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## Judaism in Pre-war Japan

### Introduction

#### The Project on “Jews and Judaism in Japan” Conducted with the CISMOR Research Group

Ada Taggar-Cohen

On January 26, 2014 the first workshop on the theme “Jews and Judaism in Japan” took place at Doshisha University. This workshop marks the beginning of the realization of a project I initiated about five years ago and which has gradually been joined by other scholars. The original motivation of the project was to follow up the research to which Prof. Masanori Miyazawa has dedicated his academic life, and still continues to do as an Emeritus professor. Prof. Miyazawa’s studies focus on Japan and the Jews, including the cataloguing of all relevant material published in Japan. His two comprehensive volumes of bibliography are the corner-stones for any study of this subject.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the research project “Jews and Judaism in Japan” is to study the reality of the Jews within the history of Modern Japan and attitudes of the Japanese people towards the Jews as reflected by governmental activities, publications in the newspapers, and by scholars in the Japanese academia. Some of the scholars who constitute the core members of this project, and who read papers during the workshop, are Masanori Miyazawa (Doshisha Women’s College), Chizuko Takao (Rikkyo University), Hiroshi Ichikawa (Tokyo University), Izumi Sato (Toyo Gakuen University), Etsuko Katsumata (Doshisha University), Doron B. Cohen (Doshisha University) and the above signed. Some other scholars joined us for this workshop, as well as for the following workshop that was held on September 21, 2014 and titled: *The Migrations of Jews in the 19th to the 21st Century around the World with Relation to Japan and the Far East.*<sup>2</sup>

Historically speaking, the Jews are a phenomenon the Japanese have encountered only during modern times, and initially not through direct contact with the Jews themselves but rather indirectly through written sources and rumors. As has been described in detail by Prof. Ben-Ami Shillony in his book *The Jews and the Japanese* as

well as by Goodman and Miyazawa in their volume *Jews in the Japanese Mind*,<sup>3</sup> it was not until the Meiji Era that the Japanese encountered Jews in person. While some Jews settled in Japan after the Meiji restoration, they constituted a small part of the larger foreign community residing in Japan; the Japanese could not distinguish between Jews and other nationals, especially since the Jews were identified by their respective nationalities and not as Jews per-se. Jewish people arrived as individuals and settled in Japan in order to assist with its modernization process or for business reasons, rather than as the migration of a community. Still, during this period small communities were created in Yokohama and Nagasaki, as well as in Kobe, where eventually a synagogue was erected, and even some Jewish burial sites were consecrated. The historical developments at the beginning of the 20th century with the Balfour Declaration made the Japanese more aware of the Jewish cause, but for political reasons this issue still remained a distant one. The studies of Dr. Kunio Ishida shed light on that period clarifying the attitude of the Japanese government towards the region of Palestine.<sup>4</sup>

Research on Jews and Judaism is not a popular field in the Japanese academy, and except for Doshisha University, which has established a program for undergraduate and graduate levels in Jewish Studies, no other university has such a program.<sup>5</sup> In a paper read recently at the Hebrew University, Prof. Yu Takeuchi of Kumamoto University, a core member of our CISMOR project, summarized the development of research on Judaism in Japan. He specified the number of academic associations for Jewish Studies, research projects, journals publishing papers on Jewish studies and more. Although there are some important developments, the subject is still somewhat “esoteric.”<sup>6</sup>

Studies published on Jews in Japan tend to focus mainly on the period of the Second World War, in which the Japanese came into actual contact with a large number of Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi regime and the war in Europe. The studies offered in this issue of *JISMOR* treat the political reasons that led the Japanese to accept Jewish refugees and at the same time question whether the Japanese actually understood what kind of people the Jews were. The issue of Anti-Semitism, which was brought to Japan through foreign influence, created a negative attitude in the perception of the image of the Jew.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of Japanese Anti-Semitism, without the actual existence of Jews, has been the focus of many publications especially during the late 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's, with the increase of publications of the type of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Japanese. We hope to devote a separate workshop to this topic in the future, to try to look into it with an approximate 20-year retrospective. It seems quite clear that the Japanese perception of these Anti-Semitic publications is not similar to European

Anti-Semitism or other “traditional” Anti-Semitism, but the question why such publications gained popularity in Japan still remains.<sup>8</sup> The above-mentioned two English publications written about Jews and Japan have the following titles: *Jews in the Japanese Mind* and *Japanese Attitudes Toward Jews*. It is interesting to note that the *way-of-thinking* is stressed in the words: “attitude” and “mind,” rather than *activities or relations*.

The research project “Jews and Judaism in Japan” is to follow two directions: the first, based on historical-cultural and anthropological perspectives, will try to track Jewish life in Japan and its relations with other Jewish communities in East Asia. Our research will deal with the first communities of Jews in Japan, and their relations with the mainland, especially in places such as Harbin and Shanghai.

The second direction will attempt to study the academic interest in Jews and Judaism as religious-cultural phenomena in modern Japan, and mostly in recent decades. Several questions are raised regarding subjects of research that Japanese scholars have pursued throughout the years, including the amount and kind of studies published and their tendencies. We will also refer to the general society, such as media and literary publications about Jews, education in schools regarding Jews and Judaism and more.

An unavoidable issue in the study of Jews in Japan is the treatment of the State of Israel, which is often referred to as the “Jewish state.” Indeed, Israel today has half of the world’s Jewish population, although some 20% of its citizens are non-Jews, including a large Muslim and Christian (Arab) population. The attitude of the Japanese political leadership towards Israel has mostly been a reserved one, evolving from the political interests of the Japanese government. The research will try to follow up cultural and academic relations between the two countries, but will not attempt to evaluate the political activities or stances taken by the two countries.

Finally, the two Israeli members of the research group, living in Japan, may suggest a direction for cultural contacts and relations between Japan and Israel. We will try to refer to the impact Israeli culture has on the Japanese; for example: how many Japanese visit Israel, how many Japanese students study in Israel and return to Japan or not; and how many scholars research Israel as a topic.

The papers delivered at the January 26th workshop belonged to both aspects of the study: that of the historical perspective and that of the ethnographic as well as academic study and publications on Judaism in Japan. At the end the impressions of an Israeli-Jew in Japan were introduced. Following are the titles of the papers delivered at the workshop, two of which appear in this issue of *JISMOR*<sup>9</sup>:

- Masanori Miyazawa: “Pro-Nazi Newspapers in Showa Wartime Japan: The increase in Anti-Semitism and Those who Opposed This Trend”
- Chizuko Takao: “The Harbin Jewish Community under Japanese Rule 1939-1941”
- Izumi Sato: “History of the Jewish Communities in Japan: Nagasaki, Kobe, Yokohama, Karuizawa and Tokyo”
- Hiroshi Ichikawa: “The translation of the Talmud into Japanese and its meaning”
- Etsuko Katsumata: “Recent Japanese Publications Relating to Judaism”
- Doron B. Cohen: “Being Israeli in Japan”

Prof. Miyazawa’s paper surveys the attitude towards Jews as demonstrated in the major newspapers such as the *Asahi Shinbun* and *Mainichi Shinbun*, in the years between the rise of Nazism and the end of the Second World War. He shows how initially the Nazis’ racist treatment of the Jews was not accepted or actually understood by Japanese, but later, being influenced by Nazi propaganda and the allied relations with Germany, voicing vicious and highly negative attitudes towards the Jews by directly quoting Hitler’s speeches, became the norm. Miyazawa states that towards the end of the war “Japanese newspapers were no longer transmitters of facts, but they had become a medium for dispensing far-fetched arguments founded on distorted facts [...] their arguments (editorials) ceased to be truthful and became extremely dogmatic and dishonest.”

The influx of Jewish refugees brought some Japanese in contact with Jews for the first time. Although they seemed strange to the Japanese, they treated them kindly. However, the newspapers did not seem to report in this tone. Miyazawa’s newspapers’ quotes vividly show the different — mostly negative but also positive — perspectives of what the Japanese termed the “Jewish question.”

Prof. Takao’s paper deals with the Jews under Japanese occupation before and during WWII in Harbin as part of the region of Manchukuo. Her paper presents vividly the state in which Jews were torn apart between the Russian communists and those opposing them, and how the Japanese authorities were unable to protect them, but rather condemned them when one of their leaders said during a funeral of a murdered Jew that the Jews only expected “the state authorities (to) have an obligation to establish peace.” Based on the study of documents housed in the Zionist Archive in Jerusalem and an interview with the main actor in the Jewish community of Harbin at that time, Abraham Kaufman, Prof. Takao presents a clearer picture of the role played by the Japanese in that city during the devastating years at the beginning of the war.

Additional Reading:

- 1) *The Jewish Community of Japan 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Yearbook* (Nama Productions, Jewish Community of Japan, 2004).
- 2) Ben Ami Shillony, *Japanese Views on Jews and Judaism* (ed. Shazar Library, The Herman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, workshop of the Study Circle on World Jewry in the Home of the President of Israel, 1993) [in Hebrew]
- 3) Pamela Rotner Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma* (London: Praeger, 1998).
- 4) Marvin Tokayer and Ellen Rodman, *Pepper, Silk & Ivory: Amazing Stories about Jews and the Far East* (Jerusalem-New York: Gefen publishing house, 2014).
- 5) Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 1979 edition of 2004).

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**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Masanori Miyazawa, *Nihon ni Okeru Yudaya • Isuraeru Rongi Bunken Mokuroku 1877-1988*, Tokyo: Shinsensya, 1990; Masanori Miyazawa, *Nihon ni Okeru Yudaya • Isuraeru Rongi Bunken Mokuroku 1988-2004*, Kyoto: Showado, 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> See <http://www.cismor.jp/en/2014/09/22/immigrant-acculturation-and-transnationalism-israelis-in-the-united-states-and-europe-compared/> (as of Dec. 10, 2014).
- <sup>3</sup> Japanese version—Ben-Amy Shillony, *Yudayajin to Nihonjin: Itanshisare, Hakugaisarenagara Seikoushita Ryominzoku* (Tokyo: Nihon Kouhou, 1993). See book review by Sheila K. Johnson, “Book Review of Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders* (Tuttle, Rutland&Tokyo, 1992),” in: *Monumenta Nipponica* 48:1 (1993), 136-139. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2385479?seq=2> (As of Dec. 12, 2014). David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
- <sup>4</sup> His important dissertation: Kunio Ishida, “The Origins of Japan’s Postwar Policy in the Middle East: The case of Establishing Diplomatic Relations with Israel, 1952-1956,” (PhD Dissertation; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009). See his recent co-authored article with Shiraishi in Japanese about mandate Palestine. Kunio Ishida and Masaaki Shiraishi, “Dainiji Sekaitaisen Zen’ya ni okeru Kyokuto no Yudayajin to Nihon Gaiko,” *Gaiko Shiryoukanho* 26, Tokyo: Gaimusyo Gaiko Siryoukan, 2012 (“Jews in the Far East and Japan’s Diplomacy in the eve of WWII”).
- <sup>5</sup> For a description of the program see in Japanese followed by English: <http://acohen.freya.weblife.me/mhw/pg307.html> (as of Jan. 1, 2014).

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- <sup>6</sup> See Yu Takeuchi, “The Rise of Interest in Jewish Studies in Japanese Academia,” a paper published in:[http://sfile.f-static.com/image/users/215554/ftp/my\\_files/Special%20Issue/NewFiles/tekeuchi%20fulltext.pdf?id=15913170](http://sfile.f-static.com/image/users/215554/ftp/my_files/Special%20Issue/NewFiles/tekeuchi%20fulltext.pdf?id=15913170) (as of Dec. 15, 2014). See also Kotaro Hiraoka, “The Present Status of Jewish Studies in Japan: an Overview of the Prospectuses of Academic Associations,” *Isshinkyosekai 2* (CISMOR, 2009).
- <sup>7</sup> For a presentation of the issue see Rotem Kowner “On Ignorance, Respect and Suspicion: Current Japanese Attitudes toward Jews,” *The Vidal Sassoon Internatinal Center for the Study of Antisemitism The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism*, (1997 acta no. 11) <http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/11kowner.htm> (as of Dec. 10, 2014).
- <sup>8</sup> The Pacific Rim Institute of the American Jewish Committee, published a research paper in 1992 on this issue which should be re-read and interpreted: Jennifer Golub, *Japanese Attitudes Toward Jews*, see [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/889.pdf](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/889.pdf) (as of Dec. 10, 2014).
- <sup>9</sup> For the workshop see: <http://www.cismor.jp/en/2014/01/26/jews-and-judaism-in-japan/>. And also <http://www.cismor.jp/en/2014/09/22/immigrant-acculturation-and-transnationalism-israelis-in-the-united-states-and-europe-compared/> (as of Dec. 10, 2014).

## **Pro-Nazi Newspapers in Showa Wartime Japan, the Increase in Anti-Semitism and Those Who Opposed this Trend**

Masanori MIYAZAWA

### **Abstract**

A major turning point for Japan during the wartime Showa era was the Japan-Germany-Italy Anti-Comintern Pact in 1937, which led Japan to join the Axis alliance through the Tripartite Pact signed with Italy and Germany in 1940. Until the mid 1930s, Japanese newspapers were severely critical toward Hitler. Then in 1935, the *Asahi Shimbun* became the first to switch to a reporting line that expressed approval of Hitler to the point of glorifying his politics. The *Asahi Shimbun* was soon followed by other newspapers, which were unanimous in welcoming the Tripartite Pact as the beginning of “a new era in the world’s history that is bound to contribute to humanity’s wellbeing” and in sympathizing with Germany in its oppression of Jews. On the other hand, there were liberal activists who were opposed to the anti-Jewish trend and remained critical of Hitler. One of them, Kiyoshi KIYOSAWA, accused Nazism of being an atrociously dogmatic and intolerant religious movement, Hitler’s one-man theater, which would not withstand the test of logical analysis. Other prominent examples of those opposed to Japan’s pro-Nazi trend include Kiichiro HIGUCHI, Lieutenant General of the Imperial Japanese Army, who assisted Jewish refugees in their entry into Manchukuo, and Chiune SUGIHARA, the diplomat who issued Jewish refugees with transit visas against the orders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The newspaper coverage of the Jews who arrived at Tsuruga with Sugihara visas did not accurately reflect the actual treatment of the refugees by the local residents.

### **Keywords**

Wartime Showa, newspapers, pro-Nazi trend, anti-Semitism, liberalists

## Introduction

Historically speaking, Japan has never experienced the so-called “Jewish Question” in the same sense as the West, where Jews have existed as a minority group with significant interactions with local populations in both public and private spheres. In 1933 and onward, as the persecution of Jews by Nazi Germany intensified and the number of Jewish refugees increased, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan began receiving from its overseas diplomatic establishments in Europe, China, and Manchukuo information and advice regarding the Jewish Question, including suggestions for somewhat anti-Jewish measures. Yet, it appears that even in 1935 Japan was unaware of the imminence of the Jewish Question.<sup>1</sup>

Japan’s ignorance can be surmised from the orders issued by the Foreign Minister (“On German Refugees”) on March 12, 1935, and addressed to the heads of the overseas Japanese diplomatic establishments, in response to the recommendations made by the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, mainly regarding the granting of status and travel documents to Jewish refugees:

Keeping in mind not only that there are few German refugees staying in our country but also that this is an issue of a political nature, [the authorities] are contemplating as to what attitude and response our country should adopt with regards to those recommendations. On the other hand, considering that it is possible that German refugees who have this type of status and travel documents issued by different countries will arrive in our country in the future, it is necessary that a policy be determined for the ministries and agencies concerned for handling [such refugees], admitting presently that this is a practical problem.

As a result of deliberations by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, and Colonial Affairs, the Japanese government fundamentally decided, following the previous cases of Russian and Armenian refugees, that from May 1 of that year to treat “refugees of German nationality as ordinary German nationals as dictated under the domestic law of our country, as unanimously agreed.”<sup>2</sup>

Soon afterward, the so-called Otpor Incident occurred. In March 1938, Jewish refugees began arriving in Otpor near the Soviet Union-Manchukuo border. The diplomatic mission of Manchukuo refused their entry, but Kiichiro HIGUCHI, the commander of the Harbin Special Branch, played an active role in enabling them to cross

the border into Manchukuo. The situation and consequences of this incident are discussed in Section II. In December 1938, the five principal ministers of the Japanese government (Prime Minister, Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs, War, and the Navy) convened and adopted “Essential Points of the Measures Concerning the Jews”.<sup>3</sup>

Since firmly maintaining friendly relations with both Germany and Italy is the diplomatic axis for the Empire at the present time, we must avoid, as a rule, actively welcoming Jews, who are rejected by our allies, into the Empire. However, adopting the attitude of being willing to reject them in the same extreme manner as does Germany not only disagrees with the spirit of racial equality that the Empire has been asserting for many years but also runs the risk of inviting disadvantageous consequences that must be avoided in view of our need of foreign currencies for the pursuit of warfare and especially for economic reinforcement in the state of emergency that the Empire is currently facing and for preventing deterioration of our relations with the United States. In view of the above, the Jews shall be treated according to the following principles.

The first of three somewhat calculating principles states that “the Jews who reside in Japan, Manchukuo, and China at present shall be treated as fairly as other nationals, and any measures that specifically reject Jews may not be taken.”<sup>4</sup> At that time in history, when Hitler’s ascent and the resultant persecution of Jews and the emergence of Jewish refugees had become a global issue, Japan still remained noncommittal in this manner.

What then of Japanese journalism? Until that time, the Jewish Question had not been actively covered by Japanese newspapers. It began to appear more regularly in Japanese newspapers as supplementary to the coverage of trends surrounding the Nazi Party administration.

## I

On January 31, 1933, the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* (forerunner of the *Asahi Shimbun* Western Japan edition) reported the formation of the Hitler Cabinet the day before and referred to the Jewish Question in an interpretative article simply stating as follows:

The annihilation of Jews is a representative slogan of the National Socialist

Party. In July 1932, it introduced to the Prussian Parliament a bill for the confiscation of Jewish-owned land. It is inevitable that Mr. Hitler's seizure of power will cause extreme fear to Jews.

On the following day (February 1), "*Tensei Jingo* (Vox Populi, Voc Dei)," the front-page column of the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun*, stating that all political parties that come into power attempt to pay for their tentative declarations made while outside power without funds, made light of the oppression of the Jews: "Can their wisdom and power of money be so easily eliminated? No, it cannot be done." However, after the German general election on March 5, the newspaper had to report on the unconcealed persecution of the Jews in the country. On March 11, the newspaper's Berlin correspondent wrote: "[The persecution of Jews] seems to be spreading nationwide, and the situation looks grave." In April, the newspaper carried several further articles on this subject.

In response to the course of events in Germany, the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* ran an editorial, "*Doitsu no dan'atsu seiji — kouju-funsho no bokyō ni oyobu* (Germany's oppressive politics — resorting to censorship and thought suppression)," on May 8, taking a strongly critical position. The editorial opens with an analysis of the oppressive policies that the German authorities have taken since the formation of the Hitler Cabinet, describing them as "increasingly outrageous, absolutely impossible to determine where they are headed with my common sense." The author continues:

I am utterly appalled at the absurdity of the German authorities not simply because of the political and economic despotism described above. Their bold and incomprehensible behavior that extends the hand of extermination even towards a source of German culture is truly atrocious beyond description.

Referring to the violent acts of censorship and thought suppression, the author admits having "no words to express my astonishment" at the fact that they are being "committed today in the 20th century in Germany, of all countries, which takes such great pride in its culture before the whole world." He further writes:

The presence of people like Messrs. Einstein and Haber is stronger than 100 Hitlers, for they have fortified the greatness of Germany on a worldwide scale. Improving the status of one nation through international cooperation or through exclusive nationalism, which is beneficial and which is not is too

obvious to be proven here.

The editorialist indicates that “it is too obvious that the German government’s current policy for reviving its national power will generate results that are the opposite of its objectives,” finally concluding that “it will not be far into the future that Germany regrets, having fallen victim to its own erroneous policy.” On the same day, “*Tensei Jingo*” takes up the irrationality of Nazi book burnings and the inhumanness of the bloody persecution of Jews in a ridiculing tone. Many articles appeared later that adopted a tone of argument similar to that of the May 8 editorial. On the whole, most articles criticized Nazism, saying that it had even become synonymous with cultural destruction.

A survey of these *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* articles written after the formation of the Hitler Cabinet enables us to discern a consistently negative or critical position regarding Nazism. Academics and cultural opinion leaders also wrote for the newspaper. The report titled “*Jujika jo no Doitsu daigaku* (German universities on the cross)” by Kyoji SHINOMIYA, a lecturer at Osaka University of Commerce then residing in Berlin (published June 21-25, 1933), were also written along the same line of argument. In the article titled “*Yudayajin wa naze kirawarerunoka? — Nachisu no Bungei Kanrin’in dan’atsu, keibetsusareta richishugi* (Why are the Jews disliked? — the Nazi suppression of the Academy of Arts, despised intellectualism)” (May 11-12, 1933), its author, Mukyoku NARUSE, Professor at Kyoto Imperial University, presented explicative yet generalized views, explaining that the Jews seemed disliked due to their power and clannish tendency, leading the worlds of arts and sciences and owning and running major newspapers and magazines, for their generally cosmopolitan nature, intelligence, sensitivity, and wealth. At the same time, the author pointed out that the Jews were not monolithic and represented diverse characteristics. Newspaper pieces written by external contributors do not necessarily correspond closely to the opinions of the newspapers. Nevertheless, newspapers do not usually provide their space generously and continuously to contributors who hold views that significantly differ from their own positions. It is generally possible to say that in those days the Japanese newspapers continued to have authors who expressed ideas and opinions that the newspapers wanted to publish.

In 1934, the number of articles treating Nazism or the Jews fell considerably. Yet, the few that appeared continued along the line of argument that had developed the year before.

The *Asashi*’s turning point in its reporting stance manifested itself most clearly in an

article of January 27, 1935 (dispatched the day before). Taking up the greater part of the front page of the newspaper's evening edition and written by Reiji KURODA, the newspaper's special correspondent in Berlin, the article was the harbinger of a new direction that the newspaper would gradually adopt from that time on.

The horizontally composed headline of the article reads "Talk with Führer Hitler/First Interview with Japanese Reporter." This is followed by the body of the article that contains such phrases as "the head of state's majestic bearing! Frank discussion on disarmament," "legitimate armaments for a sense of security," "interest in Japan," "Japanese folding screen in his plain residence," and "a firm handshake with a smile." The article carries a photograph of the correspondent, Kuroda, a three-column-tall photograph of Hitler with a caption, "Führer Hitler frankly expressing his feelings," and another photograph of the "German palace where this reporter had the interview." It seems that this interview was an honorable event for the *Asahi*.

The only foreign journalists whom Mr. Hitler has met since he became the head of state are Mr. Pierre Huss of Hearst Press of the United States and Mr. Ward Price of the British newspaper owned by Lord Rothermere, both dispatched from their home countries for the occasion. As a rule, Mr. Hitler does not grant interviews to foreign correspondents stationed in Germany. Therefore, **the consent to this interview is proof of either the interest that Mr. Hitler personally takes in Japan today or the importance the Asahi Shimbun Company is given abroad.**

It is obvious that the focus of the article is the very fact that the interview took place, rather than its content, as suggested by the bold type preserved in the quotation above as in the original. The journalist reports: "Mr. Hitler nodded a few times with a smile to the respect that I expressed in the beginning for the German people and Germany's supreme head of state in the name of President Ueno on behalf of the Asahi Shimbun Company." This passage is printed in even bolder characters in the article. Kuroda observes that Hitler "looks very serene and has clearly taken on a stately bearing of a contented head of a nation." The journalist concludes the article with his impression that Hitler's "position must be very stable, judging from his words and deportment," finding his way of "efficiently fielding the reporter's questions and brushing some aside in a frank and straightforward manner without resorting to diplomatic language rather pleasant."

Was it possible to expect objective reporting from the *Asahi Shimbun* after this

article, now that its relationship with Hitler seemed definitively determined? The article was indeed a declaration by the *Asahi* of its position as leader in the understanding of Germany and Hitler.

