

JAPAN'S JEWISH "OTHER":
ANTISEMITISM IN PREWAR AND WARTIME JAPAN

by

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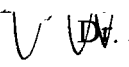
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Although the Japanese government did not persecute European Jewish refugees who came to reside within the borders of its growing empire in the 1930s and early 1940s, Japanese antisemitism increased in fervency during the war years. With government officials, intellectuals, and the media serving as conduits to the Japanese public, the "Jewish enemy" was blamed for a wide range of domestic and international problems. The negative characteristics attributed to Jews served to highlight, by contrast, the positive characteristics with which Japanese identified their own nationality, morality, and humanity. "The Jews" thus assumed the role of the antithetical Western "Other," providing Japanese with a tangible focus for their wrath against the wartime Western enemy. Japanese antisemitism, in short, was not a pale reflection of Nazism, as some

have argued, but rather was part and parcel of the long-standing Japanese essentialization of the Western “Other.”

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the complicated and often controversial discourse on prewar and wartime Japanese history, the subject of Japanese-Jewish relations has garnered relatively little scholarly attention. Yet during the exodus and genocide of European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, Japan, devoid of a significant Jewish population throughout its history, nevertheless became a safe haven for thousands of Jewish refugees. Despite pressures from its German ally, the Japanese government did not persecute European Jewish refugees who came to reside within the borders of its growing empire. As a result, thousands of Jewish lives were saved. Confounding that seemingly honorable position, however, was an antisemitic¹ current that had arrived in Japan in the 1920s and only intensified during the war years. With government officials, intellectuals, and the media serving as conduits to the Japanese public, Jews were cast as the “metaphorical” enemy

¹ The term “antisemitism” was invented by Wilhelm Marr in 1873 and originally based on the assumption of Jewish racial inferiority to the “Aryan race.” Since that time, antisemitism has been redefined in a number of ways to include ethnic, religious, and political discrimination. However, the term is often used in a transhistorical fashion, suggesting that “hostility toward Jews is an enduring reaction of non-Jews to some unique and unchanging real characteristics of Jews.” However, this thesis suggests that the origins of Japanese antisemitism can be traced to Western Christian interpretations of Jews, but perhaps more specifically to influential antisemitic texts, such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, that emerged in the early twentieth century. Japanese antisemitism cannot be neatly defined as racist, ethnocentric, or religious by nature. Thus, it is best defined in this thesis simply as “hostility directed at Jews.” That usage does not only imply real threats of harm toward Jews, such as those carried out by the perpetrators of the Holocaust, but also irrational conversions of “the Jews” into a symbol whose meaning did not depend on either real characteristics of Jews or actual contact with them. This is not a redefinition of antisemitism, as Japanese antisemitism was fundamentally grounded in twentieth century Western stereotypes of Jews. Like other forms of racial stereotyping, antisemitism served a similar purpose in both the West and Japan: it defined the Self against the antithetical Other. Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward A Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 311, 351-352.

and blamed for a wide range of domestic and international problems. In fact, evidence suggests that the Japanese government's benevolent treatment of Jews was partially influenced by fears of international Jewish power grounded in antisemitic stereotypes.

Despite efforts by a select number of scholars to prove that studying Japanese-Jewish relations in the prewar and wartime periods can shed new light on modern Japanese history and contribute to the already complex narrative of the Holocaust, the subject is all too often dismissed. Some scholars subscribe to the "German pressure" argument, suggesting that Japanese antisemitism was little more than "mindless adherence to Nazi doctrine."² For others, antisemitism coalesces nicely with Japan's well-documented wartime brutality of conquered Asian peoples and Allied prisoners of war. Moreover, the fact that Japanese did not actually persecute Jews seems to trivialize their antisemitism in comparison to the massive slaughter in Europe. Even those who have contributed greatly to our understanding of the subject are often unwilling to categorize it as anything but a bizarre "flirtation."³ However, despite challenges to the validity of the subject, numerous examples attest to the importance of Japanese antisemitism in the prewar and wartime periods. The 1942 election of Shiōden Nobutaka—one of the most outspoken Japanese antisemites in prewar and wartime Japan—to the Japanese Diet, for example, provides an adequate starting point from which to assess the significance of antisemitism in Japan.

² John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 251.

³ Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 156.

Shiōden Nobutaka subscribed to an antisemitism paralleling that of many Nazis, due in large part to the considerable time he spent in Germany as a young army officer. Shiōden attended German anti-Semitic fairs and visited the anti-Masonic museum at Nuremberg, made contact with Nazi propagandists such as Julius Streicher, and collected copious amounts of antisemitic information and material for translation into Japanese, which he assured the Germans would “contribute to the enlightenment of the Japanese about the Jewish plan for world domination.”⁴ After retiring from the Japanese Army in 1930, Shiōden became the founding president of the Kokusai Seikei Gakkai (Association for International Politics and Economy), which was sponsored by the Foreign Ministry for the purpose of providing the Japanese government with “Jewish information.” The association printed a biennial journal called *Kokusai himitsuryoku kenkyū* (Studies on International Secret Forces), which later became a monthly under the title *Yudaya Kenkyū* (Jewish Studies). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Shiōden wrote and lectured about the Jewish peril, never softening his contempt or his vision of the Jewish conspiracy as an overwhelmingly powerful international force.⁵ Still, historian Ben Ami-Shillony has challenged Shiōden’s commitment to antisemitism, arguing that Shiōden, like some other Japanese antisemites, actually sought to befriend Jews in order to exploit them for Japanese benefit. To prove his claim, Shillony cites a 1944 article by Shiōden in the

⁴ Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, Brown Judaic Studies 23 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 243.

⁵ Gerhard Krebs, “The 'Jewish Problem' in Japanese-German Relations,” in E. Bruce Reynolds, ed., *Japan in the Fascist Era*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 112; David Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 124.

Nippon Times:

At present, there are about 100,000 Jews in East Asia. . . . They can be utilized for the construction of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Some of them have already offered their cooperation and others have expressed a desire to become Japanese subjects. Such behavior is natural and praiseworthy.⁶

A full reading of the text, however, reveals that Shillony's citation was erroneous, and that Shiōden was actually chastising individuals who wished to utilize Jews:

Some people are of the opinion that those Jews in East Asia should be utilized properly for the construction of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. . . . Such tendencies seem very natural or praiseworthy. However, we must be on the alert lest we should be caught by their honeyed tongues. We see in Britain and America good examples of the nations which have fallen victim to the . . . greed of the Jews."⁷

Indeed, Shiōden did not waver in his contempt for Jews. In his postwar autobiography, Shiōden continued to reference the international Jewish conspiracy and the supposed Jewish link to communism.⁸ Still, the significance of Shiōden Nobutaka does not lie in his hard-core antisemitic writings and lectures, but rather in his overwhelming success as a candidate in the 1942 Diet election. Running on a platform based largely on antisemitism, Shiōden polled 76,250 votes, more than any other candidate in Japan had ever received. A number of historians have used this fact to draw a seemingly straightforward conclusion: Japanese constituents were antisemitic. Shiōden,

⁶ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 163.

⁷ *Nippon Times*, 16 June 1942, 2.

⁸ Shiōden Nobutaka, *Shiōden Nobutaka kaikoroku*, (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1964), 278.

too, attributed his impressive victory to antisemitism: “Differing from the other candidates, I talked about the annihilation of the Jewish influence lurking behind the war.”⁹ Indeed, most candidates were lackluster reprints from the same conservative mold, and the campaign itself was highly regulated. By way of illustration, the Japanese police made three arrests, issued fifty “cautions,” and suspended six rallies on the first day of the campaign when orators spoke on subjects deemed dangerous to the Japanese war effort.¹⁰ In such strictly regulated campaigns, public interest tended to wane. In that case, Shiōden's unique platform was probably a very valuable asset. Other factors also contributed to his victory, such as his military background, support from Reservist Association chapters and traditional rightists such as Hiranuma Kīchirō and Tōyama Mitsuru, as well as his high regard among the “intellectual class.”¹¹

Even if Shiōden's popularity cannot be solely attributed to his antisemitism, his frequent references to the Jewish conspiracy, at the very least, did not offend Japanese voters. It is presumptuous to conclude that Japanese who supported Shiōden were antisemites, but is also simplistic to assume that antisemitism was irrelevant. Japanese antisemitism was not based on real interactions with Jews, but on assumptions of Jewish character borrowed from abroad that coalesced with well-established visions of the

⁹ Edward J. Drea, *The 1942 General Diet Election: Political Mobilization in Wartime Japan* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, Center for East Asian Studies, 1979), 107.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* The most common offenses were speaking ill of the political council, controlled economy, or government policy, although “speeches attacking the upper classes,” “speeches creating public disunity or discord,” or “speeches using 'improper language' and causing anxiety or confusion” were also cautioned or suspended.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 106-109.

Western “Other.” Shiōden, like other Japanese antisemites, assigned Jews negative characteristics that served to highlight, by contrast, the positive characteristics with which Japanese identified their own nationality, morality, and humanity. At times the “Jewish enemy” assumed the role of the antithetical Western “Other,” while at other times it became an enemy apart. In either case, it provided Japanese with a tangible focus for their wrath against the wartime Western enemy. The purported Jewish encroachment on the Japanese way of life resonated with fears of Western imperialism that preceded the arrival of Commodore Mathew Perry’s black ships in 1853. And the Japanese vision of an “Asia for Asians” based on racial harmony and equality was not solely rooted in imperialist intentions, but was also the culmination of animosities against an exploitative and often racist “West.” The notion of Jewish world domination had long been a key component of Western antisemitism, just as the threat of Western domination had persisted in Japan since the first Japanese contact with the Western world shortly before the Edo period (1603-1868). As the war years dragged on and the Allied advance drew closer to the home islands, the threat of the West loomed ever larger and antisemitism, as well as anti-Westernism, increased in intensity and fervor.

