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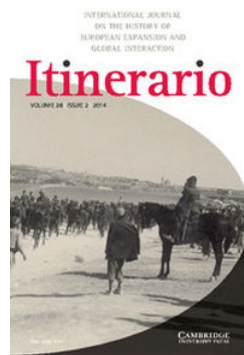
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Japanese Musicians Between Music and Politics During WWII: Japanese Propaganda in the Third Reich

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Japanese Musicians Between Music and Politics During WWII

Japanese Propaganda in the Third Reich

KYUNGBOON LEE*

Not only musicians, but all Germans have a stake in the fate of our music, since there is no other art in which the people of Bach, Beethoven and Bruckner surpass all others to such an extent.¹

Peter Raabe, the president of the *Reichsmusikkammer* (i.e., the Reich Chamber of Music), stressed at the beginning of the war in 1939 that music took on a particular significance for politics during the Third Reich. While classical music remained inaccessible to broad strata of the German population, the Third Reich attached high propaganda value to classical concerts. The state played a huge role in these concerts. A statement by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels shed light on how National Socialism linked music and politics:

National Socialism is not only a political philosophy, but is a total and all-embracing view of all things public. This is why it must be the self-evident basis for the whole of our lives...we do not possess the ambition to dictate to the conductor how to play the score. But we reserve the sovereign privilege to decide what is played and what corresponds with the spirit of our time.²

Even a seemingly harmless concert featuring the works of Beethoven, Brahms, and Bach (or the Japanese music *Etenraku*) had to comply with the cultural-political strategy of the Propaganda Minister. During his exile in Switzerland during 1934, Thomas Mann wrote in his diary that the reason he did not want to listen to *Götterdämmerung* on the radio was because everything that comes from the Third Reich smelled of the Nazi's cultural propaganda.³

Unlike Thomas Mann, German music inspired Japanese musicians and some sought active careers in Germany. This would seem like an unreachable goal but Japanese musicians did enjoy success in Germany. Some Japanese raised their batons at the renowned Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra: Kishi Kōichi in 1934, Yamada Kōsaku in 1937, Otaka Hisatada in 1939, Konoye Hidemaro in 1938 and 1940, as well as the composer of Korean origin Ahn Ekitai in 1943.⁴ Kishi and Yamada left Germany before the start of the war (in 1935 and 1937, respectively) and Otaka departed in 1940 after the start of the war, but Konoye and Ahn sought to be professionally active conductors in Germany for longer periods of time. Like other musicians during the Third Reich, they were members of the *Reichsmusikkammer*.⁵ Ahn's membership card (RKK A 115) is available in the Bundes-

archiv Berlin, while Konoye's was lost. However, there is no doubt about Konoye's membership: not only because he served as a conductor countless times but also because of a letter from the *Deutsch-Japanische Gesellschaft* (German-Japanese Society, DJG) in Berlin to the *Reichstheaterkammer* (Reich Chamber of Theater). This letter requested his membership and indicated that he was already registered with the *Reichsmusikkammer*.⁶ This means that the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Culture Chamber), which usually demanded a document of Aryan identity for its membership, accepted these non-Aryan musicians as their members.

How was it possible for these musicians from the Far East to take part in the music scene of the Third Reich even though they were not "Aryan" but belonged to the "yellow race?"⁷ To what extent were they able to contribute to the German cultural policy? **With a view to these guiding questions, this paper hopes to illuminate the relationship between music and politics during the Third Reich.**

Ahn Ekitai and Konoye Hidemaro: Pathways to the Third Reich

At the same time that Ahn and Konoye appeared on the stages of Berlin and Vienna as Japanese musicians, numerous German musicians were leaving their homes and the musical culture to avoid falling into the hands of the Nazis. Because the Japanese, who colonised East Asia, granted them entry into their territories, these refugees, unknown outside of Germany, looked for work as musicians in Asia. For example, Helmut Stern (who later became the first violin in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra) went to Harbin, while Ferdinand Adler, Wolfgang Frankel, Walter Joachim, Julius Schloss, and Alfred Wittenberg fled to Shanghai, and Joseph Rosenstock, Leonid Kreutzer, Leo Sirota, Klaus Pringsheim, Robert Pollak, Manfred Gurlitt went to Tokyo.⁸

Unperturbed by this politically motivated exodus, musicians from Japan and Japanese colonised Korea travelled to Germany to advance their musical studies. The Music Academy of Berlin enrolled a number of Japanese students between 1933 and 1945.⁹ In contrast, American students no longer went to Germany because the Nazi purged first-class musicians from Europe and many were already streamed into the USA.¹⁰

Konoye Hidemaro, whose older brother Konoye Fumimaro was the Japanese Prime Minister in 1937–39 and 1940–41, did not go to the Third Reich as a student but as a special envoy to the Foreign Ministry in September of 1938, where he worked as a conductor and organiser for Japanese-German cultural events until the end of the war. Coming from a famous family of high nobility, he trained himself as a conductor in Europe during the 1920s. Several well-known European orchestras facilitated his practice training. During the 1930s, he was the only conductor of Asian origin known internationally and he was also the only famous Japanese conductor in the Third Reich until, in 1941, when a concert conducted by Ahn was radio broadcasted from Berlin.¹¹

Ahn Ekitai came from the Japanese colony of Korea and was born in Pyongyang. He arrived in Europe in 1938, where he conducted a guest concert in Ireland. This European premiere was of his piece *Korea Phantasy*, an instrumental symphonic work.¹² But it was not until 1941 that he reached the Third Reich after detours to Dublin, Budapest, Belgrade, and Bucharest.¹³