Before long, academics appeared who expressed opinions in tune with the *Asahi*'s new reporting stance. The report series (June 7 to 9 and 11, 1935) titled "*Rodo ni kankisuru 'fukko Doitsu' no seinen* (The Youth of 'revived Germany' awakened to labor)" written by Isao KOKUSHO, Professor at Kyoto Imperial University and doctor of Economics, can be considered as the most straightforward indication of the newspaper's transformation over the past three years. In his report, Kokusho expressed his hopes for the Nazis, who were then seen as striving to overcome the capitalist finance and economics in the hope of reconstructing their nation based on new principles, and praised the "rise of the spirit of labor" that was spurring this endeavor. Considering the perception of other countries that Japan would develop from around this time on, it is intriguing to note that Kokusho cited in this piece the United States as a diametrically opposite example, a country not progressing despite abundant wealth, capital, and population. The long report brims with the author's emotion and enthusiasm.

I saw youths working right before my eyes. Their workload seemed far more than what could possibly be handled by Japanese laborers specializing in outdoor work. Yet, they were all smiles and engaged in their work cheerfully. When I saw this army of youths, though they were of another country, tears welled up in my eyes. I was struck with envy and deep emotion. . . . Two hundred thousand soldiers discharged from the Reich Labor Service all over Germany marched into Berlin. I witnessed this in front of Gedächtnis-Kirche on Tauentzien Street. Seeing this solemn and orderly procession and the shining shovels on the soldiers' shoulders, I felt like bowing my head before those "true warriors of peace" in triumph from their victorious campaign. . . . I so earnestly wish that this noble spirit, this manliness of German youths rejoicing in labor for their nation will be with Japanese youths as well. Truly a nation can prosper only when its young takes delight in work.

Overjoyed, Kokusho declares that a school of thinkers who "hastily conclude that Germany is about to perish under Nazi despotism" are making a "great mistake." He further argues from the same perspective that the Jews, who do not possess the spirit of labor, are incompatible with the Germans, and concludes that "to liberate the people

from the slavery of interest, it becomes naturally inevitable to eliminate the Jews.”

In this way, the focus of reporting shifted to what could be learned from Germany in its process of national reconstruction. In addition to the German youth rejoicing in work, women also became an object of interest. Hayami FUJIMORI, Professor of the School of Medicine at Kyoto Imperial University, expounded on Japanese women’s duties, stating that “the touchingly serious manner in which young German women undergo emergency training for their motherhood is what should be emulated by Japanese woman” (*Osaka Asahi Shimbun*, August 21, 1937).

In 1938, an article reported on Germany’s annexation of Austria, describing it as nearly completed, with only the revision of road traffic rules, the abolition of the national flag, and “cleaning-up of Jews left to be done” (*Osaka Asahi Shimbun*, Prague, March 14, Special Correspondent Hamada, published March 16). The same newspaper reported on September 14 (dispatched September 12 from Berlin) that “Führer Hitler the lion roars” that “the Jews and communism must be eliminated,” adding that the democracies should be anxious to decide what to do about Germany.

The editorial on the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* on March 13 titled “*Doku-Ou gappei no dai-shinten* (Great progress of the German-Austrian merger)” was praiseful:

There is no other way to describe the brilliance of Führer Hitler’s advance but to compare it to a flying horse soaring up to the sky. . . . He has sacrificed everything and is working for national glory. The recent incident may be a tragedy viewed from one country, Austria, but we send it our blessings for its future, as we see this country liquidate its entire past to enter into a new life and contribute to the prosperity of the German nation.

In the same year, the Japanese youth association, Nihon Seinendan, invited a delegation of the Hitlerjugend to Japan. In his series of articles, “*Hodoku seishonendan kenbunroku* (Record of the visiting German youth group’s experiences),” published on the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* on October 5, 7, 10 to 12, and 14, Morio MIYAMATO, usually based in Germany, minutely reported the Hitler Youth’s activities in Japan, how the group touched the Japanese public and was warmly welcomed everywhere. This series was sandwiched by other enthusiastic articles such as “*Nachi no wakoudo ni warera wa manabu* (We learn from the Nazi youth)” (*Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, October 6) and “*Hittora Yugento ni warera wa nani o manandaka* (What we learned from the Hitlerjugend)” (*Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, October 19).

On November 12, the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* ran a long article occupying six columns in the middle section of the front page to advertise the “Great Germany Exposition,” which the newspaper company would hold from November 20. The article opens as follows:

The tie between the *Hinomaru* [Japanese national flag] and the *Hakenkreuz* is stronger than ever as representatives of the flying wheels of the century. But what is our ally Germany like as a country? How have its fearless face, unbreakable bones, and fire-emitting soul been nurtured, and to what rhythm is its heart beating? To respond to such friendly interest and wish to know more, we are holding the “Great Germany Exposition” in partnership with the Embassy of Germany, the Japan-Germany Association, and the Institute for Research in German Culture, with active participation by the German government.

The highlight of the Japan-Germany relations in that year (1938) was the signing of the Japan-Germany Cultural Agreement in November. On November 26, the editorials of both the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* and the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* extolled this event unconditionally. The *Asahi*'s editorial congratulated the signing of the agreement, considering it as “not only contributory to the creation and construction of a new culture dedicated to humanity's progress but also greatly useful for the promotion and maintenance of peace in the world.” In the same tone, the author admits dreaming of “the day when all culturally developed countries in the world will be solidly unified through one cultural agreement.” The *Mainichi*'s editorial, for its part, states that the agreement “has made the bond between the two countries more fundamental by supplementing the existing Anti-Comintern Pact, which is a mere political agreement, on a spiritual level.” The author goes so far as to “acknowledge that it is inevitable that we advance one step further and reach an economic and military agreement, considering the international importance of the bilateral unity” and to assert that the cultural agreement “must be highly appropriate groundwork [for the next step].” Finally, the conclusion reads: “Our country's success lies in our demonstration before the whole world of our unique culture. We are extremely delighted we have taken our first step to this organizational development through the Japan-Germany Agreement.” On the same day, the journalist Soho TOKUTOMI wrote in his column in the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* that “we three, Japan, Germany, and Italy, must further harmonize our moves, look squarely at the need

to vanquish these public enemies of the world, and inevitably devise plans to deal with them,” referring to Great Britain and France.

In 1939, on April 29, the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun*'s editorial refuted the argument advanced by the United States, Great Britain, and France that the key to peace or war lay only upon Hitler and Mussolini and that Germany and Italy would be to blame if war should break out, insisting that “it is so groundless that it can be easily and completely argued down.” The author concludes: “Now that Führer Hitler has made it clear that he is willing to grant a security treaty to the countries, Great Britain, France, and the United States are required to repent even more deeply.” On the following day, the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*'s editorial exalted in the opening that “Führer Hitler's speech, so long awaited by the world, has now become a public property.” Advocating the speech in question, the editorialist concluded: “The tripartite alliance is as hard as iron. Without this, the anti-communist camp led by the three countries will lose its *raison d'être*.”

Meanwhile, the *Asahi*'s “*Tensei Jingo*” described how the German officials and people took an hour-and-a-half break from work or stopped lessons in school to attentively listen to the speech on the radio, admirably presenting this as proof of “how the Germans consider their country's destiny as their personal destiny and how all individual Germans have the strong sense of being responsible for their country's joys and sorrows.” In Japan, Germany was no longer a mere country among many others.

On July 15, 1939, ten Japanese newspaper companies and news agencies, including the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi*, published a joint anti-British declaration. Against the background of the “British maneuvers to assist Chiang Kai-shek, resulting from the misinterpretation of the Empire's fair intention,” the joint declaration expressed the media organizations' “firm determination to denounce all obstacles on the path to the attainment of the objectives of our holy war” and requested Great Britain to correct its perception of East Asia and “contribute to world peace by cooperating in the construction of a new world order.” The Japanese newspapers could not have made their position clearer. It can be said that they made all the preparations necessary to welcome the following year's Tripartite Pact of Japan, Germany, and Italy. In the meantime, Hitler was elevated to the status of “genius.” The *Asahi*'s special correspondent, Yoshiuchi KITANO, wrote that the German people's respect for Hitler was unshakable and that “the popularity of this great genius” surpassed that of the Kaiser during the last Great War. Kitano concluded that “a great deal is naturally expected of him, who has become the ‘Napoleon of the 20th century,’ and his genius can be regarded as undistorted.” (*Osaka Asahi Shimbun*, January 4, 1940)

The signing of the Tripartite Pact was greeted by the newspapers with congratulatory phrases:

“A new era in the world’s history,” “approaching sound of footsteps of the ‘driving force’ of the century,” “one pledge, Japan-Germany-Italy/Succession of the historic moment of the signing ceremony,” “thunderous cries of ‘banzai,’ an unforgettable evening,” “o, our indomitable resolute,” “returning to the ‘true Japan,’” “two joyful girls,” “international agreement of ‘world revolution’” (*Asahi*, September 29); “souls coming together/inevitable destiny,” “Germany and Italy rejoiced” (*Osaka Mainichi*, September 28).

How did editorialists, who are supposed to remain objective, treat the event? Let us examine this through the *Osaka Mainichi* editorial of the same day:

The Japan-Germany-Italy Tripartite Pact was finally signed. His Majesty graced the occasion with his statement and kindly instructed us how this important development should be treated. His Majesty’s generous solicitude touches us most deeply. While experts had maintained already at an early stage that the three countries would eventually have to choose this stance, judging from the situation of the world . . . the time has come for the three countries to openly acknowledge our essential common position and actively work together to explore our common destiny through cooperation and lead humanity to a bright new future. Our country’s wish and effort to liberate East Asia from the Anglo-Saxon bondage and build East Asia for East Asians and the wish and effort of Germany and Italy to liberate themselves from the Anglo-Saxon oppression to construct a new European regime and realize a future compatible with their forces match perfectly now. The time is ripe.

Concluding that “choosing the path to contributing to humanity’s welfare is the very wish of the three countries,” the editorial appeared to speak on behalf of the governments. Later, the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* even faithfully communicated in its column “*Kenteki*” what the German newspapers had to say (November 16, Berlin, published November 17):

The oppression of Jews in Germany has been criticized by the President of the

United States, a country of Jews. Unless Jews of American nationality are concerned, the United States has no business meddling with what the Germans do to Jews, whether they boil and eat them or grill and eat them [\*literal translation of the Japanese idiomatic expression meaning “do whatever one pleases”]. In particular, the retaliation that German people took against Jewish temples and shops following the assassination of a German diplomat in France by a Jew is not a matter that should concern the German government. Although the damage caused to the Jewish-owned properties was considerable, possibly about a billion German marks, not even half a Jew was violated, not even a hair, as German newspapers have refuted their British counterparts.

In addition to such base reporting defending Germany, the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* carried an explanatory article titled “*Doitsu no Yudayajin dan’atsu* (The oppression of the Jews in Germany)” on November 23. The article explained developments in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States following the assassination of the German diplomat, as well as the history and present situation of the Jews, commenting that “this non-assimilation of the Jews, who have lived as a world-scale special community, so to speak, is the very core of the Jewish Question.” Its conclusion read: “Considering that the China Incident is a holy war aiming to save the Far East from the communism of the Jews, we should not regard the Jewish Question as something irrelevant to us.” The leader of this article, “Evil hand assisting Chiang Kai-shek is also in the shadow of the incident of the ‘stateless people’ who erode the world,” should be considered indicative of this newspaper’s view of the Jews.

Japanese newspapers continued covering speeches by Hitler and other leaders on each occasion. Let us take a look at a few examples:

If young Jews believe that they can eliminate us, they are totally wrong. Those who will be eliminated are the Jews themselves. In the past, many Jews secretly smiled, they can no longer smile. The Jews who are smiling today will soon become unable to smile. (*Asahi* article covering Hitler’s speech on the night before the Beer Hall Putsch anniversary ceremony; November 8, 1942, Berlin; published in the November 10 evening edition)

Goebbels’ speeches were also covered. One delivered in front of the representatives of various sectors of society was reported with an emphasis on the German “policy to

eradicate the Jewish threat, through extreme and thorough means, if necessary” (*Asahi*, Berlin, February 18, 1943; published in the February 20 evening edition). Japanese correspondents in Germany interviewed Goebbels together with other members of the foreign press corps and wrote on the Jewish Question in a definitive tone: “Jews are the germs of infectious diseases within the German nation-state. Unless the Jewish Question is fundamentally resolved, and the germs eradicated, they will quickly spread again” (*Asahi*, Berlin, March 13, 1943; published March 15). Covering Goebbels’ speech at a party rally for Germany’s victory, one article reported that he “declared that clearing Jews from Europe was not a mere ethical issue but a way of national self-defense and that no means will be spared for this purpose” (*Mainichi*, Berlin, June 5, 1943; published June 7).

Those were the words that were pronounced publicly and repeatedly by one nation’s political leaders, and the Japanese newspapers reported them without adding a word of criticism. Rather, it can be said that they continued to play the role of faithfully communicating the leaders’ words to their readership. The historical fact is that the Holocaust took place, exactly as described in their discourse. Did the Japanese public sense a demagogic odor in the newspapers after they switched to the anti-Jewish camp?

Outside written reporting, the newspaper companies also engaged in cultural activities. The *Mainichi Shimbun* organized a lecture meeting on the theme of “International Thought War and the Jewish Question,” featuring as speakers well-known anti-Jewish authorities, Lieutenant General Nobutaka SHITENNO (elected at the top of the list to the House of Representatives in 1942), Kitayama ATAGO, and Masao MASUDA, and drawing an audience of 3,000 at the Osaka Central Public Hall (*Osaka Mainichi*, July 25, 1942). The “Jews and Secret International Society” exhibition, held at the department store *Matsuzakaya* in Osaka, was so successful from the opening day (*Mainichi*, March 5, 1943) that lectures on anti-Jewish themes were held during the exhibition period, which itself was extended eventually (*Mainichi*, March 21). *Kokusai Seikei Gakkai* (lit. Society of International Political and Economic Studies), an anti-Jewish research association, organized a lecture series “Seminar on the Jewish Question” in Tokyo (July 24-26), in which Torashige UEHARA, the editor-in-chief of the *Mainichi*, served as one of the lecturers.

At around the time of the decline of power of the Axis alliance and especially Italy’s surrender, the Japanese newspapers began to further shift from factual reporting to the dissemination of their subjective interpretations. It seems as if they had abandoned the reality of the world, opting to explain everything in terms of a conceptual binary

universe whose components are either Jewish or non-Jewish. Let us cite a representative example of such reporting.

The *Mainichi* editorial titled “*Roma bakugeki to Yudaya minzoku* (The bombing of Rome and the Jewish nation)” (July 29, 1943) associates the air raids on Rome with a Jewish conspiracy. It reads: “There is something unreasonable in assuming that the bombing of Rome was an act of Christians, as we pointed it out in this column the other day,” and the author goes on to say that it has been proved that the bombing was, just as suspected, “planned by Freemasonry, composed of Jews and based on Jewish thought.” The editorial then questions the true character of some anti-Axis alliance leaders such as Roosevelt and Eden, suggesting that they are “more like the leaders, or prisoners, of the Jewish nation.” It concludes that it is finally becoming clear which thought system is “guiding the British and the Americans in the current great war.”

Newspaper articles at that time were full of passages that seemingly declared that Italy’s surrender was a positive development for the Axis, a source of great joy:

“Tragedy of a soul-less entity — succumbed to persistent enemy schemes” (Yataka NAKAOKA, Lieutenant General of the Army), “Germany is relieved of a heavy burden” (Taneji HISA, Second Lieutenant of the Navy), “with one role over, the German war force is fortified” (Toshio SHIRATORI, former Ambassador to Italy) (*Asahi*, September 10); “be ready for enemies’ thought warfare — Italy’s fall is rather advantageous” (Ryotaro NAKAI, Lieutenant General of the Army), “with the Axis’ cancer removed, we the productive camp are sure to win” (Kiyoshi GOUKO, advisor to the Cabinet) (*Mainichi*, September 10); “Good news in Berlin/Führer’s speech in high spirits” (*Mainichi*, September 12).

Where did all the enthusiasm with which the newspapers had heralded the tripartite alliance, calling it “as hard as iron,” go?

Before long, the newspapers turned to arguing that the main cause of Italy’s surrender was enemy schemes. A *Mainichi* article on September 12, 1943, concludes decisively that “Badoglio’s betrayal was indeed due to a Jewish conspiracy, just as the former Prime Minister Mussolini fell into Jewish clutches.” It continues: “this terrifying secret international society, Freemasonry, the Jewish blood and dollars that control the headquarters of our American and British enemies, the original instigator of a world revolution disguised as the goddess of peace. Roosevelt and Churchill are mere elements

of this group.” The article then declares that “the army that constructs a new order must indeed fight to eradicate the Jews from the surface of the earth,” and cites Taizo HASEGAWA of *Kokusai Seikei Gakkai*: “It is essential to crush the invisible enemy, Jewish conspiracy.” Later, the *Mainichi* carried a series of articles under the common title of “*Bouryaku* (Schemes),” contributed by Toshio SHIRATORI, Toyō OHGUSHI, and Yahei OHBA (September 14 to 15 and 17). The main message of the series was that Japan and Germany, having overcome their weaknesses so as not to fall into schemes as did Italy, must nevertheless carefully prepare themselves, keeping in mind that the Anglo-Saxon-Jewish enemies were about to implement demonic plots. In particular, Shiratori wrote: “It is extremely important to clearly acknowledge this, if you wish to know anything at all about schemes — that it is totally off the mark if you do not know how the Jewish forces are running the world today.” According to him, Italy lacked this insight. He wrote emphatically that “against the opponents’ Jewish ambitions for world hegemony, we must erect the Japanese philosophy and strive to enlighten humanity and the world.” As if to succeed this article, Torashige UEHARA wrote an article titled “*Kokumin ni uttau* (Appealing to the nation),” following the same logic and using similar terms (*Mainichi*, September 16, 1943).

At around the time of Italy’s surrender, newspaper editorials treating the theme of the Jews and their schemes appeared frequently. Such editorials elaborated on the main points of Goebbels’ speeches, starting with the warning that “the cunning, treacherous and persistent false propaganda by the Jewish-Anglo-Saxon camp” should not be lightly taken (*Mainichi*, “*Sendansen o saikentou seyo* [Reexamine the propaganda war],” February 8, 1943). Passages that stand out in those editorials include the following: “The United States and Great Britain have been branded as traitors of the human race,” considering that the United States will “end up in the not too distant future as miserable slaves of money-powered Jews and red Jews” (*Mainichi*, “*Gebberusu shi no enzetsu* [Mr. Goebbels’ speech],” February 20, 1943); “the Americans, who are about to be defeated abroad, have deeply sunk to the status of slaves at home” under Jewish control (*Mainichi*, “*Beikoku ni kunrin suru Yudaya zoku* [The Jewish nation reigning over the United States],” March 6, 1943); “the nation founded on international money politics trying to overthrow the German people’s resistance with conspiratorial propaganda as it did in Italy is like a child’s play” (*Mainichi*, “*Kizentaru Doitsu* [Resolute Germany],” September 12, 1943); “our enemy is a demon; we cannot live with a demon” (*Mainichi*, “*Teiki no shotai o miyo* [Watch the true color of the enemy],” September 20, 1943); “the propaganda and schemes on the enemy side will rapidly vanish like mist before our spirit

of justice confronting humanity's enemies, the United States and Great Britain" (*Asahi*, "*Hibou o jihakuseru teki bouryaku* [Enemy scheme proven inappropriate by itself]" on the theme of the Cairo Conference, December 9, 1943). As for Badoglio's declaration of war against Germany, it was, needless to say, a betrayal, and the newspapers continued to insist that it happened "as a result of the influence of the American and British Jewish forces on the Italian Jews" (*Mainichi*, April 3, 1944).

About one month before Germany's defeat, responding to the news of Germany's cease-fire, the newspapers insisted in their editorials that it was only disinformation and that the general situation was still favorable for Germany: "the low morale in Great Britain is more widely known," "that is to say, the enemy is extremely pressed, as it is clear both in Europe and in the Pacific," "probably the enemy has no other choice but to resort to the schemes and disinformation," "we must strive to bring the true intention of the enemy into broad daylight" (*Mainichi*, "*Bouryaku senden ni bottosuru teki* [Enemy absorbed in conspiratorial propaganda]", March 21, 1945).

All this clearly demonstrates that in those days the Japanese newspapers were no longer transmitters of facts, but they had become a medium for dispensing far-fetched arguments founded on distorted facts. It is even questionable whether the authors of those newspaper articles attempted to obtain factual information. Rather, it seems as if they tried to avoid facts, bound by the concept of the absolutism of the Axis allies. They weaved into their texts their one-sided ideas of events and phenomena as they wanted them to be, forcing their arguments in a definitive manner. When the newspapers ceased to report facts, their arguments (editorials) ceased to be truthful and became extremely dogmatic and dishonest. For the Japanese public, who had never had any personal contact with the Jews as neighbors, the events and people described in newspaper articles must have appeared unfathomable, abstract discussions on matters of distant foreign countries by major newspapers detached from the everyday reality of their readership. Thus, anti-Semitism in Japan, unrelated to ordinary Japanese people, meaninglessly left its traces only in the wartime newspapers. These pathetic traces, so to speak, are just the result of unconditional admiration for another country and the proclaiming of anti-Jewish propaganda on its behalf.

## II

In 1939, when the Japanese newspapers were praising Hitler, Satoshi NISHIMOTO, LL.D., commented on *Mein Kampf* in his "*Yudaya minzoku no houshiteki kenkyu* (A

legalistic historical study of the Jewish national characteristic) (1)” (*Hougaku Ronso* [Journal of the Kyoto Imperial University Society for Legal Studies], Vol. 41, No. 3) as follows:

This book has become a recent masterpiece naturally because of his abundant genius and careful preparation but also because it is based on a thoroughly nationalist consciousness. . . . It was none other than a grand overture to the establishment of the Nazi regime, which signifies the revival of the German nation and the decline of the Jewish nation within Germany. As the Nazis have since been steadily pursuing the development of the German nation and the elimination of Jews, wherever there is a black-white-red party flag with a hooked cross, Jews are condemned to lose their place of truly peaceful living.

From this perspective, this paper presents a history of the Jewish nation and proposes how the Jewish nation should be treated today. Such was an academic paper published in the journal of the Faculty of Law of Kyoto Imperial University.

At about the same time, Kiyoshi KIYOSAWA wrote an article titled “*Hittora wa naze ninki ga arunoka — Doitsu ni kite Nachisu undo o miru* (Why Hitler is popular — coming to Germany and observing the Nazi movement)” for the February 1938 issue of the magazine *Chuokoron*. In this article, the journalist and social commentator stated that Nazism was a religious movement that would not withstand the test of logical analysis, that “it has become Hitler’s one-man theater, and that religious fire keeps burning until it burns itself out, and Germany’s religious flame is now furiously blazing as Hitler’s chorus leader.” In another article, “*Hittora no gosan* (Hitler’s miscalculation)” (*Chuokoron*, October 1939), Kiyosawa analyzed the German situation against the backdrop of the annexation of Austria and of the Sudetenland, stating “Hitler has no mental leeway to listen to what his enemies have to say. As in the past, his desire has inflated like a rubber ball. [...] Whether Hitler has miscalculated or not is for future historians to decide. [...] Miscalculation is perhaps an inevitable product of an adventurous hero.” Kiyosawa, viewing Nazism as a religious movement, stated that it was “atrociously dogmatic and intolerant, as manifested in the persecution of Jews and contention with the Church” and argued why Jews had become the target of Nazi attacks. This article is in stark contrast to the major newspapers glorifying Hitler with such phrases as “a new era in the world’s history” and “taking humanity to a brighter new life and well-being.”