As Hannah Arendt suggests, the growth of antisemitism can hardly ever be explained in terms of one single cause.¹² The same holds true in the Japanese case. The alliance with Germany can neither be solely credited for the existence of antisemitism in Japan, nor can it be wholly dismissed. The Germans achieved some success in transmitting antisemitism: numerous articles and translations of German works (such as

¹² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), 3-5.

Mein Kampf) were published, exhibitions were held in major cities, and a number of mid-level government officials, including Shiōden, were directly influenced by the Germans. At times, antisemitism could be invoked by Japanese to connect with their German ally, to unify, however superficially, against an evil, world-dominating enemy, as well as to downplay the power of Allied forces by suggesting that Axis defeats were the result of Jewish treachery. Still, Japanese antisemitism cannot be understood simply as a pale reflection of Nazi ideology. Japanese conceptions of race were based on their perceived “purity” in contrast to the “impurity” of the outside “Other,” while Nazi racism was an amalgamation of Social Darwinism, racial anthropology, eugenics, and traditional Jew-hating. The inherent differences of German and Japanese racial ideas, both regarding their personal visions of racial superiority and their treatment of other races, could never be reconciled.

Japanese interactions with “real” Jews (those who had actual contact with Japanese) often resulted in interpretations of the Jewish “Other” that deviated from the ideas espoused by antisemites. Since the 1920s, “real” Jews were viewed by the government as diverse nationals rather than as representatives of a collective race. For most Japanese government officials, persecution of “real” Jews contradicted self-serving visions of their moral superiority and racial tolerance, notions that were fundamental to the wartime propaganda campaign. But for other Japanese, both common citizens and government officials, “real” Jews were objects of pity, victims of the same racist “West” that had orchestrated the “Yellow Peril” trend of the early twentieth century. Still others remained indifferent to the plight of Jews, or possessed only a superficial understanding

of what antisemitism was and how it might relate to “real” Jews and the Japanese war effort. Thus, Japanese feelings towards Jews were far from uniform, suggesting that antisemitism, despite its frequent appearance, was hardly a unifying ideology in Japan.

As previously mentioned, few scholars have addressed Japan’s relationship with Jews in the prewar and wartime periods. Ben-Ami Shillony, Marvin Tokayer, David Kranzler were the groundbreaking researchers in the field, establishing a solid framework for future studies, while David Goodman, Miyazawa Masanori, and Pamela Rotner Sakamoto have offered the most significant contributions in recent years. However, each of their works has considerable drawbacks, especially concerning their limited scope and failure to properly contextualize Japanese antisemitism.

While many historians do well in providing examples of antisemitism, in the press, among intellectuals, and in the government, they fail to compare them with Japanese anti-Westernism. Indeed, anti-Western wartime propaganda, a subject best described in John Dower’s *War Without Mercy*, cannot be divorced from antisemitic propaganda. Yet each of the aforementioned historians begin their discussions of Japanese antisemitism with the arrival of foreign texts such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, ignoring any links between historical Japanese animosity toward the West and the acceptance of antisemitism. David Kranzler claims that “the seeds of anti-Semitism in Japan go back as far as 1877, when Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* was first published in the country.”¹³ But while Kranzler is accurate in noting the arrival of

¹³ David Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” in David Wyman, ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 557.

antisemitism from abroad, this thesis suggests that “the seeds” were sown much earlier in Japanese history, a subject addressed in greater detail in chapter four.

The approach of many works is also problematic for one attempting to understand the nature and purpose of Japanese antisemitism, as many focus on the experiences of Jewish refugees rather than Japanese. Marvin Tokayer was one of the first to address the Japanese government’s Jewish policy in his 1970 book, *The Fugu Plan*. However, perhaps in an attempt to appeal to a popular audience interested in the experiences of Holocaust survivors, Tokayer alternates factual chapters with fictional ones, describing experiences of make-believe characters that are said to reflect real Jewish refugees. His examinations of the Japanese seem of secondary importance, as his claims are based primarily on a single set of documents from the Japanese Foreign Ministry and second-hand oral histories.

David Kranzler also focuses his attention far more on the experiences of Jews than on the Japanese, and he makes little mention of antisemitism. Kranzler has offered the most significant contribution to the history of the Shanghai Jewish community, the largest concentration of Jews under Japanese control during the war, through numerous articles and his monumental *Japanese, Nazis, & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai*. In his work he does recognize the existence of antisemitism in Japan, but he argues that, considering the thousands of Jewish lives saved, Japanese policies were ultimately pro-Jewish.

Whether intentional or not, most works are decidedly one-sided, categorizing “Japan” as friend or foe of the Jews. In a subject as complex and horrific as the

Holocaust, attempts at either blanket condemnation or commendation of “nations” or “peoples” are all too frequent among scholars, perhaps because they offer simple solutions to a subject that continues to baffle us. One of the most well-known examples of that tendency is the controversial book by Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, which posits that ordinary Germans readily carried out the Holocaust because antisemitism was an inherent quality of German identity. In a somewhat similar fashion, scholars addressing Japanese-Jewish relations typically portray “the Japanese” as either wholly guilty or innocent.

David Kranzler downplays Japanese culpability by suggesting that Japanese were somehow unaware of the consequences of their actions: “If the supposedly sophisticated anti-Semites of Europe and the United States believed the Jew to be *the* cause of international and domestic problems, then the naïve Japanese, but a generation removed from feudalism, were even more susceptible.”¹⁴ Ben Ami-Shillony reiterates the notion of Japanese victimization in his *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*, which compares historical experiences of Jews and Japanese to seek out commonalities and differences. In his comparisons of “Anti-Semitism and Anti-Japanism” and “Auschwitz” and “Hiroshima,” Shillony provides a victimization link between Japanese and Jews that diminishes the significance of Japanese wartime antisemitism, which he ultimately dismisses as “an intellectual fad.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 559.

¹⁵ Ben Ami-Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1991), 164.

David Goodman and Miyazawa Masanori also attempt to neatly label “Japan,” although they reject the interpretations of Kranzler and Shillony. Their work, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, traces the history of Japanese antisemitism from the nineteenth century to the 1990s, offering unparalleled contributions to the subject (especially their examination of the postwar Japanese turn to philosemitism as a way to “forget” wartime antisemitism). However, their specific focus on antisemitism, coupled with their title choice, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, leads the reader to conclude that hatred is the primary lens through which Japanese view Jews. Thus, while providing a solid and intriguing history of antisemitism in Japan, Goodman and Miyazawa leave almost no room for the possibility of different Japanese interpretations of Jews.

Indeed, more extensive examination of the diversity of Japanese opinions of Jews would properly contextualize these works and avoid simplistic categorization. As Hannah Arendt argues, comprehension of history entails “the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of reality—whatever it may be or might have been.”¹⁶ Indeed, while objectivity can never be completely achieved, we cannot hope to understand the development, purpose, and strength of Japanese antisemitism if we fail to broaden the scope of our investigations. One recent work by Pamela Rotner Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma*, has moved closer toward that goal by challenging those who seek to neatly label Japanese treatment of Jews. Sakamoto examines Japanese consuls’ relations with Jewish refugees in the 1930s,

¹⁶ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 7.

concluding that they were neither collectively obedient nor rebellious. Most Japanese diplomats were pragmatic and cautious, choosing to defer to Tokyo in times of uncertainty. Expressions of altruism, as well as blatant acts of persecution or discrimination, were rare occurrences. In the end, those Japanese who saved Jews often did so inadvertently, “as a haphazard response to external conditions.”¹⁷

In following the lead of Sakamoto, this thesis avoids collectively labeling “Japan” or “the Japanese people” as antisemitic or philosemitic. However, it moves beyond the actions of Japanese consuls, examining not only Japanese encounters with Jews, but also their imaginings of a collective, worldwide “Jewish enemy” during the prewar and wartime periods. It argues that, from the highest government official to the average citizen, Japanese perceptions of Jews were multifarious and, consequently, cannot be neatly categorized. Those who attempt to categorize Japan or the Japanese seem to ignore the possibility that Jews could be well-treated while simultaneously being slandered. However, that notion is only inconsistent if one accepts the Western polarity between philosemitism and antisemitism. Japanese antisemitism was not influenced by memories of ethnic tension, and therefore could be consistent with policies designed to take advantage of Jews and their “expertise.” Treating Jews well could help the Japanese promote their “purity” by contrasting their humanity and racial tolerance with that of the West. And for many who believed in the myth of international Jewish power, befriending Jews likely seemed a logical way to assist in the creation of a new order in Asia. At the

¹⁷ Pamela Rotner Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 7.

same time, the Jewish conspiracy had many parallels with longstanding Japanese perceptions of the Western enemy, and it offered a simple explanation for Western mistreatment of Japan. While not all Japanese subscribed to antisemitism, its frequent invocation was tolerated because it did not contradict the goals of the Japanese regime. In fact, positive and negative interpretations of Jews coexisted without inspiring intense debate among the Japanese because both either served the war effort in some fashion or, at the very least, did not inspire dissent among the populace.