In Japan, Ahn had little chance of being trained as a conductor and the situation was certainly even worse in colonial Korea. During the 1920s a European music scene was almost non-existent: the only places where European music was taught were the churches and schools founded by Western missionaries. In 1930, when Ahn finished his studies in Tokyo, it was not yet possible to receive training to become a conductor in Japanese music academies. The only options were to study on one's own or go to a foreign country. Unlike Konoye, who was eight years his senior, a Western missionary encouraged Ahn and he went to the Kunitachi Music School in Tokyo to obtain training as a cellist before he studied conducting in the United States.¹⁴ After playing first cello under Vladimir Bakalenikoff and Eugene Goossens in the Cincinnati Civic Symphony Orchestra, he became Assistant Conductor of the Philadelphia Symphony Club in 1934, where Leopold Stokowski was the principal conductor.¹⁵ Ahn used his contacts in America to seek further training as a conductor in Europe. In 1936, he studied for several months with Felix Weingartner in Vienna, who then arranged for Ahn to conduct the Budapest Symphonic Orchestra.¹⁶

He owed his conducting debut in the Third Reich in 1941 not only to his talent but also to the 1940 Tripartite Pact between Germany, Japan and Italy. It is also noteworthy in this context that the name of Ahn Ekitai appeared in the papers of the *DJG* after a meeting of Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke, a strong proponent of the Tripartite Pact with Hitler in March 1941. The interest in Japan, which had been steadily growing in the wake of the Tripartite Pact had given new strength with Hitler's March 5, 1941 ordinance "Weisung Nr. 24 über Zusammenarbeit mit Japan" (Order No. 24 concerning cooperation with Japan), which clearly stated the German policy of rapprochement with Japan.¹⁷

Due to racist attitudes, the Pact with Japan seemed to discomfit faithful Nazi supporters. **When the famous Japanese dancer Kuni Masami studied in Berlin during WWII, he often heard comments such as "Japanese belong to the Mongolian race, but I'll treat Japanese as a special race. Japanese are brave and strong while fighting, so in a manner of speaking they are like the Prussians of Asia."**¹⁸ This could conversely indicate that, before the Pact, the Nazi party (*NSDAP*) racially discriminated against the Japanese. According to race-documents from *NSDAP*, it excluded two Japanese men since they had a Japanese mother-in-law and a Japanese father, respectively.¹⁹ There is no doubt that the Reich's racial politics were in practice much more flexible but there were also reports how Japanese were discriminated against in daily life.²⁰ According to Kuni Masami, the famous Japanese singer Tanaka Michiko could not have married the German actor Victor de Kowa until she underwent a sterilisation operation in 1941.²¹ In August 1942, in the secret Nazi *Meldungen aus dem Reich* (Reports from the Reich) 1938–1945 attested to the changing images of the Japanese after the military Tripartite Pact (i.e., "even though Japanese were Mongolian, they were people of the Tripartite Pact, and thus honorary-Aryans").²²

Between 1941 and 1944, Ahn and Konoye both were *the* Japanese conductors for the Third Reich in all the musical performances that were being organised to show the solidarity between the Axis powers. A kind of "Japanese culture boom" got popular in Berlin: Japanese films, lectures, exhibitions were in demand.²³ Both conductors were celebrated in the German–Japanese friendship concerts in Hannover,

Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart, Cologne, Vienna, etc. But who arranged the concerts of the Japanese conductors?

The Musical Activities of Ahn and Konoye in the Third Reich During WWII

The *DJG* advertised the Japanese–German pact with cultural performances, to which Ahn and Konoye contributed as Japanese conductors.²⁴ Following the November 1938 agreement for cultural exchange between Germany and Japan, the *DJG* became ever more active and, during the war, it was one of the most important inter-state organisations in the Third Reich.²⁵ Most of its branches were founded in 1940 or later, after which its cultural-political activities increased significantly. For a long time there was only one office, located in Berlin, but another office opened in Vienna after the Austrian “Anschluss.” This marked the beginning of a rapid expansion: from 1938 to 1943, eight further offices were opened throughout the whole Reich (Hannover, Munich, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Hamburg, Salzburg, Magdeburg and Linz).²⁶ The *DJG* files at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz (294 volumes in total) offer much insight into the active cultural exchange between Japan and Germany. The favorite forms of cultural propaganda used by the *DJG* organisers included not only musical concerts but also theater and dance performances, art exhibitions, lectures and movie screenings.

Although Konoye was the envoy for cultural affairs of the Japanese Government, he was principally active as a conductor who directed concerts not only with the *DJG* but also the German Red Cross. His concerts in the latter half of 1942 show that he was actively involved in concerts to boost the morale of the soldiers and the German people in war.²⁷

Due to a busy schedule, Konoye was not able to handle all the musical performances on his own. In a letter dated 16 July 1942, Rudolf Trömel, secretary of the *DJG* Berlin, declined a request from Gau Bayreuth for a concert and noted that Konoye did not have any time to conduct the opera *Fidelio* on 16, 18 and 24 September 1942 at Coburg.²⁸ It appeared as if the *DJG* office worked as a kind of booking agent for Konoye.²⁹ Concomitantly, the *DJG* informed the Foreign Office on the progress of its concert tours.³⁰

Ahn’s activities were limited to cultural-political events that took place from 1941 to 1944. These events were either organised by the *DJG* itself, in the framework of its cultural exchange policy, or arose in connection with the *DJG*. The latter was the case with the concerts of the *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength Through Joy, *KdF*) and *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* (the War Winter Relief Organization, *KWHW*).³¹

Two things are remarkable here: Ahn appears to have preferred *Etenraku* as a musical trademark of his concerts and Ahn—not Konoye—was the composer and conductor of the *Festmusik Mandschoukuo* for the 1942 concert to mark the tenth anniversary of the Manchukuo founding. The German newsreel *Descheg Monatsschau* broadcasted this event in September 1942 which indicates its high propaganda value.³² The reason why Ahn rather than Konoye performed for this important propaganda event is not yet known.³³ However, the many letters exchanged between Ahn and Richard Strauss and between Strauss and Ehara Koichi (the Manchurian diplomat to Germany who wrote the words to Ahn’s piece

Festmusik Mandschoukuo) show how these persons cooperated in preparing the festival concert.³⁴