At that time, Kiyosawa was a regular contributor to such magazines as *Chuokoron*, *Kaizo*, and *Kokusai Chishiki*. In February 1941, however, he was registered on the list of banned authors of the Bureau of Intelligence Section II (in charge of publications, established 1940), along with Tadao YANAIHARA, Kisaburo YOKOTA, Koutaro TANAKA, Hironori MIZUNO, and Tsunego BABA. At about the same time, the Metropolitan Police Department prohibited the sale of the published works of Yukio OZAKI, Hitoshi ASHIDA, Tsunego BABA, Toshiyoshi MIYAZAWA, and Kiyoshi KIYOSAWA, who were considered as liberalists. In 1944, *Chuokoron* and *Kaizo* were discontinued on the recommendation of the military authorities. While under the surveillance of the Special Higher Police, Kiyosawa wrote *Ankoku Nikki (A Diary of Darkness)*, to “keep a record to write a modern history later.” Needless to say, his diary contained his criticism of the pro-German, anti-Jewish discourse of the newspapers.

With regard to Japan’s actual treatment of Jews in flesh and blood, Kiichiro HIGUCHI in the Otpor Incident, which occurred in March 1938, and Chiune SUGIHARA, Vice-Consul at the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania, who issued so-called “Sugihara visas” to Jewish refugees from July to August, 1940, should be mentioned.

One day in March 1938, 18 Jewish refugees arrived at Otpor Station on the Trans-Siberian Railway near the Soviet Union-Manchukuo border. More refugees arrived later, and their number increased considerably. The diplomatic mission of Manchukuo refused their entry. However, Kiichiro HIGUCHI, the commander of the Harbin Special Branch attached to the Kwantung Army negotiated with the diplomatic authorities, succeeding in having visas issued to the refugees and thereby opening the “Higuchi route.” Germany responded to this by sending a statement of protest to the Japanese government. Within the Kwantung Army, Higuchi’s initiative came to be regarded as problematic, and calls for his punishment grew loud. Higuchi reported to the headquarters of the Kwantung Army and appealed to Chief of Staff, Hideki TOJO, saying, “it is unconceivable to submit to such inhuman German treatment.” Tojo listened to this and decided not to subject Higuchi to disciplinary punishment. Tojo’s decision diffused the criticism surrounding Higuchi within the military, and “the German protest was overlooked.”<sup>5</sup> The year before this incident, in December 1937, Higuchi attended the First Conference of Jewish Communities in the Far East held in Harbin, where he criticized the Nazis and defended the Jews on behalf of the guest attendees and was generously applauded. However, Japanese newspapers did not write even a single line about this conference.

Against the orders of the Foreign Ministry, Chiune SUGIHARA wrote transit visas to Jewish refugees from Poland for humanitarian reasons. The situation surrounding the issuance of so-called Sugihara visas has come to be well known in recent years, thanks to extensive research. Because of this, we shall refrain from examining this subject in detail here; instead, let us direct our attention to the Jewish refugees who actually received Sugihara visas.

### III

The number of Jewish refugees who, during one year from the summer of 1940, travelled to Vladivostok on the Trans-Siberian Railway and crossed the sea to arrive at Tsuruga Port, Fukui Prefecture, with Sugihara visas is estimated to be about 6,000. How did local residents in Tsuruga City receive the refugees, and how did the Japanese newspapers report their arrivals?

In March 2006, the Sea of Japan Topographical Survey and Research Association launched a research project to study the traces of the Jewish refugees who landed at Tsuruga. The Association interviewed 28 persons and collected 32 testimonials.

Many of those surveyed vaguely remembered seeing groups of miserably dressed Jews traveling on foot from the port to the railway station. Their accounts included: “Asahi-yu (local public bathhouse) closed one day to let the Jews take a bath free of charge”; the boy who said “he had given apples and other fruits” to the Jewish refugees is “almost sure to have been my brother, who was six years older than me”; “my parents had a watch and jewelry shop in front of the train station. Each time a ship arrived at the port, Jews with no luggage would come into the shop. . . . [my parents] bought many watches and rings. The Jews would take the money and go to the *udon* noodle shop near the station to eat”; “my father felt sorry for the Jews and often gave them the food in the shop. I also gave a steamed potato that I had once.” The survey report presents various testimonials, including one by an interviewee who vaguely remembered listening to the principal’s talk during a morning assembly at Tsuruga Normal Elementary School: “The foreigners who arrived here yesterday on Europe-Asia ferryboats and went on to Kobe and Yokohama are the Jews, who have no country of their own. They might have looked miserable, but many of them are rich. They are foreigners who are forced to travel for various reasons.”<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the newspapers also reported on the arrivals of Jewish refugees. While the newspapers did describe the Jewish refugees, it can be said that the articles

were already biased on the basis of stereotypical views of the Jews.

In early 1941, a certain direction of reporting began to appear, starting with the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* article of February 2, "Floods of wandering Jews / Over 100 in Tsuruga at each arrival of ship." According to this article's summary, 50,000 travelled from Northern Europe to Siberia in 1940, and some 1,200 of the 1,500 passengers from Vladivostok to Tsuruga were Jewish. From 1941 to 1942, about 200,000 travelled from the Soviet Union through the services of Intourist, and a sizable percentage of them are believed to have passed through Japan in transit. To this influx, the article writes in conclusion: "Tsuruga Prosecutor's Office is watching closely to prevent the infiltration of international spies who might attempt to engage in maneuvers amid those groups of travelers." In the sequel to this article, the Jewish refugees are described as follows: "Some are flush with cash, and some do not even have enough to buy cigarettes. Yet, they all have the same troubled expression chiseled with wrinkles of worry. When they spoke, they were unanimous in praising the peaceful atmosphere of Japan as if unaware of the war and the warm kindness of Japanese people." The article also reports that the journalist spoke with a Jewish refugee who said, "How happy I would be if I could be allowed to stay on in Japan, even as a beggar" (*Osaka Asahi*, February 6). The *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* reported with the headline, "Jews pouring in at Tsuruga/Impudence of the people driven away" (February 14).

Let us compare some minor articles of this kind. One *Osaka Asahi* article reports the arrival of Jewish refugees at Tsuruga, describing them as "showing a smile of relief and turning on their charm, saying just-learned 'arigato' repeatedly to those around . . . creating a cheerful, cosmopolitan scene." The article also relates, with a photograph, that later in Kobe they attended a prayer meeting before going to their respective lodgings for the night: "Just as expected from 'God's chosen people,' they prayed devoutly" (February 15). The *Osaka Mainichi* reports the same event under the headline "Troops of wandering Jews pass through Osaka to Kobe/Disorderly and uncontrolled" and with phrases such as "cramming into third-class cars, oblivious of others in the same condition," "slightly soiled" and "down and out" describing their appearances, "optimist with only an accordion as the only personal property, and some colorfully dressed ones . . . leaving much to be talked about on the platform," and "finally settling down at a reception facility" in Kobe (February 15).

During this period, the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* ran a series of articles titled "*Rurou no Yudayajin* (wandering Jews)" for six days (February 9-14), something that the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* did not do. This series was a detailed, generally objective presentation

of the current situation of the Jews and its background, with some passages showing a slight hint of pity. The author also asks himself a question: "Is the thought of worldwide conspiracy that is nosily discussed in Europe with regard to the Jews also entertained in the depth of these Jews' hearts?" However, regarding some crucial questions, he does not deny that the instigator and victor of the First World War "is said to be the Jews" and that "the Jews are said to have conspired" to commit all sorts of unscrupulous acts amid the post-war confusion. He also refers to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, easily finishing off: "Those terrifying words tell the truth about the feared and detested Jewish nation."

The *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* carried an interesting report about two groups of foreign refugees who were staying in Japan at that time (July 24, 1941). One group consisted of some 400 Germans who had been taken in custody in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) since the Dutch-German war broke out, and the other group was some 800 Jewish refugees. The headline of the report is already stereotypical: "Mothers disinfect tableware for children even in a hotel/Efficient and disciplined German women/Jews beat down prices to XX (NB: official prices)." The two photographs accompanying the report create a striking contrast, with one captioned "a pleasant afternoon tea for German women and girls in Kobe," and the other, "wandering Jews receiving rationed bread at the Jewish Association of Kobe." The report says that the refugees of the first group stay at high-grade hotels in Kobe, Arima, Nara, and Kyoto and private residences of their compatriots living in Japan, that their living expenses of 10 to 16 or 17 yen per day are entirely covered by the Embassy of Germany, and that they get together to enjoy one another's company at various locations in Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. With these descriptions, the report tells the reader that the Germans have many virtues that the Japanese should emulate. On the other hand, the report's descriptions of the other group of refugees are as follows:

For a while [following their arrival in Japan], they stayed in hotels to show off their high spirits, but at present most of them share rented houses around Aotani and Nozaki Street, relying on the lifeline of 1.50 yen per person and per day offered by the Jewish Association of Kobe to prepare meals at home. Although making do with small fish and vegetables at home, they are so vain that they come out to the Oriental Hotel and order a cup of tea in the lobby, which is shared by two or three persons. Or, one staying in the hotel invites other Jews from outside to take a bath in the hotel room at 0.50 yen per person. These are the ways they fully act out their Jewish characteristics. The Jews

living from day to day in group are desperate to obtain travel documents to go to a third country.

It is possible that these descriptions were in fact accurate. However, it is also possible to surmise that the report was written to use traditional stereotypical Jewish images to explain various situations, to “demonstrate” that the stereotypical images were accurate. The journalist might have forced himself to not notice anything that did not correspond to those images. This tendency can be more clearly found in the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*’s coverage of Jewish refugees in Japan than in that of the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun*.

Around May 1941, newspaper articles began to cover the departure of Jewish refugees from Japan more frequently. Both the *Osaka Mainichi* and the *Osaka Asahi* depicted tragic scenes of departure, suggestive of anticipated hardships. The *Osaka Mainichi* reported: “Passengers and well-wishers completed a gloomy picture of departure at the pier, both sides thinking of all the difficulties and danger that might come their way in the future.” Most of the Jewish refugees in Japan were forced to move to Shanghai for the time being, without knowing where their final destination would be. One factor for this was a freeze on Japanese assets by the United States, Great Britain, and the Dutch East Indies, in succession, in late July, causing a sudden tension between Japan and the United States. One newspaper covered this development in the article, “*Touketsu’ no kage ni Yudayajin* (Jews behind ‘freeze’) (*Osaka Asahi*, August 2). If this article were accurate, it brought about the ironic consequence of putting the Jews in Kobe in a predicament. On both August 20 and 30, some 300 Jewish refugees left for Shanghai. The remaining 850 or so, the *Osaka Asahi* reported: “We have the prospect of getting completely rid of the migratory birds — that since last year have flooded the International Section — from Kobe by the end of September.” The *Osaka Mainichi* reported the departure of the first group of 289 Jews from Kobe on August 20 in a ridiculing tone:

Since they do not neglect to look after their appearances in spite of being wanderers with no money on their persons, they have bravely put on a formal winter jacket or a frock coat in this summer heat to look dignified, although soaked with sweat. Some have put on a spring coat over winter clothes, and some don a felt hat or a Panama hat, which they must have gone through great trouble to purchase in Motomachi, to look summery only on the head. There is

a young Jewish girl carefully holding a traditional Japanese umbrella to her chest. . . . the party marched to the Motomachi 1-chome tram station, biting a pear or apple . . . (August 21)

The *Osaka Asahi* described the departing Jews without ridiculing:

They were variably dressed, some wearing a thick winter overcoat and some a frock coat, and some trying to take with them everything they could, from pots and pans to even kegs for pickled vegetables. . . . their expressions were full of anxiety as they were about to embark on another voyage, showing their wistful feelings for what they are leaving behind. (August 21)

The *Osaka Asahi*'s article at the end of the month, "*Kobe no Yudayajin zokuzoku Shanhai e* (successive departures of the Kobe Jews for Shanghai)" (August 29), explains the end of the adventure.

As sequels to the articles cited above, there are those covering the Jewish refugees after their arrival in Shanghai, namely "Wandering Jews infesting Shanghai / Jews outshining Chinese merchants in negotiations" (*Osaka Asahi*, September 25, from Special Correspondent Shinoda) and an article with a photograph, stating "Kobe Masonic Club, de-facto Japan chapter of the Jewish secret society, Freemasonry . . . is in danger of destruction and secretly struggling in its secret world behind its firmly closed doors" (*Osaka Mainichi*, "'*Kaiki no dendo*' kaimetsu e ['Hall of mystery' on its way to destruction]," October 4). It can be said that the problem of dealing with actual Jews in Japan, excluding Japanese-occupied cities such as Shanghai and Tianjin, terminated by the time of the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States in December. After that time, issues involving Jewish refugees, whether in Manchukuo or China, did not appear in Japanese newspapers, except for one miniscule article two years later reporting "the arrival in Teheran of 5,000 Polish Jews from the Soviet Union on the 30th, who are continuing on to Palestine" (*Asahi*, Istanbul, September 22, 1943).

## Conclusion

After the departure of the Jewish refugees from Japan, no actual Jewish persons were kept in custody in Japan, and the Japanese newspapers reverted to playing with conceptual Jewish images. Based on the same logic as the anti-Semitic ideologue, a

range of cultural events were organized, and newspaper editorials repeated discussions on the theme. Moreover, since the Japanese newspapers adhered to the opinion that “it goes without saying that the arrival of world peace will be accelerated, as the relationship between Japan and its allies becomes closer and firmer” (*Osaka Asahi* editorial, November 10, 1942), they were reduced to being mere transmitters of news from Germany about “Jewish calamity swept away” (*Asahi*, January 24, 1943, reporting Hans Hinkel’s “One path to new ideals”) and “eradication of Jewish evil” (*Asahi*, January 24, 1943, reporting “Führer Hitler’s proclamation”). The attitude of the newspapers toward Italy has already been stated above.

Tracing the entry of Jewish refugees into Japan, their stay in and departure from the country, we can say that the national government, Hyogo Prefecture, and Kobe City and other municipalities handled the situation generally calmly, despite the ongoing reinforcement of the Japan-Germany alliance. It can be also assumed that ordinary people in Tsuruga and Kobe did not behave aggressively toward Jewish refugees at all, although they might have appeared strange to the local residents. Rather, there are testimonials attesting to humane and compassionate reception of the Jewish refugees, which seem credible. On the other hand, major Japanese newspapers, seemingly sympathetic toward them, continued depicting the Jews in a sarcastic, caricatured manner. Furthermore, they revealed their preconceived notions about the Jews in their interpretation of the background of the massive emergence of refugees, falsely linking all sorts of problems throughout history with the Jewish nation. The newspapers reported and commented the Jewish Question solely conceptually, in their desperate dedication to Germany. After this phase, they had their own way. The result was the detachment of the newspapers from the governments in the treatment of the Jewish refugees and from the general public in the perception of reality.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There was a small number of Jewish scholars, business people, etc. of various nationalities who lived in Japan. However, they did not necessarily make known their Jewish identity, and the circles in which they moved did not regard them specifically as Jewish. Following the Siberian Intervention (1918-22), some military personnel opposed to the pro-democracy movement of the Taisho era (1912-26) introduced the anti-Jewish discourse into Japan. Basing their argument on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and blaming the collapse of the imperial system of Germany and Russia on a Jewish conspiracy, they argued that the next target of the Jewish conspiracy would be the Empire of Japan, rather than the British monarchy, which had

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already been weakened by the same plot. Sakuzo YOSHINO and other liberals criticized this argument, but the newspapers did not participate in the debate.

- <sup>2</sup> *Gaimusho Kiroku - Minzoku Mondai Kankei zakken - Yudayajin Mondai* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Records / Miscellaneous Cases Related to National and Ethnic Issues / Jewish Issue), Vol. 3 (January 1934 - end May, 1938)
- <sup>3</sup> While it is generally said that the “Essential Points” were adopted by the five principal ministers in consultation, “(Strictly Confidential) Essential Points of the Measures Concerning the Jews” bears a notation handwritten in red at the end, which reads: “The above is not the decision made by the Council of the Five Ministers; the Prime Minister spoke of this proposal, presented by the Foreign Minister, to the principal competent ministers, that is, the Ministers of War and Home Affairs, and since both of these ministers accepted it, it was adopted as orders to be issued to the overseas diplomatic establishments” (*Gaimusho Kiroku - Minzoku Mondai Kankei Zakken - Yudayajin Mondai* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Records / Miscellaneous Cases Related to National and Ethnic Issues / Jewish Issue), Vol. 5 (December 1-31, 1938)). The “Essential Points” were later issued to the overseas diplomatic establishments as “Decision by the Council of the Five Ministers dated December 6, the 13th Year of Showa.”
- <sup>4</sup> Many scholars simply state that the “Essential Points of the Measures Concerning the Jews” were abolished as war broke out between Japan and the United States. To be sure, remarks to the “Measures for the Jews in View of the Current State of Affairs (draft adopted by the Liaison Meeting)” of January 1942 read: “The Essential Points of the Measures Concerning the Jews adopted by the Council of Five Ministers shall be abolished.” Moreover, the 1942 measures show greater severity toward the Jews: “All entry of Jews shall be forbidden, except for those entering for special reasons” (Item 1); “their residences and commercial operations shall be placed under strict surveillance, and their hostile maneuvers shall be eliminated and suppressed” (Item 2); “all that appears to support the Jewish national movement may not be conducted” (Item 3). Yet, the explanatory section of the same text contains the following passages: “However, actions that appear to completely eliminate the Jews not only go against our national ideal of worldwide unification but also are sure to be used by the British and the Americans for their propaganda; therefore, in principle, the Jews shall be treated in the same way as those who have the same nationalities as they. . . . Not conducting the required surveillance is acknowledged to be appropriate.” While its motivation might have been idealistic or calculating, Japan did continue a line of measures for the Jews that clearly differed from that of Germany or Italy.
- <sup>5</sup> Takashi HAYASAKA, *Shikikan no Ketsudan — Manshu to Atsu no Shogun Higuchi Kiichiro (Commander’s Determination: Kiichiro Higuchi, Shogun of Manchukuo and Attu)* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju’u, 2010), p. 149.
- <sup>6</sup> Sea of Japan Topographical Survey and Research Association, *Jindo no Minato Tsuruga — Inochi no Biza de Tsuruga ni Jourikushita Yudayajin Nanmin Sokuseki Chosa Houkoku (Humanitarian Port, Tsuruga: a report of the follow-up survey of Jewish refugees who landed at Tsuruga with Sugihara visas),* 2007.

**Prewar Japan's Perception of Jews and  
the Harbin Jewish Community:  
The Harbin Jewish Community under Japanese Rule 1932-1941**

Chizuko TAKAO

**Abstract:**

After the October Revolution and the Russian Civil War, more than 10,000 Jews lived in Harbin, a Russian city constructed in Manchuria at the end of the 19th century, forming the largest Jewish community in the Far East. With the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the establishment of Manchukuo in the following year, Harbin and other Russian settlements built up along the Chinese Eastern Railway came under Japan's rule.

There had only been a few Jewish communities in Japan. For this reason, Japanese perception of the Jews is generally considered to have been only conceptual and notional, and Japan's anti-Semitism was an "import" from the West. However, after the establishment of Manchukuo, Japan confronted the reality of the "Jewish question" there, i.e., the problem of the anti-Semitism by the White Russians who emigrated from Russia after the defeat of the White Army. In a sense, Japan inherited the Russian Jewish question in Harbin. This paper examines how the rivalry between the Russian Fascist Party and the Harbin Jewish community influenced prewar Japan's perception of Jews.

**Keywords:**

Harbin, Manchukuo, Jews, anti-Semitism, Zionism

## **Introduction**

Despite the fact that there used to be small Jewish communities in Nagasaki, Kobe and Yokohama, Japanese perception of Jews often does not derive from firsthand experience of communicating with Jewish people. After the introduction of Western civilization during the Meiji Era (1868-1912) and later, the European Christian view of the Jews was imported to Japan as part of Western “education,” along with conceptual images of Jewish people, as exemplified by the so-called “Jewish conspiracy theory,” which had nothing to do with real Jews.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that actual contact with Jewish people did not have an impact on how the Japanese perceived them. Japan’s actual contact with Jews took place in northeastern China, that is, Manchuria, over which Japan and Russia had contested. With the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the establishment of Manchukuo in the following year, the community of 100,000 Russians came under Japanese rule. Since then, Japan confronted the real “Jewish question.”

This paper examines the relationship between the Harbin Jewish community and Japan, focusing on Japan’s perception of and policy regarding the Jewish question in Manchukuo, under whose jurisdiction Jewish people unwittingly came, when Japan made inroads into Manchuria.

### **1. Harbin — The “Jerusalem of the Far East”**

In its closing years, Tsarist Russia launched the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER), of 2,500 kilometers in total length in northeastern China, as a shortcut for the Trans-Siberian Railroad connecting Vladivostok, a naval port in the Far East, to Moscow. Russia obtained the rights to the CER through the Triple Intervention following the first Sino-Japanese War (of 1894-5), by deliberately extending a favor to China in expectation of receiving a favor in return. In the areas along the railroad, Russia enjoyed extraterritoriality rights, and many cities were constructed, populated with people from the inland areas of Russia. In particular, Harbin was created in 1898 at the point of intersection of the Songhua River (Sungari River) and the railroad. Shortly after its inception, Harbin became a base for Russia’s expansion into the Far East.

In late Tsarist Russia, Jews were placed under strict residency restrictions. The overwhelming majority (4.9 million out of a total 5.2 million) of Russian Jews were concentrated in the Pale of Settlement (present-day Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania) and Poland. However, during the short period following the Russian Empire’s expansion into

Manchuria and the construction of Harbin, Russian Jews established a firm economic and social position in Russian Far East. According to a census conducted in 1912, out of a total of 43,691 “Russians” in Harbin, the number of Jews was 5,032, accounting for 11.5%. In Harbin, where the influence of Russian culture was noticeable, the residents living there tended to be collectively referred to as “Russians.” In actuality, however, they comprised Ukrainians, Tartars, Jews, Germans, and other various people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. The Russian city of Harbin built in Asia was dubbed the “Moscow of the East” or the “Paris of the East.” However, in several Jewish memoirs, we can also find the expression the “Jerusalem of the Far East.” Harbin was an enclave of Russian Jews that had suddenly emerged in Asia.

Why were so many Jewish people attracted to this Far Eastern city of Harbin, so far from European Russia, shortly after its establishment? One reason was that Harbin, located at the frontier of the Russian Empire, was a city that represented the more liberal aspects of Tsarist Russia. In line with the policy of the Finance Minister Sergei Witte, who focused on economic development in areas along the CER, the Empire legalized Jewish residence in these areas. As a result, many entrepreneurial Jews were attracted to these areas.<sup>2</sup> In 1903 when the CER was opened, the Harbin Jewish community was created. In the following year, the first rabbi arrived from Omsk in Russia. Harbin was called the “Happy Horvathia” under General Dmitri L. Horvath, who had been the General Manager of the CER from 1903 to 1920. Harbin conveyed the tolerant aspects of Tsarist Russia, quite different from Russia Proper.

During the Russo-Japanese War which broke out in 1904, Harbin functioned as a supply base for the Russian army in Manchuria, attracting many people, ranging from munitions dealers to speculators who dreamed of making a quick fortune. For the war, about 30,000 Jews were called up for military service from various parts of Russia. Many Jews were included among the Russian soldiers held in Japan’s prisoner-of-war camps in Matsuyama and other locations.<sup>3</sup> In the context of Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and the turbulence of the First Russian Revolution, pogroms were rampant across Russia, and many Jewish communities in the Pale were destroyed. Some of the demobilized Jewish soldiers did not return to their devastated hometowns but decided to stay in Harbin, bringing over their families.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Abraham Kaufman and Harbin Jewish Community**

Jewish people in Harbin played a pioneering role in promoting the development of

natural resources as well as the growth of forestry, flour-milling, alcohol production and other local industries. A number of Jewish capitalists, including Leonti Skidel'sky (a forestry and coalmining contractor) and Roman Kabalkin (a soybean exporter), were active in such industries as sugar manufacture, flour-milling and the fur export. They also played an important role in the city council founded in 1908. It was Abraham Kaufman (1885-1971) who assumed the leadership of Harbin's Jewish community. He was a medical doctor and served as the chairman of the Jewish Community of Harbin from 1919 to 1945.