As sociologist Maurice Freedman has suggested, one of the benefits of studying minority groups is “the light they throw on the societies of which they are a part.”¹⁸ Indeed, despite the invisibility of Jews as a conspicuous social force in Japan, Japan’s relations with both real and imagined Jews in the prewar and wartime periods explain much about its tenuous relationship with the West in modern history. With that focus in mind, this thesis re-contextualizes the subject of Japanese antisemitism. While it provides a narrative of Japanese-Jewish relations in the prewar and wartime periods that includes a discussion of the rise of antisemitism and government reactions to Jewish refugees, this thesis will also examine the variety of public and private Japanese responses to Jews, as well as the influence of German pressure, concluding that Japanese antisemitism was neither all-encompassing nor completely adopted from abroad. From that point, the thesis examines the historical role of the “Other” and “the West” in Japan, placing antisemitism within that broader framework. After exploring the functions of antisemitism in prewar and wartime Japan and its relation to anti-Westernism, the study

¹⁸ Maurice Freedman, “Jews, Chinese, and Some Others,” *British Journal of Sociology* 10, no. 1 (1959): 61.

concludes with an analysis of the problems associated with contemporary Japanese memories of Jews and the Holocaust.

CHAPTER II
JAPANESE-JEWISH RELATIONS THROUGH 1945
AND THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM

Historically, Japanese and Jews have had little direct contact. Historian Herman Dicker claims that Jewish traders appeared in Japan as early as the ninth century. However, it was not until the arrival of Commodore Perry's black ships and the "opening" of Japanese ports that Jews began to arrive in greater numbers. Usually working as merchants, they settled in cities such as Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki, and by the turn of the century had established small yet vibrant communities. The Jewish population in Japan grew slowly (less than 1,000 by the onset of World War I), so Jews remained an obscure and largely unknown component of the population. It was during the modernization and westernization of the Meiji Period that antisemitism first arrived in Japan. As increasing numbers of Japanese adopted Christianity, Western missionaries provided them with a variety of Jewish images, including the notion of Jews as "Christ killers."¹⁹ However, the translation and publication of antisemitic books likely had a greater impact on Japanese perceptions of Jews. William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, retold under the title of *Jinniku shichi-ire saiban* (The Mysterious Western Human Flesh-Pawn Trial), was serialized in the *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* in 1885, and Ivan

¹⁹ Herman Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East: A Century of Jewish Life in China and Japan* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), 162; Kranzler, "Japan Before and During the Holocaust," 554, 557; Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 38-39.

Turgenev's short story, "Zhid," appeared in 1898 in the journal *Kokumin no tomo*. While these works helped spread negative Jewish stereotypes through the scheming, unsavory characters of Shylock and Zhid, it was only after Japan's involvement in the Siberian Intervention (1918-1922) that antisemitism began to gain strength.²⁰

Following the outbreak of revolution in Russia in 1917, America, France, Canada, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia and Japan stationed military forces in Siberia to support White Russian forces against the Red Army. Motivated by anti-Communism and its own imperialist intentions, Japan committed more troops than any other nation and remained in Siberia until 1922, two years longer than any of its allies. It was during that time that low-level officers in the Japanese military became familiar with *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, one of the most influential antisemitic texts ever written. The book, which was required reading for White Russian troops, explained the Bolshevik revolution in terms of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. Among other things, *The Protocols* told of a secret Jewish plot to destroy the world economy in order to supplant Christian civilization with an all-powerful Zionist empire.²¹ Although the work was later found to be fictitious, its portrayal of Jews as powerful international, political, and financial figures profoundly influenced the thinking of the Japanese officers (as it did with many others around the world). *The Protocols* were published in Japan in 1924 under the title

²⁰ Avraham Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," in Roman Malek, ed., *From Kaifeng . . . to Shanghai: Jews in China* (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 2000), 286; Miyazawa Masanori, "Japanese Anti-Semitism in the Thirties," *Midstream* (March 1987): 23.

²¹ Sergei Nilus, *The Protocols and World Revolution, including a Translation and Analysis of the "Protocols of the Meetings of the Zionist Men of Wisdom,"* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1920), 11.

of *Sekai kakumei no rimen* (Behind the World Revolution). However, some Japanese were referencing the text even before it was translated. In 1921, Mori Kenkichi, a member of the Information Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, completed *Yudayajin ni kansuru kenkyuu* (A Study about the Jews), a text which made frequent use of *The Protocols* in its descriptions of Jews as controllers of world finances, industry, and education systems. As a result of Mori's work and the publication of *The Protocols*, Foreign Minister Uchida Yasuya instructed his diplomats abroad to conduct research on Jews and report their findings. Soon after, in journals with titles such as *Kokusai Himitsu-Ryoku no Kenkyu* (Studies in the International Conspiracy) and *Yudaya-jin no inbo to heinichi mondai* (The Jewish plot and the Anti-Japanese problem), Japanese began to offer their own contributions to the discourse on the “international Jewish conspiracy.”²²

Although antisemitism gained more recognition in Japan by the 1920s, especially among government officials, most Japanese remained unconcerned with Jewish affairs. However, there were significant instances in which prominent Jews became the subjects of Japanese public attention. With the media serving as a conduit, a positive interpretation of Jewish wealth, power, and intelligence was passed on to the Japanese public in direct contrast to the writings of Japanese antisemites. Still, those Jews who caught the attention of the Japanese were often discussed in terms of their nationality or accomplishments, seldom in terms of their religion.

²² Krebs, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 108-109.

In the early twentieth century, the most prominent Jew from the Japanese perspective was Jacob Schiff, a New York banker and philanthropist who chaired the firm Kuhn, Loeb, & Co. and in that capacity played a vital role in Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). During the war, the Japanese government, in desperate need of funds, dispatched Takahashi Korekiyo to America on a special mission to negotiate war loans. Unable to acquire assistance from banks in New York, Takahashi proceeded to London, where he met Schiff by chance at a dinner party. Schiff helped Takahashi secure substantial loans for the Japanese government, and he raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the Japanese war effort. He was motivated by the potential financial gains such loans would bring, but also by a deep resentment for the Tsar's mistreatment of Russian Jews. Schiff's actions were widely believed to have helped tip the scales of the war, and following Japan's victory in 1905, he became a national hero. During a visit to Japan in 1907, he became the first foreigner to receive the Order of the Rising Sun from the emperor.²³ Schiff developed a deep respect for the Japanese, concluding that they were a people of "great intelligence, industry, and modesty."²⁴ As the primary manager of the Japanese government's American accounts following the Russo-Japanese War, Schiff maintained a close relationship with the Japanese. He became friends with Takahashi and looked after his daughter, Wakiko, when she spent

²³ Kase Hideaki, "Nihon no naka no yudayajin" [Jews in Japan], *Chūō kōron* (May 1971): 244; Zvia Bowman, "Unwilling Collaborators: The Jewish Community of Harbin Under the Japanese Occupation 1931-1945," in Malek, ed., *From Kaifeng . . . to Shanghai*, 323; Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 17.

²⁴ Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928), 236.

three years studying in America. Although Schiff criticized Japanese attempts to establish friendly relations with Russia in the years before World War I, he later supported Japanese expansion in Manchuria, which he believed would stabilize China and benefit his business interests there.²⁵

Following World War I, Japanese media attention shifted to Albert Einstein, who had achieved international fame by the beginning of the 1920s. After receiving the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921, Einstein began a world tour that included a two month stay in Japan. In late 1922, he arrived in Kobe amid much fanfare and grandiloquent praise from the press: (“Sparkles Like Brilliant Ray! Doctor E. Giant of Scholarship”).²⁶ Einstein lectured to large crowds in every major Japanese city. When his initial speeches (which included Japanese translations) lasted more than four hours, Einstein took pity on his attentive and patient audience by substantially reducing the length of his lectures. Einstein was surprised when he was notified by two Japanese companions that those attending the shorter lectures felt slighted. In fact, it seemed that just being in the presence of Einstein outweighed the content of his lectures, and many Japanese were eager to get the chance to see him. On a number of unscheduled occasions, Einstein was compelled to disembark from his train to greet the massive crowds gathered along the tracks. Treated as a state visitor, he was received on separate occasions by both the Prime Minister and Emperor. At the end of his trip, in a farewell letter printed in the *Osaka*

²⁵ Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers*, 164-165; Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 34-35.

²⁶ Marius Jansen, “Einstein in Japan,” *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 50, no. 2 (1989): 152-154.

Mainichi, Einstein expressed his appreciation, claiming he had never experienced a more sincere welcome than he had in Japan.²⁷

Although encounters with prominent individuals such as Einstein and Schiff may have helped fashion an image of Jews in the minds of many Japanese, it is likely that their Jewishness did not significantly impact their popularity. During the Taishō Period (1912-1926)—a time when internationalism and democratization were replacing the Meiji goals of nation-building—it is not surprising that Schiff and Einstein were lauded by the Japanese. Their Western identity, coupled with their financial and intellectual prominence, enabled them to achieve iconic status. That their Jewishness did not undermine their fame becomes more significant when viewed within the context of increasing German antisemitism. In May 1922, Walther Rathenau, a prominent German Jew, was assassinated by right-wing extremists in Berlin. A few months later, shortly before deciding to travel to Japan, Einstein canceled a speaking engagement in Germany when rumors of possible assassination surfaced. Japanese antisemitism was far less fervent than in other nations, and it remained a relatively obscure ideology during the Taishō Period. Nevertheless, as domestic and international turmoil increased in the late 1920s, blaming Jews and the “international Jewish conspiracy” became increasingly common.

By the late 1920s, the Japanese government was divided into two distinct factions

²⁷ Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 557; Phillip Frank, *Einstein: His Life and Times* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947), 198-199; Ronald W. Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1984), 199; Jansen, “Einstein in Japan,” 152-154.

