

# Translating Transculturality: Mediation of Identity in John Rabe's Diaries

*Traduciendo la transculturalidad: mediación de la identidad en los diarios de John Rabe*

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**Abstract:** Along with people's movement and technology, local and foreign components in language and culture become interconnected. Hence translation and cultural studies need approaches, beyond the national, to fuzzy linguistic and cultural forms. One such case originates from the Nanking Massacre, which occurred in the East Asian theatre of WWII. John Rabe, a businessman from Hamburg and a foreign resident in Nanking, was elected by the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone to be its chairman. His humanitarian efforts eventually won him a special cultural identity, «the Living Buddha». This article focuses on mediation of identity. It presents «translating

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transculturality» as a new research approach, and applies it to the mediatedness related to Rabe's identity in his diaries and their revised, edited and translated versions.

**Key words:** translating transculturality; mediation; identity; John Rabe's diaries; WWII.

**Resumen:** Traducir la Transculturalidad: Mediación de Identidad en los Diarios de John Rabe. Junto con la migración, los componentes locales y extranjeros en el idioma y la cultura se interconectan. Por lo tanto, la traducción y los estudios culturales necesitan que se desarrollen nuevos enfoques encaminados hacia formas lingüísticas y culturales difusas que vayan más allá de lo nacional. Uno de estos casos se origina en la masacre de Nanking, que tuvo lugar en el teatro de Asia Oriental durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. John Rabe, un hombre de negocios de Hamburgo y residente extranjero en Nanking, fue elegido como presidente por el Comité Internacional para la Zona de Seguridad de Nanking. Podía proteger a los civiles chinos de las atrocidades japonesas, ya que el Japón imperial tenía una relación más estrecha con la Alemania nazi que con el bando de los Aliados. Finalmente, todos sus esfuerzos humanitarios le reconocieron una especial identidad cultural, «el Buda viviente». Este artículo se centra en la mediación de la identidad. Presenta «traducir la transculturalidad» como un nuevo enfoque de investigación y lo aplica a la mediación, relacionada con la identidad de Rabe en sus diarios y sus versiones revisadas, editadas y traducidas.

**Palabras clave:** traducir la transculturalidad; mediación; identidad, los diarios de John Rabe; la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the East Asian theatre of World War II, the growing tensions caused by Japan's imperial expansion in China led to a full-scale war between the two countries from 1937 to 1945. On 7 July 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident broke out in Beijing, which has been widely considered the start of the war. After Shanghai fell in November 1937, the Japanese troops marched to Nanking, then the capital city of China. In occupied Nanking, they perpetrated an «uninterrupted spree of murder, rape and robbery» (Mitter 2013, 130) from December 1937 to January 1938, which is now commonly known as the Nanking Massacre or the Rape of Nanking. After its absence from collective memory during the 1950s and 60s, the Massacre reemerged in public consciousness in the 1970s, because of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972; since then it has «become the center of a public controversy in Japan» (Yang 1999, 844-846). While progressives make effort to bring to light the history of Japan's imperial expansion in Asia, revisionists seek to whitewash its wartime past, viewing the war as «a sacred crusade, fought for the benefit of Asia» (Yoshida 2006, 51). Among them, some have published books to openly deny the Nanking Massacre (Yang 1999, 844-845). In China, these denying voices have been reported by the media and evoked academic and nonacademic reactions, such as

publishing historical overviews of the Nanking atrocities, releasing historical documents and establishing a memorial in Nanking (ibid., 847). With the passage of time, this traumatic event has become «a national wound for the Chinese» (Shen 2011, 662), being added to a broader narrative frame of the «national humiliation» and falling into political, ideological instrumentalisation (Li and Huang 2017, 128). Today it has become an example frequently used in discussion about East Asia's ruptured histories of WWII (see, for example, Jager and Mitter 2007 and Saito 2017).

The Nanking Safety Zone, which was established to protect the noncombatants in occupied Nanking, offers suitable cases for research on the Massacre that explores new perspectives – other than the nation-oriented ones – on the event, since in this area the Chinese civilians and disarmed soldiers, Japanese ambassadors and soldiers and a handful of foreign residents from Europe and the U.S. all shared the same social space at the time. One such case is the story of John Rabe (1882-1950), a Hamburg businessman who lived in China for thirty years. He first went to Beijing in 1908, and joined the city's Siemens branch in 1911. He became the director of the Siemens branch in Nanking in 1931 and a member of the NSDAP in 1934. Before the Japanese military occupation of Nanking, Rabe was elected chairman of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone, which was in the central area of the city. In this 3.86 square kilometres area, more than two hundred thousand Chinese civilians were protected. Rabe's humanitarian efforts won him a special cultural identity, «the Living Buddha». He was called back to Germany in 1938. In addition to revealing the Nanking atrocities to residents in Berlin after his return, Rabe also sent a report to Hitler, which caused him to be arrested by the Gestapo. He was eventually released, but forbidden to talk about the Nanking Massacre to the public. After the collapse of the Nazi regime, Rabe petitioned for de-Nazification twice. On 7 June 1946, his second petition was approved by the Denazification Commission for the British Sector based on his successful humanitarian efforts in China. He lived in Berlin until his death in 1950.