Abraham Kaufman was born to a wealthy Orthodox Jewish family in 1885 in Mglin in the Chernihov gubernia within the Pale. In his memoir, Kaufman stated "the passion of Hasidism lives within me." His mother was thought to have been the great-granddaughter of Shneur Zalman, the founder of Chabad Hasidism, a mystical Jewish sect initiated in Lithuania in the 18th century. When Kaufman was five years old, his family moved to Perm in Russia proper. After graduating from a gymnasium, he was unable to enroll at Kazan University due to a restriction in the number of Jewish enrollees, so Kaufman went to Switzerland where he studied medicine and qualified as a medical doctor in 1909. He then returned to Russia. While working as a doctor in Perm, Kaufman engaged in Zionist activities in various provincial cities. In 1912, Kaufman arrived in Harbin, where he started social activities in a wide variety of fields. He served as the leader of the Harbin Jewish community for a quarter of a century, from the Civil War period after the Russian Revolution to the collapse of Manchukuo. At the same time, he worked as the Far Eastern representative of major Zionist organizations, such as the Jewish National Fund, the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. Kaufman was the chief editor of the *Evrejskaia Zhizn* ("Jewish Life"), a Russian language Jewish weekly, published in Harbin between 1921 and 1943. After the foundation of Manchukuo, he chaired the Far Eastern Conference of Jewish Communities, organized for three consecutive years from 1937, through which he communicated Japan's policy toward the Jews to overseas countries. In 1939, Kaufman visited Japan at the invitation of the Japanese government, and held talks with top-level Japanese officials of the authorities concerned. Through these activities, he functioned as a "*shtadlan*," an intercessor between the Japanese and the Jewish people. Abraham Kaufman was a figure who exerted great influence on how the Japanese military and government authorities perceived Jewish people in the prewar period.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Harbin Jewish Community and Japan's Policy toward Jews in the Manchukuo Period

#### 3-1. Anti-Semitism of the Russian Fascist Party

The Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 divided Russia into two camps: the Reds and the Whites. Fierce battles broke out in the Far East and Siberia, with rulers changing many times. Many refugees, including remnants of the White Guard, were dispersed to various part of the world. These Russians (often referred to as "White Russians") fled primarily to Berlin, Paris, Prague and Harbin. More than 200,000 people fled from Siberia and the Russian Far East to Manchuria, crossing the border between Russia and China. Most of them remained in Harbin, whereas many others moved from Manchuria to the United States, Australia, or Shanghai and other Chinese cities.

There were many Jews among these refugees from Russia. Due to the influx of the refugees, the population of the Harbin Jewish community dramatically increased to between ten and twenty thousand people. The Harbin Jewish community organization had to accept in great haste the flood of refugees from inland Russia, which was devastated by the Civil War. By around 1921, the *Pristan* (wharves) district, the business center in Harbin, became home to two synagogues, a Talmud Torah school, a Jewish library, a gymnasium, a mutual-aid funeral society, a graveyard, a home for the aged, a clinic, an eating house, a Gmiluth Hesed (a free-loan society), a refugee relief organization, and other substantial mutual aid organizations. These facilities were concentrated in a triangle-shaped area, about one kilometer along one side, delineated by Kitaiskaya Street (Chinese Street), the main street running through *Pristan* district in a north-south direction, Kommercheskaya Street (Street of Commerce) to the north, and Diagonalnaya Street (Diagonal Street) to the west.

After the October Revolution in 1917, there was a rapidly spreading view associating the "Bolshevik disaster" with the Jews, in which the revolution was regarded as the result of a Jewish conspiracy, among people both in and outside Russia. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, forged by the Russian secret police at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were suddenly spotlighted to imply that the *Protocols* had predicted the Russian Revolution and the "breakdown of the world order," and spread to various parts of the world at that time. Japan was no exception.<sup>6</sup> In the Japanese troops in Siberia which supported the Whites were inundated with information about the close connection between the Bolsheviks and the Jews. In particular, the Japanese Consulate General and military authorities in Harbin supplied anti-Semitic information to Japan, with the proviso that the information was reported from White Russians. Merged with

anti-Bolshevik sentiment, anti-Semitism posed a threat to the Jewish community of Harbin.

With its population dramatically increased due to the influx of the post-revolution refugees, Harbin came to have the largest concentration of counter-revolutionary Russians in the Far East. In January 1927, a Russian fascist organization with the aim of overthrowing the Soviet regime came into existence under the slogan of “God, Nation, Labor,” to establish a fascist dictatorship in Russia. Multiple fascist groups assembled to form the Russian Fascist Party in May 1931.<sup>7</sup>

In February 1932, when the Kwantung Army made a triumphal entry into Harbin, the army used the Russian Fascist Party, which had just been formed at that time, as its collaborator. Immediately afterwards, there were frequent incidents of Jewish people being kidnapped by the Russian Fascist Party with its intent to demand ransom. According to the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a number of abductions targeting wealthy Jewish shopkeepers occurred immediately after the foundation of Manchukuo in 1932.

Since earlier times, northeastern China had suffered frequent cases of abductions for ransom committed by marauding Chinese bandits known as *Honghuzi*. Kaufman recollected that after the Japanese military had swept away these Chinese marauders from Harbin, the Black Hundreds and Russian fascist bandits replaced them.

“In March [1933], a Jewish social activist called Koffman was abducted on his way home from work. He was taken away by car [...] and killed during his capture. His dead body has not been found. Two months later, a butcher called Grinberg was kidnapped. [...] On the night of Yom Kippur, a son of a merchant called Shetel was abducted by a group of bandits. The group caught him on Konnaya Street, forced him into a car, and drove off. Shetel’s son was kept trapped in a dark, damp cave for 100 days, and sometimes tortured. Later he was freed for a ransom of \$25,000. In May 1937, the decomposed body of a shopkeeper called Leonson was found in a well in a newly developed urban area of Harbin. He had been kidnapped by bandits for ransom in June 1935.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Boris Bresler, a historian who was born in 1918 in Harbin and later emigrated to the United States, Harbin transformed from a “city of tolerance” to a “city of hatred and harassment” after Japan expanded its influence following the Manchurian Incident.<sup>9</sup> During the early 1920s, between ten and twenty thousand Jews lived in

Harbin. However, after the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932, many Jews left Harbin and emigrated to Shanghai or Tianjin, causing the number of Jews remaining in Harbin to fall to 2,251 at the end of 1938.<sup>10</sup>

### **3-2. Impact of the Kasje Affair on Harbin Jewish Community**

There was deep involvement by the local police authorities behind the kidnappings of Jews by bandits. The Kasje Affair involved a conspiracy between the Russian Fascist Party and the Japanese army and police, which escalated into an international scandal. The incident took the following course. At midnight on August 24, 1933, Simon Kasje, a young Jewish pianist was kidnapped by unidentified attackers. Simon was the son of Joseph Kasje, who operated the Hotel Moderne, the most prominent hotel in Harbin, which hosted the Lytton Commission in 1932. It was Kostya Nakamura, an interpreter of Japanese military police (*kempeitai*), who conceived a plot to extract a ransom from this wealthy father. When Joseph Kasje refused to negotiate the ransom with the kidnappers, they sent him his son Simon's ear. However, following instruction from the French deputy consul Albert Chambon, Joseph did not comply with the ransom demand, and attempted to identify the kidnappers through his own investigation and to rescue Simon. On December 3 of the same year, Simon's mangled body was found. In October 1934, six suspects were arrested, including Martynov who was a member of the Russian Fascist Party and a police officer of the Criminal Affairs Division of the Harbin Police Agency. Their trial began at the district court in Harbin in June 1935. The accused were sentenced to death in June 1936. However, in response to a petition by the White Russian side, an appeal was filed. Then the kidnappers were retried in a higher court, which reversed the decision of the district court, and all of the convicts were acquitted in January 1937.<sup>11</sup>

Since the victim Simon was a French citizen, the French Consulate was involved in the Kasje Affair, which became a scandal that caught worldwide attention. Jewish newspapers in Shanghai as well as Europe and America reported the details of the Kasje Affair, and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions abroad exchanged information and made inquiries into the affair. For this reason, Japan's diplomatic documents include materials regarding the Kasje affair.

Behind the Russian Fascist Party, which was directly responsible for the crime, were the Japanese Military Mission (*tokumu kikan*) and the military police. White Russians had exercised great influence within the police structure in Harbin since former times. After the establishment of Manchukuo, Japanese police organizations, including the Harbin Military Mission and the Manchukuo military police took advantage of the

Russian Fascist Party as their subordinates.

On September 19, 1936, the Harbin Consulate-General Shoshiro Sato sent a report to Shigeru Yoshida, then ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the United Kingdom, admitting that Jews being persecuted throughout the world, but the degree of persecution was particularly serious in Harbin. Sato explained the reasons as follows: in Harbin, several hundred White Russians worked for the regulatory police authorities, military-police and the railway police. They had lost their homeland and ended up suffering extremely miserable vagrant-like lives. They believed that it was the Jews who had reduced them to an unfortunate existence, and so saw them as their enemies. In addition, there were many “bad” Russians who abused their positions to commit illegal acts under the pretext of raising funds for anticommunist activities. Sato also bemoaned the fact that, of the Japanese officials who should have been cracking down on such “bad” Russians, very few were capable of seeing through these worrisome conditions.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the Harbin vice consul Hanroku Nagaoka submitted a report dated January 14, 1935 to Foreign Minister Koki Hirota. In the report, Nagaoka candidly admitted that the Jews were suffering military-sanctioned persecution committed by the Russian Fascist Party in Harbin, but expressed his view that taking a policy of siding with the Jews, who comprised a minority of the Russians living in Harbin, would never be convenient for the sake of governance, because that policy would alienate the White Russians.<sup>13</sup> It can be said that this report indicates the actual conditions and Japan’s real intention concerning the governance of Manchukuo, which were incompatible with the official principles for governing Manchukuo, such as “Five Races Under One Union” and “Racial Harmony.”

### **3-3. Trial of the Kasper Affair**

After the Kasper Affair, the Russian Fascist Party's newspaper *Nash Put'* (“Our Path”) carried even more slanderous articles connecting the Jews with Bolshevism. In addition, in November 1934, Osamu Eguchi, a chief of the Criminal Affairs Division of the Harbin Police Agency, stated in a Russian newspaper published in Harbin that the suspects in the affair were patriots who had committed the crime to raise funds for patriotic activities from Jews who had ties with the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> According to his statement, those accused of kidnapping and murdering Simon Kasper resorted to the crime motivated by patriotism, in retaliation against the Jews who constituted the central force of the communists that had collapsed the Russian Empire. Eguchi defended the murderers saying, “If high-spirited men are placed in such a situation as a people without

a country, they may well resort to anything to attain their purpose and unexpectedly violate laws, and such examples abound,” and pleaded extenuating circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

What was the response from the Harbin Jewish community to the Kasper Affair? The day of the funeral for Simon Kasper, all Jewish shops and stores in Harbin were closed to offer their condolences. At the funeral, Kaufman gave the following speech:

“The Jews were the first people in the world to declare the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ We do not pursue revenge, but we seek legal protection of our lives and properties. The state authorities have an obligation to establish peace. The [Japanese and Manchurian] authorities must fight against and sweep out the bandits who foment the hatred of citizens against Jews and sow seeds of discord among citizens.”<sup>16</sup>

In response, *Manshu Nippo* (“The Manchuria Daily Newspaper”), a Japanese newspaper published in Dalian, criticized Abraham Kaufman stating that he had “behaved outrageously by delivering a fierce anti-Manchukuo speech on the street.” Likewise, right-wing newspapers in Harbin reported that Kaufman had made a speech to strongly protest against the “negligence of the authorities that allowed the despicable crime but failed to protect the residents from murderers.”<sup>17</sup> These media reports indicated that, after the Kasper Affair, Kaufman, the central figure of the Harbin Jewish community, was under personal attack. By contrast, the issues of *Evrejskaia Zhizn* (“*Jewish Life*”),<sup>18</sup> a Russian Jewish journal in Harbin for which Kaufman served as the editor in chief, carried almost no reports or comments on the Kasper Affair — Kaufman kept his silence. This shows that the Jews, who were the victims, were in a very vulnerable position.

In this abnormal trial, both the police and the prosecution defended the group of Kasper’s murderers as “patriots.” On June 13, 1936, the Chinese judge of the Harbin district court handed down stiff sentences, contrary to most expectations; death sentences for four of the suspects and life sentences with hard labor for the remaining two suspects.<sup>19</sup>

*Kharbinskoe Vremia* (*The Harbin Times*, a daily newspaper published in Harbin by the Japanese authorities for Russian émigrés, with a circulation of 25,000) sought “fair justice” and a “retrial,” using an analogy between Kasper’s kidnapers and Sholom Schwartzbard, who had assassinated Simon Petliura.

“In the Kasje Affair, the Jewish community is well aware that the accused committed the crime from political motives. Jewish people who remember the Schwartzbard case expected the trial to be political. However the court’s decision did not meet such expectations. That is why the entire population in Harbin hopes that the case will be reopened in the near future, and that justice will triumph.”<sup>20</sup>

The Schwartzbard case refers to the trial concerning the assassination of Symon Petliura by a Jew in Paris in 1926. Petliura was the Supreme Commander of the Ukrainian Army who was considered to have borne the greatest responsibility for the pogroms that occurred in Ukraine during the Civil War period after the Russian Revolution. After being defeated by the Bolsheviks, Petliura fled to Paris and assumed the reins of the Ukrainian government in exile.

In May 1926, Petliura was assassinated by Sholom Schwartzbard, who had lost several family members in the Ukrainian pogroms. After the trial held in France in 1927, the jury acquitted Schwartzbard on the ground that Petliura had been responsible for directing the pogroms.<sup>21</sup> This court decision, in which a vengeance murderer was found not guilty, split public opinion in half in France, its pros and cons drawing the attention of the international community. As mentioned above, the *Kharbinskoe Vremia*, a daily newspaper that represented the viewpoint of the Japanese authorities, asserted that the accused of the Kasje Affair should be retried and acquitted, associating the murderers with Schwartzbard. It is presumed that this assertion had an incomparably greater impact on the Jewish community than the petition for retrial by the Russian Fascist Party, which had always set forth an anti-Semitic argument.

This was when Kaufman finally voiced his opinion, after having kept silent until then. Kaufman<sup>22</sup> praised the decisions handed down by the Harbin district court, saying “The trial for the criminals who kidnapped and murdered Simon Kasje is over. The blackguards have been found guilty. Four have been sentenced to death, and two have been sentenced to life imprisonment. Punishments have been assigned to these bandits. We have not made any comments until now, because [...] we have been waiting until details of the case were clarified before the court and fair decisions were handed down.”<sup>23</sup> Kaufman criticized the tenor of the argument that saw the Kasje kidnapers and murders as heroes as follows:

“Newspapers published in Harbin carried opinions full of falsehoods and

despicable slanders [...] seeing the murderers as national heroes and turning the trial into a political one. Kaspé was considered to be an agent of the Comintern, and the Kaspé kidnapers to be virtuous fighters who acted with patriotic motives. These opinions accordingly asserted that their crimes were not deserving of punishment but rather of admiration. [...] I don't know how anything could be found in common between the Schwartzbard case and the Kaspé Affair. Schwartzbard assassinated Petliura to avenge him for directing 400 pogroms in Ukraine and victimizing 200,000 Jewish people. I doubt that abducting an innocent Jew [Simon Kaspé] who had no relation to politics [...] could be considered a heroic and patriotic act. I think it was purely based on an extremely low-level animal instinct.”<sup>24</sup>

*Ha Degel* (“*The Flag*”),<sup>25</sup> a Russian language bulletin published by Betar, a Zionist Revisionist youth organization, also had kept silence over the trial of the Kaspé Affair until then. However the bulletin conveyed a sense of crisis, saying that “It has now become necessary for Jews to make statements regarding this matter.” *Ha Degel* also protested against the comparison between the “bandits who kidnapped Kaspé for ransom, sliced off his ear, finally killed him, and laid the blame on each other” with Schwartzbard, and required that their sentences should be solemnly carried out.<sup>26</sup>

The trial of the Kaspé Affair constituted a crisis, in which the Harbin Jewish community confronted the Japanese authorities that held effective control over Manchukuo. However, the community's protests were in vain; soon after the death sentences were handed down in June 1936, the High Court of Justice ordered a retrial, and in January 1937, all six accused persons were granted amnesty.<sup>27</sup> The trial of the Kaspé Affair and its outcome may lucidly illustrate the true nature and fraud of what was called Manchukuo, how the “rule of Law” operated there.

#### **4. Why Abraham Kaufman Cooperated with Japan?**

In 1937, when the embers of the Kaspé Affair still lingered, Kaufman and Japan rapidly reached rapprochement. Some materials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicate that, in the spring of the same year, Kaufman “suddenly changed the shy-away attitude” toward the Japanese authorities that he had adopted until then, and approached the Japanese Military Mission, culminating in the 1st annual Conference of Far Eastern Jewish Communities being held in Harbin upon the initiative of Kaufman. The

conference was organized in December 1937, bringing together 21 Jewish delegates from Harbin, Tianjin, Dalian, Mukden, Hailar, Qiqihar and Kobe, with the attendance of 700 participants. At this conference, the Jewish side declared full cooperation with Japan concerning the state policy of Manchukuo.<sup>28</sup> The Conference of Far Eastern Jewish Communities was held for three consecutive years until December 1939. The Jewish delegates admired the “Racial Equality” promoted in Japan and Manchukuo, declared their cooperation with Japan, and demonstrated their findings to Jewish communities in Western countries.

The Japanese side actively publicized the conference to exhibit to other parts of the world the success that Japan and Manchukuo had achieved in ruling their Jewish communities, as well as their racial equality measures, winning Kaufman’s support for Japan’s policy toward the Jews. Almost without exception, previous studies consider that the initiative for the conference was taken by the Japanese side, namely by the Kwantung Army.<sup>29</sup> Certainly it is clear that the Japanese side had an active intention to take advantage of the Jewish community under its rule. For example, Japan was apparently considering a plan to take advantage of the Jews to attract American investment to Manchukuo. Besides, Japan attached importance to the possibility of improving relations with the United States by playing the “Jewish card.” In addition, the author thinks that Japan intended to capitalize on Kaufman’s Zionist leadership to provide centralized management of Jewish communities in Manchukuo and Japan, as well as in Tianjin and Shanghai. Following a command given by Kaufman, not only the Harbin Jewish community but also other Jewish communities in various regions of the Far East expressed their obedience to Japan’s national policy. In places other than Shanghai, which did not participate in the conference, Ashkenazi (Russian) Jews were the primary constituents of the Jewish communities; in these places the network of personal connections established by Kaufman, as the Zionist representative of the Far East, was effectively utilized.

Thus far, many studies based on Japanese materials have placed emphasis on Japan’s policy toward the Jews, and usually Jewish communities under Japanese rule have been treated as an object at the mercy of changes in Japanese policies. However, by studying archival documents in Israel, the author has identified cases of autonomous actions of the Jews. For his cooperation with Japan, Kaufman was captured by the Soviet Union in 1945 and sent to labor camps, where he was forced to serve for eleven years as a camp doctor. He emigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union in 1961. In 1967 in an interview (held in Yiddish) regarding his experiences during the Manchukuo period,

Kaufman talked about Japan's prewar policy toward the Jews and the roles he had played at that time, insisting that it was the Jews who had taken the initiative regarding the Conferences of Far Eastern Jewish Communities.<sup>30</sup> In this regard, we would like to discuss the background behind Kaufman's change of stance toward cooperation with Japan.

The Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem house some interesting historical records proving that Kaufman began to consider collective emigration of the Jews to Palestine from Harbin, where anti-Semitism was growing following the Kasper Affair in 1933. These records comprise correspondence between Kaufman and the Jewish Agency from 1935 to 1936. Around that time, exchange of practical correspondence was commenced between Harbin and Palestine concerning *aliyah* and visas. In a letter dated November 5, 1935, Kaufman wrote to the authorities in Palestine as follows:

Recently 25,000 Soviet citizens have escaped from Harbin. They include about 1,000 Jews. As a result, commerce has stagnated and the Jewish economic foundation in Harbin has collapsed. A great many people are considering leaving Manchukuo, and Palestine is the first choice of destination for all of them.<sup>31</sup>

In 1935, the Soviet Union sold the CER to Japan, following which the families of the railway workers began to return to the USSR. Due to the mass exodus of people, the economic foundation collapsed, and the ensuing reduction in demand for housing caused real-estate prices to plunge by as much as 40%. Under these circumstances, some Jews living in Manchukuo began to consider emigrating to Palestine. In his letter of November 5, 1935 to the Jewish Agency, Kaufman asked whether or not Palestine could accept immigrants from Manchukuo, and emphasized that Jewish life in Manchukuo under Japan's rule was no longer peaceful and quiet, saying "Here Jews' enthusiasm for exodus to Palestine is growing daily. [...] The living conditions here are suggestive of those of our fellow [Jews] in Germany."<sup>32</sup>

Kaufman requested the Jewish Agency to provide information on obtaining category A3 visas for craftsman with small capital. In response to his request, however, the Palestine Jewish Agency wrote a reply dated December 31, 1935, stating that "Palestine primarily accepts immigrants from Warsaw, Berlin, and Bucharest. Currently there is no room for Jews from Harbin to enter Palestine using category A3 visas." In 1933 and later, the Jewish Agency's policy for immigrant acceptance came to place the greatest focus on

how to absorb German Jews from Nazi Germany, in addition to Jews from Poland, whom Palestine had primarily accepted since before that time. During the single year of 1935, a great many Jewish immigrants, equivalent in number to that of the 30 years preceding World War I, arrived in Palestine from Europe. However, there was no quota for Harbin Jews. Yitzhak Oren recalls that “Among the Jewish Diasporas, a remote forgotten community like that of Harbin was assigned only a small number of certificate. Given the calamities suffered by Jews in Eastern Europe and Germany, the Jewish Agency could not afford to be generous to a wealthy community like ours.”<sup>33</sup>

The possibility of emigrating to Palestine became even smaller thereafter. In April 1936, Palestinian Arabs rioted in protest against a huge influx of Jewish immigrants. The British mandatory authorities changed their policy to limit Jewish immigration. Furthermore, the Sino-Japanese war broke out in the summer of 1937, and the Jewish communities in Tianjin and Shanghai, which had been destinations of emigration from Harbin until then, came under Japanese occupation.

As described above, unable to leave Harbin for Palestine, the Harbin Jewish community in the latter half of the 1930s was at a stalemate. Kaufman attempted to ensure the safety of the Jewish communities in Manchukuo and under Japan’s control, by cooperating with Japan and by actively using Japan’s “plan to take advantage of the Jews.”