(“Control” and “Imperial Way”), each of which sought to increase Japan's imperialist presence in Asia. While the Control faction suggested a southern course into the oil-rich Dutch East Indies, the Imperial Way faction advocated expansion into Manchuria, an area also rich in oil but far removed from American interests in the south. By the end of the 1920s, the Imperial Way faction gained the upper hand, and the Japanese focus shifted to the acquisition of Manchuria and preparation for future clashes with the Soviet Union. Following the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932, officials within the Imperial Way considered various possibilities for developing the region. Veterans of the Siberian Intervention, themselves members of the Imperial Way faction, suggested the possibility of using Jews. At that time, several thousand Jews, mostly Russian, were scattered throughout Manchuria, with the most sizable population residing in Harbin. Of the city's one million residents, Jews represented only a tiny fraction. Their numbers were as high as 13,000 in the 1920s, but by the mid-1930s more than half had left in response to economic depression. After the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway to Japan in 1935 and outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, thousands more left Manchukuo (often bound for the international community in Shanghai), resulting in the complete disappearance of many Manchurian Jewish communities.²⁸ Despite the mass exodus, Japan's “Jewish experts,” as the most influential antisemites came to be known, established “Jewish research groups” and began to develop concrete plans to enlist Jews, both in Asia and elsewhere, in the development of Manchukuo.

The most prominent of the “Jewish experts” in terms of their influence on the

²⁸ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 315-316.

Japanese government were Colonel Yasue Norihiro and Navy Captain Inuzuka Koreshige. Yasue, a relatively unimportant figure in the military before the 1930s, began writing and lecturing about Jews shortly after his return from Siberia. In 1927, he was sent abroad by the General Staff to study Jews for several months. After visiting Palestine, Paris, London, and Moscow, Yasue returned home a self-styled “Jewish expert.” Although impressed with Jewish determination, Yasue was greatly influenced by *The Protocols* (he claimed to be the first to translate them into Japanese). In his 1934 book, *Yudaya no hitobito* (The Jews), Yasue “exposed” the Jewish control over capitalist and communist countries. The book contained forewords by General Minami Jiro, former Army Minister and later commander of the Kwantung Army, and General Suzuki Soroku, former chief of the General Staff. By the late 1930s, Yasue was considered the army's highest authority on Jews, and in 1938, he became chief of the Intelligence Bureau in Dairen.²⁹

Like Yasue, Inuzuka returned from Siberia committed to exposing the threat of international Jewry through research, writing, and lecturing. He frequently spoke on the “The Jewish Menace” to younger navy officers and published his research, some of which was labeled “top-secret” for dramatic effect, in a series called *Yudaya jōhō* (Jewish Information). In 1938, he lectured on the dangers of Freemasonry at the Cabinet Intelligence Division's Ideological Warfare Seminar, and one of his speeches was transcribed by the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and distributed to Chambers throughout the country. With the publication of his book, *Yudaya mondai to Nippon* (The Jewish

²⁹ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 300, 301, 302; Krebs, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 109.

Problem and Japan) in 1939 (in which he, too, “exposed” the Jewish conspiracy against Japan), Inuzuka established a solid reputation as a “Jewish expert” and was subsequently appointed head of the Navy's Advisory Bureau on Jewish Affairs.

Aside from the publications of the “Jewish experts,” antisemitism was commonly invoked by the Japanese press. In fact, Jews were mentioned or featured in a multitude of articles from all major newspapers, as well as in drawings and manga caricatures, radio programs, and theater performances. As domestic and international conditions deteriorated in the 1930s and 1940s, antisemitic attacks became especially vehement and outlandish. Jews were blamed for a variety of problems and were at the center of numerous conspiracy theories.³⁰ When Jews appeared as drawings in Japanese newspapers and magazines, they often took on clownish features, with hooked noses and large ears. Comedy groups even parodied Jews in their performances, using them as comical representations of the Western enemy.³¹ All the while, the “Jewish experts” wrote, lectured, and even organized antisemitic exhibitions, at times with Nazi support.

Despite the fear of Jews inspired by the media and the “Jewish experts,” Yasue and Inuzuka did not personally hope for the immediate and complete destruction of international Jewry. Instead they adopted more pragmatic approaches for dealing with the “Jewish problem.” In *Yudaya no hitobito*, Yasue drew attention to the threat of Jews,

³⁰ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 162; Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 108.

³¹ Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 109-110.

but ultimately concluded that “some Jews were harmless, and some could be exploited.”³² Similarly, Inuzuka observed that European Jews, who had been persecuted for thousands of years, were steadily migrating east toward Japan (their “ancestral homeland,” according to Inuzuka).³³ Those Jews, Inuzuka argued, could serve a useful purpose. With Yasue, Inuzuka concocted a plan in which the Japanese government would feign friendship in order to exploit Jewish wealth, financial and business expertise, and international power. By attracting Jewish settlers to a new homeland in Manchukuo, they argued, economic and industrial development of the region would be assured. Moreover, Jewish friendship would be vital for manipulating foreign governments (especially “Jew-controlled America”) and stemming the tide of anti-Japanese sentiment in the international community (a product of the “Jew-controlled press”). This scheme has been dubbed the “Fugu Plan” by historians, based on Inuzuka's claim that exploitation of Jews was comparable to cooking the Japanese *fugu*, or pufferfish. The *fugu* contains lethal amounts of poison in its internal organs, and must therefore be carefully prepared. Although considered a delicacy, improperly handling the *fugu* can spread poison to the meat, seriously sickening or even killing those who consume the fish. In a similar way, Inuzuka argued, one must be cautious when dealing with Jews. If their power could be properly utilized, however, Japan would reap great benefits.³⁴

³² Yasue Norihiro, *Yudaya no hitobito*, (Tokyo: Gunjin Kaikan Shuppanbu, 1937), 161-162.

³³ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 131.

³⁴ Kase, “Nihon no naka no yudayajin,” 242; Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II* (New York: Paddington Press, 1979), 65.

Indeed, the situation in Europe offered a perfect opportunity for Inuzuka and Yasue to implement their plan. The antisemitism of Hitler and his Nazi regime resulted in a series of decrees that stripped German Jews of their rights. In addition to increasing taxes and freezing Jewish bank accounts, the German state sanctioned acts of violence against Jews and their property. Following the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938—in which thousands of Jewish businesses and properties were attacked and thousands of Jewish men were arrested and deported to concentration camps—Jews fled Germany by the thousands. Many refugees traveled east via ship or the Trans-Siberian Railway, although few imagined settling in China or Japan permanently. Rather, they hoped to use Japanese and Chinese ports as departure points to overseas locations, such as America or Palestine.

As Jewish refugees began to arrive in greater numbers, the Japanese government worked to devise a clear-cut Jewish immigration plan. At the Five Ministers Conference in 1938, high level government officials, including Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, Army Ministry Itagaki Seishirō, and Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa, adopted a policy declaring that Jews entering and residing in Japan, China, and Manchukuo would be treated the same as other foreigners. If Jews possessed adequate funds and obtained visas to destination countries through appropriate legal procedures, they would be allowed to enter Japan. It was also decided that, while efforts should not be made to attract Jews, exceptions could be made for those Jews who could benefit Japan, such as businessmen

or technicians.³⁵ Thus, the Japanese government followed the Fugu Plan's preference for exploitation rather than alienation.

By the late 1930s, Yasue and Inuzuka began to approach Jews under the guise of friendship. The Jewish leader in Harbin, Abraham Kaufman, was invited to Tokyo and given an imperial award, and Kotsuji Setsuzo, “the only Hebrew-speaking Japanese in the world,” was enlisted by the Southern Manchurian Railway to develop friendly relations with Jews in Manchukuo.³⁶ In Harbin, Yasue helped calm the violent antisemitism of White Russians, who were known to attack, kidnap, or murder Russian Jews. He also closed the offices of *Nash Put* (Our Way), the local antisemitic newspaper, although Jewish newspapers were apparently given more liberal guidelines to follow. In one instance, Japanese officials in Harbin ignored a formal complaint by a German consul who was deeply insulted by a Russian-Jewish newspaper article's attack on Hitler. It was better not to anger the Jews, the Japanese decided, since “limiting the Jews' freedom of speech would provoke hostility here and throughout the world of the Jews, who exercise economic hegemony.”³⁷ Later, when the Police Chief of Harbin made defamatory statements about Jews, Japanese officials hurriedly released an apologetic statement, claiming that “Japan and Manchuria have no reason to oppress the Jewish people, who will have the protection of the state so long as they behave according to the regulations of

³⁵ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 4.

³⁶ Tokayer and Swartz, *The Fugu Plan*, 66.

³⁷ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 292-293.

Manchuria.”³⁸ In fact, Russian Jews in Manchukuo were given legal status and protection, and a Far Eastern Jewish Council was created to represent all Jews under Japanese control, with Yasue serving as the liaison between the Japanese authorities and the Jews. In addition, Far Eastern Jewish Conferences were held in 1937, 1938, and 1939 with the intention of expressing Japanese friendship and a desire to work with Jews to create an “Israel in Asia.” Those conferences attracted thousands of Jewish delegates from several different communities, as well as press from Russia and Japan. General Higuchi Kiichirō, Chief of Special Service (Intelligence) and conference attendee, claimed that the Japanese, “look with friendship toward the Jewish people and are ready to cooperate with [them]”³⁹

In reality, the Far Eastern Jewish Council and Far Eastern Jewish Conferences were facades used to win Jewish favor and test the reactions of the international community. Statements made by both Japanese and Jews were regulated and sanitized to that effect. Yasue warned Jewish delegates not to criticize German and Italian repression of Jews and pressured them to issue a statement describing the “racial equality and racial justice” they enjoyed as Japanese imperial subjects, as well as their willingness to cooperate with “Japan and Manchukuo in building a new order in Asia.”⁴⁰ Other Russian Jews were persuaded to contact their American brethren and inform them of their good

³⁸ Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East*, 37, 39.