John Rabe's diaries remained unknown to world society until 1996, when Iris Chang discovered them during her writing of *The Rape of Nanking* (1997), an English nonfictional book on the Massacre that made the event widely known in the U.S. What first attracted Chang to Rabe was the irony of «a kind-hearted Nazi working with American missionaries to save Chinese refugees from Japanese soldiers» (Chang 1997, 188). The original Nanking diary, *Feindliche Flieger über Nanking* (Enemy Planes over Nanking), was written in Nanking between 1937 and 1938. Rabe revised his original Nanking diary in Berlin in 1941 and 1942, and turned it into the two-volume diary, «Bomben über Nanking: Das Tagebuch eines Lebenden Buddha» (Bombs over Nanking: The diary of a Living Buddha). John Rabe's Berlin diary started in 1945 and ended in 1946, recording the life of his family in postwar Germany. As Rabe's Nanking diary contains «newspaper clips, letters, telegrams, minutes of Safety Zone Committee meetings, and a list of more than 400 cases of atrocities by the Japanese military»

(Wickert 2000, 254), its discovery contributed to further historical studies of the subject. The diary was made public first by the American, rather than the Chinese or German media. Mirroring Iris Chang's initial reaction, American media coverage also highlighted the seemingly paradox in Rabe's identity, as a headline in *The New York Times* indicated: «At the Rape of Nanking: A Nazi Who Saved Lives» (Chen 1996). In the following year, the Chinese translation of Rabe's revised Nanking diary and the German edition of his revised Nanking diary and Berlin diary were published. The English translation of the German edition was published in the U.S. in 1998 and in the U.K. in 1999.

The current article focuses on mediation of Rabe's identity in his Nanking diary, Berlin diary and their German edition and Chinese and English translations. It presents a new research approach, translating transculturality, to transcultural narratives and their revised, edited and translated versions. It will show with the John Rabe case that mediation of transcultural identity is selective and produces divergent reconstructions. The article will conclude with a discussion about the prospects and limits of research on transcultural narratives and their later versions with the research approach, translating transculturality.

## 2. TRANSLATING TRANSCULTURALITY: A RESEARCH APPROACH TO TRANSCULTURAL NARRATIVES OF THE PAST AND THEIR REVISED, EDITED AND TRANSLATED VERSIONS

Along with people's movement and technology, local and foreign components in language and culture become interconnected. Hence Wolfgang Welsch proposes the concept of transculturality to describe the puzzling form of cultures today (Welsch 1999). «In recent years, transculturality has emerged as a new approach to culture particularly suited to exploring the hybridity of individual and collective identities and the cultural "connections between things" in an increasingly globalized world» (Doff and Schulze-Engler 2011, 3).

History is human knowledge of the past. In Martha Cheung's discussion about knowledge in the humanities, she argues that knowledge is mediated by nature:

It is widely admitted today that knowledge in the humanities is not disinterested or impersonal but situated. In both the processing and the production of knowledge, a researcher is acted upon by contextual pressures, influenced by prevailing intellectual trends, anchored in tradition or torn between traditions, and shaped by his/her own training, by ideology and societal prejudice (2012, 156).

Drawing on Martha Cheung's conception of mediation in the humanities, the current article attempts to point out that the mediatedness in translated history should

not be underestimated, because translated history is the consequence of, at least, dual mediation, i.e. mediation in the source text and mediation in the translated text, let alone the possibility that the source text is in itself a translated work.

Translating transculturality is a research approach to mediation in transcultural narratives of the past and their revised, edited and translated versions. The approach bases research on temporality and locality, putting a transcultural narrative and its later versions back in the time and context of their production. John Rabe's decision to stay in Nanking resulted in a special transcultural formation of his identity, in the sense that his national, political and special cultural identities were interconnected in occupied Nanking. There are three types of mediation of his identity that occurred over time and across context and were reflected in the text and its paratexts (Genette 1997). They include:

**Socio-cultural mediation**, which took place in occupied Nanking between 1937 and 1938. It refers to the meaning making of Rabe's national, political and special cultural identities in the original socio-cultural context;

**Self mediation**, which occurred in Berlin between 1941 and 1942. After being released by the Gestapo, Rabe self-mediated his identity in his revision of the original Nanking diary;

**Translation-editorial mediation**, which took place in China, Germany and the U.S. in the late 1990s. Rabe's national, political and special cultural identities were selectively mediated in Chinese, German and American contexts six decades after the occurrence of the event, in accordance with their respective translation-editorial purposes at the time.