In May 1939, the Japanese government invited Kaufman and his wife<sup>34</sup> to Japan. They toured Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Tokyo, Kamakura and Nikko, and visited the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; to the latter, Kaufman reported an improvement in American Jewish sentiment toward Japan. After observing various parts of Japan, he said to Japanese officials, “I keenly realize that Japan’s territory is so small that it is natural for Japan to seek expansion into the continent.” Meanwhile, the Military Mission concluded that Kaufman’s visit to Japan had significant meaning in terms of Japan’s scheme to maneuver the Jews.<sup>35</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

After the Russian Revolution, Harbin had the greatest concentration of the Jewish population in the Far East. Even during the Manchukuo period, which was in effect ruled by Japan, Harbin was home to a close-knit Jewish community comprising several thousand Jews. In 1939, when the anti-Semitic arguments such as “Jewish conspiracy” and “international secret power” were discussed among the anti-Jewish “experts” in

Japan, South Manchurian Railway Research Department in Dalian made the following observation: “Dr. Kaufman, the Jewish leader approved by Jews living in Harbin, has such overwhelming influence over the Jewish community that no individual or group is any match for him. For this reason, no “secret Jewish headquarters” can exist in Harbin. In addition, in view of the divided state of the Jews in Shanghai, we can ascertain that the level of integration of Jewish people is not as high as people fear.” Based on this observation, the report was apparently dubious about the Jewish conspiracy theory.<sup>36</sup> Anti-Semitism in Japan is often referred to as “anti-Semitism without Jews.” However, the real existence of the Jewish community in Harbin had a certain impact on Japanese perception of Jews.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As for the Japanese perception of the Jews and the history of anti-Semitism, see: Masanori Miyazawa, *Zoho Yudayajin Ronko (Studies on the discussions of the Jews [Enlarged Edition])*, Tokyo: Shinsensya, 1982; Masanori Miyazawa, *Nihon ni okeru Yudaya Isuraeru rongi bunken mokuroku 1877-1988 (Bibliography of Discussions on Jews and Israel in Japan 1877-1988)*, Tokyo: Shinsensya, 1989; David G. Goodman, Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype*, New York: The Free Press, 1995.
- <sup>2</sup> David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914*, Stanford University Press, 1999.
- <sup>3</sup> In and after the Russo-Japanese War, about 70,000 Russian soldiers were taken as prisoners of war to various parts of Japan. The prison camps, with the knowledge of ethnic and religious enmities within the Russian Army, housed Jewish and Polish prisoners separately. Among these prisoners, as many as 10,000 people nationwide applied to be naturalized as Japanese (source: Tokio Saikami, *Matsuyama Shuyajo: Horyo to Nihonjin (Matsuyama Prison Camp: Prisoners and Japanese People)*, Chuokoron-Shinsha, Inc., 1969, p.52). A magazine published in Japan at that time sympathetically introduces the words of a Jewish soldier: “I am a Jew, and I am disappointed because the Russian military system does not allow a low-ranking soldier to be promoted to a commissioned officer, no matter how accomplished he may be in terms of military service. I have always thought that this war is so absurd for me. As such, I have decided to surrender.” (“Yudayajin no Rohei Toko” (“Jewish Russian Soldier’s Surrender”), *Senji Gaho*, vol.38, 1905, p.90.)
- <sup>4</sup> Abraham I. Kaufman, “Poselok Kharbin,” *Biulleten’ Igud Iotzej Sin*, No.296, 1988.
- <sup>5</sup> In addition to an autobiography “Lagernyj vrach” (“Doctor in the Labor Camp”) (Tel Aviv, 1973), in which he described his experience in the forced labor camp, Kaufman wrote many other memoirs. These include “Listki iz moej zhizni” (“Pages of My Life”) in which he recalls his life in Russia from his birth to the days before moving to Harbin, and in his days when he studied in Switzerland (1885-1911), and “Poselok Kharbin” (“Harbin Settlement”) which describes his life in Harbin. However, the memoir of his life in Harbin is incomplete as it ends

with the description of the Kaspé Affair in 1933. The memoir of his Harbin days appeared serially in the Russian version of the Bulletin from December 1987 to April 1998, published by the Igud Yotsei Sin (Association of Former Jewish Residents of China) — an organization for mutual friendship of the Jews hailing from the Far East and its Chairman was Abraham Kaufman's son, Teddy Kaufman. The Bulletin also serialized Kaufman's memoir on his life in Russia, from February 1998 to 2006. Some materials regarding the Harbin Jewish community are said to be retained in the Harbin Municipal Archives but they are not disclosed. However, the Igud Yotsei Sin Archives in Tel Aviv, the Yad Vashem Archives, the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, and Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan contain materials regarding the Harbin Jewish community and Abraham Kaufman.

- <sup>6</sup> Chizuko Takao, "Shiberia Shuppei to Shion Giteisho no Denpa 1919-1922" ("The Siberian Intervention and the Dissemination of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Japan: 1919-1922*"), *Studies on Jewish Life and Culture*, vol.27, December 2013, pp.23-36.
- <sup>7</sup> John Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945*, London: Hamish Hamilton, pp.48-59.
- <sup>8</sup> Kaufman, "Poselok...", *Biulleten'*, No.350, 1997.
- <sup>9</sup> Boris Bresler, "Harbin's Jewish Community, 1898-1958: Politics, Prosperity, and Adversity," in Jonathan Goldstein ed., *The Jews of China*, vol. 1 Historical and Comparative Perspectives, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, p.209.
- <sup>10</sup> "Zai Harubin Yudayajin no Jokyo" ("State of the Jews Living in Harbin"), *Gaiji Keisatsu-ho (Foreign Police Report)* vol.199, the Home Ministry Police Bureau, 1939, p.118.
- <sup>11</sup> John Stephan, *op.cit.*, pp.81-89.
- <sup>12</sup> Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR), *Minzoku Mondai Kankei Zakken / Yudayajin Mondai (Miscellaneous Affairs Relating to Ethnic Issues / Jewish Problems)* vol. 3 (I-4-6-0-010).
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> Takeshi Nakashima, "Kaspé Jiken wo Meguru Zai Harubin Roshiajin Shakai to Nippon" ("Russian Society in Harbin and Japan concerning the Kaspé Affair"), *The Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, March 2014, p.44.
- <sup>15</sup> JACAR, Ref.B04013204500, *Minzoku Mondai Kankei Zakken / Yudayajin Mondai* vol. 3 (I-4-6-0-010) (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). The consul general of the Soviet Union protested against Eguchi's statement, saying that it would promote anti-Soviet activities.
- <sup>16</sup> Kaufman, "Poselok...", *Biulleten'*, No. 353, 1998.
- <sup>17</sup> *Manshu Nippo (The Manchuria Daily Newspaper)*, December 8, 1933.
- <sup>18</sup> With a circulation of 4.5 million, the *Evrejskaia Zhizn* had readers not only in Harbin and various other parts of Manchukuo, but also overseas countries including Palestine. "Zai Harubin Yudayajin no Jokyo" ("State of the Jews in Harbin"), p.128.
- <sup>19</sup> John Stephan, *op.cit.*, p.166.
- <sup>20</sup> *Kharbinskoe Vremia*, 15 June, 1936. *Kharbinskoe Vremia* was a Russian daily newspaper launched in November 1931, with the aim of guiding Russian public opinion in Harbin to Japan's advantage.
- <sup>21</sup> Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern and Antony Polonsky, "Introduction," *Polin: Jews and Ukrainians*,

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- vol.26, Oxford, 2014, pp.28-29.
- <sup>22</sup> The article was written under a pseudonym Nemo (Silence). Later Kaufman confessed in his memoir that it was he himself who wrote the paper. Kaufman, "Poselok...", *Biulleten*, No.353, 1998.
- <sup>23</sup> *Evrejskaia Zhizn*, 25 June, 1936, p.8.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ha Degel (The Flag)* was a biweekly Russian language magazine, which was launched in 1932 by A. Y. Gurevich, who was the President of the Betar (Brit Trumpeldor), a Jewish youth organization in Harbin.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ha Degel*, 26 June, 1936. The magazine explained that the reason why it had kept silent until then was that "Essentially, Zionists should concentrate solely on building a Jewish nation in Palestine."
- <sup>27</sup> According to Takeshi Nakashima, all the perpetrators in the Kaspe Affair were acquitted because the Russian Fascist Party, the Japanese military police and the Japanese Military Mission engaged in a conspiracy. The Japanese side therefore had to avoid at any cost the risk of losing its faithful Russian cooperators and also the risk of bringing its wrongdoing to light. Takashi Nakashima, op.cit., p.56.
- <sup>28</sup> JACAR, Ref.B04013204800, *Minzoku Mondai Kankei Zakken / Yudayajin Mondai*, vol. 3 (1-4-6-0-1\_2\_003).
- <sup>29</sup> Avraham Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," in Roman Malek ed., *From Kaifeng to Shanghai: Jews in China*, Sankt Augustin, 2000, pp.279-317.; Boris Bresler, "Harbin's Jewish Community, 1898-1958: Politics, Prosperity, and Adversity," in *The Jews of China*, vol. 1, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, pp.200-215.; David Kranzler, "Japan before and during the Holocaust," in David S.Wyman ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp.554-572.; Naoki Maruyama, *Taiheiyo Senso to Shanhai no Yudaya Nanmin (The Pacific War and Jewish Refugees in Shanghai)*, Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Syuppankyoku, 2005.; Hiroshi Bando, *Nihon no Yudayajin Seisaku:1931-1945 (Japan's Policy toward the Jews)*, Tokyo: Miraisya, 2002.
- <sup>30</sup> Yad vashem Archives, 06/3168. Regarding the assertion of Kaufman, a study poses the question: "Was Kaufman really unaware that he was being exploited by the Kwantung Army? Or did he attempt to fabricate stories of the past that were convenient for him and the Harbin Jewish community?" Altman, "Controlling the Jews...", p.317.
- <sup>31</sup> Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, S6/3809.
- <sup>32</sup> For details of the correspondence between the Jewish Agency in Palestine and Kaufman, see Chizuko Takao, "Aburahamu Kaufuman to Harubin Yudayajin Shakai: Nihon Touchi-ka Yudayajin Shakai no Ichi Danmen" ("Abraham Kaufman and the Harbin Jewish Community: One Aspect of the Jewish Community under Japan's Rule"), *Roshia no Naka no Ajia / Ajia no Naka no Roshia (Asia in Russia / Russia in Asia) (III)*, Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2006, pp.47-58.
- <sup>33</sup> Yitzhak Oren, "Studencheskij sertifikat (Student Certificate)," *Biulleten*, No. 352. The Israeli writer Yitzhak Oren was born in 1918 in Siberia and raised in Harbin. He emigrated to Palestine to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1936. Moris Farhi, "A Profile of Yitzhak Oren," *Jewish Quarterly*, vol.36, Issue 4, 1989, p.13.

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- <sup>34</sup> JACAR, Ref.B04013207200, *Minzoku Mondai Kankei Zakken / Yudayajin Mondai* vol.7 (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). Some materials and opinions hold that the wife of Kaufman who visited Japan was a Japanese woman named “高橋満” (Mitsu Takahashi). For example, Hiroo Yasue wrote that “In May [1939], Kaufman left Harbin with his Japanese wife Mitsu (her maiden name was Takahashi)” in his book *Dairen Tokumu Kikan to Maboroshi no Yudaya Kokka (Dalian Military Mission and a Phantom Jewish State)*, Tokyo, 1989, pp.155-156. However, according to a report of June 1, 1939, by the director of the Japanese Administration Office in Dalian, the name of Kaufman’s wife was Esther (Esfir D. Kaufman 1902-1984) (Esfir is the Russian version of Esther). After his first wife died, in 1933 Kaufman remarried a Jewish woman named Esfir Davydovna, hailing from Bessarabia (*The Concise Harbin Jewish Dictionary* [in Chinese], Harbin, 2013, p.252). It is interesting to consider the reason why the Japanese wife theory came into existence, but the theory presumably derives from misunderstanding due to the name of Kaufman being written as “高福満” in Chinese characters.
- <sup>35</sup> During this visit of Kaufman, Takeo Koyama, an “expert on Jewish question” from the special research team of the Manchurian Railway Investigation Department, served as a Russian-Japanese interpreter. Koyama criticized anti-Semitism in Western countries and maintained that Japan should adopt its own policy of controlling and instructing the Jews and having them cooperate with Japan, for the sake of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere vision. Masanori Miyazawa, *Zoho Yudayajin Ronko (Studies of the Jews [Enlarged Edition])*, p.197.
- <sup>36</sup> “Zai Harubin Yudayajin Oyobi Yudayakei Kikan no Saikin Jijo” (“Recent Situations of the Jews and Jewish Organizations in Harbin”), *Yudaya Mondai Chosa Shiryo (Research Documents on the Jewish Question)* No.17, Manchurian Railway Investigation Department, 1939.

**Symbolism and Fantasy of the Biblical *Leviathan*:  
From Monster of the Abyss to Redeemer of the Prophets**

Danielle Gurevitch

**Abstract:**

The legendary biblical monster of the deep known as Leviathan was part and parcel of the destructive forces that sought to annihilate the world. Yet, according to another popular Jewish belief, a similar sea creature is associated with the spiritual idea of repentance and rebirth. This article examines the Leviathan/whale image and its cultural depiction in ancient Jewish literature, as well as its influence on medieval Christianity. I contend that the roots of the Leviathan image in western society grew and spread over the centuries, becoming an integral part of traditional lore, as well as religious ethos, in different cultures. Each society depicted the legendary creature in a distinct manner in response to its own collective primal fears, kneading it into a source of strength and hope in times of anguish. In other words, this paper attempts to demonstrate that the image of the giant monster ultimately serves as a source of strength and consolation, whether it is defeated (as in ancient pagan civilizations), controlled (as in Judaism), or brandished as a threat of punishment for sinners (as in Christianity).

**Keywords:**

Leviathan/whale, collective primal fears, Jewish tradition, monotheist thought, spiritual idea

According to the ancient Jewish tradition, when God created the world He fought the terrible sea monster — Leviathan. In the end of days, a bitter battle will take place between the Creator and the beast, and eventually God will destroy Leviathan. This act will symbolize the end of the world, as we know it and the beginning of a new utopian era. This thought contrasts the biblical story of Creation as described in the Book of Genesis, according to which “God created the great sea monsters” (Gen. 1:21). Legend has it that when God wished to create the world, He first had to wage war on the creatures of the abyss and the darkness so as to force them to submit to His authority and allow Him to impose order in the form of the Creation. He began by commanding the darkness to disappear and make way for the light, and then went out to fight the creatures that lived in the depths of nothingness. First, God crushed Rahab, a giant that controlled the ancient waters, and dispatched it to the bottom of the sea.<sup>1</sup> He then turned his attention to Leviathan. Leviathan is said to have been a sea monster with as many eyes as the days of the year, scales that shone like the sun, massive jaws, a mouth that spewed fire and flames, nostrils that breathed smoke, and eyes that sprayed jets of light.<sup>2</sup> This colossal creature moved across the seas leaving a glowing wake, or else remained in the depths of the ocean boiling the water and producing steam.<sup>3</sup>

The legendary monster of the deep known as Leviathan was part and parcel of the destructive forces that sought to annihilate the world. Yet, according to another popular Jewish tradition, a similar sea creature, described as a “big fish,” is associated not with chaotic destruction, but rather with the spiritual idea of repentance and rebirth. The first, and undoubtedly the most familiar, example that comes to mind, elevates from the biblical story of Jonah the sinning prophet (written after 530 BCE), who was swallowed by what in the collective imagination is commonly thought to be a whale (in Hebrew: leviathan), and miraculously, by God’s mercy, survived the ordeal. According to the biblical story, the prophet spent three days and three nights in the dark belly of the fish, until he recognized what he had never truly been willing to see before, the depths of God’s compassion. It was then that Jonah repented and the fish spit him out on the shores of Nineveh (Jon 2:1-10).

Jewish tradition attributes considerable importance to the powerful image of the legendary Leviathan. Not only is the creature mentioned six times in the Bible,<sup>4</sup> but it later appears no less than 828 times in Talmudic discussions, in Aggadah midrashim (Jewish legends), in prayer books, in early and later commentaries, in the Kabbalah, in Zohar, and in Hasidic sources, and it is even represented on wooden engravings decorating holy arks in synagogues.<sup>5</sup>

This article examines the Leviathan/whale image and its cultural depiction in ancient Jewish literature (grounded on the biblical foundations), as well as its later influence on medieval Christianity. I will begin by presenting the sea creature's scientific classification as determined by ancient, medieval, and contemporary scholars, and its common conception as a whale. I will then consider its significant, yet puzzling polar, image in the collective Jewish memory: an active, destructive monster seeking to challenge God's dominion on the one hand, and a passive, obedient creature that allowed God to use him as a tool for spiritual uplift on the other.

I contend that the roots of the Leviathan/whale image in western society grew and spread over the centuries, becoming an integral part of traditional lore, as well as religious ethos, in different cultures. Each society depicted the legendary creature in a distinct manner in response to its own collective primal fears, kneading it into a source of strength and hope in times of anguish. In other words, I will attempt to demonstrate that the image of the giant monster ultimately serves as a source of strength and consolation, whether it is defeated (as in ancient pagan civilizations), controlled (as in Judaism), or brandished as a threat of punishment for sinners (as in Christianity).

### **The Sea Monster in the Bible and in Myth**

Commentators are unanimous in the opinion that the Bible does not use "leviathan" in its Hebrew literal meaning of "whale," but rather in reference to an ancient, mythological sea creature, although the notion of a struggle between the almighty, omnipotent God and any creature, no matter how powerful, is not entirely clear. The parallels between the Biblical monster and the one of earlier pagan civilization myth are suggestive, particularly after the Ras Shamra Tablets were discovered in the archeological excavations on the site of the ancient north Syrian city of Ugarit, in 1929. The resemblance of the core elements in both narratives raises intriguing questions.<sup>6</sup>

At the center of the Mesopotamian myth, written in cuneiform script of the mid-fourteenth century BCE, is the battle for the throne between Ba'al, the Acadian-Babylonian storm and fertility god, and Yahm, god of the sea and the rivers. In this ferocious cosmic conflict, Ba'al and his sister, Anat, smite the fierce sea monster, a creature with five names or epithets representing either one or two beings: Yahm/Nahar; Tunnan/Tannin; the Snake; the Powerful One; and the seven-headed serpent Lotan, a cognate for the Hebrew Leviathan.<sup>7</sup> Another relevant text is the Babylonian epic *Enūma Eliš*, where, again, the tale of the sea-conquering deity is a powerful and primal narrative.

Yet, while the first story describes a conflict over the conquest of the sea and does not include cosmogonic elements, the second is the mixture of a creation story with a struggle for domination over the sea and the land. The central episode of the Babylonian poem is the fight between the great god Niburo (Marduk) and Tehom (Ti`amat), the feminine embodiment of the primeval salty ocean. Note that the Hebrew word “tehom” (תהום), as used in Genesis, refers to the world *ex nihilo* (before Creation), and in contemporary Hebrew denotes the deepest depths (חוֹשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם).<sup>8</sup> Both stories describe the “waters” gathered together as one entity, and the bitter struggle of the god to cut the sky from the sea in order to divide them.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in both the ancient Mesopotamian myths and the Biblical text, the “waters” appears to serve not merely as a symbol of the realm of the dead and deep darkness, but more generally as a symbol of the world of the sea and the forces of nature.<sup>10</sup> The battle is therefore a means for the Hebrew God, as well as for the Mesopotamian gods, to create order in the universe and dominate the powers of chaos that are responsible for the raging floodwaters. In other words, both narratives present a visualization of the tension between the forces of light, the spirit of God that hovers above, and the forces of darkness, the spirits of the abyss and its creatures below. In the Biblical conception, water and darkness are perceived as being formed from the same rudimentary, primeval, chaotic material. On the second day of Creation, the waters were divided into the water above, the divine forces of light striving to maintain order, and the water below, the dark forces of pre-Creation aspiring to return to the primordial chaos, to bring about the end of days when the rising water will burst its banks and flood the land with the sea creatures within it.<sup>11</sup> It is these waters that are suppressed by the might of God, as described several times in the Bible.<sup>12</sup> Consider, for example, Ps 104: 6-9:

You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight. They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

As the story continues, the groundwater sea forces (the meaning of the Babylonian Tiamat, Canaanite Zewel-Yam or the Hattian dragon Illuyankas) seek to destroy the universe by covering it with water, and are stopped by the Canaanite Ba'al, the storm god, or the Babylonian Bel-Marduk. After overcoming the mutiny of the water, the victorious

god becomes king. Allusions to this battle seem to appear in the Bible. The closest likeness is in Psalms 93:3-4, where the crowning of God is demonstrated by presenting His mighty force overcoming the “thunders of mighty waters.”<sup>13</sup> In Psalms 104:6-9, God’s rebuke keeps the water within the boundaries set for it, so that it will not endanger the world.<sup>14</sup>

In etiological terms, the image of the seasonal stormy-weather battle in early Babylonian and Canaanite myths probably evolved because it was created by people who lived near the Mediterranean coast and feared the waves crashing against the shore and threatening to destroy their homes. In the Babylonian story, Marduk and his storm gods kill Tiamat and cut her body in half; with one half he creates the sky, seals it carefully, and places guards to keep watch that the water does not leak (En. El. 4, lines 138-140).<sup>15</sup> During the ferocious battle, Tiamat, herself a sea monster, creates terrifying creatures to wage war on her behalf during the offspring gods’ rebellion, such as sharp-toothed crocodiles, dragons, serpents, a wild dog, a giant lion, a fish, a hippopotamus, and other repulsive demons. As the young gods are frightened by the strength of Tiamat and her cohorts, Marduk volunteers to fight her on condition that he is crowned king of the gods. Once he becomes king, Marduk is armed with the weapons he himself created for this battle (En. El. 4, lines 93-104). While the result of the battle may be predictable, what is fascinating is the nature of the creatures who take part in it. These frightening sea monsters represent the mysterious aspects of the ocean (the sea as a living creature) across cultures.

Echoes of the same legendary confrontation, the struggle between God and a monster of the depths, can also be found in the Bible in the books of Isaiah, Psalms, Amos, and Job. Job, who curses the day and the night, describes the moment when the sea monster, Leviathan, will awake with great anger from his deep sleep, liberate himself from his shackles in the darkness at the bottom of the great sea, and cause an eclipse or floods: “Let those curse it that curse the day, who are ready to arouse Leviathan” (Job 3:8).<sup>16</sup> The continuation of the struggle can be seen in Job’s description of the great battle that will take place between God and the monster (Job 41:19-31):

From its mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap out. Out of its nostrils comes smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. Its breath kindles coals, and a flame comes out of its mouth. In its neck abides strength, and terror dances before it. The folds of its flesh cling together; it is firmly cast and immovable. Its heart is as hard as stone, as hard as the lower millstone... Its

underparts are like sharp potsherds; it spreads itself like a threshing sledge on the mire. It makes the deep boil like a pot; it makes the sea like a pot of ointment.

According to legend, God ordered Gabriel to pull Leviathan from the Great Sea (the Mediterranean). Although Gabriel succeeded in catching it with his hook, he is swallowed up in the attempt to pull it out on to dry land, whereupon God himself is obliged to seize the monster, and slays it in the presence of the pious. In the world to come (Ha'olam Haba), the meat of Leviathan (the supreme sea beast) will be eaten at the messianic banquet, along with that of two other beasts: Behemoth (the supreme land mammal) and Ziz (the griffin-like, supreme air animal). The skin of Leviathan will be used as a tent to shelter the festivities.<sup>17</sup> Note that unlike the Mesopotamian stories that focus solely on sea battles, the Jewish narrative includes creatures representing the sea, the earth, and the air,<sup>18</sup> indicating God's dominion over the entire universe.



Behemoth and Leviathan  
William Blake (1825)

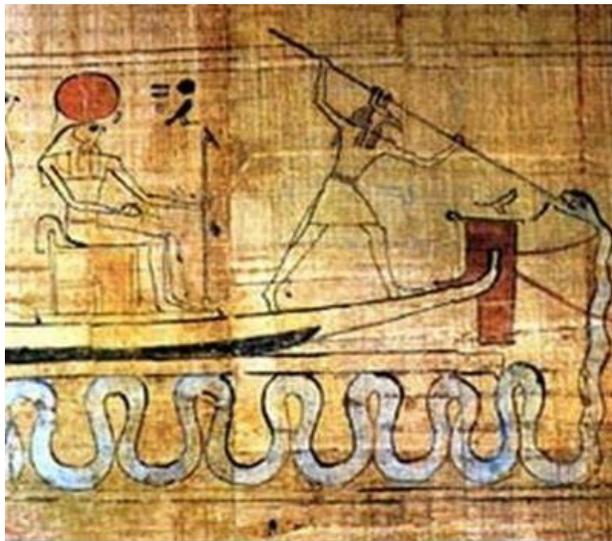


Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz  
Bible illustration, Ulm, Germany (1238)

### **The Nature of the Beast**

From both the Egyptian-Mesopotamian and Biblical descriptions it is still difficult to

determine precisely what type of creature Lotan/Leviathan was meant to be. Shupak asserts that the Mesopotamian tradition was deliberately obscure, as the Egyptians believed their myth to contain secrets of wisdom and magical medicinal formulae, among other things, the disclosure of which could be dangerous. Consequently, the myths were not written down, but rather relayed orally, and only a select few knew how to decipher them.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the Egyptians sought to heal a variety of diseases by means of magic spells that often compared the patient's condition with mythological events from the distant past. Shupak refers to at least three such spells in which the disease is compared to the sea, using its Egyptian name *Yam* (the "great green" waters), the enemy of God. According to the spells, just as the sea/chaotic snake/crocodile was defeated by the god Seth, the disease will be eliminated from the human body.<sup>20</sup>



Seth helps Ra to fight the evil serpent Apep  
Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Based on the Biblical midrashim, it can be assumed that seafarers in ancient times saw whales drawing in sea water together with their food, and then exhaling the water in a jet from the blowhole on their backs.<sup>21</sup> This phenomenon may have led to the mistaken image of a giant mythological fire-spitting whale-like creature.