While Ahn's activities as a conductor were small when compared to Konoye's, Ahn gladly took part in cultural-political events during the war in which well-known German and Japanese figures from politics and business participated. On occasion, great artists like Richard Strauss were in the audience. Strauss, who composed *Japanische Festmusik* to commemorate the 2600th anniversary of the Japanese Imperial Family in 1940, was present when the Vienna Symphony Orchestra played his work on 12 March 1942 in Vienna. After this German-Japanese festivity, Strauss signed a document that praised Ahn's accomplishment with "grateful appreciation." The document is in the files of the Bundesarchiv Koblenz.³⁵

In addition, a letter from the artistic director of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Gerhard von Westermann, to the director of *DJG* Berlin indicates that Ahn enjoyed greater artistic recognition than Konoye:

I am quite pessimistic about the prospect of employing Count Konoye. It seems doubtful to me that a concert organized by the German Red Cross would be much of a success under his lead. Would it not be possible, for the time being, to postpone a commitment on the part of Count Konoye? Two concerts under Japanese conductors seems a bit much to me, and given the choice between the two suggested by you, I would, on the basis of artistic considerations, definitely prefer Mr. Ahn.³⁶

The Cultural-Political Functions of Japanese Musicians in the Third Reich

There is no doubt that the war and the pact between Germany and Japan promoted the careers of the Japanese musicians. Japanese musicians' contribution to Nazi cultural policies can be summarised in three points.

Firstly, when they performed both modernised Japanese music (i.e., *Etenraku*) Konoye and Ahn appeared as "musical diplomats" of the Japanese Empire. They presented Japan as an exotic nation with a long tradition that was nevertheless thoroughly modernised and which had, for a long time, a great power status. "Etenraku," the so-called "music handed down from heaven," is the best-known example of the repertoire of Japanese court music, or *gagaku* (雅楽), that dated from around the eighteenth century and was thus connected to the Japanese imperial institution: "It is a festive prelude that has been played at concerts in the Japanese Imperial Court for a millennium."³⁷

During the Meiji Restoration in Japan a mytho-history was in place but, by the turn of the century, a culture of nationalism had been created.³⁸ This developed in two different ways. The Japanese Empire, being closely linked with modernity, struggled to show that Japan could be ranked with the most modern of nations, not only in technological progress but also military power.³⁹ With Japan's victory over China and Russia achieved, Japan should become "a nation of scholars striving for civilization and enlightenment."⁴⁰

It also "invented" much of Japanese tradition and demonstrated "an implied con-

tinuity with the past.”⁴¹ Used in such a way, tradition could be regarded as “what modernity requires to prevent society from flying apart.”⁴² So “age-old” Japanese tradition was revamped and incorporated into Japanese national culture (e.g., Shinto or Bushido). In the case of invented “national music” it proceeded paradoxically, as Takenaka Toru writes, since “*national music* paved the way for the Westernization of music in Meiji Japan.”⁴³ Considering the fact that in East Asian countries accepted the idea of a “national music,” for example a “national anthem,” as an imported Western invention, it was not surprising that Japanese “national music” appeared to have a more Western inclination than a native “national” character.

From the 1910s to the 1930s, Western music had a firm footing in Japanese elite society whereas native traditional music increasingly lost its standing. In this time, Konoye brothers transcribed the gagaku music piece “Etenraku” for Western instruments.⁴⁴ Both modernist and conservative musicians welcomed their transcription: it was the “generalization of a Japanese traditional music”, so the piece could be played beyond Japan in the Western world.⁴⁵

According to the data in Konoye’s score of *Etenraku*, the work was performed fifty-seven times between 1934 and 1944 all over the world.⁴⁶ It was therefore the most often staged Japanese musical piece in the Third Reich and its allied countries performed under the direction of Ahn and Konoye. It is not surprising then that a document of the Japanese Foreign Ministry explicitly refers to *Etenraku* as a premier Japanese work that artists had to promote abroad.⁴⁷

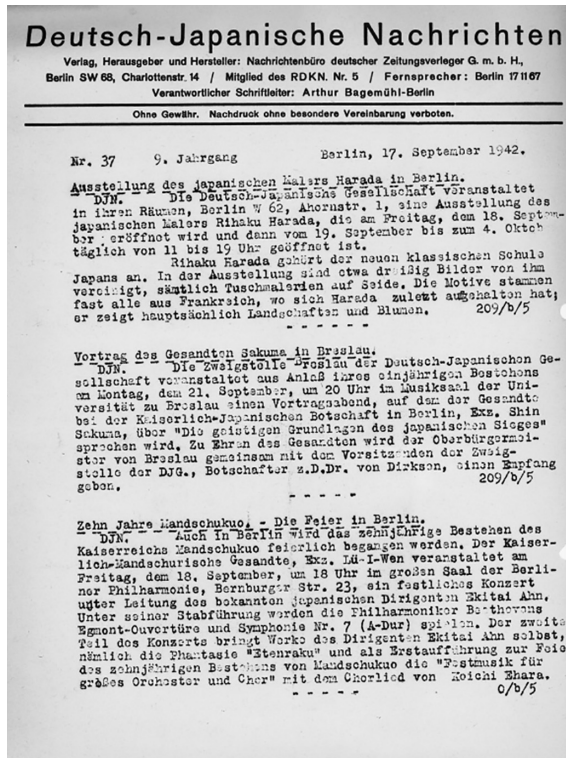
Secondly, apart from Japanese music, Konoye and Ahn mainly performed German music by Schubert, Beethoven, Wagner and others. This fact gave credence to the often repeated claim, embraced by Nazi propaganda, that Germany was the “chosen country for music in the world” (*das auserkorene Musikland der Welt*). In an interview he gave to the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* in 1941, Konoye underlined his belief in this worldwide recognition (“Weltgeltung der deutschen Musik”) and argued that German music had left its mark on Japan.⁴⁸ The German media usually cited the work of Japanese composers as proof of how seriously artists from that country engaged with German music.⁴⁹

Thirdly, Japanese musicians directly supported the official policies of the Axis powers. Because music was “universally” comprehensible without translation, classical music concerts could effectively show the strong connection between the three Axis powers. During the war there was a growing demand for Japanese musicians. Ahn and Konoye, Suwa Nejiko, a featured Japanese violinist with the Berlin Philharmonic and singer Tanaka Michiko were highly sought after. Nor did their propaganda value decrease during the final years of the war. They were in a privileged position to demonstrate that the Germans were not alone and that the Japanese were on their side.⁵⁰

A good example is the above-mentioned celebratory piece *Mandschoukuo*, composed by Ahn in 1942 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Manchukuo. Ehara Koichi wrote the choral text in German:

Mit Japan sind wir fest gebunden.
Wie ein Herz, im heiligen Ziel,
Um zu schaffen ewigen Frieden,

Courtesy of the Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BA R 64 IV/193, 10). German-Japanese News of the tenth anniversary of the Manchukuo founding (17 September 1942).