### 3. SELECTIVE MEDIATION OF RABE'S IDENTITY IN HIS DIARIES AND THEIR REVISED, EDITED AND TRANSLATED VERSIONS

#### 3.1. *Socio-cultural mediation (Nanking, 1937-1938): Transcultural formation and meaning making of Rabe's identity in Feindliche Flieger über Nanking*

Before the military occupation of Nanking, John Rabe's national identity served as a socio-cultural background against which his regional and professional identities were formed. Rabe was from Hamburg. While his regional identity as a Hamburger was mentioned from time to time, it was more often combined with his professional identity, a businessman working for Siemens. Rabe was a reputable Hamburg businessman in Nanking. In the explanation for his decision to stay in the city in the diary entry for 21 September 1937, Rabe wrote that «*aber – es gibt da einen moralischen Punkt, über den*

*ich als ehrbarer hamburger (sic!) Kaufmann bis jetzt nicht hinwegspringen konnte» («but there is a moral point that I, as a reputable Hamburg businessman, cannot step over up to now»)* (Rabe 1937/38, vol. 1, 40). He pointed out that the Chinese employees of Siemens and the Chinese servants in his residence regarded him as their role model. If he remained in his position, they would do the same and stay with him to the end. But if he left, they would become unemployed. An immediate problem they would face was where to go, as war was expanding in China. In such a situation, Rabe became their hope to survive. The trust they gave to Rabe touched him and made it even harder for him to disappoint them. Rabe's identity of a reputable Hamburg businessman carried a moral sense of responsibility.

John Rabe's national identity was interconnected with his political identity, after he had agreed to be chairman of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. Rabe recorded in his diary entry for 22 November 1937 that in the meeting of the International Committee he was elected to be its chairman (Rabe 2017, vol. 2, 198). In order to get permission from the Japanese authorities to create a neutral zone for noncombatants in Nanking, Rabe resorted to asking help from Hitler. On 25 November 1937, Rabe telegraphed Hitler via the German general consulate in Shanghai, asking for Hitler's intercession with the Japanese government to grant permission for the establishment of a neutral zone in Nanking for noncombatants. In the telegraph Rabe wrote: *«da andernfalls, bei bevorstehendem Kampf um Nanking, das Leben von über zweihundert tausend Menschen gefährdet»* (otherwise, in the upcoming battle for Nanking, the lives of over two hundred thousand people will be endangered) (ibid., 217).

Foreign residents in Nanking used their national flag to secure safety, in particular to protect them and their properties from air raids. Against this background, the national flag of Nazi Germany was also used. In the evening of 12 December 1937, as Chinese and Japanese troops were in fierce battle, a growing number of Chinese civilians wanted to take shelter in Rabe's residence. Rabe only let in women and children in the beginning, but eventually everyone, as he could no longer endure the wailing of the people outside. In Rabe's diary entry of the day, he recorded that the noises of grenades and bombs grew more and more intensive and came closer, and the entire horizon in the South became a sea of flames (Rabe 2017, vol. 3, 123). A few of the civilians hid themselves under the German flag, which Rabe and the servants had stretched out earlier in case of air strikes. After Nanking was occupied, the national flag of Nazi Germany continued its protective function. On 14 December 1937, Rabe wrote in his diary that when Japanese soldiers entered his residence to rob possessions, he always managed to ask them to leave, by showing them his swastika armband (ibid., 156). On 29 January 1938, Rabe learned from the German embassy that they had received from the Japanese authorities a letter, which informed them that all the refugee camps must be closed down on 4 February 1938 (Rabe 2017, vol. 5, 149). On Chinese New Year's day, Rabe could not feel happy in front of his new year present, because 4 February

was approaching. He wrote in his diary of the day: «*Ich hoffe aber noch immer, dass ich, auf meine deutsche Flagge verweisend, das Schlimmste verhüten kann*» («but I still hope that by pointing to my German flag I can prevent the worst») (ibid., 168).

Doing his duty for the Safety Zone in an extraordinary way, Rabe received genuine appreciation from other foreign residents. For instance, Minnie Vautrin, an American missionary who protected women and children at Ginling Women's College, wrote on 21 February 1938 in her diary:

At 4 p.m. attended the farewell reception to Mr. John Rabe held at 5 Ninghai. [...] Much genuine appreciation was shown for Mr. Rabe and the unselfish way in which he has given himself to the poor of Nanking. Searle expressed for the other members of the committee their appreciation, and a statement signed by all members of the committee was given to him, to the German Embassy, and the Siemens Co. He is an exceptional type of business man—one who unconsciously wins friends for his country. (199).

Dr. Robert Wilson, an American surgeon who operated for free at the Hospital of Nanking University, praised Rabe in a letter to his family, even though Wilson was «thoroughly repulsed by Nazism» (Chang 1997, 121). «He is well up in Nazi circles and after coming into such close contact with him as we have for the past few weeks and discover[ing] what a splendid man he is and what a tremendous heart he has, it is hard to reconcile his personality with his adulation of “Der Fuhrer” (sic!)» (Wilson as cited in Chang 1997, 121).

