



In its series of public lectures, the German Institute for Japanese Studies will present on

Thursday, 27 May 2004

**Dr Brian Victoria
The University of Adelaide**

The Role of Religion in World War II – As seen in Germany, Japan and the US

In the aftermath of 9/11 there is a tendency to regard 'holy war' as unique to Islamic fundamentalism, a throwback to a medieval mentality. This viewpoint is problematic in that by positing 'holy war' within the Islamic tradition, the adherents of the other great world religions are freed from examining their own past fervent support for warfare in its various guises. The historical reality is that religion-endorsed violence has existed, at one time or another, in all of the world major faiths.

One relatively unstudied example of this phenomenon is the fervent, if not fanatical, support given by political and clerical leaders of Germany, Japan and the U.S. for the world wars they fought in the 20th century, most especially W.W.II. If by 'holy war' we mean warfare that is fervently endorsed by the ecclesiastical hierarchies of the participants, W.W.II itself can rightfully be identified as such a war. In the case of Japan, it was in fact commonplace to refer to the Japanese war effort as a *seisen* or 'holy war'. In addition, Adolf Hitler is famously known for his comment in *Mein Kampf* that "In resisting the Jew, I am fighting the Lord's battle." And further, on July 30, 1941, Pope Pius XII opined that "Hitler's war is a noble enterprise in the defense of European culture."

While many in the West, as well as Japan, would like to believe that, thanks to the doctrine of the separation of church and state, they have freed themselves from medieval 'religious fanaticism', this paper will suggest that religion-endorsed warfare is as close as W.W. II, if not closer.

Brian Daizen Victoria is Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Adelaide and currently Visiting Professor in Buddhist Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In addition to his recent book, *Zen War Stories* (Routledge Curzon, 2003), his major writings include the 1997 book *Zen At War*, an autobiographical work in Japanese entitled *Gajjin de ari, Zen bozu de ari* [As a Foreigner, As a Zen Priest], published by San-ichi Shobo in 1971; *Zen Master Dōgen*, coauthored with Prof. Yokoi Yūhō of Aichi-Gakuin University (Weatherhill, 1976); and a translation of *The Zen Life* by Sato Koji (Weatherhill, 1972).

The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on **Thursday, 27 May 2004 at 6.30 p.m.** at the DIJ. Admission is free, but please register by May 25 with Ms. Dinkel at the DIJ.