"Etenraku" as Japanese Propaganda Music in the Third Reich, or Two Kinds of Europeanisation of a Japanese Tradition

Konoye composed his *Etenraku* in Japan in 1930 and the work premiered in Moscow in 1931.⁵² The occasion was an invitation to Moscow by the Union of Soviet "Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries" (VOKS), which had approached Konoye through its Tokyo bureau.⁵³

Ahn used the traditional gagaku melody of *Etenraku* as the main theme.⁵⁴ According to documents of the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, his *Etenraku* was one of the most frequently performed pieces in cultural-political concerts. Nearly every concert that Ahn conducted in Europe included this work: in Hamburg, Hanover, Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia, Vienna, Zurich, and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1943.

It is still not clear why Ahn composed *Etenraku* or it was intended to imitate Konoye.⁵⁵ Did Japanese officials charge him with making Japanese music popular abroad? However, musically, Ahn's *Etenraku* and Konoye's *Etenraku* represented two very different ways of Europeanising Japanese tradition.

Konoye's *Etenraku* was a faithfully transcribed arrangement of the traditional music for European instruments. In order to retain the character of the original work, Konoye subjected the traditional music to only limited modifications.⁵⁶ In con-

trast, Ahn's work borrowed only the melody and tonal colour. He composed it in the language of Western music as a "symphonic poem" or programme music.⁵⁷ Konoye's *Etenraku* was much closer to the court music piece *Etenraku* used for solemn ceremonies involving the Imperial Family. It should be regarded as an attempt to realise the dream of creating a new Japanese music capable of translating the spirit of Japan into sound. Because the form of *Etenraku* consisted of several repetitions of a melody without development, it evoked the antique world of Japan. While Konoye created a kind of arrangement, Ahn's was a "symphonic phantasy."⁵⁸ The Japanese scientist Toshiko Yuasa (who researched uranium in Paris in 1944) corroborated such a description when, in her diary on January 30, she referred to the conducting style and the compositional style of Konoye and Ahn:

Hidemaro is without exaggerated gestures; his conducting is restrained. One senses immediately how much he differs from Mr. X. [Ahn]. *Etenraku* was composed on the same theme and in direct competition with X's version, but I sympathise more with Hidemaro's faithfulness to the original piece.⁵⁹

The reception of both works in German-speaking countries was different on another level. A 1941 newspaper article highlighted Konoye's descent from a distinguished family of high nobility.⁶⁰ The reporting often made a connection between this family background and *Etenraku* while it neglected genuinely musical aspects.⁶¹ On the other hand, Ahn's Korean origin was not mentioned. Reportedly, Ahn was a thoroughly ("von Schrot und Korn") Japanese composer. In his case, the reporting concentrated on musical aspects.⁶²

Even though it was not clear whether or who commissioned Ahn's work, his *Etenraku* was more modern. Its use of Asian tonal colour indeed suggested an Asian exoticism.⁶³

However, which of these works had a greater effect on the war in the context of German-Japanese propaganda? Taking a broader historical point of view, I argue that Ahn's *Etenraku* achieved more favour than Konoye's with audiences in Germany.⁶⁴ Ahn's music presented the exotic sound of Japanese music in a manner that was compatible with European taste, as the Japanese scientist Yuasa confirmed in her comparison with Konoye's *Etenraku*. This could explain why the exotic, but not overly foreign, version by Ahn found a more favourable reception than Konoye. There was some cautiously formulated criticism of Konoye's *Etenraku* which accused the work of monotony and "melancholic ostinato phrases" (schwermütigen ostinaten Wendungen).⁶⁵ It was not just a matter of taste but a question of which sound would successfully demonstrate the power of a modern nation. Traditional music from earlier centuries could not represent to the imagination a modern nation-state that was successful in war. It is not surprising that not only Japan (but also Korea and China) had established military bands after a Western model: they played western march music with European instruments and not their traditional military music. Japan as a modern nation had to present itself with the powerful sound of Europeanised music and retained only superficial elements of the native Japanese idiom, just like Ahn's piece. Even though modernity is "a construct which has certain attributes that are associated with western culture but that are not necessary for modernization," in the case of music, Japan and

other East Asian countries accepted modernity as identical with westernisation.⁶⁶

Ahn was a modernist who believed that Western culture and music were an essential component of the project to “enrich the country and strengthen the military” a policy followed by the Japanese Emperor since the Meiji era and by Koreans during the Daehan Empire (1897–1910).⁶⁷ This could be a reason why Ahn and Konoye regarded their *Etenraku* as suitable material to represent Japan as a modern nation with an imperial aura. It can be said that *Etenraku* belonged to the Japanese strategy to modify older visual and musical traditions. These modified forms became part of wartime propaganda that intended to eventually contribute to victory.⁶⁸