At the same time, Rabe was also highly appreciated by the local residents. Minnie Vautrin recorded such a scene about Rabe in her diary entry for 17 February 1938:

Mrs. Tsen had heard that our women refugees wanted to see Mr. Rabe and implore him to stay. We were not prepared for the sight that met our gaze when we arrived in front of Science Building. Between 2 and 3 thousand women were there and as Mr. Rabe approached them they all knelt and began to weep and implore. He spoke a few words and then Mary got him away by a back pat. (196).

In his own residence alone, Rabe protected more than 600 Chinese civilians. On Chinese New Year's Day, 31 January 1938, these civilians wrote him a Chinese letter of gratitude on a red silk banner to express their gratitude for his protection. Rabe added the original Chinese letter and an English translation right below it to his diary entry of the day. The Chinese letter starts with «*济难扶危，佛心侠骨*» («[You] have saved people from hardship and danger, [You have] the heart of Buddha and the bones of an ancient Chinese folk hero»).

It seems that mediation of Rabe's special cultural identity occurred as early as in the original socio-cultural context. The English translation of the Chinese letter begins: «With a heart of Buddha and chivalrous spirit, he saved thousands of the

poor in their distress» (ibid., 167). Despite the change of meaning, both the original letter and its English translation in Rabe's diary use «a heart of Buddha», which is a metaphor that praises the kindheartedness of a person. But Rabe somehow thought he was regarded as a Living Buddha, considering how he responded to the letter: «*Was doch alles aus mir geworden ist? [...] schon macht man mich zum Lebenden Buddha für tausende von armen Leuten!*» («What had become of me? [...] man has already made me the Living Buddha for thousands of poor people!») (Rabe 2017, vol. 5, 167-168). In contrast to «a heart of Buddha», «the Living Buddha» almost suggests a Buddha incarnate in the secular world, which is not what the Chinese letter and its English translation expressed.

### 3.2. Self mediation (Berlin, 1941-1942): Re-meaning making of his own identity in «*Bomben über Nanking: Das Tagebuch eines Lebenden Buddha*»

All of John Rabe's national, political and special cultural identities were mediated in his revised Nanking diary. Rabe's self mediation of his national identity revealed more about his individual characteristics, that Rabe was after all an ordinary person. He was a product of his time and social milieu, carrying their traces in his words and deeds. John Rabe's revised Nanking diary starts with his summer holiday with his wife in Beidaihe, a popular beach resort in North China. Leaving his wife in late August, Rabe traveled back to Nanking alone by train and ship. He stopped in Yantai, Qingdao and Jinan, where he stayed with the local German communities. Since Rabe had the habit to keep a diary, it remains a question of whether his description of the summer holiday was taken from his other diaries or from his memory. Writing about his trip back to Nanking, Rabe offered a glimpse of the life of German citizens in China at the time. While Rabe was in Yantai, due to his diabetes he wanted to purchase enough insulin and bring it back to Nanking for future use. His friend, Mr. Busse, walked with him in the entire city and emptied the pharmacies and drugstores of insulin. As Busse was commissioned to sell insulin, he then took Rabe to his godown and sold him more at the regular price. But on the following day, Busse made much profit from selling insulin to the pharmacies and drugstores as they all needed to refill their empty shelves. Qingdao was a former German colony. There Rabe visited Mr. Schlichtiger: «*Ich wanderte mit ihm über Berg und Tal, um alle die einst deutsch gewesenen Stätten noch einmal wiederzusehen*» («I hiked with him over mountains and valleys, in order to see all the former German sites once again»). Did Rabe hold a colonial gaze at Qingdao, regretting the «loss of German territory»? Or did he just want to see the sites as they were related to his home country? Or did he reflect on the negative effects of colonialism? These questions remained unanswered in the revised Nanking diary. In Jinan, Rabe stayed



overnight in a German hotel, which was famous for its sausages. In addition to the German communities Rabe stayed with during his trip, he also mentioned the refugees in Yantai and the flood-stricken civilians in Jinan, whom he saw while he was there. Even though the German communities provided Rabe a relatively safe and comfortable environment along his trip, the poor and homeless life of the local that he occasionally mentioned still suggested that war was around him.

In addition to Rabe's sense of responsibility for the Chinese employees and servants that was attached to his regional and professional identities in the original Nanking diary, the revised Nanking diary suggests that Rabe also tried to remain tough in front of others. Nanking was occupied on 13 December 1937. Right after, atrocities were perpetrated in the city. In peaceful time, rarely would Rabe spend time on poetry, as to him it was too «weiblich» (feminine) to match his identity of a reputable Hamburg businessman, which Rabe recalled in his diary entry for 14 December 1937. But in occupied Nanking where war presented itself in the way of looting, raping and killing, Rabe turned to poetry to make sense of what was happening around him. In particular, he repeatedly read a poem named «Leben» (Life), as when life is in constant danger, its solemnity expressed in poetry can be better sensed ever. Rabe did not want others to discover his sentimental aspect. Therefore, he looked around before reading, to make sure that he would not be caught by anyone. Rabe's identity as a Hamburg businessman was affiliated to his German identity, but the way he perceived and performed his regional and professional identities revealed more about his individual characteristics, such as his sense of responsibility for the Chinese employees of Siemens and the Chinese servants in his residence as well as his attitude towards poetry.

