

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Samurai culture twisted: bushido, shinto and war crimes

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***SAMURAI CULTURE TWISTED:  
BUSHIDO, SHINTO AND WAR CRIMES***

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**M. Phil. Thesis**

**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

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***Samurai Culture Twisted: Bushido, Shinto and War Crimes***

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Master of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This thesis deals with the changes of *Bushido* and *Shinto*, and how the “corrupted” *Bushido* and extremist State *Shinto* influenced war crimes in WWII. This topic has long been given insufficient attention in the field’s literature. Moreover, most of the studies which deal with *Bushido* and *Shinto* focus on their traditional role or their role in WWII, thus, they seldom talk about the changes of *Bushido* and *Shinto* from their proper, traditional period to their extremist forms in WWII and their relation to war crimes. This thesis will employ the famous book of Dr. Inazo Nitobe on *Bushido* and other primary sources, such as The Tokyo Trials and Hagakure to explore these important issues.

These two fundamental elements of traditional Japanese culture — *Bushido* and *Shinto* — continue to have great influence today. Historically, all Japanese have been seriously influenced by them. Japanese feel a great pride in their culture and they feel pride in *Bushido* and *Shinto* because they were indigenous to their culture. However, this presentation argues that both *Bushido* and *Shinto* were significantly altered in the period between the *Meiji* Restoration and the Second World War. This was done, in part, to consolidate the position of the emperor. Under the influence of the militarists and extreme *Shintoists*, the traditional concepts of both of these foundation elements of traditional Japanese culture were changed into far more extremist forms. In the period after the *Meiji* Restoration, both of them became important factors in the origins of the Second World War and helped lead to many crimes during the entire war.

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