Japanese Musicians Between Music and Politics

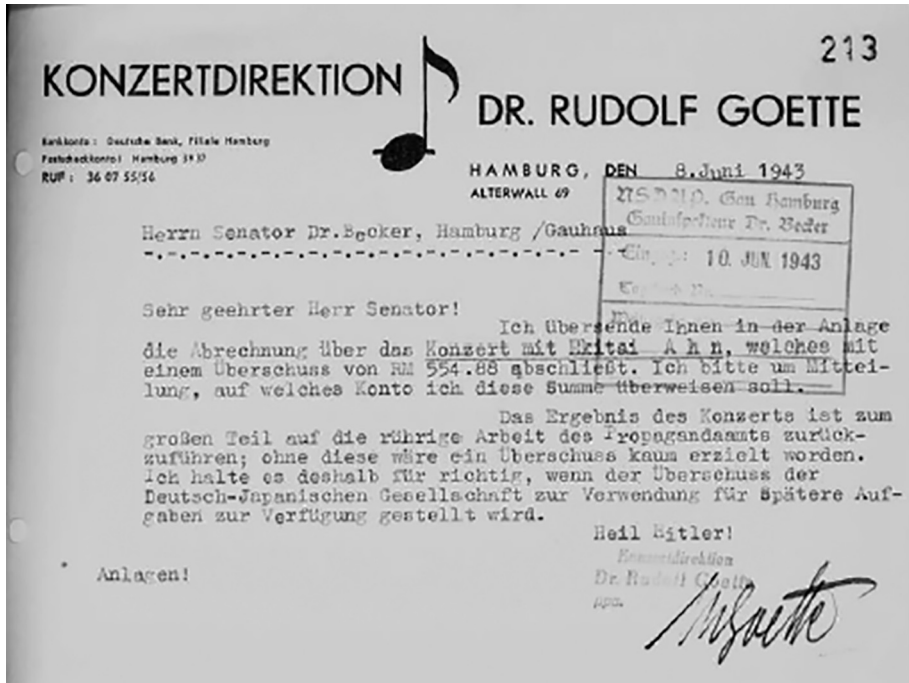
The Japanese origin of the conductors was a main focus of propaganda. However, their musical abilities were also highly valued. The decision by Westermann, the artistic director of the Berlin Philharmonic, in favour of Ahn's *Etenraku* illustrates this fact. Precisely because one did not actually expect musical talent at these cultural-political events, they proved all the more effective when such talent actually revealed itself. Despite the often-repeated claim that “music is music” (a phrase that the musicians of the Berlin Philharmoniker used to defend their musical function during the Third Reich), this attitude should not hide the fact that political context makes music into “propaganda” works. This aim was an important strategy of the Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. A prime example was Wilhelm Furtwaengler, who Goebbels exploited for political gain. It was clear that at the concerts held jointly between the *DJG* and the *KdF*, or *KWHW*, that music was not the only thing that mattered. If the musicians were famous and talented, the value of the propaganda rose. That was why Goebbels was eager to entice the most famous artists, such as Wilhelm Furtwaengler or Richard Strauss.⁶⁹

Ahn Ekitai's German career, more than that of Konoye, was a byproduct of the war and his efforts—as a musician—were all the more important for German cultural propaganda. We can hardly understand the impact of his *Etenraku* outside of the context of the German-Japanese cultural exchange and the wartime alliance of the two countries. In fact, after 1946 Ahn's *Etenraku* disappeared from his repertoire.⁷⁰

Comparing Ahn to Konoye, one difference becomes clear. While Konoye used conducting to achieve his political propaganda, Ahn exploited the political circumstances of the time to further his career as a musician and his survival as a conductor. For Konoye, who admired Hitler from political conviction, the goal of solidarity between Japan and Germany was more important than his own financial advantage.⁷¹ He often conducted without remuneration, or, when he received a fee, he donated it to the German Red Cross.⁷² While Ahn eagerly served Japan's political agenda, he also valued professional success. A newspaper report noted that one of his concerts showed a “strong and passionate will to the extraordinary that expresses itself in performance and format.”⁷³

A career as a Korean in the Third Reich was nearly impossible because, first and foremost, it was not a matter of individual musical ability. To gain access to a musician of international fame, like Richard Strauss, Ahn had to comply with the

*Courtesy of the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Germany (BA R 64 IV/180, 213).
This document shows the great success of Ahn's concert (8 June 1943).*



national-socialist cultural policy even more than a Japanese musician.⁷⁴ Ahn—no less than Konoye—contributed to both Japanese and German propaganda. A German ministerial decree of October 1944 called three Japanese musicians “**prominent foreign artists**”: Ahn, Konoye and the violinist Suwa Nejiko.⁷⁵ The document underlined that they had continuously performed in the Reich and that they had to be treated on an equal footing with German artists by the War Headquarters. This finding does not leave any doubt that the Japanese artists did not only serve Japanese but also German propaganda.

While Jewish musicians had to emigrate all over the world—not only to the USA and England but also to Shanghai, Tokyo, and Harbin—to escape persecution, Nazi rule offered a chance for Ahn and Konoye to develop their musical careers. However, after the war, this became a liability. It is for this reason that Konoye, after being taken into custody by US soldiers at the end of the war in Leipzig and then repatriated to Japan via the US, claimed in an essay that the Nazis persecuted him.⁷⁶ Ahn, who fled via Paris to Spain in 1944, maintained that the Japanese were persecuted him.⁷⁷

Ahn was the composer of what became the South Korean national anthem, written in 1935. Koreans considered him a patriot and fighter against Japanese colonial power. A biography written by a friend of Ahn tells of numerous heroic exploits. He is said to have performed his *Korea Phantasy* (in Germany) despite Japanese control. Older scholarship confirmed this impression for over forty years.⁷⁸ But recent research exposes him as a *Japanese* composer in the Third

Reich during the Second World War.⁷⁹ Fervent debates have recently emerged within Korean society over who should be condemned as a collaborator. Ahn's name appears in the *Dictionary of Japanese Collaborators* (親日人名辭典) published in 2009. Some have even argued for the need for a new national anthem.