Rabe's positive view of the NSDAP was overturned after his return to Germany. The encounter with the Gestapo pressed Rabe not only to confront the nature of Nazism, but also to comprise on his previous humanitarian standards. In the Foreword of the revised Nanking diary Rabe added: «*Sollte die Veröffentlichung, die heute aus naheliegenden Gründen untersagt ist, doch eines Tages angebracht erscheinen, so ist dazu vorher die Erlaubnis der Deutschen Regierung einzuholen*» («Should the publication, which has been prohibited for obvious reasons today, seem appropriate one day, the permission of the German government must be obtained first»). The apparent compliance revealed the censorship Rabe faced and his intention of reworking it for publication.

As a result, he self-mediated his political identity. One such case is the belated revelation of the relevance of his NSDAP membership to his remaining in Nanking. In the original Nanking diary Rabe did not mention his party membership as one of the reasons for his decision to stay in Nanking. But in the revised version Rabe added to the diary entry for 21 September 1937 that his decision to stay in Nanking was subconsciously influenced by his status as an NSDAP member: «*Schliesslich gibt's – in meinem Unterbewusstsein – einen letzten und nicht den unwichtigsten Grund, der es mir selbstverständlich erscheinen lässt, dass ich hier durchhalte. Ich bin Parteigenosse*

der N.S.D.A.P.» («Finally, there is – in my subconsciousness – one last and not the least important reason, which makes it seem natural to me that I stick it out here. I am a party member of the N.S.D.A.P.»). Rabe continued and added his own understanding of the obligation of being a party member: «*Wir lassen den Arbeiter – den Armen – in der Not nicht im Stich!*» («We do not leave workers – the poor – in need in the lurch!»). Today it is no longer possible to be certain of Rabe's motive for this addition. He may have acted out of desire to protect himself, in the hope that his party affiliation would prevent the Gestapo from doubting his loyalty to the regime despite his open revelation and criticism of crimes against humanity.

Similarly, it is also impossible to be certain why Rabe highlighted his special cultural identity. Perhaps the respect and honour he had received in Nanking was too much in contrast to the treatment he endured in Berlin, which compelled him to emphasise his special cultural identity. He might hope that by telling people in Germany the story about «the Living Buddha», they could come to know his personality and previous humanitarian efforts. That is why he even added «a Living Buddha» to the subtitle of the revised Nanking diary. His description of his Chinese new year present, the Chinese letter of gratitude, in the original Nanking diary was brief. But in the revised Nanking diary, Rabe added more details and replaced the original Chinese letter and its English translation with a German translation in the diary entry for 31 January 1938. As the revision took place in 1941 and 1942, four to five years after Rabe had received the present, the newly added descriptions were literally Rabe's reconstruction of what had happened on Chinese New Year's Day in 1938, which reflected, to a certain extent, also Rabe's current interpretation of his past in Nanking.

One important description Rabe added was about the «translator», one of Rabe's Chinese guests. According to Rabe, this «translator» was «*ein höherer Beamter der früheren chinesischen Regierung – keiner meiner besonderen Freunde – aber ein Klassiker – ein Gelehrter*» («a senior official of the former Chinese government, not one of my special friends, but a person who can read classics, a scholar»). This senior official was among the Chinese guests who stood devoutly, according to Rabe, in front of the letter and translated it loudly into English: «You are the Living Buddha for hundred-thousand people». The direct comparison of Rabe to the Living Buddha sounded overly complimentary and aroused Rabe's interest in the specific meaning of the letter. Hence, he asked the senior official to translate the letter again and this time without flattering additions. As Rabe was aware of the future readers of the revised Nanking diary, i.e. German speakers, he provided only a German translation of the letter.

In the revised version of the diary entry for 31 January 1938, the German translation starts with «*Du hast das Herz eines Buddha und bist seines tapferen Geistes*» («You have the heart of a Buddha and share his bold spirit»). It is still the metaphor, «the heart of a Buddha», showing that Rabe's special cultural identity, «the Living Buddha», came into being in the oral translation-reception process from the Chinese guest to

Rabe. Either the guest rendered the letter as «You are the Living Buddha for hundred-thousand people», or this was how Rabe received the guest's oral translation. In any case, Rabe's special cultural identity, «the Living Buddha», came into shape in this process. A little bit too much it might be, but it is also a symbol that carries the weight of more than 600 lives that Rabe managed to save and protect in his own residence and the respect and appreciation that Rabe won from the Chinese refugees in the Nanking Safety Zone.

