

Development of the Image of the Warrior during the Heisei Era

Synopsis: Film plays a role in shaping our perspective on history. Films contribute to the creation of a collective memory and shape national perceptions and self-image. The lecture examines the change in the way the Japanese portrayed the Japanese warrior during World War II, by screening short sections of selected war films, made in Japan in the Showa era in the two decades after the end of World War II, compared to films made during the Heisei period of the 21st century.

The attitude toward death and suicide, the acceptance of defeat, the loyalty to orders and the emperor, the attitude of the occupying Japanese soldier to the locals, remained complex and controversial issues in Japanese society and therefore in the way they are portrayed in films. Alongside them is the narrative of the "good defeat" that created today's prosperous and peace-loving Japan. In contrast, in the films of the 21st century, the Japanese soldier portrayed as professional, disciplined and generally "more hero" than in the early films. In addition, without compromising his image, he is more compassionate and a person connected to Japanese tradition.

This image corresponds to the attitude and political arguments toward the Japanese Army at the 21st century. "Healthy nationalism" (kenzen na shonarizumu) supported by political conservatives, those who want Japan to finally return to being "a normal nation" (futsu no kuni), meaning that there are no restrictions on its military power. The Army itself is a strong army, with pride, loyal to the pacifist constitution but requires be recognized and respected as a professional army in its own country and in neighbor countries.

About the Lecturer: Boaz Hadashi is an MA graduate of the Asian Studies at the University of Haifa. A tour guide to East Asia.