³⁹ Bowman, “Unwilling Collaborators,” 325; Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 281.

⁴⁰ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 299; Bowman, “Unwilling Collaborators,” 325; Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 563.

treatment. Soon after, Inuzuka sent a confidant to America to gauge reactions.⁴¹

It is difficult to determine the motivations of Jewish leaders in adhering to Japanese demands, although it is likely that they had little choice. Expressions of support may have been a small price to pay for security and the ability to carry on their lives in peace. Still, some of the most influential Jews in Manchukuo seemed oblivious to Japanese motives and accepted the extension of friendship without question. Abraham Kaufman was outspoken in his support for the Japanese treatment of Jews in Manchukuo. In a speech at the 1937 conference he stressed similarities between Jewish and Japanese ideals, and he called on Jews to repay Japanese kindness with loyalty. Lev Zikman, one of the most prominent Jewish entrepreneurs in Manchukuo, reiterated Kaufman's praise for Japanese rule. Zikman defended the Japanese to skeptical American Jewish leaders, such as Stephen Wise, in hopes of mending American-Japanese relations. He even offered to establish a pro-Japanese Jewish newspaper. Although that dream did not materialize, the Russian Jewish press in Harbin praised Japan, and articles appeared defending Japan's war in China.⁴²

By the time of the first Far Eastern Jewish Conference, the Japanese government's lax immigration policies, coupled with its failure to acknowledge the unwillingness of Western nations to accommodate Jewish refugees, had allowed thousands of refugees to enter Japan or its territories with no where else to go. Initially, a number of Jewish refugees used Kobe as a stopover point, intending to stay no more than a few weeks

⁴¹ Tokayer and Swartz, *The Fugu Plan*, 87.

⁴² Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," 306-310, 317.

before immigrating westward. At that time, Kobe had the largest population of Jews in Japan (approximately fifteen Ashkenazi and ten Sephardic families) and was home to the political organization, “The Kobe Jewish Community” (more commonly known by its cable address, Kobe Jewcom). As opportunities to immigrate beyond East Asia diminished, Kobe Jewcom provided substantial assistance and “negotiated” with the Japanese government to extend the refugees' stays for up to six months.⁴³ By the onset of war with America, 4,600 Jews had stayed in Japan, surviving in large part through the help of Kobe Jewcom. Those who were unable to obtain visas to other countries by the end of 1941 (approximately 1,000) were relocated to the Jewish community at Shanghai.⁴⁴

Even before the forced relocations by the Japanese, Shanghai, a city of four million Chinese and nearly 100,000 foreigners, was the most common destination for Jewish refugees in East Asia. This was partially due to Shanghai's large International Settlement and sizable Jewish population. More importantly, however, were the lax restrictions for entering the International Settlement. In fact, no visa or papers of any kind were required.⁴⁵ During the six months following the Five Minister's Conference, as many as fifteen thousand refugees were admitted to the Japanese sector in Shanghai. The mass influx further exacerbated resources, however, and members of the International

⁴³ Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers*, 171.

⁴⁴ David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976), 314. Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 93-94.

⁴⁵ Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 564.

Settlement, including Jews, called for an immigration ban. In August 1939, the Japanese authorities agreed and officially halted immigration to Shanghai.⁴⁶

In Shanghai, Jews established two separate communities of Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Community associations oversaw religious activities, services, kosher slaughtering, and served as arbitrators in disputes. Three daily newspapers were founded, as well as elementary schools, medical clinics, and even a business college. There were also recreational opportunities in the form of concerts, art exhibitions, radio programs, theater, and sporting events. Nevertheless, life in Shanghai was not as idyllic as it appeared. Housing was scarce and of poor quality, and the lack of food left most refugees completely dependent on international Jewish relief organizations.⁴⁷

Following Pearl Harbor, Jews in Shanghai who had not secured visas to other countries were barred from leaving the city. Restrictions were tightened, and relief from Jewish organizations, which were primarily based in America, was severed. In May 1943, a Jewish ghetto was established and refugees were relocated to a forty-square block area that already housed more than one hundred thousand Chinese. Although the ghettoization process resembled Nazi consolidations of European Jews in preparation for deportation and execution, only a limited number of Jews perished in Shanghai. In fact, most Jews fared as well, if not better, than other Shanghai residents. The ghetto remained open, free of barbed wire, and refugees could acquire passes to leave the Jewish zone.

⁴⁶ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 21, 267; David Kranzler, "Shanghai Refuge: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1949" in Malek, ed., *From Kaifeng . . . to Shanghai*, 403.

⁴⁷ Kranzler, "Shanghai Refuge," 407-408, 410.

Starvation claimed the lives of some refugees, and many reported being randomly harassed or beaten by Japanese guards or members of the *Kempeitai*. However, there were no summary executions of Jews in Shanghai, and between 1939 and 1945, there were only thirteen deaths per one thousand persons. In fact, the deadliest day for the Shanghai Jews was July 17, 1945, when an American bomber unintentionally dropped its payload on the ghetto, killing thirty-one refugees and wounding two-hundred fifty others. Despite those losses, the Jews of Shanghai lived in relative peace throughout the war while many of their European counterparts faced extermination. In the end, approximately 24,000 Jews escaped the Holocaust either by immigrating through Japan or living under direct Japanese rule.⁴⁸

The outbreak of war with America dashed the hopes of Inuzuka and Yasue: the “expertise” and “wealth” of Jewish settlers could no longer be exploited to develop Manchukuo. Moreover, the “Jewish experts” failed to impress American Jewry with their show of goodwill. Still, notions of Jewish power persisted throughout the war. In late 1945, Japanese officials in Shanghai, believing that American Jewry controlled the Roosevelt administration, insisted that Jewish leaders use their “international connections and power” to broadcast an appeal to their American brothers to end the war. Those attempts (not surprisingly) were unsuccessful, but they reveal that the myth of Jewish power was never fully extinguished.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 566; Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 553. The Mir Yeshiva, the only European yeshiva to survive the Holocaust completely intact, spent the war years studying in Shanghai.

⁴⁹ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 563.

As previously mentioned, antisemitism was not confined to the “Jewish experts” in the Japanese government, but was manifested in a variety of forms and dispersed throughout the nation. Antisemitism served a useful propaganda function in wartime Japan (a subject addressed more specifically in chapter four): in newspapers, books, and exhibitions, Jews became “metaphorical” enemies, most often representing the unsavory character of the antithetical Western “Other” in contrast to the pure spirit of the Japanese. Given these facts, one might assume that Jew-hating garnered widespread approval in the 1930s and 1940s. However, Japanese feelings towards Jews were complex and far from universal. Some rejected antisemitism outright, while others viewed Jews as individual nationals rather than as a collective race. Feelings of sympathy for the “wandering Jew,” a victim of Western persecution, resonated with many Japanese who knew the sting of Western racism. The following chapter explores the variety of ways Japanese envisioned Jews, prompting new questions about the strength and purpose of Japanese antisemitism in prewar and wartime Japan.

CHAPTER III

JAPANESE PERCEPTIONS OF JEWS BEYOND ANTISEMITISM

I am the man responsible for the alliance with Hitler, but nowhere have I promised that we would carry out his antisemitic policies in Japan. This is not simply my personal opinion, it is the position of Japan, and I have no compunction about announcing it to the world.⁵⁰

This statement, made by Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke at a private banquet in December 1940, seems to clearly define the Japanese government's pragmatic approach toward Jews during the 1930s and 1940s. Given the fact that Jews were generally well-treated by the Japanese, some historians view Matsuoka's statement as official proof that antisemitism was unacceptable to the Japanese and could not coincide with the goals of the government and, ultimately, the war effort. To a certain degree, this assessment is accurate. Although it is likely that antisemitic views were shared by at least some high government officials, mistreatment of Jews had the potential to backfire, providing the West with a convenient propaganda weapon at a time when the world was closely watching. And for those officials who believed that Jews controlled international news agencies, as many antisemites claimed, fears were likely even greater. Thus, even though the Fugu Plan ultimately failed, a pragmatic Jewish policy was adhered to throughout the war.

⁵⁰ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 112.

For some historians, Matsuoka's statement serves as a clear definition of "Japan's basic position regarding Jews."⁵¹ But did Matsuoka really speak for "the position of Japan?" In fact, Matsuoka's frequently cited statement was actually made to Lev Zikman during a private meeting at the Foreign Minister's residence in Tokyo. As previously mentioned, Zikman was a prominent businessman in Manchukuo and a strong supporter of the Japanese. At the time of the meeting, he had been enlisted as a propagandist by Matsuoka and charged with swaying the opinion of American Jews in favor of the Japanese. Zikman later recalled his encounter with Matsuoka: "I asked him whether he wanted me to tell his gracious words to my coreligionists in Manchuria or abroad, and he said; Yes, you can, of course you can."⁵² Thus, Matsuoka's denunciation of antisemitism was propaganda, passed along to Zikman at a time when the government hoped to attract Jewish friendship and wealth. For the Foreign Minister, the welfare of Jews was far subordinate to the goals of the Japanese empire. Exactly one month after his meeting with Zikman, Matsuoka wired the Japanese embassy in Washington, requesting that a survey be made of American groups who opposed entering the war against Germany. Matsuoka hoped to assess the usefulness of these groups as intelligence operatives and their potential to help prevent America from going to war. Among those he was willing to work with were communists, labor union members, African Americans, and anti-

⁵¹ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 112; Kranzler, "Japan Before and During the Holocaust," 546.