### 3.3. Translation-editorial mediation (the late 1990s): Divergent translation-editorial reconstructions of Rabe's identity

As Rabe had wished before his death, it was the revised Nanking diary, «Bombs over Nanking», that was selected for publication in the 1990s. Its Chinese translation, 拉贝日记 (Rabe's Diary), was published in 1997, earlier than the German edition and its English translation. The Publisher's Note, which is on a beginning page of *Rabe's Diary*, provides the Chinese readers an introduction to the source text:

1942年约翰·拉贝将1937年~1938年在南京所记日记《敌机飞临南京》整理成书稿《轰炸南京》。本书依据后者原稿翻译出版。(Rabe 1997a, n.p.)

Gloss translation:

In 1942 John Rabe revised the diary «Enemy Planes over Nanking», which had been written in Nanking between 1937 and 1938, into the typescript, «Bombs over Nanking». The current publication is a translation of the original typescript of the latter.

*Rabe's Diary* acknowledges to its Chinese readers that its source text is not the original diary that Rabe wrote during the Nanking Massacre, but the original typescript of its revised version that he worked out in Berlin in 1942. While the title of the original diary, «Enemy Planes over Nanking», is kept intact, only the main title of the revised diary, «Bombs over Nanking», is saved in the Publisher's Note. Rabe's emphasis of his special cultural identity in the subtitle, «Das Tagebuch eines Lebenden Buddha» («The diary of a Living Buddha»), is interrupted in the Chinese translation.

In the Publisher's Afterword, *Rabe's Diary* also reveals to its readers the general translation strategy and the translation motive:

我们组织南京大学、东南大学的7位德文教师，以忠实于原稿、对原文不做任何删改为基本通则[...]为世人研究侵华日军南京大屠杀暴行和拉贝其人提供真实可信的史料。(ibid. 719)

Gloss translation:

We organised seven lecturers in Germanic Studies, who are from Nanking University and Southeast University, [into the translation team]. Our fundamental and general principle is to be faithful and not to make any changes to the source text [...] in order to provide truthful and credible historical material for those who research on the Nanking atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese troops and on Rabe.

Designated to be a faithful translation of its source text, *Rabe's Diary* maintains Rabe's self-mediation of his identity in the revised diary, such as his visits to the local German communities along his trip from Beidaihe to Nanking, his NSDAP membership as a reason to stay in Nanking, his performance of a reputable and tough Hamburg businessman and the «translator» of the Chinese letter of gratitude. Rabe's self-mediation is transferred to the Chinese readership.

In addition, Rabe's identity was further mediated in the paratexts, which include a biography of John Rabe written by his friend and the editor of the German edition, Erwin Wickert, and the denazification judgement from the Denazification Commission for the British Sector. They are added to *Rabe's Diary* as appendices. In the biography, Erwin Wickert mentions that Rabe became interested in politics only when it was relevant to China, such as German trade with China and Germany's foreign policy in Asia (Wickert 1997a, 707). In addition, Rabe joined the NSDAP in 1934 for the purpose of getting access to teachers and funding from the Nazi party for the German school in Nanking, which was not intended for Rabe's own children (ibid.). His lack of accurate knowledge of Nazism was due to his physical distance from Germany. He made just three short visits to Germany during his thirty-years sojourn in China; his knowledge of what was happening in his home country was gained from newspapers he had subscribed to, but the German ones were mouthpieces of the Reich Propaganda Ministry (711-712). In the cultural aspect, Wickert points out that being long time away from home eventually separated Rabe from German culture. According to Wickert, Rabe was an «old China hand»: Rabe understood the Chinese way of thinking and was also able to think in the Chinese way; he can point out, Wickert wrote, the otherness of China and the Chinese; but it was difficult for him to settle again in his homeland, which already became alien to him (712). Wickert also wrote in the biography that Rabe was revered by the Chinese as a saint, but he did not point out whether it originated from Rabe's special cultural identity, «the Living Buddha» (708).

The second appendix, the denazification judgement from the Denazification Commission for the British Sector, is a text that deals in particular with Rabe's political identity in *Rabe's Dairy*. Similar to the biography, to get support from the German Reich for the German school in Nanking was the reason given in the judgement why Rabe joined the NSDAP in 1934 (Rabe 1997a, 717). Being mentioned in both the bibliography and the denazification judgement, to get teachers and funding from

the Nazi party for the German school in Nanking has been made the reason to the Chinese readership why Rabe joined the NSDAP.

*Rabe's Dairy* mediates Rabe's identity in the paratexts, but it does not make changes or add notes to their subjective and inaccurate aspects, which will be discussed soon. The paradox is that a faithful translation of the paratexts, out of the purpose of being faithful to history, actually helps to disseminate the unfaithful in them to history. Being faithful to history and being faithful to the source text are not the same. Being faithful to history actually requests translation to be unfaithful to the mediatedness in the source text.

