

## Thesis Abstract

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Title of Thesis: The Function of Christian Elements in the Media: Analyzing the News Coverage of the Great East Japan Earthquake in Germany and USA			
Summary of Thesis:  <p>Language is closely tied to a society's cultural background. As such, Western languages have been strongly influenced by Christianity. Previous research has shown that Christian elements appear outside their original religious context, and are used in mass media and in political contexts. When comparing the perspectives of media, it is thus important to investigate the role of Christian elements in the news and whether they are employed consciously or not.</p> <p>This study analyzes and compares the news coverage on the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (3.11 disaster) in German and American newspapers. Towards this aim, 1) a content analysis of news articles, and 2) survey interviews with readers and journalists were carried out. The content analysis was supported by designing an original database system "UniFoDB" (Unified Format and Database for Analyzing Christian Elements in Newspapers). UniFoDB enables the comparison of newspaper article data in different languages, by applying cultural language meta tags, which are generalized based on the Christian elements found in the news contents. It also visualizes the relation between an article's content, the elements and their functions.</p> <p>Results show that many Christian elements are employed in the German and American coverage, to describe the 3.11 disaster and its aftermath, as well as to convey the emotions of the people. However, there are both similarities and differences in how they are used. Moreover, the Christian backgrounds are not necessarily recognized by journalists or readers.</p> <p>Findings show how the 3.11 disaster was depicted in foreign news media, but also highlight how the journalists' worldview and sense of value affects the content. As previous research shows that the use and meaning of Christian elements in the Western news are ignored by the Japanese media, this research also highlights the necessity to reevaluate the way how foreign news are conveyed in Japan.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Comparative news analysis, Great East Japan Earthquake (3.11 disaster), Christian elements, database system, news discourse analysis.</p>			