Another animal that may have inspired the myth is the crocodile, whose biological features may be seen in the portrayal of the beast's glittering scales and eyes shining like torches from the water. Moreover, the Hebrew word for crocodile, *tannin*, appears in the

Bible in reference to a sea monster, as in Isaiah 27:1: "וְהָרַג אֶת הַתַּנִּינִן אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם", translated in the NRSV as dragon. Zoologically speaking, the crocodile does not inhabit the ocean (Yam/ים), but rather rivers, and indeed, Ezekiel 29:3 directly points at the great crocodile that is in the Nile river: "הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹל, הָרֹבֵץ בְּתוֹךְ יְאֲרֵי : אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יְאֲרֵי".<sup>22</sup> The Prophet Ezekiel refer to the Great Pharaoh as "hattannīn haggādōl" [the great Crocodile that lies in the midst of the Nile], but here again the NRSV does not translate it literally, but uses the more general term, "the great dragon sprawling in the midst of its channels."

The monstrous reptile might, in fact, be a reference to the crocodile, which can reach up to seven meters in length, and was one of the largest and most intimidating creatures known in ancient times. The fearsome crocodiles and their bitter struggle with God are mentioned again in Psalms 74:13: שִׁבַּרְתָּ רֵאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל הַמַּיִם [you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters]. The term appears to relate to a creature similar to the fish-like Leviathan, as both are described as sea monsters that live in darkness in the depths of the ocean, as in Isaiah 51:9-10:

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago! Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon [Hebrew: tannin]? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?

Although large crocodiles were a serious threat in the ancient world, the Egyptians regarded them as sacred, and it was forbidden to harm them. Moreover, while it may be assumed that very few people actually saw a whale, many are likely to have seen a real crocodile. They are often depicted in Egyptian sources with only their eyes protruding from the shallow water, waiting for the right moment to attack a person who has come to bathe in the Nile.

Another creature whose name is occasionally used instead of, or in conjunction with, Leviathan is the serpent: "On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea." (Isaiah 27:1).<sup>23</sup> This hints at an Ugaritic cognate: "When you smote Lotan, the fleeing serpent; Annihilated the twisting serpent; the dominant one who has seven heads" (KTU 1.3; 1.5).

In the Babylonian Talmud (A.D. 257-320), Rabbi Yochanan suggests that the sea

monster was originally thought to possess the qualities of a serpent rather than a fish (Baba Batra, 74b). Citing the above Biblical verse, he interprets it to mean that God created a male (piercing serpent) and female (crooked serpent) Leviathan, and killed the female to prevent them from mating and destroying the world.

Although the context speaks of serpents or some similar sinuous reptiles, Aïcha Rahmouni suggests that the most likely etymology is the Akkadian word *šalātu*, meaning “to rule, to be in authority,” and it does not necessarily refer to a snake as we know it.<sup>24</sup> Another interpretation is offered by Shupak, who points out that the original Egyptian word *snk* means crocodile, while the word *skn* means “lack of satiety, greed and lust.” She therefore suggests that the reference is to the gluttonous nature of the imaginary crocodile-like monster. Alternatively, it may be a characterization of the 30 meter long anti-God snake Apopis.<sup>26</sup> The Jewish tractate Idra Zuta supports this claim, presuming Leviathan to represent not a specific beast, but rather the principal rival in the confrontation between divine forces of equal strength.

### Leviathan as a reptile in Jewish tradition

Interestingly enough, while the NRSV Bible repeatedly translates the Hebrew “tannin” as “dragon,” there is also a Hebrew word for “dragon” that is used in both the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmud. However, the Hebrew dragon refers to a lizard, snake, or the image of such an animal on pottery. In fact, in ancient Jewish culture, the dragon was thought to belong to the family of reptiles, and was no more exceptional than any other common lizard or small poisonous snake. The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin, page 56a +b (also in *Avot De'Rabi Natan*, Version 1, Chapter 4), for instance, which tells of Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakai’s departure from Jerusalem and the establishment of the center at Yavne, contains the following exchange:

אמר לו (אספסיאנוס) : חבית של דבש, ודרקון כרוך עליה – לא היו שוברין החבית בשביל דרקון? שתק (רבן יוחנן בן זכאי). קרא עליו רב יוסף – ויש אומרים רבי עקיבא : “משיב חכמים אחר ודעתם יסכל” (ישעיהו, מד, כ”ה) שהיה צריך לומר לו : נוטלין צבת ומסלקין את הדרקון והורגין אותו, ואת החבית מניחין.

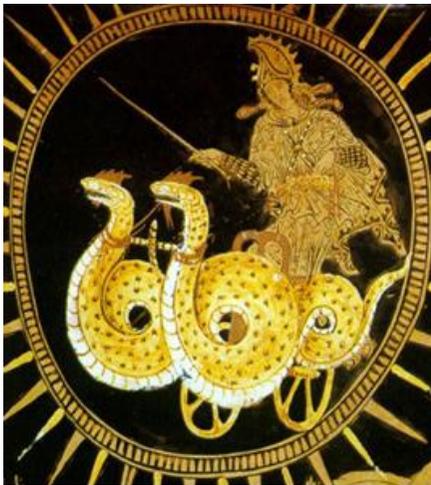
[If you find a **dragon** on a barrel of honey...remove the **dragon** and use the utensil.]



Lizard: Varanus (Psammosaurus) griesus

A further reference to the dragon appears in the Mishnah, where it is clearly understood to be a symbol of idolatry, most likely the personification of one of the earth gods or the gods of the otherworld. The discussion centers around the question of whether a Jew who finds a utensil on which the form of a dragon has been drawn is entitled to make use of the object.<sup>26</sup>

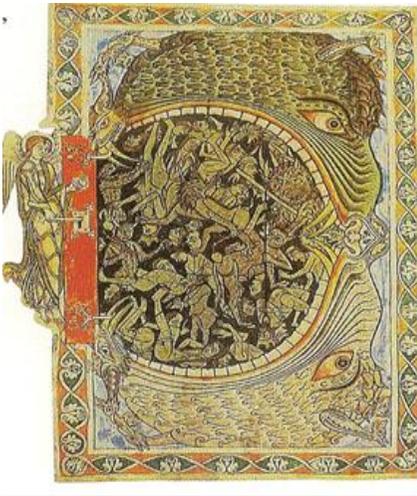
In the Biblical context, the word “dragon” appears for the first time in the Septuagint and the Vulgate as the translation of the Hebrew “serpent” into which Aaron’s rod was transformed before the eyes of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:12).<sup>27</sup> The dragon can be found in Hellenic sources as well, where “draca” also means snake. Medea, for example, fled from Corinth after slaying her children in a huge chariot drawn by flying serpents/drakones (δράκων).



Dragon-chariot of Medea, Lucanian red-figure dated ca. 400 BCE, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio

## The Sea Monster in Christian Tradition

The forces of the depths of the ocean thus appear in Judeo-Christian stories not in the context of a struggle against the forces of nature, but rather as part of an iconic struggle of God and his angels against the devil and his emissaries. Biblical bestiary drawings from the 12-13th century clearly portray monstrous man-eating beasts similar in appearance to a giant whale.<sup>28</sup> In Christian depictions, the sea monster is not only seen swallowing up sinners, but the belly of the whale is often used to represent Hell, with the whale's jaws corresponding to the gates of Hell.



Water monster swallowing sinners, angel standing at its side, locking its jaws.

Illustration of Psalm by Henri de Blois, 1161<sup>29</sup>



Saint Jean sees the Devil swallowing the false prophets.

France, 1220-70. Miniature, Apocalypse Bible of Toulouse

The motif of a terrifying sea beast fired the imagination of medieval monks, who developed it into a plethora of images of animals of various kinds who shatter people's bones, poison their bodies, and chew them up, spit them out, and chew them up again. These animals included worms, giant poisonous toads, twisting snakes, and crocodiles. Some of the images show the creature's eyes shining with the glow of the devil or emerging from the earth and spitting fire on innocent people for no apparent reason.<sup>30</sup> According to Salisbury, "this image continues through the visionary literature of the Middle Ages until the best-known image portrayed in Dante's *Inferno*, where Lucifer in the pit of hell eternally eats the souls of those who betrayed their masters."<sup>31</sup> This might

be understood as the paradox of martyrdom. In order to demonstrate his victory over the fear of being eaten by the beast, the saint expresses his eagerness to have his flesh ground by the beast's teeth and be consumed in death as an essential part of salvation: "Ignatius through his martyrdom ...become[s] Christ's food, and thus part of Christ's body (as the food gets incorporated into the flesh of the consumer). Then by becoming part of the body of Christ, the saint achieves the victory over death, decay, and becoming food for (and transformed into) the hungry beast that ground his flesh."<sup>32</sup> Salisbury concludes that these stories "reinforce the deeply held fears of being eaten, which is after all, the human fear of death."<sup>33</sup>

### **Jonah and the Whale**

The image of the mighty beast swallowing sinners in medieval Christian iconography is frequently associated with the Biblical sea monster, Leviathan. Yet it is also possible that a completely different source contributed to the crystallization of this image: the "big fish" that swallowed Jonah, which is commonly conceived of as a whale. The story of Jonah Ben-Amittai, written after 530 BCE, tells of the mission given to Jonah the Prophet by God: he is to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and urge its population to repent. But Jonah can not open his heart to accept his destiny, and he attempts to flee. In response, God calls up a storm and commands the most frightening creature of the sea to swallow the sinner. Three days later, it vomits Jonah safely onto the beach, restoring his faith and obedience.



Pieter Lastman (1621), *Jonah and the Whale*  
Museum kunstpalast, Dusseldorf

In her book, *Prophetic Adventure: Jonah as the Liar of Truth*, Ruth Reichelberg's basic assumption is that in the universal collective memory, the "big fish" is a whale. Ask anyone in the street "Who is Jonah?" she says, and the answer will surely be, "He's the one who was swallowed by the whale." In other words, "Qui dit Jonah dit baleine" [Talking about Jonah is talking about a whale], she claims, adding that he is the ancestor of Little Red Riding Hood and Pinocchio.<sup>34</sup>

In all three monotheistic religions, Jonah is regarded primarily as the prophet of rebirth, a symbol of rising from the dead and salvation through an inner journey. In later medieval Christian thought, he represents the suffering of the martyr, death, and rebirth; in Islam (where he is Yūnus يُونُس in the Quran), he is a symbol of the suicide-prophet; and in Jewish tradition his story is an allegory for achieving spiritual purpose and redemption. In *The City of God* (XVIII: 30), Saint Augustine speculates whether Jonah's experience is itself a prophetic vision of the resurrection of Christ: "The Prophet Jonah, not so much by speech as by his own painful experience, prophesied Christ's death and resurrection much more clearly than if he had proclaimed them with his voice. For why was he taken into the whale's belly and restored on the third day, but that he might be a sign that Christ should return from the depths of hell on the third day?"<sup>35</sup> In Jewish tradition, the Book of Jonah, known as the Maftir Yona, is read at the closing of the service on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. It is meant to strengthen faith in redemption (geula), and teach that one can not escape from God in their wrongdoing, as stated in Psalms 139:7: "Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" Man is obligated to repent, just like the people of Nineveh, who achieved salvation after they mended their ways.<sup>36</sup>

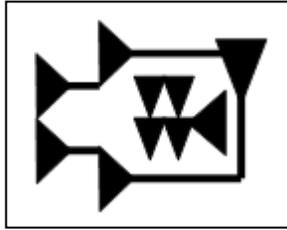
Although the theme of a hero confronting a sea monster is virtually universal and can be found in almost all ancient cultures, the Biblical story appears to have special meaning for all monotheistic religions due to its unique features. Unlike the usual hero/sea beast tales, the fish in the story of Jonah is neither his rival nor his enemy. Moreover, when Jonah undergoes the prophetic experience, he would no longer seem to be a young man, that is, he is not in a stage in his life when he has to prove his physical strength or skills as a warrior. On the contrary, he does his utmost to avoid his obligations as a prophet, tries to flee as far from the scene of confrontation as possible, and eventually is completely indifferent to the sailors' intent to throw him overboard, "so they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea" (Jon 1:15). He might even be said to have a death wish. According to the Bible: "He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you" (Jon 1:12), and later explicitly begs

God to “And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (Jon 4:3). Furthermore, in contrast to the negative connotations of the medieval Christian allegory, being swallowed by the “big fish” plays a positive role in Jonah’s existential ordeal. Reichelberg sees a direct correlation between the completion of his mission to the people of Nineveh, his physical condition (in the belly of the fish) and the feminine identity of the whale/big fish,<sup>37</sup> basing this assumption on the use in Jonah 2:1-2 not only of the Hebrew word for “fish” dag (דג), but also of its feminine form — daga (דגה)

וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בַּמַּעֵי הַדָּג, שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים וּשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלוֹת; וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל יוֹנָה, אֱלֹהֵי-הַיָּם, מִמַּעַי, הַדָּגָה.

[and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish,]

Reichelberg also notes the non-coincidental similarity between the name Jonah (Hebrew יוֹנָה [Yona], spelled yud-vav-nun-hee) and the name of the city, Nineveh (Hebrew נִינְוָה, spelled nun-yud-nun-vav-hee).<sup>38</sup> The resemblance is an essential link in the chain of the prophet’s spiritual uplifting, and his circumstances an emblem of his mental state. The sailors, marveling at his ability to sleep in the midst of the tempest, ask Jonah: “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god!” (Jon 1:6). Earlier, he is ordered by God: “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” (Jon. 1:2). The parallel suggests that Jonah is being ordered to wake up, not physically, but rather from his mental stupor.<sup>39</sup> Thus, one might argue that Jonah begins by ignoring his divine duty, goes through an initiation process in a womb-like environment, and ultimately undergoes a process of rebirth. Once enlightened, after three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, he prays to God to save him. God hears his cry, and in an act resembling childbirth, delivers him safely to shore. Unlike all other known man-versus-sea beast stories, here the fish has no intention of consuming Jonah, but rather is humbly obeying God’s request to serve as a tool in the prophet’s education, for “the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah” (Jon 1:17). Benjamin Gezuntheid notes that the symbol of Nineveh in the original cuneiform script is a fish in a house, as the city’s economy was based on fishing. He adds that in Hebrew as well, the name Nineveh means fish house (nin [נין] fish, and navee [נוה] house).<sup>40</sup>



Symbol of the city of Nineveh in cuneiform inscription

Gezuntheid interprets this as a divine message that even the other nations of the world can earn the mercy of God if they repent their wrongdoing.

Jonah, however, is unwilling to receive the message, and does his best to flee from his obligation. Ironically, he attempts to escape from the city that is identified as “the house of the fish,” only to be swallowed up, by God’s order, by a fish who protects him until he “wakes from his sleep” and is able to carry out his duty toward that city, the city whose name resembles his own.<sup>41</sup>

### **Two Creatures, One Message**

Thus, as we have seen, although it is often treated as a single construct, there are actually two different versions of the legendary sea beast. The first is the monster Leviathan, the Canaanite emblem of chaos who threatens to flood the earth with water that was adopted by Jewish as well as by Christian tradition in the form of the enemy of God, who represents order. This terrifying sea monster seeks relentlessly to thwart all efforts at progress, growth, or prosperity, whether human or divine in the Jewish collective memory while it reflects the ultimate sinners’ punishment in the later Christian interpretations. The second, as conveyed in the story of Jonah, is an entirely different creature, a protective, obedient denizen of the sea sent by God to protect the hero from himself as part of his initiation process. Yet, despite being represented as polar opposites, in many ways the two creatures are one and the same. Both are traditionally identified with the whale (the Hebrew leviathan), and both are used to epitomize the ultimate struggle between man and his fate, and even more significantly, to establish the sovereignty of the Creator.

The willingness of the hero to confront the harsh and unforgiving seas, or in other words, the irresistible attraction of the forces of chaos, is related repeatedly across cultures and eras. In respect to the human hero or demigod, Seneca best describes this

theme as a need: “Avida est periculi virtus” [Bravery is keen for danger].<sup>42</sup> As for the religious implications of the narrative, one might ask whether the dominion of the Creator is best demonstrated solely through tales of combat. Perhaps the message is better conveyed through narratives that illustrate the immutable connections between opposite elements: not just good and evil, but also mental and physical courage on the one hand, and extreme fear on the other.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> “You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.” (Ps. 89:10). Unless otherwise specified, all Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
- <sup>2</sup> “I saw a great light on the sea. He said to him: Perhaps you saw the eyes of Leviathan,” Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Baba Batra, Page 74, Column 2.
- <sup>3</sup> “Out of its nostrils comes smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. Its breath kindles coals, and a flame comes out of its mouth.” (Job 41:20-21).
- <sup>4</sup> Is 27:1 (twice); Ps 74:14; Ps 104:26; Job 3:8; Job 40:23-24.
- <sup>5</sup> For a complete database, See: The Responsa Project: Global Jewish Database, Bar Ilan University. <http://responsa.biu.ac.il>.
- <sup>6</sup> On the comparison between the Biblical text and the Ugarit text, see, inter alia: H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, Göttingen (1894); W.G. Lambert, “A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis,” in *Babylonian and Israel* (Edited by H.P. Müller; Darmstadt, 1991), 94-113; S.E. Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literature* (AOAT 204) (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980), 346-361, 465-470; J. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985); also, compare with God’s Battle with the Sea according to Egyptian Sources, in: Nili Shupak, “He Subdued the Water Monster/Crocodile,” in *Iyunei mikra ve-parshanut*, (Vol. 10; Edited by M. Garciel et al.; Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2011), 325-342 [in Hebrew].
- <sup>7</sup> “Because thou didst smite Lotan, the evil serpent; The mighty one of seven heads” (KTU2 1.3 II: 5-8). Mark S. Smith, “The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume 1” of KTU 1.1-1.2. in *Vetus Testamentum Supplements series* (Vol. 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994); “The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume 2,” in *Vetus Testamentum Supplement series* (Vol. 114. Leiden: Brill, 2008); <http://web.archive.org/web/20080115123739/http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/2938/mythobaal.htm>; Sema'an I. Salem and Lynda A. Salem, *The Near East: The Cradle of Western Civilization* (Bloomington, IN: Writers Club Press, 2000).
- <sup>8</sup> In Akkadian literature, the monster goddess’s name is spelled Ti`amat, the same as in Canaanite, but is pronounced Ti`aw(w)at, which most probably did not sound to the ancient Hebrews like a parallel of the Hebrew “tehom.” On the other hand, Akkad and Sumerian myths attribute the dominance of the sea to Absu, god of the sweet water, which is probably the source of the English word “abyss,” so transition with lingual adjustments between cultures

can be suggested.

This paper is based primarily on the translation: Edited by W.G. Lambert and S.B. Parker, *Enuma Elis: The Babylonian Epic of Creation: The Cuneiform Text* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1966); see also: Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 1993), 351-402; Benjamin R. Foster, "Epic of Creation," in *The Context of Scripture, Volume 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Edited by William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 390-402.

- <sup>9</sup> "And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.'" (Gen 1:6); mēšunu ištēniš inhhīqūma [mingled their water together] (En. El. I, line 5). Unless otherwise specified, Enuma Elis is cited here in normalized form from the composite cuneiform edition of Lambert and Parker; for a discussion of these lines, see: Piotr Michalowski, "Presence at the Creation," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (Edited by T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard et al.; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 383-384; and online, in academia.edu, at: [http://umich.academia.edu/PiotrMichalowski/Papers/466309/Presence\\_at\\_the\\_Creation](http://umich.academia.edu/PiotrMichalowski/Papers/466309/Presence_at_the_Creation)
- <sup>10</sup> Compare with Eliade, who suggests that the taming of the water motif, common in many traditions, stands universally for the eternal return of the moment of creation, that is, the cosmogonic conquest of chaos and establishment of order. M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (translated by W. Trask; Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), chapter 2.
- <sup>11</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Vol. 5; Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1998 [1925]), 16-17.
- <sup>12</sup> See also: Ps 29:3; 33:7; 65:5; 77:17-21; 135:6; 89:9-10; Job 26: 12.
- <sup>13</sup> "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord!" (Ps 93:3-4).
- <sup>14</sup> Other references to the struggle between the mighty forces can be found in Gen 1:2, 1:6-10, 1:20-21, and even more clearly in Isa 51:9-10 and in Ps 29:10.
- <sup>15</sup> Compare with: Job 38:8-10: "'Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?...and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors,"
- <sup>16</sup> See also Ps 74:14, and Amos Haham's commentary on the Book of Job (Jerusalem: Rabbi Kook Institute).
- <sup>17</sup> Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*; see also: Baba Batra 74b, 75a.
- <sup>18</sup> See also the dream visions in the deuterocanonical books of Baruch and Ezra: " ובהמות יגלה ׀ ממקומו ולויתן יעלה מן הים הם שני התנינים הגדולים אשר בראתי ביום החמישי לבריאה ואשמרם עד ׀. Apocalypse of Baruch A (propheta Baruchi) 29:4; see also, Apocalypses of Ezra (propheta Ezra) 4:49-52.
- <sup>19</sup> Shupak, "He Subdued the Water Monster/Crocodile," 327, note 6.
- <sup>20</sup> Shupak, 330-331; see also: A Massart, *The Leiden Magical Papyrus* (I 343+ I 345, suppl. OMRO, 1954), 16-17, 64-67.
- <sup>21</sup> See: Menachem Dor, *Fauna in the Era of the Scriptures: the Mishnah, and the Talmud* (Tel Aviv: Graph Or-Daphtal, 1977), 74-76.