Ahn projected a Korean rather than a Japanese identity when he performed his *Korea Phantasy* in Ireland in 1938. That is why many Koreans still admire him and the controversy has not yet been settled. It may be possible that Ahn cooperated with the Japanese under duress. Further research will be needed to decide the issue. There are documents dated from October 1941, which indicated that Ahn, in contrast to other Japanese, was not willing to return to his homeland upon the outbreak of WWII.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, his strong desire to pursue a musical career in Europe was unquestionably the crucial motivation behind his collaboration with Japan and Germany. Recent Korean research has questioned the myths surrounding Ahn, whereas Japanese scholarship has neither confirmed nor questioned Konoye's stature as a Nazi victim.⁸¹

Some evidence confirmed Konoye's differences with the race politics of the Nazi regime. He helped the Jewish composer Manfred Gurlitt to settle in Japan.⁸² Konoye, himself, claimed that the Nazis forbade him to perform after 18 June 1943 within Germany proper, which researchers interpreted as Konoye having lost the regime's favour.⁸³ A letter from the Berlin DJG of 24 June 1943 indicated that his concert in Wuppertal was not cancelled because of Konoye's supposed unpopularity with the Nazis but due to "terrorist attacks."⁸⁴ The letter mentions that further concerts in cities such as Wiesbaden or Ludwigshafen should be prepared. Moreover, as mentioned in the German ministerial decree of October 1944, Konoye was one of three Japanese musicians named as "prominent foreign artists" who consoled German soldiers with music. This meant that he cooperated with the German military propaganda department and the Nazis until the very end of WWII. It is really difficult to decide, definitively, who was a collaborator and who was not. In the cases of Konoye and Ahn it might be simpler to investigate their motivations because they claimed not to be forced into cooperation with the defeated parties, but to be pursued and forbidden by the Nazis and by the Japanese, respectively.

For Konoye, it was not his cooperation with the Japanese wartime regime but his collaboration with the Nazis that became problematic after the war. In Japan, under the motto "when our fatherland was fighting, we should have all worked together for victory," no musician was really criticised as a collaborator.⁸⁵ A nationalist and collaborator such as Yamada Kosaku continued to be respected as a great Japanese musician for his whole life. In postwar Japan, Konoye had to show his distance from the Nazis. Questions about the relationship between Konoye and the Nazis remain, and demand further research.

Even though Japanese musicians in the Third Reich belonged to the "Mongolian race,"⁸⁶ they became members of the *Reichsmusikkammer*, consoled "Aryan" soldiers and, more generally, engaged in extensive musical-political activities.⁸⁷ This testified to the contentious relationship between race theory and propaganda. It also showed how closely interconnected music and politics were. This was an irony of East-West cultural exchange: the German-Japanese alliance turned Ahn and Konoye into musical-political propagandists of the Third Reich while Jewish musicians who fled from Germany helped establish a Western music culture in Japan and some even contributed to Japanese propaganda.⁸⁸

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Primary Source Abbreviations

BA=*Bundesarchiv*

DJG=*Deutsch-Japanische Gesellschaft*

KdF=*Kraft durch Freude*

KWHW=*Kriegswinterhilfswerk*

RKK=*Reichskulturkammer*

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Notes

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- 1 Raabe, "Über den Musikbetrieb während des Krieges," 1030.
 - 2 Heiber, *Goebbels-Reden*, 228.
 - 3 Mann, *Tagebücher 1933–34*, 502.
 - 4 The composer's name is not consistently transliterated into Roman script. In the US he uses Ahn Eaktai or Ahn Iktai, while the Japanese pronunciation of his name Ahn Ekitai was used in Germany for official purposes.
 - 5 It is believed that the violinist Suwa Nejiko and the singer Tanaka Michiko, who were active in the Third Reich and its occupied territory until the end of the war, were also members of the *Reichsmusikkammer*. However, no archival evidence proving this could be found at the Bundesarchiv Berlin.
 - 6 BA R64IV/81, 110.
 - 7 According to a document from August 1942 in the secret *Nazi Reports from the Reich 1938–1945* "superficial talk" about the Japanese as a "yellow peril" was widespread in the German population. Boberach, *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945*, 4043.
 - 8 Stern, *Saitensprünge*, 197–221; Enomoto, *Shanghai Ōkesutora Monokatari*, 200–1; Götz, *Manfred Gurlitt. Leben und Werk*, 124–9.
 - 9 Moroi Saburō, Rie Ainai, Sakamoto Yosihiko, Fukui Naohiro, Miyasaki Naoichi, Ebina Michi, Okuda Ryōzō among others. *Jahresbericht* (1927–1938).
 - 10 Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise*, 79–100.
 - 11 BA R64IV/209, 80.
 - 12 The choral part which concludes the *Korea Fantasy* today was added after the Second World War. Kim, *An Ik-tae*, 200.
 - 13 After the aforementioned concert in Dublin in 1938, he studied with Ernst von Dohnányi at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. At the same time, he was active as a conductor in Eastern Europe.
 - 14 Ahn's most famous Korean song is the national anthem written in 1935. It came into being during his time in the USA, making him one of the most famous musicians in Korea, and indeed the "national composer." Among the Korean people, his name is perhaps better known than Isang Yun (1917–95), who is Korea's most internationally acclaimed composer.
 - 15 *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (15 April 1934): 11.
 - 16 Korean Student Federation of North America, "Eak Tai Ahn back from Europe," *The Korean Student Bulletin* 15–1: 6. After the concert in Budapest Ahn returned to the USA. Regarding his work in the USA, see *The Korean Student Bulletin* 8-3 (1930); 11/3-4, 12-1 (1933); 12-3, 12-4 (1934); 13-1, 13-2 (1935); 14-2, 14-3 (1935/36); 15-1, 15-2 (1936); 16-1 (1937); 16-3 (1938), in Chōn, Chōng-im, 248-261.
 - 17 Greiner, et al., *Der Untergang des Dritten Reiches*, 71.
 - 18 Kuni, *Berulin Senso*, 57.
 - 19 BA R64IV/31, 140–1; Haasch, *Die Deutsch-Japanischen Gesellschaften 1888–1996*, 212.
 - 20 For instance, a woman with a Japanese mother complained in 1936 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about racist abuse from ordinary German people and other disadvantages in work and marriage (BA R64IV/31, 112–4).
 - 21 Kuni, *Berulin Senso*, 117.
 - 22 Ibid., 58. A brief "Opinion of the German Population about Japan" reported in August 1942 analysing the positive, changing image of Japanese. Boberach, et al., *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945*, 4042–7.
 - 23 Ibid., 4042.
 - 24 From 1929 onwards the *DJG* was the successor organisation to the "Wadokukai" (和獨會) founded in 1888 which mostly dealt with developing friendly relations between Japanese and Germans. Like all other organisations of the Third Reich, it was subject to the Gleichschaltung since 1933.
 - 25 Haasch, *Die Deutsch-Japanischen Gesellschaften 1888–1996*, 137.
 - 26 Ibid., 172.
 - 27 16 September 1942 in Dresden (concert of the German Red Cross); 23 September 1942 in Bremen (concert of the German Red Cross); 4 October 1942 in Königsberg (concert of the *DJG*); 10 October 1942 in Stettin (concert of the *DJG*); 29 October 1942 in Berlin (concert of the *DJG*); 6 November 1942 in Ludwigshafen (concert of the *DJG* / IG Farben); 13 November 1942 in Strasbourg