The German edition, *John Rabe: Der gute Deutsche von Nanking* (John Rabe: The good German of Nanking), is a collection of excerpts from the revised Nanking diary and the Berlin diary. In «Zum Text» (A Note on the Text), which is on a beginning page of the German edition, its relation with the original and revised Nanking diaries and with the Berlin diary is introduced (Wickert 1997b, 22). «A Note on the Text» also tells the German readership how the excerpts were selected by the editor Erwin Wickert: «*In der Auswahl habe ich versucht, John Rabe in all seinen Facetten zu zeigen und habe auch wiedergegeben, was er heute vielleicht weggelassen hätte, weil seine Zeit jetzt schon in vieler Hinsicht nicht mehr verstanden wird*» («In the selection I tried to represent John Rabe in all his facets, and I also reproduced what he would perhaps have left out today, since his time is now in many ways no longer understandable») (ibid.). To a certain extent, the German edition is no longer a collection of Rabe's diaries alone, but the editor's reconstruction of Rabe's life, in particular, his life experience against the historical backgrounds of wartime China and postwar Germany. The editorial focus of the German edition was to represent as many facets of John Rabe as possible.

Not historical event-oriented, the editor deleted, for example, the «Notes on the present situation», which is a collaborative work in English carried out in occupied Nanking by the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. It lists more than four hundred cases of war crimes perpetrated during the Nanking Massacre, a critical component of the Chinese translation, *Rabe's Dairy*. Rabe translated the «Notes on the present situation» from English into German for the revised Nanking diary, indicating Rabe's personal wish that this diary would be published one day and henceforth the war crimes revealed to the German readership. Rabe's German translation of the «Notes on the present situation» embodies his silent resistance to the oppression of the Gestapo. It also suggests that Rabe did not lose «the heart of Buddha and the bones of an ancient Chinese folk hero» and that he did not betray his special cultural identity, hence its original symbolic meaning as well. Even though the «Notes» is not directly related to Rabe's identity, its deletion results in the partial decontextualisation of Rabe's national, political and special cultural identities in Berlin in 1941 and 1942.

As a consequence of switch of focus from a historical event to a life story, Rabe's identity was further reconstructed by editorial mediation. Rabe's description of his trip from Beidaihe to Nanking was left out. Hence the only glimpse of the local German

communities in Yantai, Qingdao and Jinan, is no longer available, and therewith also Rabe's ambiguous view on Qingdao. In contrast, Rabe's special cultural identity, «the Living Buddha», is highlighted in the German edition. Diary entries from 31 January 1938 to 5 February 1938 become a separate chapter, with «Der lebende Buddha» (The Living Buddha) being the chapter title, making the story of how Rabe became «the Living Buddha» easier to be found. It is also referred to on the inner back cover of the book: «Die Chinesen erklärten Rabe zum »Lebenden Buddha«» (The Chinese declared Rabe the «Living Buddha») (Rabe 1997b, n.p.). In consequence, the reconstruction of Rabe's identity generates a more positive and legendary image of Rabe.

Excerpts from Rabe's Berlin diary, which is not included in the Chinese translation, *Rabe's Diary*, reveal the constant difficulties Rabe faced due to the entanglements of meaning of his identities over time and across context. In postwar Berlin, Rabe's family suffered growing hunger, and he was haunted by accusations of becoming a Nazi from other residents. On 5 June 1945 Rabe recorded an accusation against him of having joined the party for personal advantage, which he disputed energetically (ibid., 329). Rabe explained to the accuser that one reason among others – simply «u.a.» («unter anderem» in German; «among others» in English) in his diary – was to get financial support from the German Reich for the German school in Nanking; in addition, the majority of German nationals abroad had joined the party for solidarity (ibid.). Even though «one reason among others» was mentioned very briefly, it shows that the German school in Nanking as the reason is a result of mediation as well.

After Rabe's initial petition to be de-Nazified was turned down on 18 April 1946, it was probably the moment Rabe saw his national, political and special cultural identities in the greatest conflict. In his 18 April 1946 diary entry, Rabe again invoked the letter of gratitude that «referred to» him as «the Living Buddha»:

*Wenn ich in China von irgendwelchen Greueln der Nazis gehört hätte, wäre ich doch nicht Pg. geworden, und wenn meine Einstellung als Deutscher mit den Ansichten der Ausländer in Nanking kollidiert hätte, würden die Engländer, Amerikaner, Dänen etc. in Nanking mich doch nicht zum Chairman des Internationalen Komitees der Nanking Sicherheitszone gewählt haben! In Nanking der „Lebende Buddha für Hunderttausende« und hier ein »Pariah« ein Outcast! (ibid., 340)*

Gloss translation:

If I had heard of any Nazi atrocities in China, I would not have become a party member! And if my views as a German collided with the views of the foreigners in Nanking, the English, Americans, Danes, etc. in Nanking would not have elected me to be Chairman of the International Committee of the Nanking Safety Zone! In Nanking the «Living Buddha for hundreds of thousands» and here a «Pariah» an Outcast!