- <sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the creature is mentioned by several prophets, yet some of the biblical Hebrew indications of the term “Tanim” (תנים) and “Tanin” (תנין) might be confusing. For example: “וַתִּכְבְּדוּנוּ עִלְיֵנוּ בְּצַלְמֹתַי; וַתִּכְסֵם עִלְיֵנוּ בְּצַלְמֹתַי” [yet you have broken us in the haunt of jackals, and covered us with deep darkness.] (Ps 44:19). From the Hebrew script, it is not clear whether it seeks to address the sea creatures or the wild Jackal, unlike some biblical indications, where the exact referred beast can be understood by its context, as in Isaiah 43:20: “וְהַיָּבֵשׁ יִשְׁמַח בְּיָמֵי הַיָּבֵשׁ” [The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches], and in Jer 49: 33: “וְהָיְתָה הַצּוּר לְמַעוֹן תַּנִּים” [Hazor shall become a lair of jackals, an everlasting waste]. Both indicate the Zoological wild beast that lived mostly in uninhabited desert areas. While elsewhere, the same word is used to describe the Nile crocodile, for example, in Eze 29:3, mentioned here, and again in Eze 32:2: “וְאֵתָהּ, כְּתַנִּים” “Tanim bayamim” means the crocodile that is in the waters.
- <sup>23</sup> Here again, “dragon” is a translation of the Hebrew “tannin.”
- <sup>24</sup> Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts* (translated by J. N. Ford; Leiden: Brill: 2007), 302-333.
- <sup>25</sup> Nili Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage’s Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Freiburg Schweiz: University Press, 1993), 108-110, 114-116; on Apopis, see for example: L.D. Morenz, “Apopis: On the Origin, Name, and Nature of an Ancient Egyptian Anti-God” (JNES 63, 2004), 201-205; J.F. Borghouts, “The Evil Eye of Apopis,” in *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 59 (1973), 114-150.
- <sup>26</sup> See, Mishnah Avoda Zara 3.3, Jerusalem Talmud Avoda Zara 3.3, 43c, Babylonia Talmud Avoda Zara 43a: “There are those who claim that the utensil should be destroyed because it is improper to use it, and there are those who say that each utensil should be assessed on its merits. The drawing appearing on it should be examined; some are permitted, others forbidden.”
- <sup>27</sup> See: E.M.M. Eynikel and K. Hauspie, “The Use of ‘Dragon’ in the Septuagint,” in *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography. Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Danker* (Edited by B. Taylor et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004). See also in the Vulgate, the Latin translation: “proieceruntque singuli virgas suas quae versae sunt in **dracones** sed devoravit virga Aaron virgas eorum.”
- <sup>28</sup> Compare *Physiologus*, (Translated by Michael J. Curley Austin; TX: University of Texas Press, 1979), 83.
- <sup>29</sup> In Stéphane Audeguy, *Les Monstres: Si loin si proches* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 25.
- <sup>30</sup> Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (NY: Routledge, 1994), 73; Eileen Gardiner, *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante* (NY: Italica Press, 1989), 38-41, 70.
- <sup>31</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 73.
- <sup>32</sup> Salisbury, 72.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ruth Reichelberg, *L’aventure prophétique: Jonah, menteur de Vérité* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 23.
- <sup>35</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God* (Translated by Marcus Dods; NY: Modern Library, [1950] 2000), 635.
- <sup>36</sup> *Vitry Machzor*, (Berlin: S. Hurwitz edition, 1896-1897), 293-294 [in Hebrew].

<sup>37</sup> Reichelberg, *L'aventure prophétique*, 116.

<sup>38</sup> Reichelberg, 91.

<sup>39</sup> Compare with Genesis 21:17-21; Kings1 19:21.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Gezuntheit, "Iyunim be-sefer Yona" [Studies of the Book of Jonah], in <http://www.tefilah.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/03/SeferYonah.doc> [in Hebrew]. On the drawing of the name of the city of Nineveh in cuneiform inscription: R. Borger, *Assyrisch-babylonische Zeichenliste*, Neukirchener Verlag, 1978, Seite 95, Nr. 200; Seite 203, Nr. 589. According to Gezuntheit, the inner triangles in the belly of the fish denote "escape," "doom," or "plant."

<sup>41</sup> See: Gezuntheit, *Iyunim*; R. Borger, *Assyrisch-babylonische Zeichenliste* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), Seite 95, Nr. 200; Seite 203, Nr. 589.

<sup>42</sup> Seneca, *De Providentia*, 4, 4.

**Beyond the Dark Ages:  
Modern Jewish Historians and Medieval Judaism**

Eli Isser Kavon

**Abstract:**

It has been more than 30 years since the publication of Professor Y.H. Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Yerushalmi's work has impacted a new generation of Jewish historians, despite its pessimism regarding the role of history as a substitute for tradition, as well as its doubt that the historian's craft will resonate within Jewish memory. My focus in this essay is on the four greatest modern historians of Judaism: Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnow, Yitzhak "Fritz" Baer, and Salo Baron. I investigate each historian's analysis of medieval Jewish rationalism—as represented by the towering figure of Moses Maimonides—and each historian's assessment of Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism. My goal in this effort is to challenge Professor Yerushalmi's pessimism and to highlight how historians of Jewish faith and life can enrich our understanding of tradition, memory and the past. I do not make the claim that *Zakhor* is wrong—in fact, Yerushalmi's analysis of History and Memory is brilliant. No doubt, History will likely never replace Memory and tradition. Yet, there is more room for hope. I believe that Yerushalmi is too pessimistic in his assessment of the abiding power of the historian of Judaism and Jewish life to instill faith and hope for the future. Perhaps one day, the yeshiva seminary will be able to engage the historian's classroom in a constructive and inspiring manner. That is my hope in writing this essay.

**Keywords:**

Historicism, Rationalism, *Kabbalah* (Jewish mysticism), Memory, *Halakhah* (Jewish law)

## Introduction: Y.H. Yerushalmi's *Zakhor* and the Jewish Historian's Challenge

“I would simply forbid teaching our children Jewish history. Why the devil teach them about our ancestors' shame? I would just say to them: Boys, from the day we were exiled from our land we've been a people without a history. Class dismissed. Go out and play football.”

—from Haim Hazaz's “The Sermon”<sup>1</sup>

In *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, historian David N. Myers explores the intellectual world of four Jewish thinkers with roots in modern Germany: Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss, and Isaac Breuer. What united these different men was their rejection of applying historical-critical tools to the study of Judaism. In the twelfth century, Maimonides, the greatest of medieval Jewish thinkers, dismissed the study of history as a “waste of time.”<sup>2</sup> Nine centuries later historicism has emerged as “a remarkable success story”<sup>3</sup> in modern thought. While the “crisis of historicism” is still with us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—especially, the issue of the relativism that the historian can create—we, as human beings and as Jews, cannot seal the Pandora's box. Scholars of Jewish life and Jewish texts cannot escape the presence of the historical-critical method. To do so is an act of denial and an attempt to place a fence around “holy ground” that can never be approached without reverence and blind faith. This worldview in no way diminishes the achievements of Cohen, Rosenzweig, Strauss or Breuer. But it does emphasize that the approach to “resisting history” is not a viable approach for Jewish thinkers, including theologians and philosophers.

It is no coincidence that David N. Myers, the author of *Resisting History*, is a student of Columbia University's Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. In Myer's earlier study of “The Jerusalem School” of historians at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he lauds Yerushalmi as “my teacher, master, and guide through the intricate byways of Jewish history.”<sup>4</sup> Professor Yerushalmi's most influential study—it is still the subject of discussion and scholarly analysis more than 30 years after it was first published—is *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Yerushalmi's slim volume, based on a series of lectures he delivered at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1981, is a

curious work, permeated with frustration and self-doubt. Yerushalmi struggles with the questions that haunted the German-Jewish thinkers in Myers' study. While Yerushalmi does not reject the historical-critical approach to understanding Judaism and Jewish life—indeed, Yerushalmi never denies that he is an historian who employs the modern method—*Zakhor* reflects the author's existential and professional struggle to find a meaningful place for the academic study of Jewish history in the intellectual, religious, and social life of modern Jewry. "Nothing has replaced the coherence and meaning with which a powerful messianic faith once imbued both Jewish past and future," writes Yerushalmi in *Zakhor*. "Perhaps nothing else can. Indeed, there is a growing skepticism as to whether Jewish history can yield itself to any organizing principle that will command general assent."<sup>5</sup>

The object of this essay is to challenge Yerushalmi's assumption that the historian of the Jewish past has lost the ability to shape the contours of Jews' understanding of their history and faith. I will attempt to analyze the historical investigations of Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnow, Yitzhak Fritz Baer, and Salo W. Baron into medieval Jewish life, faith, and literature. All four men played a decisive role in reshaping the way Jews understood their past and, therefore, had a decisive impact on the world around them and on the future of Jewish destiny. While Yerushalmi may be right in claiming that "a professional Jewish historian...[is] a new creature in Jewish history,"<sup>6</sup> this does not mean that this innovation renders the Jewish historian impotent in forging a new understanding of the way Jews remember their past. Historians such as Graetz and Baron challenge the "Yudkas" who dismiss Jewish history in the Diaspora—especially the "dark ages" of the medieval epoch—as a history of persecution, pogroms and defamation. Indeed, the Middle Ages for Jews is not a dark, unlightened, stagnant "black hole" in Jewish history. It is "vibrant, alive, and interesting."<sup>7</sup> Even Yitzhak Baer, as a Zionist historian, cannot completely dismiss medieval Jewry as "lachrymose" despite the demands of national ideology that painted the Exile as Yudka's never-ending misery.

My approach in this essay is to focus on the histories of Graetz, Dubnow, Baer, and Baron on two specific areas of medieval Jewish history: the first is the most influential figure of medieval Jewish thought, Moses Maimonides; the second area of exploration is the movement of mysticism as embodied in the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* and the Kabbalah. How does each of the historians I am studying understand these aspects of medieval Jewish history? What does their analysis have in common and how do they differ? How

did the political ideology and movements of the modern epoch shape their understanding of medieval Judaism and Jewish life? I will approach these questions by referring to the historians' work, secondary sources, as well as my own research notes.

### **The Sephardic Paradigm and Rationalist Supremacy: Graetz and Dubnow**

The period of the ascendancy of the Umayyad caliphate in Spain has not only been of interest to historians in understanding the events of Jewish history in the medieval period. The “Golden Age” of Jewish life in Muslim Spain culminating in the career of Maimonides has been central to the polemic of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement and its critics. As Ismar Schorsch writes in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*:

The full-blown cultural critique of the *Haskalah* (German Jewry's ephemeral Hebraic version of the European Enlightenment) drew much of its validation, if not inspiration, directly from Spain. The advocacy of secular education, the curbing of Talmudic exclusivity and the resumption of studies in Hebrew grammar, biblical exegesis, and Jewish philosophy, and the search for historical exemplars led to a quick rediscovery of Spanish models and achievements.<sup>8</sup>

Maimonides is central to what Schorsch calls “the myth of Sephardic supremacy” among German-Jewish *maskilim* two hundred years ago. The *Haskalah* did not only view Maimonides through the disinterested lens as a purely academic endeavor to understand medieval Jewish history but championed the great thinker as a forerunner to Jewish intellectual endeavors in the Germanic states to reconcile Judaism with Kantian rationalism and, later, the philosophy of Hegel. It is no coincidence that Galician philosopher and historian Nachman Krochmal—a pioneer of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—titled his Hegelian interpretation of Jewish history “Guide to the Perplexed of the Time” (published after his death in 1840). In this period, Maimonides is a constant presence in the works of the scientific and academic study of Judaism. Schorsch analyzes a satire written by Aaron Wolfsohn, a *maskil*, in which Maimonides and Moses Mendelssohn are reunited in the afterlife and discuss each other's philosophies as true colleagues. “Collapsing the Moses of Egypt and the Moses of Dessau into the Moses of

Cordoba,” writes the former chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, “rendered the philosophic strain of Spanish Judaism both pristine and normative.”<sup>9</sup>

It is important for us to understand the role of medieval Sephardic Jewry and Moses Maimonides within the context of the movement for Jewish enlightenment spurred by Mendelssohn. Heinrich Graetz is a stern critique of the methodology of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* but the influence of Maimonides is so great among German-Jewish thinkers that not even Graetz can resist the opportunity to engage in a bit of hagiography in his analysis of Maimonides and the “Golden Age.” Here is a sample of the near-sainthood bestowed upon the medieval Jewish thinker by the groundbreaking modern historian:

It was, however, not only his wide and deep knowledge, but his character, which constituted Maimuni’s distinction. He was a perfect sage, in the most beautiful and venerable sense of the word. Well-digested knowledge, calm deliberation, mature conviction, and mighty performance, were harmoniously combined in him. He was possessed of the deepest and most refined sense of religion, of the most conscientious morality, and of philosophical wisdom; or rather these three elements, which are generally hostile to one another, had, in him, come to a complete reconciliation. That which he recognized as truth was to him inviolable law; from it he never lapsed for a moment but sought to realize it by his actions throughout his whole life, unconcerned about the disadvantages that might accrue.<sup>10</sup>

In his survey of Jewish historians throughout the ages, Michael A. Mayer quotes Graetz’s belief that with death of Maimonides, “the period of rich spiritual harvest is followed by an ice-cold, ghastly winter” in the history of the Jewish people.<sup>11</sup> Graetz’s focus on biography and persecution—scholars and suffering—colors his analysis of Maimonides’ life and thought. Krochmal’s Hegelian understanding of Jewish civilization’s rise, growth, and decay influences Graetz’s analysis. And, of course, he is also influenced by Maimonides’ role as an expert halakhist, an outstanding community leader, and a penetrating philosopher. The medieval thinker is a hero for a scholar like Graetz who is attempting to show that, indeed, the Jewish people’s history is vibrant and alive long after the coming of Christianity. The role of the Jews in world history did not end with the coming of Christ. The “dark ages” were not so dark for the Jews. That is the case for Graetz, at least until the death of Maimonides, a genius who illuminated the darkness.

While I have accused Graetz of hagiography in his historical rendering of the life and thought of Maimonides, I may have overstated the case. In Shlomo Avineri's *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, the author states that in Graetz's "account of medieval Jewish thinkers," the pioneering historian "tends to prefer Judah Halevi over Saadia Gaon and Maimonides."<sup>12</sup> For Graetz, the "rational laws" of Saadia and Maimonides are not the essence of Judaism. Rather, Judah Halevi's understanding of history is messianic, foreseeing the end of the suffering of Exile and reestablishing the essential links between Jewish Law, the People of Israel, and the Land of Israel. I would imagine that for two reasons Judah Halevi appealed to modern historians as more of a relevant thinker for modern Jewry than Maimonides: first, Judah Halevi believed the legitimacy of Judaism was based solely on Divine revelation to the Israelites at Sinai as an event in history; second, the poet tried to derail the attempt by Jewish philosophers to reconcile Judaism with Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle. For Graetz, this second reason is especially important. Part of the historian's polemic is in establishing a "Jewish history" that does not need to be reconciled with any other movement or religion and would reassert the identity of German Jews in an epoch in which some of the same Jews assimilated or converted to Christianity (including many of Moses Mendelssohn's descendants).

The Maimonidean mystique is also present in the historical work of Simon Dubnow. Dubnow focuses on the Maimonidean controversy—a bitter controversy over the philosophical writings of the great Sephardic sage after his death—and he does so with a searing critique of the forces arrayed against Maimonides. He actually equates the conservative rabbinate that attempted to ban certain Maimonidean writings with the Inquisition Pope Innocent III brought to bear on the Albigensian heretics in Southern France.<sup>13</sup> Dubnow is a staunch defender of the rationalism of Maimonides:

The traitorous alliance between the fanatics of the synagogue and the fanatics of the Church, the callous enemies and persecutors of the Jews, aroused the wrath of the communities in Provence and Spain. Even the moderate party turned away from Rabbi Solomon and his group of abominable informers...Ramban and Rabbi Meir were shamed by the acts of the fanatics and fell silent...<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps Dubnow's discussion of the clash between the evil "Orthodox" and the heroic "freethinkers" tells us more about Dubnow's rejection of Judaism as an organized religion when he was a young man than it tells us about the realities of Maimonides and the fierce controversies after the philosopher's death. Of course, there are broader issues beyond Dubnow's personal history. Dubnow, influenced early in his life by the positivism of Comte and the philosophy of J.S. Mill, argued for absolute intellectual freedom against the demands of religious authority.<sup>15</sup> This obviously colored his discussion of the attempt by rabbis to ban the work of a "freethinker" (whether Maimonides and his followers such as the Ibn Tibbons would have considered the great rabbi as a maverick is open to question).

### **Baer: Ashkenazic Superiority and the "Proto-Zionism" of Maimonides**

In the historical writings of Yitzhak Fritz Baer we begin to see the fading of the Sephardic mystique and a more critical understanding of the role of Maimonides. The aspect of Baer I find so fascinating is that his life and career are emblematic of "the Jerusalem School" of Zionist historians at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, yet he is a medievalist who has to, in some way, dispel the view of "Yudka" in the Hazaz story that the medieval period is solely a time of persecution and defamation. According to the excellent study of the "Jerusalem School" by David N. Myers, Baer—although an expert on the Jews of Spain—portrayed the Sephardic educated class in a negative light, especially when compared to the Jews of Ashkenaz.<sup>16</sup> In his *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Baer presents what he believes is a dominant leitmotif of Jewish history: the polarity between Judaism and Hellenism.<sup>17</sup> In this world of dualism, foreign philosophies and ways of life always pose a threat to the folk piety of the Jews. This type of piety was not that of the Court Jews of Spain, those who, like Maimonides, attempted to reconcile Judaism with Aristotelian philosophy. Rather, the martyrs of the Rhineland during the First Crusade in 1096 epitomized the true Jewish national spirit embodied in the folk piety of religion that led them to kill themselves and their children rather than convert to Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Genuine Judaism in Baer's worldview is a national spirit that is enshrined in religious unity and religious expression through the self-government of the *kahal* or *aljama*. In a very creative way, Baer was able to salvage what the Zionist pioneers perceived to be a "lachrymose" epoch of suffering and revive it as one of the most creative periods in the history of the Jewish people.

As for the First Crusade—so important to Baer’s typology of medieval Jews—there still remain some important questions as to the importance of the martyrdom outside of the Rhineland. Why did not Rashi, a student of the Rhineland yeshivahs, or his descendants in the Tosafist school, mention the martyrdom of 1096 in their commentaries? Was this destruction on a smaller scale than the chronicle of Solomon bar Simson would have us believe? Baer might be exaggerating the importance of “folk piety” in his contrast of the “assimilating Sephardim” and the “pious Ashkenazim.”<sup>19</sup> Here we have a clash of Y.H. Yerushalmi’s “history” versus “memory.”

*Galut*, written by Baer in Hebrew in 1936, is his most challenging, demanding, and “unruly”<sup>20</sup> volume. Written during difficult years for German Jewry—Baer had made aliya from Germany only a few years earlier—*Galut* is a history of the idea of Exile. While Jewish communities experienced the Diaspora differently in different places, Baer tried to unify the experiences as those of exile, suffering, and ultimate redemption. While I have already mentioned that Baer had presented the medieval period in Judaism as vibrant and alive, *Galut* paints a darker picture of Jewish life in the Middle Ages. This assessment flies directly in the face of Salo W. Baron’s more positive picture of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Baer argued that both Christian anti-Semitism and Jewish assimilation—especially on the intellectual and cultural levels—posed a constant threat to Jews in the Exile in the medieval epoch.<sup>21</sup>

Yitzhak Baer devotes one chapter of *Galut* to “Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon.” In a few pages, the Zionist historian does something curious: He neutralizes Maimonides as a philosopher who attempted bravely to reconcile Judaism and the Arab interpretations of Aristotle, converting the great thinker into an ardent nationalist in the mold of Judah Halevi (the question of Judah Halevi’s “proto-Zionism” is problematic and anachronistic—he viewed the return to the Land of Israel through the lens of traditional Judaism, not 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism). Baer emphasizes Maimonides’ giving “a special place to the doctrine of the Messiah.”<sup>22</sup> “In [Maimonides’] eyes,” writes Baer, “the Messiah doctrine was basic to the Jewish faith and to the historical existence of the Jewish people, which had to be defended against any attack.”<sup>23</sup> Baer continues:

Again, if [Maimonides] insisted that the true Messiah could be recognized only by outward signs—the political, military, national consequences that were to follow his appearance—he did so simply to erect a wall against spiritualizing

tendencies, which were encouraged among the Jews by internal and external influences, and against the fantasies of the false prophets, which, if allowed to spread, could not in the end fail to shake the people's faith. He fought against the aberrations of a mystical faith to which he himself essentially belonged. *His own faith was genuine and more strongly determined by the historical tradition of Judaism than by any external philosophical influence.* His "rationalism" did not shake the national and political foundations of the Jewish tradition; rather, it strengthened them.(my emphasis)<sup>24</sup>

Baer's analysis of Maimonides is problematic. Because the Zionist historian is a firm believer that "genuine" Judaism combated the influences of Greek philosophy and culture, he is forced to downplay the role that Arab interpretations of Aristotle played in the great philosopher's worldview. "External philosophical influence" indeed played a crucial role in the intellectual and religious life of the Jewish elite both in the Baghdad caliphate and in the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba. The extent of the influence of Kalam, Neo-Platonism, and the philosophy of Aristotle cannot be denied, although the extent of their role in the intellectual life of Sepharad can be debated. Who was the *real* Maimonides? Julius Guttmann presents a Maimonides who is a traditionalist to the core for whom philosophy served the interest of religion as its handmaiden. For Harvard's Harry Wolfson, Maimonides is a thinker who balanced the truths of the Torah and the truths of philosophy in a two-tiered system, one truth not being subordinate to the other. Philosopher Leo Strauss gives us the most unlikely scenario: That Maimonides was a true Aristotelian for whom Judaism was an inferior expression of Truth—of course, Maimonides could not present himself in that way in the context of the medieval Jewish world. But, as Strauss writes in his classic *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, "The *Mishneh Torah* is primarily addressed to the general run of men, while the *Guide* is addressed to the small number of people who are able to understand by themselves."<sup>25</sup> Yitzhak Baer presents us with a fourth version of Maimonides—not that of the author of the *Mishneh Torah* or "The Guide of the Perplexed"—but as a believer in the idea of Jewish nationhood that would culminate in a political restoration under a Messiah in the Land of Israel, putting an end to the suffering of Exile.

In my opinion, Baer overemphasizes a small part of Maimonides' thinking on "natural" messianism at the expense of a much larger body of literature that certainly confirms that "foreign thought" impacted significantly on the greatest Jewish thinker in history. In

*Galut*, Baer is attempting to induct Maimonides into the pantheon of harbingers of modern Jewish nationalism and, to a certain extent, distorts the reality of Maimonides' life and thought. He is also trying very hard to present the picture of a thinker for whom the dualism of "Judiasm versus Hellenism" is not an issue. Despite his writing of the "Guide," Maimonides—for Baer—is most definitely within the camp of the pious ones, not the assimilating freethinkers.

### **Baron on Maimonides: External Influences and a "Hopeless Endeavor"**

Salo Wittmayer Baron, the dean of 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish historians, does not present one in-depth chapter on Maimonides or the controversy that erupted after his death. While Baron's masterwork, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, is roughly chronological, Baron's organization is by topic. Maimonides appears in Baron's work in many different places. For example, the philosopher is presented as a polemicist against Karaism,<sup>26</sup> as a codifier,<sup>27</sup> and as an influence on early Kabbalah.<sup>28</sup> It is by now a truism that Salo Baron attempted to purge the writing of Jewish history of its "lachrymose" and negative elements, as well as present the history of the Jews as being a part of broader Christian and Muslim history. A fine example of both trends can be found in the historian's discussion of the interrelationship between the *halakhah* of Judaism and the *shariah* of the Muslims. Baron argues that "the interpenetration of Jewish and Islamic constituents largely contributed to shaping the destinies of both religious groups."<sup>29</sup> In the broader context of the Jewish situation among Christians and Muslims in the medieval world, Baron writes:

Moreover, unlike genuine pariahs, Jews could, severally and collectively, leave their group and, at their own discretion, join the dominant majority. At least until the rise of modern racial anti-Semitism nothing was formally easier for a Jew than, by an act of simple conversion, to become a respected, sometimes leading member of the Christian or Muslim community... The fact that so many Jews throughout the ages repudiated this easy escape, indeed furiously resisted all blandishments and force, testifies to their deep conviction that they would lose, rather than gain, from severing their ties with the chosen people.<sup>30</sup>

In this assessment of the Jewish condition in history, Baron avoids the value judgments

made by Baer in the typologies of the “pious” Ashkenazim versus the “assimilating” Sephardim.

In his discussion of “Jewish Scholasticism” Baron demonstrates the deep ties between such philosopher as Maimonides and the Arab interpreters of Aristotle. “The weapon of Greek logic,” writes Baron, “sharpened by the dialectics of the talmudic schools in Babylon, the Christian sectarian polemics in Syria, and the juridical controversies throughout the Muslim world, was wielded [by Jews] with astounding ease to resolve the most evident contradictions.”<sup>31</sup> Yet Baron seems to look upon Maimonides’ endeavor to reconcile Judaism and Aristotle as a partial failure:

This supreme intellectualism was the more necessary for Jewish thinkers, the more they strove to rationalize their adherence to Jewish law and to the peculiar system of Jewish ethics. Like many Muslim and Christian philosophers, Maimonides tried to synthesize the religious ethics of his creed with the Aristotelian system. Even more than in the realm of pure metaphysics, however, this was an almost hopeless endeavor...Maimonides, in his extreme intellectualization of the moral demands of Judaism, can do full justice neither to the rabbinic nor to Aristotelian ethics.<sup>32</sup>

Salo Baron’s assessment of Maimonides as a thinker is an honest one that avoids the hagiography of Graetz and the attempt by Baer to reshape the medieval thinker in the contours of modern Jewish nationalism. While all the historians I have discussed are important critics of the *Wissenschaft* understanding of medieval Judaism, Baron is most successful here in taking the glow off a “golden age” that had been the pride not only of *maskilim* but also of critics of *Wissenschaft*. It is important for us to understand the limits of intellectual life, even in the fertile world of philosophy and science under the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Umayyads in Cordoba.