⁵² Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 332.

Semites.⁵³

In reality, Matsuoka's statement offers little help in fleshing out “the position of Japan” in relation to Jews. In order to understand why Japanese antisemitism did not result in widespread persecution, one must go beyond the statements of government officials and examine the ways in which Jews were viewed in Japanese society during the 1930s and 1940s. In reality, conceptions were multifarious, and Japanese understanding was complicated by the differences between “real” Jews and the “metaphorical” Jewish enemy. Although much of the contemporary writing concerning Japanese-Jewish relations seeks to brand “Japan” as “antisemitic” or “philosemitic,” neither label suffices, as no unitary Japanese position existed. This chapter examines the visions of Jews that existed beneath the surface of Japan's antisemitic current, suggesting that, despite its frequent invocation, antisemitism ultimately failed to garner significant strength as a unifying ideology in Japan. In drawing this conclusion, two important questions still linger: why did antisemitism continue and even increase in intensity during the war, and what need or purpose did it serve in Japan during the 1930s and 1940s? Although these issues will be specifically addressed in a later chapter, the merits of the frequently invoked “German pressure” argument will be examined here.

While Japan seemed to be saturated with antisemitism throughout the 1930s and 1940s—in the newspapers, on the radio, and at public exhibitions—it was not a

⁵³ Gerhard Krebs, “The Spy Activities of Diplomat Terasaki Hidenari in the USA and His Role in Japanese-American Relations,” in Ian Neary, ed., *Leaders and Leadership in Japan* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 191.

universally accepted ideology. As antisemitic writings and lectures began to appear with greater frequency in the 1920s, critics from both liberal and conservative camps voiced their concerns, rejecting the notion of the “metaphorical” Jewish enemy. Yoshino Sakuzō, a professor in the law department of Tokyo Imperial University, was one of the most outspoken liberals. He denounced antisemitism, concluding that *The Protocols* was a reactionary work based on Western prejudice and intended to incite hatred of Bolshevism: “When I saw that today influential people are attempting to resist new ideas with this sort of ludicrous gimmick, I began to worry about the potential retarding effect on our culture . . . I could not remain silent.”⁵⁴ Uchimura Kanzō, an influential author, Christian theologian, and pacifist, openly admired the Jews and supported the Zionist cause, as did Bishop Nakada Jūji, founder of the Japan Holiness Church. Right-wing nationalists, too, were not unanimously antisemitic. Mitsukawa Kametarou, a propagandist for Japanese colonialism and colleague of Kita Ikki and Ōkawa Shūmei, praised Jewish civilization and rejected the validity of *The Protocols* in his 1929 publication, *Yudayaka no meimou* [The Fallacy of the Jewish Peril]. Other rightists adopted common ancestry theories as a way of tracing the noble origins of Japan: Professor Fujisawa Chikao argued that Emperor Jimmu was a descendent of King David.⁵⁵

From the late 1920s, public support for Jews or, more generally, the West, began

⁵⁴ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 87.

⁵⁵ Krebs, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 109; Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 164.

to fade as the Japanese government took greater steps to suppress opposition. Japan's Peace Preservation Law was amended in 1928 to include the death penalty for "thought crimes," and organizations or movements criticizing the emperor were banned. As part of its strategy to mobilize the entire Japanese nation for war against China and, later, the West, the Japanese government passed the National Mobilization Law in 1938, which sanctioned its control over civilian organizations, established price controls and ration restrictions, and nationalized industries and news media. Press restrictions increased every year leading up to 1941, and the number of Japanese newspapers was drastically reduced.⁵⁶ Those who expressed dissent for the new regulations were labeled unpatriotic or traitorous. Most opponents of antisemitism had little choice but to fade from the public scene in the increasingly xenophobic and anti-Western atmosphere of the late 1930s and 1940s. Some even dramatically changed their opinions. Okagami Morimichi (also known under the pseudonym Kuroda Reiji) had initially expressed criticism for Hitler and the Nazis in articles for the *Asahi Shinbun*, but by the 1930s he had accepted antisemitism, penning several related tracts including "Tale of the Great Scandal of the Panama Canal: A Perfect Example of Jewish Methods."⁵⁷ Many critics who refused to alter their stance were blacklisted, such as liberal writer Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, although they continued to express their concerns in private. Kiyosawa kept a wartime diary in which he recorded every "childish" antisemitic expression he encountered in magazines and

⁵⁶ Tom Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War Two* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), 20.

⁵⁷ Miyazawa, "Japanese Anti-Semitism in the Thirties," 26.

newspapers, concluding that they were “a disgrace to Japanese intellectuals.”⁵⁸

In some cases during the war, publications that supported or praised Jews managed to evade censorship. In his 1941 book, *East Asia and the Jewish Problem*, Koyama Takeo, a self-styled “Jewish specialist,” expressed a sense of gratitude toward Jews. He cited Jacob Schiff’s financial support during the Russo-Japanese War and suggested that Jewish businesspeople living in Japan had helped open markets for Japanese goods in the Middle East and Africa. In 1944, Araki Toshima, a famous Japanese astronomer, discussed various national attitudes towards science in his book, *Nihon seishin to Nihon gakujitsu* (Japanese Spirit and Japanese Science). While the British and Americans saw science as a means for increasing their wealth and power, Araki argued, Jews envisioned science as a means for promoting human happiness.⁵⁹ The publishing of these philosemitic statements suggest that the Japanese government did not always equate Jews with the Western enemy, revealing that, even among government censors, there was no monolithic perception of Jews.

Positive interpretations of Jews were not confined to books and articles. In May 1941, less than a year before two major antisemitic exhibitions held in Tokyo and Osaka warned Japanese about the threat of the “international Jewish conspiracy,” the Asahi Kaikan Museum in Osaka hosted an exhibition titled “The Wandering Jew.” Intended to highlight the suffering of Jewish refugees, “The Wandering Jew” featured twenty-two photographs of Kobe Jewish refugees taken by members of the Tanpei Photography Club.

⁵⁸ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 161.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

Since 1935, the Tanpei Club had held more than twenty exhibitions, featuring the work of some of Japan's preeminent photographers and attracting considerable public attention. The photos featured at the 23rd Tanpei Exhibition in 1941 were intended to depict human suffering caused by war. Indeed, in the faces of the Jewish refugees one could clearly comprehend the sadness and uncertainty caused by their dislocation: some were shown staring into the distance with forlorn or vacant expressions, while others were shown sleeping on park benches or tirelessly hauling luggage.

One of the photographers, Kaneyoshi Tabuchi, later expressed his sympathy for the “Wandering Jews”: “What is floating on the wanderer's brow is not only sorrow and misery . . . but also the tenacity of a people gloomily scattered throughout the world. Still they cannot hide their troubles. It is a battle for them not to be defeated.”⁶⁰ Also featured at the exhibition, alongside photos of the refugees, were pictures of recuperating Japanese soldiers from a nearby military hospital. That the photos of Jewish refugees were exhibited together with those of Japanese soldiers suggests a sense of equality in suffering, affording the Jews a sense of humanity that had been stripped from them in Europe. From the perspective of the wartime regime, however, the exhibit may have also expressed subtle opposition to the war. A short while after the exhibition, the Tanpei Photography Club was permanently suspended.⁶¹

The victimization of Jews undoubtedly resonated with many Japanese, who were

⁶⁰ Edward Phillips, ed., *Flight and Rescue* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001), 108-123.

⁶¹ Anne Tucker, *The History of Japanese Photography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 149, 156, 375.

well-accustomed to the “Yellow Peril” racism of Westerners. Outside of the Japanese government, where there was no knowledge of the Fugu Plan, Japanese citizens often reacted to Jews in relation to their personal notions of morality. Leo Hanin, a secretary working for Kobe Jewcom, remembered the hospitality of the Japanese: “When one of the children became very sick and when the Japanese doctor who was called to treat him took him to his private hospital, the doctor refused to accept money for his services and the hospital when he found out the child was a refugee.”⁶² According to Hanin, local Japanese farmers often donated food to Kobe Jewcom: “They came . . . with boxes and boxes of fresh, beautiful apples and oranges and personally presented each child with some of the fruits.” There were anonymous gifts of flowers and money, contributions from school groups, and instances in which Japanese offered refugees their ration coupons. Hanin concluded that “there was no antisemitism to the refugees in Kobe, only compassion and kindness. [The Japanese] were humble, decent, good people.”⁶³

Altruism was also practiced by certain members of the Japanese government, although that quality is most commonly associated with Sugihara Chiune (also known as Sugihara Senpō), the Japanese consul at Kovno from 1939-1941. Sugihara issued thousands of eight-to-twelve day Japanese transit visas to Jews in 1940, allowing them to obtain exit visas and leave Lithuania. The Japanese Foreign Ministry instructed Sugihara only to issue visas to those who had adequate funds and a destination country, but Sugihara ignored his orders and knowingly approved visas with falsified destinations.

⁶² Phillips, ed., *Flight and Rescue*, 108.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 315-318.

Some estimate that as many as 10,000 Jews escaped Europe through Sugihara's assistance.⁶⁴ Although recent evidence suggests that Sugihara may have used diplomatic loopholes to issue the visas, thereby dampening his “rebel” image, the humanitarianism of Sugihara cannot be denied.