- (concert of the German Red Cross); 20 November 1942 in Brussels (concert of the DJG); 14 December 1942 in Kattowitz (concert of the DJG / Axis powers). BA R64IV/81, 41, 48–51, 71–7.
- 28 Letter from Trömel to Gau Bayreuth on 16 July 1942 (BA R64IV/81, 161).
 - 29 BA R64IV/81, 148.
 - 30 Concert tours had to be authorised by the Ministry for Propaganda (BA R64IV/81, 88).
 - 31 July 1941 “Special Concert” with singer Tanaka Michiko at the Berlin Broadcast Tower; March 1942 in Vienna with Emil von Sauer (soloist) and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (Richard Strauss’ *Japanische Festmusik* and Ahn’s *Etenraku* were among the works performed); April 1942 German–Japanese concert in Hannover (Ahn’s *Etenraku* was among the works performed); September 1942 in Berlin, tenth anniversary of the Manchukuo founding (Ahn’s Symphonic Phantasy *Mandschoukuo* and *Etenraku*); February 1943 in Vienna with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (Ahn’s *Mandschoukuo*); April 1943 in Hamburg (*Etenraku* and other works); August 1943 with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (*Etenraku* and other works). BA R64IV/209, 2–4, 40; BA R64IV/210, 18; BA R64IV/179, 299.
 - 32 <http://www.historisches-tonarchiv.de/wochen-schauen.htm>
 - 33 On one hand, according to Korean academic Choi Soemion (崔書勉), who met Ahn in 1955, it was because of Ahn’s musical talent that it was him who was entrusted with the commission to compose the piece for the concert (Interview with Choi, 21 May 2013 in Seoul). On the other hand, it seems that Richard Strauss, who had not enjoyed composing the *Japanische Festmusik* (Trenner, *Richard Strauss Chronik*, 601), did not want to undertake this commission, and thus Ahn might have been recommended to compose the music for *Manschoukuo* instead.
 - 34 In Strauss Family archive in Garmisch-Patenkirchen (Germany) there are four letters from Ehara Koichi and over fifty from Ahn, providing information about the relationship between Strauss and Ahn.
 - 35 BA R64IV/180, 340.
 - 36 Letter from Gerhard von Westermann to the DJG Berlin dated 3 May 1943 (BA R64IV/81, 27).
 - 37 BA R64IV/81, 87.
 - 38 Dower, *Wearing Propaganda*, 268. Thanks to Olivia Milburn for pointing me to this book.
 - 39 Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, 434.
 - 40 Jansen, *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, 75.
 - 41 Hobbsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1–14; Dower, *Wearing Propaganda*, 267.
 - 42 Vlastos, *Mirror of Modernity*, 2.
 - 43 Isawa Shuji (1851–1917), the most significant person in promoting “national music” and an ardent Westerniser, adopted this term from America, but did not define what “national music” meant exactly. Okunaka, *Kkoka to Ongaku*, 85–7; Takenaka, “Isawa Shuji’s ‘National Music’”, 113.
 - 44 *Etenraku* was arranged for Western orchestra originally by Hidemaro as well as his brother Naomaro (1900–1932) around 1930. There are few differences between Naomaro’s and Hidemaro’s versions. Kumazawa Sayako, “Konoe Naomaro, Hidemaro ni yoru Etenraku,” 15–29. This essay deals only with Hidemaro’s version.
 - 45 In this case also it could be said that “tradition is a modern trope, a prescriptive representation of socially desirable institutions and ideas thought to have been handed down from generation to generation.” Vlastos, *Mirror of Modernity*, 3.
 - 46 Kumazawa, “Konoe Naomaro Hidemaro ni yoru Etenraku,” 24–6.
 - 47 Ibid., 23.
 - 48 Lehmann, “Weltgeltung der deutschen Musik.”
 - 49 Weber, “Ein japanischer Dirigent in Wiesbaden.”
 - 50 Hitler still hoped in 1944 that Japan would attack the Soviets. Boberach, *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945*, 6567.
 - 51 Concert programme of the Wiener-Symphoniker. Thanks to Klaus Dittrich for the translation.
 - 52 It is quite remarkable that Ahn chose to compose a piece with the same Japanese title. According to the Berlin concert programme of 1943, Ahn composed his *Etenraku* in 1938 in Rome.
 - 53 As Soviet critics misinterpreted the work as French inspired, it was necessary to always provide a detailed description when performing it abroad. Ōno Kaoru, *Konoe Hidemaro*, 211.
 - 54 Although the scores of Ahn’s *Etenraku* are still undiscovered, it is believed that his work *Gangchonsungak* (降天聲樂), whose title can mean “Music from Heaven,” is the