### **Graetz and the Enlightenment Rejection of Primitive Mysticism**

Jewish mysticism—especially in the form of Kabbalah as formulated by Isaac the Blind in 13<sup>th</sup> century Provence and later by Nahmanides in Gerona—is not an irrational system or a fantasy. Kabbalah, as expressed in the *Zohar*, is a coherent mystical and symbolic system that dares to explore the nature of God. What the Kabbalists attempt is to find the

language to express the grandeur of the Divine and focus on how the individual Jew can experience God in his or her daily life and actually affect the nature of the most powerful force in the universe. The challenge that the Kabbalist faces is trying to use words to explain the Idea of God that is beyond words and beyond the rational. The Kabbalah's use of symbols and a highly imaginative mythology should not be dismissed as superstition but respected as a genuinely Jewish religious and theological expression.<sup>33</sup> Gershom Scholem was the great scholar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who revived Kabbalah as a respectable and mainstream expression of Jewish belief, worthy of critical and academic study. Yet, we must remember, that Jewish mysticism was often treated with great disrespect in Jewish scholarly circles before the "Scholem Revolution."

The *Haskalah* and the scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were openly hostile to Jewish mysticism. No doubt, Kabbalah's mythological and non-rational aspects embarrassed *maskilim* who were attempting to show that Judaism was a philosophical system that could be reconciled with Kant and Hegel. The discussion of the sexual aspects of the *sefirot*, for example, must have been a great source of anxiety for Jewish intellectuals in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany eager to prove the rational basis for "ethical monotheism." Ismar Schorsch discusses another reason that deserves our attention for the *Wissenschaft* hostility to Kabbalah:

...I have long felt that the single-minded quest for the literal meaning of the text is what rendered *Wissenschaft* scholars deaf to the mystic chords of *Kabbalah*. To be sure, questions of authorship also got in the way. The traditional and often untenable claims for the antiquity of mystical texts provoked the scholarly wrath of historical positivists crusading for truth...The source of their revulsion was not a rational bent per se, because some of the bitterest critics of *Kabbalah*, like Luzzatto and Graetz, had a pronounced romantic streak, but rather an obsession with what they held to be the sanctity of the literal sense of the text.<sup>34</sup>

As much as Heinrich Graetz opposed both *Wissenschaft's* neglect of the national elements of Jewish history and its apologetic that reduced Judaism to solely the realm of religion, his history of the Jews derides Kabbalah in the way of the *maskilim*. It seems that Graetz could not escape the intellectual world of 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. It would take a German Jew living almost a century later to correct the Jewish intellectual bias

against Kabbalah.

Graetz associates the rise of Kabbalah with the death of Maimonides and the controversies over his writings that followed. According to Graetz:

Through the rupture that arose from the conflict for and against Maimuni, there insinuated itself into the general life of the Jews a false doctrine which, although new, styled itself a primitive inspiration; although un-Jewish, called itself a genuine teaching of Israel; and although springing from error, entitled itself the only truth. The rise of this secret lore, which was called *Kabbala* (tradition), coincides with the time of the Maimunistic controversy, through which it was launched into existence. Discord was the mother of this monstrosity, which has ever been the cause of schism.<sup>35</sup>

In Graetz's historical scheme the death of Maimonides and the rise of Kabbalah signal a period of decline in the history of the Jewish people that would not end until the rise of Moses Mendlessohn centuries later. The Kabbalah, in Graetz's words, was able to "ensnare the intelligence and lead astray the weak."<sup>36</sup> This assessment was grossly unfair and did not even take into account that before Isaac the Blind there was more than a millennium-old tradition of Jewish mysticism dating back to the *Merkavah* and *Hekhalot* schools of the early rabbis. Furthermore, Graetz places Maimonides and mysticism in direct conflict, which is not entirely true. The Kabbalah was, in the end, not a corrupting influence on the Jewish people but a genuine expression of yearnings for cleaving to God and being redeemed (the latter especially in Lurianic Kabbalah). Graetz, the product of his time and place, cannot rise above his environment in analyzing Kabbalah. For all his opposition to *Wissenschaft*, Graetz is firmly in its camp regarding Jewish mysticism.

### **Dubnow: Kabbalah As a Response to Medieval Rationalism**

Simon Dubnow is a bit more charitable than Graetz in his assessment of Jewish mysticism. In explaining the rise of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* in Central Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Dubnow states the mystical piety of the Kalonymides was a response to "dry Talmudic scholarship [that] could not satisfy everyone."<sup>37</sup> The exegesis of Rashi and the Tosafists was not sufficient to endow the Jew after the shock of the Crusades "with the strength to endure suffering."<sup>38</sup> For Dubnow, therefore, the mystics of Ashkenaz are not a

wholly negative phenomenon. They do play their part in sustaining the community.

Having said that, however, I will now turn to Dubnow's assessment of the *Sefer Hasidim* of Rabbi Judah He-Hasid and later editors. Here, Dubnow is fairly negative in the treatment of this important work:

The Book was very popular in the Middle Ages. It is a strange mixture of sublime religio-ethical dictums alternating with naïve superstitions of the simple folk; of sober wordly wisdom along with fairy tales about demons and witches. There is clearly manifested here the world outlook of the Jew, who is harassed not only through persecutions from outside, but through the consciousness of his own sinfulness: who sees in everything the intrigues of Satan: frightful, mysterious forces, lurking on man everywhere, ready to destroy him at every move.<sup>39</sup>

Dubnow's assumption that the Kalonymides were responding to the tragedy of the Crusades, especially the First Crusaders' devastation of the Rhineland communities in 1096, is probably not correct. Historians are not sure why the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* emerged when they did—but it had likely nothing to do with the suffering and martyrdom of the Crusades.<sup>40</sup> Yet, Dubnow seems to be right in identifying the mystical pietists as some sort of protest movement against the formal, intellectual world of the Tosafists. Just as with the emergence of modern Hasidim in Eastern Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps the medieval Hasidim were attempting to undermine rabbinic authority in these communities and attempting to instill spirituality into a cerebral framework.

As for the later emergence of Kabbalah in Provence and Christian Spain, Dubnow takes a similar approach regarding mysticism's role as a protest movement:

If the rabbinate, after a century of struggle, was victorious over the enlightenment, it was sustained in no small measure by the mystical trend that had gained momentum among the Spanish and Provencal Jews in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The rationalism of Maimonides and his more extreme adherents could not satisfy the religious conscience of the faithful, who in that gloomy epoch sought sustenance in Judaism for the heart, not the mind. They yearned to find it in self-forgetfulness, not cognizance...Instead of looking for an explanation

for the highest dogmas and traditions of Judaism in Aristotle's natural science and metaphysics, they began to seek it in the national sources...Many espoused this "secret wisdom" as a counterbalance to Rationalism; and mysticism became the loyal companion and fellow-fighter of the rabbinical Orthodoxy.<sup>41</sup>

As with Graetz, Dubnow views the phenomenon of Kabbalah as a response to the Maimonidean controversy. I am not sure if this is correct. Kabbalah may have been, in part, a mode of thought that was meant to counter the formalism and heresy of reconciling Judaism with philosophy. But there is something else at work here—Kabbalah's success has much to do with the acceptance by the rabbis of a Jewish mystical tradition dating back many centuries. Jewish mysticism is not only a reaction to events and philosophical trends. It is a genuine expression of the Jew's yearning for and love of God. Dubnow, in my opinion, is still under the influence of *Wissenschaft* suspicion of Jewish mysticism and it colors his writing of the history of Jewish mysticism.

### **Baer and the Ambiguous Stance on Medieval Mysticism: Piety and Passivity**

David N. Myers, in his study of "The Jerusalem School" provides an important insight into Yitzhak Baer's understanding of Jewish mysticism in history:

Affluence and intellectual cosmopolitanism, contempt for co-religionists and national betrayal thus characterized the Jewish upper classes in Baer's history. Their opposites were the uneducated lower classes, whose insularity and lack of exposure to Gentile culture preserved an unadulterated allegiance to Jewish religion...In his scheme, "the cabalists were not absorbed solely in mystical thought; they also opened a vigorous attack against the dominant courtier class and participated actively in the efforts to raise the level of religious and moral life."<sup>42</sup>

Baer raises the status of Kabbalah in Christian Spain from medieval superstition to a genuine and legitimate expression of Jewish faith. Gone are the *Wissenschaft* suspicions of mysticism that infected Graetz and, to a certain extent, Dubnow. Like Dubnow, however, Baer also promotes Kabbalah as a reaction to the leadership of the Jewish

community. However, for Baer, it is not only a religious rebellion. It is a revolt against the political and economic hegemony of the court Jews of Christian Spain.

Baer reinforces the positive role of Jewish mysticism in *Galut*. Yet, we should note the ambiguity of Baer toward mysticism not mentioned by Myers. Baer writes:

Mysticism took over the task of reinforcing the structure of tradition that had been shaken by rationalism and Christian polemic...The whole wonder-world of tradition took on a new and magical light that seemed to shed a halo even over the horrors of the Galut. But the body of the nation, thus revived, now almost resembled those unearthly bodies that the dead were supposed to assume after the Last Judgment and the Resurrection...Kabbalah produced new powers that made for the conservation of the traditional patterns of Jewish existence and for their inner vindication, and thereby helped to prevent a premature collapse. Perhaps it prevented at the same time the restoration to health of other forces closer allied to life.<sup>43</sup>

For Baer, Jewish mysticism is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it strengthened the resolve of Jews to believe in God and retain their faith in the harshest of conditions, whether in Spain or in the Rhineland. On the other hand, Kabbalah distanced the Jews from the realities of Exile and played a part—at least before the messianic influences of Lurianic Kabbalah and the Shabbetai Zevi affair—in creating passivity that could only end in tragedy. As a Zionist, Baer sees the aspects of Jewish nationhood in the way Kabbalah strengthened Jewish resolve to remain a nation. On the hand, in a negative way, Kabbalah distanced the Jews from the reality of returning to the Land of Israel and building up a real nation. Baer is torn in his assessment. I find it interesting that Baer's thesis is the almost perfect critique of Heinrich Graetz's acid-penned attacks on Jewish mysticism. Yitzhak Baer, in this case, is a true critic of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* by his recognition of the positive value of Kabbalah. Perhaps in this case, he was in some important way influenced by his colleague at The Hebrew University, Gershom Scholem.

### **Baron on Kabbalah: “Sophisticated Theosophy”**

Salomon Baron, in his analysis of Kabbalah, is the least polemical of all the historians discussed. This does not mean that Baron lacks an agenda—all historians are the product

of a place and time and have a particular “axe to grind.” In Baron’s case, the polemic is toward a reading of Jewish history that is not the Zionist pioneer Yudka’s lachrymose view of history in the Hazaz short story. Still, it seems to me that Baron is the least enmeshed in a political movement such as Baer’s Zionism or Dubnow’s call for Jewish autonomy in Eastern Europe.

Baron rightly claims that Kabbalah “was largely of ancient origin and was always close to Graeco-Oriental gnosticism, Neoplatonism and Islamic mysticism. It reached its highest degree of achievement, however, in medieval Europe and among the Spanish refugee communities in the East.”<sup>44</sup> A century after Graetz lambasted Kabbalah as medieval superstition, Baron is far more generous—and correct—in his understanding that Jewish mysticism was rarely antinomian and became the intellectual and theological property of rabbis dedicated to *Halakhah* such as Nahmanides. “The opposition of the leading rabbis to the Kabbalah,” writes Baron, “was reciprocally rather half-hearted from the outset.”<sup>45</sup> According to Baron, beginning with Nahmanides, “even the leading halakists became kabbalists of higher or lower order.”<sup>46</sup> While the kabbalists by the time of the Maimonidean controversy were certainly involved in a movement against rationalism and philosophy, the Jewish character of the Kabbalah was always “evident in its teachings.”<sup>47</sup>

Baron has no qualms admitting that Jewish mysticism has always been influenced by non-Jewish sources and ideas, such as Neo-Platonism. This is certainly one of Baron’s strengths—in his history he documents the interaction between Jews and the larger world. At the same time, he presents Kabbalah as a unique product of Jewish minds and Jewish societies. He also makes clear that while there is superstition in Kabbalah, it is also a very sophisticated system of theosophy that is a genuine expression of Jewish faith. In addition, he points out that social conditions played an important role in the spread of Kabbalah. Aside from the Kalonymides, the Jews of Germany produced no important mystics in the medieval period (he quotes Scholem on this point).<sup>48</sup> In his analysis of Jewish mysticism, Baron’s thorough history and lucid explanation of the literature and symbols of Kabbalah are the furthest removed from any *Wissenschaft* influence. In a few short pages, he provides a most concise explanation of medieval Jewish mysticism.

## **Conclusion: Why “Yudka” is Wrong—The Continuing Meaning of Jewish History**

This paper’s origins were in my quest to write an essay on Yitzhak Fritz Baer’s understanding of medieval Judaism. What has always intrigued me about Baer is the fact that he was both a Zionist and a medievalist. In her important study, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Yael Zerubavel explores the early Zionist understanding of history and comes to the conclusion that ‘the period of Exile...represents a “hole” between the two national periods’ of antiquity and modernity, an “acute lack of positive characteristics attributed” to Jewish life in the history of the Diaspora.<sup>49</sup> If Baer is a Zionist, should he not agree with Yudka in the Haim Hazaz story that the history of the Jews in Exile is not a true history? Obviously, Baer transcends the ideology of Zionism in the service of providing an accurate portrayal of Jewish history. While in *Galut*, Baer does mirror some Zionist conceptions of a medieval “dark age” for the Jews, his career and writings are proof that he understood the Middle Ages as being an important, productive, intellectually stimulating and institutionally challenging epoch for the Jewish people. Yes, he is a Zionist. But he is not the doctrinaire ideologist at the center of the Hazaz story.

As for Baer, much the same could be said of Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnow, Salo Baron and even the great figures of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* such as Leopold Zunz. These men, even while engaged in apologetics or critiques, never abandoned a belief in the vitality of the medieval period in Judaism that they were studying. Shlomo Avineri writes of Graetz’s groundbreaking scholarly work:

...Graetz’s main impact and legacy was his monumental *History of the Jews*. Many Jews who became deracinated from their religious and traditional background drew their historical self-awareness as Jews from Graetz’s volumes. Biblical heroes who slumbered in Jewish self-consciousness for generations were revived and underwent a far-reaching process of emancipation, secularization, and romanticization. Perhaps more than any other person Graetz contributed to the view of Jews as a nation.<sup>50</sup>

Heinrich Graetz, although so much a part of the Romantic Movement in Europe that sparked nationalism, elevates Maimonidean rationalism at the expense of medieval mysticism. Graetz is a transition figure from Enlightenment and Haskalah—with their

anti-mystical prejudice and their trumpeting of Reason—to Zionist nationalism. He cannot escape the dismissing of Kabbalah corrected later by Gershom Scholem’s academic foray into the investigation of mysticism’s central role in all of Jewish history. Simon Dubnow, as a representative of Jewish historians from Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement, cannot help but to represent Maimonides as a “freethinker” who opposed the “Orthodoxy” of his time, despite the fact that the use of such terms was an anachronism. The immersion in mysticism of the Hasidim of Eastern Europe evoked mixed feelings in Dubnow—he rejects mysticism as a phenomenon of “Orthodoxy” much like the fanaticism he believed he was seeing in the shtetl but, at the same time, he could not but admire Kabbalah as a genuine expression of folk piety of the Jewish masses.

Yitzhak “Fritz” Baer’s opposition of assimilating and degrading Sephardic philosophy as against the genuine and proto-Zionist folk piety of medieval Ashkenaz remains a defect of an otherwise brilliant analysis of the Jewish condition in Exile. His conversion of Maimonides into a harbinger of Jewish nationalism is also anachronistic and hardly plausible knowing that the greatest Jewish thinker of all time did not even consider aliya to the Land of Israel as a positive commandment of God (unlike the mystic Nachmanides). As for Kabbalah, Baer is ambiguous, admiring the folk piety that Jewish mysticism evokes but inculcating passivity in Rabbi Isaac Luria’s thought that led to the debacle of failed Messiah who was Shabbetai Zevi. Baron, the least polemical of the four historians at the heart of this essay, expresses some skepticism about a non-Jewish influenced rationalism that produced a reaction of a highly sophisticated Kabbalah that was the “property” of many “mainstream” rabbis who were experts in Jewish law.

Professor Y. H. Yerushalmi fears that historicism will impact little on the Jewish community at large. The reality is that the triumph of historicism has reenergized Jews in a search for their past and the meaning of that past. History will inform Memory and continue to play an important role in strengthening Jewish identity and making known to the world that the relevance of Judaism and Jewish culture to the world did not end with the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Yerushalmi’s pessimism regarding the impact of Jewish history on the masses of Jews is the pessimism of a post-modern Jewish historian. The reality for Graetz, Dubnow, Baer and Baron was a deep-seated belief that investigating Jewish history would instill in Jews a strong sense of who they were. Often, their history was written as a *Wissenschaft* influenced or Zionist polemic, but one can sense the

immediacy of their project and its Jewish and global impact. There is no reason to now abandon their optimism regarding Jewish History's impacting Jewish Memory in a constructive and meaningful way. The rupture Yersushalmi sees in modernity is not a yawning chasm. Let us start building bridges between present and past. I hope this essay contributes in a small way to a greater understanding of the role of the modern Jewish historian and the periods in the Exile and in the land of Israel that he or she is studying.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The passage from the short story by Hazaz is quoted in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, p.97.
- <sup>2</sup> Quoted by David N. Myers in *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought*, p.5.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, p.viii.
- <sup>5</sup> Yerushalmi, *op. cit.*, p.95.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.
- <sup>7</sup> Eli Kavon, "Halakhic Nation," *Jerusalem Post*, June 2014.
- <sup>8</sup> Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, p.73.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.
- <sup>10</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews, Vol. III*, pp.447-448.
- <sup>11</sup> Michael A. Mayer, *Ideas in Jewish History*, p.241.
- <sup>12</sup> Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, p.34.
- <sup>13</sup> Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews: From the Later Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Vol. III, p.96.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.
- <sup>15</sup> "Simon Dubnow," in *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 6, p.255.
- <sup>16</sup> Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, p.122.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.119.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.120-1.
- <sup>22</sup> Yitzhak Baer, *Galut*, p.38.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.38-9.
- <sup>25</sup> Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p.94.
- <sup>26</sup> Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. II, p.350.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.339.

- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140.
- <sup>29</sup> Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. I., p.335.
- <sup>30</sup> Cited by Michael A. Meyer in *Ideas of Jewish History*, p.329.
- <sup>31</sup> Baron, Vol. I, p.358.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.367.
- <sup>33</sup> Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, p.163.
- <sup>34</sup> Schorsch, *op. cit.*, pp.153-4.
- <sup>35</sup> Graetz, Vol. III, p.547.
- <sup>36</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. IV, p.1.
- <sup>37</sup> Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews: From the Later Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Vol. II, p.715.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.717.
- <sup>40</sup> Robert M. Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp.422-425.
- <sup>41</sup> Dubnow, Vol III., p.123.
- <sup>42</sup> Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, p.123.
- <sup>43</sup> Baer, *op. cit.*, pp.50-1.
- <sup>44</sup> Baron, Vol. II, p.135.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.
- <sup>49</sup> Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, p.19.
- <sup>50</sup> Avineri, *op. cit.*, p.35.

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## **Editor's Postscript**

We are pleased to present you with the tenth issue of the *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (JISMOR)*.

The Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (CISMOR) held a workshop titled "Jews and Judaism in Japan" on January 26th, 2014. Please refer to the "Introduction" by Prof. Ada Tagger-Cohen for an overview of the workshop. This issue contains two of the articles delivered at the workshop. Each of the articles vividly depicts a relationship between the Japanese and the Jews during the prewar period.

This issue also contains articles submitted by Dr. Danielle Gurevitch and Rabbi Eli Isser Kavon.

The situation in the Middle East is constantly changing. *JISMOR* is intended to promote an interdisciplinary study of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other monotheistic religions rather than to convey and comment on current topics. When we see that some discredited stereotypes of the Abrahamic religions are spreading, however, we feel an even greater responsibility for presenting unbiased pictures of these religions to our readers. We ask for your continued support for *JISMOR*.

March 2015

Takehito Miyake, Chief of Editorial Committee

## Guidelines for Submissions

Revised on March 31, 2014

1. *JISMOR* is an online journal published annually in or around March in Japanese and English, and is made publicly accessible on the Doshisha University Academic Repository and the website of Doshisha University Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (CISMOR).
2. In principle, eligibility for contributing papers is limited to research fellows of CISMOR and individuals recommended by at least one research fellow of CISMOR.
3. Each submitted paper will be peer-reviewed, and the editorial committee will decide whether to accept it or not for publication.
4. In principle, submissions are limited to unpublished papers only. (If you intend to submit a paper that has been published before, you should obtain the permission of the relevant institution for the publication of your paper in *JISMOR*.)
5. Please send a resume of your paper (written in approximately 400 characters in Japanese or 150 words in English) via e-mail by the end of May to the address shown below. Any format is acceptable.
6. Your paper should be received by the editorial committee by the end of July.
7. Please prepare your paper both in Word format (see below) and PDF format, and submit them, as e-mail attachments.
8. To submit a paper, please use a template for Microsoft Word, which can be downloaded from the CISMOR's website. (<http://www.cismor.jp/en/publication/index.html>)
9. The paper should be written in either Japanese or English.
10. The paper should be written from left to right.
11. The paper should be 16,000 to 24,000 characters long if written in Japanese and 6,000 to 9,000 words long if written in English.  
Research notes, book reviews, and research trends should be within 8,000 characters if written in Japanese and within 3,000 words if written in English.
12. The first page of the paper should include: the title of the paper; the name of the author; the organizational affiliation; an abstract (in approximately 400 characters if written in Japanese and 150 words if written in English); and five key words. If you write the paper in Japanese, please write the title, the name of the author, and the organizational affiliation in both Japanese and English.
13. Footnotes should be provided collectively at the end of the paper. No bibliography is shown, in principle.
14. If your paper includes reference to books, magazines, and/or newspapers in a European language, their names should be written in italic type, while titles of papers that may appear in your paper should be written in roman type.
15. In principle, Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, and other words from any language using a non-Roman alphabet should be transliterated into the Roman alphabet, using the same system of transliteration throughout the paper.

Specifically, in transliterating Hebrew and Greek words, please comply with the guidelines specified in Chapter 5 (p. 25 onward) of P. H. Alexander, *et al.*, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies*, 1999 (hereinafter referred to as “SBL”), as much as possible. While SBL specifies two systems of transliterating Hebrew words—academic and general-purpose—you may use either one that better suits your purpose. (Use of SBL is also recommended for transliterating the words of ancient languages such as Coptic, Akkadian, and Ugaritic.)

In transliterating Arabic words, Japanese authors are required to comply with K. Otsuka, *et al.*, eds., *Iwanami Isuramu Jiten (Iwanami Dictionary of Islam)* to the furthest possible extent. While no particular system for transliterating Arabic words is specified for authors from other countries, compliance with ALA-LC (Library of Congress) is recommended as much as possible for transliterating Arabic, Persian, and Turkish words.

If you have difficulty obtaining any of the abovementioned guidelines, please contact the editorial committee.

16. Published papers will be converted into PDF file and sent to the respective authors.

Please contact for inquiry and submit your paper to:

Editorial committee for the *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions*

Doshisha University Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions

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