Although some Japanese were genuinely concerned about the plight of Jews, Japanese propagandists also recognized a useful purpose in highlighting the victimization of Jews at the hands of the West. In denouncing Western racism they simultaneously stressed the need to establish the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere, an Asian bloc guided by the divine rule of the Japanese and free of Western influence and racial discrimination. Indeed, much of Japan's anti-Western sentiment during the 1930s and 1940s focused on racism, most likely the result of real Japanese experiences with American racial discrimination in the early twentieth century: Japanese immigrants were forbidden citizenship and could not own land or marry whites in many Western states, and in California, the children of Japanese immigrants were forced to attend segregated schools. Japanese immigration to the United States was gradually restricted until 1924, when it was halted altogether with the Immigration Act.⁶⁵ Despite its successful modernization, success in the Russo-Japanese War, and alliance with the victors of World War I, Japan was not afforded equality with the West, a factor that contributed to its

⁶⁴ Hillel Levine, *In Search of Sugihara: The Elusive Japanese Diplomat Who Risked His Life to Rescue 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 7; Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 566.

⁶⁵ Robert A. Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America: A History of the Japanese in the United States* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980), 56, 120-129.

withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933.

Thus, for many Japanese, the fundamental goal of the Japanese war in the East was to liberate Asia from the clutches of the racist, imperialist West. Throughout the war, frequent references were made to America's bleak history with minorities, primarily within the context of imperialism. In August 1941, the Ministry of Education's ideological manifesto, *Shimin no Michi* (The Way of the Subject), reminded Japanese that Western encroachment on Asia was part of a long history of domination: "How were American Indians treated? What about African Negroes?"⁶⁶ In December 1942 and January 1943, *Nippon Times* articles claimed that White Americans "slaughtered the peaceful and meek native Indians and robbed them of their land." They also labeled persecution of Jews a symptom of Western discrimination: "they have imposed social barriers against the Jews that are only slightly less rigid than those imposed on the negroes and orientals That is the way the Anglo-Saxons intend to rule the world."⁶⁷ Expressions of tolerance, coupled with claims that Japan was the protector or savior of Jews, attributed the Japanese a sense of moral superiority over the West. Bishop Nakada Jūji predicted in 1933 that a war was coming in which Jews would suffer terribly, but Japan would come to their rescue and lead them back to their ancient homeland, thus initiating the Second Coming of Christ.⁶⁸ In 1939, Inuzuka Koreshige implored Jewish leaders, "If you would only change your understanding of Japan, you too could submit

⁶⁶ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 26.

⁶⁷ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 163-164.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

and benefit from the great spirit of Japanese universal brotherhood.”⁶⁹ Writing years after the war, Inuzuka Kiyoko, wife and secretary of Inuzuka, continued to believe that Japan had been the protector of Jews: “We offered the Jews ‘refuge’ under Japan’s protection based on the principle of racial equality, without ethnic prejudice and out of respect for the unique character of the Jewish people.”⁷⁰ Thus, under the wing of the racially tolerant Japanese, the Jews and other races would prosper.

While some Japanese afforded Jews a role in the new order or identified with their victimization, many possessed only a superficial understanding of who Jews were or how they related to the Japanese war effort. Once again, disconnects between the “real” and the “metaphorical” made it difficult to determine friend from foe. German-Jewish philosopher Karl Lowith, who spent part of the war years teaching in Sendai, recalled two such instances of confusion. On one occasion, a Japanese professor, who was collaborating on a project with German and Italian scientists, asked Lowith to proofread his manuscript before sending it to Germany and Italy. In the introduction, the professor expressed his admiration for Albert Einstein and his appreciation of Lowith's editorial assistance. When Lowith advised him to omit those statements, the professor appeared completely dumbfounded: “his understanding of Nazism went no further than the assumption that Germany and Italy were in favor of the New Order in the East as Japan

⁶⁹ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 132.

⁷⁰ Ibid.; Kiyoko Inuzuka, *Kaigun Inuzuka kikan no kiroku: Yudaya mondai to Nippon no kōsaku* [Records of the Navy’s Inuzuka Operation: The Jewish Problem and Japan’s Maneuvers] (Nihon kōgyō shimbunsha, 1982), 236-237.

conceived it.”⁷¹ In another instance, Lowith was consulted by a Japanese physician about helping a Jewish friend escape from Germany. At the same time, however, the man had joined the German-Japanese Society of Sendai, an organization primarily concerned with spreading Nazi propaganda and antisemitism.⁷²

With such wide-ranging opinions of Jews circulating in Japanese society, it is not surprising that antisemitism failed to gain prominence in Japan. Nevertheless, it was not completely abandoned, and following the forging of the Japanese-German alliance, the frequency with which the Japanese press invoked anti-Semitism increased. This fact, coupled with the ghettoization of Shanghai Jews in 1943, led some to conclude that the Japanese had become puppets of Nazi antisemites. That notion became particularly strong following Japan’s defeat in 1945, a time when the desire to “forget” the war and reinvent Japanese identity was especially strong. Both Japanese and Westerners sought different ways of rationalizing the existence of antisemitism in Japan. One of the most commonly accepted viewpoints came from Otto Tolischus, a journalist who, in his 1945 book *Through Japanese Eyes*, translated and commented on selected antisemitic broadcasts, quotes, and articles. In his commentary, Tolischus immediately found fault with Germany: “Perhaps it will come as a surprise to many that in aping Nazi methods [the Japanese] have also adopted anti-Semitism as one of their major propaganda weapons. . . . The only feature which distinguishes it from the anti-Semitic outpourings of

⁷¹ Cheryl A. Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1989, 86.

⁷² Ibid.

the Nazis is its special stupidity, in which the Japanese pupils surpass their mentors.”⁷³ While Tolischus's assertions about the Japanese echo other racist tomes of the time (such as the examination of the child-like “Japanese brain” in the infamous documentary *Our Job In Japan*), his assumption that Japanese antisemitism was a byproduct of Nazi influence endures to this day. In analyzing Japanese and Western racism and propaganda during the war, historian John Dower has claimed that the rise of antisemitism in Japan was the result of “mindless adherence to Nazi doctrine.”⁷⁴ It should be noted that the Germans achieved a significant level of success in transmitting Nazism and antisemitism in Japan. However, the Japanese were not simply “aping” their German allies. In reality, Japanese and Germans were ideologically dissimilar in a number of ways, and their stance on Jews was just one example of that contradiction.

Following the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936, the Germans applied direct pressure on the Japanese public and government to accept Nazism and antisemitism. At times, the Japanese were more than willing to cooperate. From 1937 to 1938, a mysterious Nazi named E. Spranger gave 80 speeches throughout Japan, mostly aimed at highlighting similarities between Germans and Japanese (*bushido* and the German code of honor, the *samurai* and the Prussian officer, etc.).⁷⁵ In 1938, members of Hitler Youth visited Japan, and the *Mainichi Shinbun* printed an article lauding their activities. Soon after, the *Mainichi* sponsored an exhibition titled “Greater Germany,”

⁷³ Otto D. Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), foreword, 88.

⁷⁴ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 251.

⁷⁵ Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” 85.

which was overseen by German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. Later, the German Ambassador to Japan, Georg Stahmer, raised money to translate and publish Nazi material on Jews. At the antisemitic Tokyo and Osaka exhibitions of 1942-1943 (which were partially organized by the German Embassy), 32,000 antisemitic brochures were distributed, as were 3,000 copies of *Juden Hinter Stalin*, an antisemitic book by Rudolf Kommos.⁷⁶

The Germans also pressured Tokyo to revise its lenient policies toward Jewish refugees. Inuzuka and Yasue, viewed by Nazis as “friends of the Jews,” became individual targets of criticism, and the Japanese government eventually placed Yasue on the inactive list while Inuzuka was reassigned to active duty with the Navy. These dismissals were likely a combination of German pressure and recognition of the uselessness of “Jewish research” following the failure of the Fugu Plan. In any case, outright expressions of friendship toward Jews by the Japanese government disappeared with the signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. A fourth convention of the Jewish communities in the Far East, scheduled for December 1940, was cancelled two weeks prior to its opening.⁷⁷

The instances in which Japan yielded to German pressures do not signify slavish adherence to German will, but indicate Japanese recognition of the importance of achieving a sense of unity with their German ally. Many Japanese tried to correlate

⁷⁶ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 109; Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 485-486.

⁷⁷ Krebs, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 117; Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 327, 485.

Japanese and German interests: “The bonds between Nippon and the Axis states are . . . spiritual ties, designed to create a new culture”; “The Tripartite Alliance . . . is a spiritual union of three countries aimed to bring about eternal peace to World Humanity.”⁷⁸

Expressions of antisemitism, too, served as a way to lend support to Germany and solidify Japanese-German friendship. On March 16, 1938, the *Asahi* used antisemitism to bolster its support of Germany's annexation of Austria, claiming it was time to “clean out the Jews.” On Nov. 17, in response to Roosevelt's criticism of the Kristallnacht pogrom, the *Mainichi* claimed, “it is Germany's choice whether to boil the Jews or fry them in oil.” Later, in a separate article, the *Mainichi* blamed Germany's defeat in World War I on Jewish doctors, who were said to have miscalculated the number of food calories German soldiers needed to sustain the war effort. And in 1943, a Japanese radio station in Batavia denied rumors of Germany's genocidal campaign against the Jews: “‘The Jews are being exterminated!’ goes out the parrot cry. Don't you believe it! When this present war of emotion has passed there will still be millions of Jews carrying on their dirty tricks.”⁷⁹

Outside of the press, antisemitism was also invoked to show support for Germany. In 1938 and 1939, when negotiations for a military alliance with Germany and Italy deadlocked because Japanese leaders sought a pact against the Soviet Union, radical propagandists who supported German demands for an alliance against Great Britain and

⁷⁸ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 131.