The poignant contrast between the esteem he received in Nanking as a «Living Buddha» and his status as «a pariah, an outcast» in his own country mirrors the rupture caused by the rapid movement of events from prewar to postwar years and the dramatic change of socio-cultural contexts.

Last but not least, Wickert wrote for the German edition a foreword, a chapter between the Nanking and Berlin diaries and an afterword in order to represent the entire life of John Rabe to the German readership. The English translation of the German edition, *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe*, tends to leave out the parts of Wickert's editorial mediation that are less relevant to the Nanking Massacre or to John Rabe's life. The Afterword in the German edition contains five sections: «*Deutschland und China im Jahr 1937*» (Germany and China in the year of 1937), «*Hitler als Friedensengel?*» (Hitler as a peace angel?), «*War John Rabe ein Nazi?*» (Was John Rabe a Nazi?), «*Das Ungeheuer*» (The monster) and «*John Rabes letzte Jahre*» (John Rabe's last years). The English translation retains only the last part, «John Rabe's Last Years», which is directly relevant to Rabe's life. As a result, *The Good Man of Nanking* – an English translation of the German edition – is still a reconstruction of Rabe's life. But Wickert's editorial mediation is less introduced to the English readership. With the revised Nanking diary, other than the German edition, being its source text, the Chinese translation does not include the afterword written by Wickert.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: PROSPECTS AND LIMITS OF APPLYING «TRANSLATING TRANSCULTURALITY» TO RESEARCH ON TRANSCULTURAL NARRATIVES AND THEIR LATER VERSIONS

The John Rabe case may appear to be a particular one. But it pinpoints a phenomenon that is more common than specific in translation practices, but has not received an equal attention in translation studies. That is, because of people's movement and technology, more and more people become transculturally formed. A university student whose father is Australian and mother American can major in African Studies in Germany. A Japanese Christian can work in Brazil. A New Yorker can become transculturally formed even without living in another place. Such examples can never be exhausted. As a consequence, language and culture do not stay as fixed and their borders as clear-cut as the paradigms of the source and target languages and the source and target cultures have been suggesting. Translation is practiced as early as in the original writing of people who are transculturally formed. This is why translating transculturality is introduced to translation studies as a new research approach.

However, since transcultural formation of people in real life does not have a fixed pattern, depending on which components over the world will be interconnected, the approach of translating transculturality cannot provide a fixed method. Nonetheless,



the three types of mediation – socio-cultural, self and translation-editorial – provide three scenes where translation is practiced in a broader sense by people in transcultural formation. In each scene, the approach of translating transculturality puts the scholar in a dynamic and dialogic space. Being exposed to multiple, and sometimes even contradicting, collective frames for meaning making, the scholar is actively involved in reexamining and discovering the applicability of each of the frames to the transcultural case they study. Then they can reassemble them to create a multi-perspective method in accordance with the complexity of the transcultural case. Related to the transcultural formation of Rabe's identity and its mediation later on, the translating transculturality approach, in this dynamic and dialogic space, has disentangled the entanglements of meaning which are mostly likely to cause cultural misrepresentation and stereotypes, preparing the John Rabe case for further studies of the circumstances in which John Rabe, an ordinary person, was transformed into a humanitarian activist who would rather risk his own life to protect others than run away, and the circumstances in which the very same person was forced to compromise on his previous humanitarian standards and become silent. The approach of translating transculturality assigns the scholar an ethical task to facilitate communication beyond nation and history. In the John Rabe case in particular, it hopes to contribute to reconciliation in East Asia, for scholars and non-scholars to become aware of and reflect on how individuals have been shaped by their past and present social milieus, and to decide their own standpoint – what they must contest, what they can change and what they should hold on to – for a better future.

Last but not least, the translating transculturality approach has its own limits. The first is that it helps to reduce selective mediation and reveal multiple aspects of a transcultural reality, but it cannot end selective mediation. Focusing on Rabe's national, political and special cultural identities means that this article is also selective, in the sense that it limits itself to identity and does not cover all the components of Rabe's identity, such as his fatherhood and husbandhood. But adding more aspects of Rabe's identity does not shed more light on mediation of identity. The second limit is that meaning cannot be fully re-captured and re-presented. Even though the current article tries to discuss mediation of John Rabe's national, political and special cultural identities as extensively as possible, it has not unfolded their full meaning across time and context. The analysis of mediation of Rabe's special cultural identity in the current article, for instance, is still limited to the Chinese letter of gratitude and its translational and editorial mediation. That is to say, its focus is predominantly on the letter and its literal meaning, rather than on gratitude. This is due to the fact that while the current article focuses on identity, such gratitude is embedded in the historical event. Without the critical situation – the severity of the atrocities – being brought to the fore, the importance of Rabe's humanitarian efforts to the poor of Nanking can hardly be re-presented, hence their gratitude.



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