- Korean version of *Etenraku*. This composition appears suddenly in Ahn's repertoire after the war, while *Etenraku* disappears at the same time. It is the same melody, and the description of the composition is also similar.
- 55 Konoye's *Etenraku* was recorded in November 1934 under the baton of the chief conductor Leopold Stokowski in Philadelphia; at this time, Ahn was Assistant conductor of the Philadelphia Symphony Club. The same piece was performed again in February 1937 by the Philadelphia orchestra with the same conductor, while Ahn was a master student at the Temple University (school of music) in Philadelphia (he graduated with a Master's degree in June 1937), so Ahn in all probability encountered Konoye's *Etenraku*.
 - 56 Konoye altered the ending phrase, in order to adjust it to the musical taste of European audiences. Kumazawa, "Konoe Naomaro, Hidemaro ni yoru Etenraku," 15.
 - 57 Concert programme of the Berliner Philharmoniker.
 - 58 "Ekitai Ahn japan karmester hangversenye a Pesti Vigadoban."
 - 59 Yamazaki, *Yuasa Toshiko Pariniikite*, 96. Thanks to Jun Yoshihara (吉原潤) for pointing me to this diary and to Jonathan Service for the translation.
 - 60 BA R 64 IV/81, 124.
 - 61 Kumazawa, "Konoe Naomaro, Hidemaro ni yoru Etenraku," 22–3.
 - 62 Skorzeny, "Deutsch-Japanisches Konzert."
 - 63 "Ekitai Ahn japan karmester hangversenye a Pesti Vigadoban." Although a European audience might have associated traditional images such "sakura" and "kimono" with Japan, this music must have presented Japan as a modern nation with a long tradition, a synthesis of tradition and modern elements. In programmes of the concerts which mentioned his symphonic piece *Etenraku* without exception stressed the old origin of the piece. Meseke, "Japanischer Gastdirigent in Hannover"; Skorzeny, "Deutsch-Japanisches Konzert"; Concert programme of Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The extract in the Hungarian Film Archive clearly shows that his music develops progressively up to a climax.
 - 64 Cf. Skorzeny, "Deutsch-Japanisches Konzert"; Meseke, "Japanischer Gastdirigent in Hannover."
 - 65 "Das Sonnenbanner im Kurhaus Saal"; Weber, "Ein japanischer Dirigent in Wiesbaden." On the other hand there were, as far as I know, always positive critics of Ahn's concert. Cf. Meseke, "Japanischer Gastdirigent in Hannover."
 - 66 Buntrock, "Without Modernity," 1.
 - 67 This is a view confirmed by the thoroughly Western form of the National Anthem (G major) that he composed for the postwar Korean state.
 - 68 Dower, *Wearing Propaganda*, 268–72. There is a chapter about tradition and modernity related to Kimono design which is suggestive for the case of *Etenraku*.
 - 69 Cf. Diary of Joseph Goebbels dated 22 November 1939; 9 January 1940; 17 April 1940; 20 June 1940; 5 October 1940.
 - 70 A document of the Radio Barcelona Broadcasting indicates Ahn conducted his *Etenraku* in the Gran Teatro del Liceo in Barcelona in 15 March 1946. This is the latest evidence as far as I know. In contrast to Ahn's *Etenraku*, Konoye's version is still today playing as old Japanese music. Cf. Programa de Radio-Barcelona.
 - 71 Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich*, 94.
 - 72 In 1942–3 Konoye donated 35.000 Reichsmark to the German Red Cross (BA R64IV/27, 129). Ahn was paid 500 Reichsmark for conducting. (BA R64IV/209, 50).
 - 73 Skorzeny, "Deutsch-Japanisches Konzert."
 - 74 A letter from the concert organisers underlines that the success of Ahn's concert owed much to the propaganda office (BA R 64 IV/180, 213).
 - 75 Ministervorlage 14 / X / 44 Quelle BA R55 / 20626, 117. Joseph Goebbels appreciated Suwa Nejiko and gave her a Stradivarius as a present (Haasch, *Die Deutsch-Japanischen Gesellschaften 1888–1996*, 270). After the war Suwa played in the prison for war criminals in Tokyo. Surprisingly the name of Tanaka Michiko who still gave concerts in Stuttgart and Hannover in March and April 1943 is missing in the decree (BA R64IV / 182, 98, 117). Recent research about her violin: Carla Shapreau, "A Violin once owned by Goebbels keeps its secrets."
 - 76 Konoye, "Ani Hidemaro no Shi no Kageni," 84.
 - 77 Kim, *An Ik-tae*, 206.
 - 78 Ibid., 200.
 - 79 Lee, *Ilōbōrin Sigan 1938–1944*.
 - 80 Tokunaga, *Budapesto Niki*, 260.
 - 81 Ibid.; Ōno Kaoru, *Konoe Hidemaro*, 299, 322; Kumazawa, "Konoe Naomaro, Hidemaro ni yoru Etenraku," 27.
 - 82 Manfred Gurlitt's letter to Konoye on 4 April

1938. Also Konoye recommended the Jewish musician Joseph Rosenstock as a chief conductor for the Japanese New Symphonic Orchestra in Tokyo.
- 83 Ōno Kaoru, *Konoe Hidemaro*, 322.
- 84 It is not known to which event these “terrorist attacks” referred to (BA R64IV/81, 167).
- 85 Nomura, et al., “Gakudan no Genzou wo Ugoku,” 1–2; Choki, *Sengo no Ongaku, Geisutzuongaku no Politics to Poetics*, 18.
- 86 Kuni, *Berulin Senso*, 57.
- 87 In a letter of April 1943, the influential Nazi culture officer Hans Hinkel (Ministrialdirektor mit Zuständigkeit für die RKK) wanted to organise a concert with Konoye and the Großes Berliner Rundfunkorchester in order to broadcast it in a programme for soldiers (BA R64IV/81, 31–2).
- 88 Pekar, *Flucht und Rettung*, 11–26; Klaus Pringsheim, for example, composed the militaristic “Koa March” (興亞行進曲) and the propagandistic piece “Yamada Nagamasa” (山田長政). During the war Yamada served as a symbol for the conquest of Southeast Asia. Hayasaki, *Berurin Tōkyō Monogatari*, 214–6. Pringsheim’s scores and documents are stored at Archives and Research Collections McMaster University library, Canada. Thanks to Honda Osamu (本田修) for this information.