 4th anniversary of the victory near Tannenberg (East Prussia) with "Long Live Hindenburg" and the choral movement "We must be victorious" by choirmaster Hansen with the participation of the Moltrecht Choir and an additional instrumental ensemble, as well as the concert given to celebrate the Emperor's birthday. This was a themed concert which took a look at the history of military marching music from the 13th to the 19th century and which included Beethoven's Yorksher March WoO 18. At the opening ceremony of the municipal park in Bando the military band played popular marches by Carl Teike. And of course there were Christmas concerts. In 1918 the string ensemble played a "Christmas Medley" compiled by Hansen. Together with six other prisoners-of-war from Schleswig-Holstein, Hansen was released early on 26th August 1919, in order to be able to take part in the referendum on whether Schleswig was to be affiliated to Denmark or Germany. On the evening before his departure he gave a farewell concert. Music ensembles also took part in many "evenings of music and entertainment". In late July 1919 Hansen's little jingle "Warum denn diese Eile, wir warten noch 'ne Weile" ("Why the hurry, we'll wait a bit longer"), which had been printed in the newspaper, could be heard in a concert.

Room 12 on the ground floor is dedicated to other areas in which culture was nurtured in the prisoner-of-war camps. Theatre was particularly popular, whereby audiences preferred comedies which would distract them from their dreary routine as prisoners. But there were also occasional productions of more demanding works. Since the stage in Shed No. 1 was not built until later, Schiller's "The Robbers" was performed in the open-air. Female roles had of course also to be played by men. Most productions were accompanied by the camp orchestra or sections of it, who contributed overtures and played between acts. One highlight must certainly have been the performance of Goethe's tragedy "Egmont", with accompanying music by Beethoven, which was repeated five times. The manuscript score on display in showcase 1 here contains not only the composer's corrections to the music, but also many stage directions which link the music to the play. The collection of stage sets reproduced in the last edition of the "Baracke" (some of which are to be seen on the wall) demonstrates the dedication and artistic talent of the theatre enthusiasts among the camp inmates. For the performances of "Egmont" the camp newspaper printed an introduction to the play, which compared its themes of freedom and heroic death with the situation of prisoners-of-war. While pointing out the production's inevitable limitations due to the circumstances in the camp, the reviewer at the same time enthusiastically emphasises all its successful points. Possibly Hansen was the author of the detailed explanations regarding the music. In the programme for Lessing's "Minna von Barnhelm" in Showcase 2 the audience is reminded that the Japanese camp administration has forbidden clapping. The author of the play "Die Rabensteinerin", Ernst von Wildenbruch, had written a poem for the consecration of the Beethoven House in 1891.

Puppet theatre was also very popular in the camp, with elaborate, hand-carved puppets. The "Exhibition of Art and Handwork Skills" in March 1918 was a display not only of the theatre

props and costumes made in the camp's workshops, but also of the puppet theatre. The community of Bando made its meeting hall with large adjoining buildings and an outside area available for the exhibition and the prisoners-of-war put more than 450 exhibits on display, the majority of which were for sale or could be ordered. The "Art" section was made up of more than 200 chalk-, charcoal-, ink- and watercolour-drawings, as well as a few oil paintings. The section "Handwork Skills" was made up of 11 subsections such as model ships, toys, foodstuffs, but also musical instruments (7 exhibits) and collections of stuffed animals and preserved plants (this was Heinrich Thies' hobby). Interest in the exhibition was remarkable and 19 translators led more than 50,000 visitors around it, including many classes of schoolchildren. Other camps organised similar exhibitions, as can be seen from the exhibition catalogue from Ninoshima and the postcard from Kurume. Such postcards were produced in the camp printing-works on every special occasion. They were stamped with identical text messages, which simplified censorship and sped up delivery.

On display in Showcase 3 are documents connected with the prisoners' homecoming. In anticipation of an early departure from Japan, the last issue of the "Baracke" was published in September 1919, but it actually took until the end of the year until the Japanese government had arranged the transportation on six chartered freighters. The prisoners from Bando camp sailed on the „Hofuku Maru“, which left Kobe on 30th December and arrived 56 days later, on 24th February 1920, in Wilhelmshaven. The men had taken their printing equipment with them onto the ship and they produced six issues of the newspaper "The Homecoming" during the voyage. A coral evening was arranged on board, which included a performance of an adaptation for male voice choir by Friedrich Silcher (Hymn to the Night) of the andante movement of the Piano Sonata op. 57. In remembrance of the nine soldiers who died during the internment a memorial stone was erected within the camp, which can be seen in Heinrich Thies' photo album. It was not until the 1960s that contact was resumed between former prisoners and the people of Bando. In 1972 the "Deutsches Haus Naruto" (German House in Naruto) was erected in the former grounds of the camp to serve as a museum and place of remembrance.

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