⁷⁹ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 162; Lucy D. Meo, *Japan's Radio War on Australia, 1941-1945* (London: Melbourne University Press, 1968), 111-115.

France, including Shiōden Nobutaka, made frequent reference to the threat of the Jewish enemy.⁸⁰

Besides offering support to the German cause, Japanese antisemitism in the years before the Pacific War served to unite two geographically-isolated allies against a common enemy. Following Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, conservative commentator Itō Ken linked Japan and Germany by claiming that, despite battling on distant fronts, both nations were struggling against a common foe: the Jews.⁸¹ Fujiwara, a Japanese delegate to the *Weltdienst* congress in 1938, labeled Chiang Kai-Shek and Sun-Yat-Sen Jewish cohorts. He argued that the war in China was not against Chinese, but a defensive battle against Jewry. In Japan's desperate struggle to rid the world of Jewish influence, Fujiwara implored the Germans: "Do not abandon us, the isolated bulwark in the Far East!"⁸² Similarly, in *Yudaya mondai to Nippon*, Inuzuka Koreshige claimed that Chiang Kai Shek's army depended on Europe and America for its military power, and on the Jews for economic support.

Antisemitism was also used to weaken domestic criticism of Japan's allies, as indicated by the *Mainichi's* explanations in 1943 for the gradually worsening situation in Italy. On July 29, an editorial suggested that Allied bombings of Rome were the work of a Jewish conspiracy; on September 12, the *Mainichi* blamed a Jewish plot for Italy's surrender; and on April 3, an article claimed that Italy's declaration of war against

⁸⁰ Krebs, "The 'Jewish Problem' in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945," 115.

⁸¹ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 106.

⁸² Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 242.

Germany was the product of Anglo-American Jewish influence on Italian Jews.⁸³ In each case, it was not the inability of the Italians (and, by correlation, the Axis Powers) to withstand the strength of the Allies that was blameworthy, but rather the devious plans of Jews working from within.

Despite these shows of support in the late 1930s, many Japanese were skeptical of the Nazis and their antisemitic policies in the years before the alliance. If the Jewishness of Albert Einstein was insignificant during his visit to Japan in the early 1920s, it was very apparent to the Japanese by 1933, as indicated by a critical article in the *Asahi Shinbun*: “The policy of repression adopted by the German authorities is an outrage We are left aghast. Einstein and Haber have contributed more to the greatness of Germany than a hundred Hitlers. . . . Germany may yet fall victim to its own policies and come to rue the day it adopted them.”⁸⁴ Other journalists dismissed Hitler as a minor aberration, touted the superiority of Japan’s military forces, and expressed fear of the international backlash a Japan-German alliance might bring.⁸⁵ Thus, like Japanese intellectuals, some journalists resisted a pro-Nazi stance until government censorship and the alliance with Germany eliminated or skewed their writings.

Ultimately, the Japanese refused to take the critical step toward outright persecution of the Jews under their control. According to one source, the Germans wished to isolate Shanghai Jews on islands near the mouth of the Yangtze before

⁸³ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 109.

⁸⁴ Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 557.

⁸⁵ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 152-153.

liquidating the entire population.⁸⁶ Joseph Meisinger, Chief of the Gestapo in the Far East, suggested that the Jews be loaded onto old, expendable ships, transported to the open sea, and sunk in their vessels. He also recommended that Jews be worked to death in Chinese salt mines, or “volunteered” for tortuous medical experiments.⁸⁷ Pressures for consolidation increased in the 1940s, and when a ghetto was finally established in 1943, it appeared that Nazi influence had finally worn down Japanese resistance. The Chief German Consul of Tientsin, Fritz Wiedemann, testified in 1951 that he was under orders to “instruct the Japanese authorities about the racial policies of Germany and to suggest appropriate measures.” He concluded with certainty that “the internment of Jews in the Shanghai ghetto had been instigated by German authorities.”⁸⁸

Contrary to the opinion of Wiedemann, it is unlikely that German pressure had a profound impact on the establishment of the Shanghai ghetto. As previously mentioned, this ghetto differed dramatically from those in Europe. For the Japanese, the Shanghai ghetto served the practical purpose of consolidating Jews in a tightly-guarded, fixed location. While antisemitic stereotypes probably aroused Japanese suspicions of Jews, legitimate fears of espionage and sabotage likely had a greater impact on the ghetto's creation. The ghetto was established in the aftermath of the first U.S. air raids against Japanese cities and the exposure of the Communist spy ring headed by Dr. Richard

⁸⁶ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 478-479.

⁸⁷ Tokayer and Swartz, *The Fugu Plan*, 224.

⁸⁸ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 488.

Sorge.⁸⁹ It was certainly plausible that Jewish spies were operating in Shanghai, but the *Kempeitai* did not focus exclusively on Jews: at roughly the same time that Jews were relocated to the ghetto, Allied nationals in Shanghai were interned in separate camps. Thus, Jews were not the only group subjected to discrimination.⁹⁰

Ultimately, the alliance between Japan and Germany, as historian Johanna Meskill notes, was “hollow.” In fact, at times, it seemed as though the two nations followed paths that were quite contradictory and even mutually harmful. Disagreements over territorial matters, a lack of diplomatic and military coordination, and diverging ambitions plagued the alliance, leaving it little more than a “purely formal, lifeless arrangement.”⁹¹ The instances in which the Germans managed to exercise some influence over the Japanese press and government were outweighed by numerous examples of Japanese resistance to German pressures. The survival of Shanghai's Jewish population amidst the Nazi-led destruction of European Jewry attests to this fact. However, the Japanese also resisted other pressures. Throughout the 1930s, for example, Japan welcomed German Jewish musicians, scientists, educators, and technicians who had lost their jobs in Germany. There is evidence to suggest that some of the individuals were dismissed as a result of German pressure, but the Japanese ignored requests to ban records by Jewish artists and allowed most professionals to keep their jobs. In 1936, the Germans protested when a part of the Japanese press praised Jewish musicians and their “fight against the despotic

⁸⁹ Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” 90.

⁹⁰ Krebs, “The 'Jewish Problem' in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 121.

⁹¹ Johanna Menzel Meskill, *Hitler and Japan: The Hollow Alliance* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), 182.

cultural policy of National Socialism.” Tōgō Shigenori, ministerial director of European affairs in the Foreign Ministry, responded to German petitions by noting the popularity of the musicians in Japan and suggesting that their expulsion could be interpreted as an act of racial discrimination.⁹² That same year, Joseph Rosenstock, a talented German-Jewish conductor, arrived in Japan and established the Nippon Symphony. Rosenstock offered to step down in 1941 due to Nazis pressures, but his resignation was rejected and he continued to conduct until 1944. Advertisements for his concerts appeared in the *Nippon Times* on various occasions throughout the war.⁹³

Why were the Japanese unwilling to cooperate with the Germans in persecuting Jews, especially following the failure of the Fugu Plan? One answer likely lies in the inherent differences between Japanese and German racial ideology. The principles of Nazi racial theory are most clearly defined in Adolf Hitler’s autobiography, *Mein Kampf*. First published in 1925, the book espoused a theory of racial hierarchy placing Aryans at the apex of civilization, Jews at the bottom, and the remaining races somewhere in between. By the onset of World War II, *Mein Kampf* had been translated into numerous languages and was read throughout the world. In Japan, portions of *Mein Kampf* were available as early as 1925, and a full translation was completed in 1942. One of the most popular editions available was Manabe Ryoichi's translation, which was published shortly

⁹² Krebs, “The 'Jewish Problem' in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 111.

⁹³ Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” 80-81; *Nippon Times*, 11 June 1943, 8; *Nippon Times*, 16 June 1943, 4.

after Pearl Harbor and renowned for its “accuracy.”⁹⁴ The book sold more than 100,000 copies in its first year of publication, becoming a national best-seller. However, army censors forced Manabe to revise the book before it was published. While Hitler may have offered appealing perspectives on the world's “Jewish problem” that resonated with many Japanese, other aspects of *Mein Kampf* were, from a Japanese point of view, highly objectionable. In his writings, Hitler clearly expressed his belief in the inferiority of Japanese civilization:

It is not true, as some think, that Japan adds European technology to its culture; no, European science and technology are trimmed with Japanese characteristics. The foundation of actual life is no longer the special Japanese culture, although it determines the color of life—because outwardly, in consequence of its inner difference, it is more conspicuous to the European—but the gigantic scientific-technical achievements of Europe and America; that is, of Aryan peoples. Only on the basis of these achievements can the Orient follow the general human progress. They furnish the basis of the struggle for daily bread, create weapons and implements for it, and only the outward form is gradually adapted to Japanese character.⁹⁵

In Manabe's translation, this section is absent. Also omitted is a passage suggesting that Japanese culture would “freeze and sink back into the slumber from which it was wakened seven decades ago by the wave of Aryan culture,” as well as a long section describing why Aryans are “the true culture-founders of this earth.”⁹⁶ All told, more than ten pages were omitted in the Japanese version. Interestingly, after bypassing

⁹⁴ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 42.

⁹⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 290-291.

⁹⁶ Manabe Ryoichi, *Waga Tōsō* (Tokyo: Kofukan, 1942), 258-267.

Hitler's comparison of Aryan and Oriental cultures, Manabe's text picks up on a section which begins, "The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew."⁹⁷ Indeed, Hitler's comments about Jews were significant to the Japanese, especially his statement that Jewry "fears the presence of a national Japanese state in its millennial Jewish kingdom and desires that the ruin of that state shall precede the establishment of its own dictatorship."⁹⁸

Mein Kampf revealed Hitler's true feelings about the Japanese long before accords and alliances led him to revise his viewpoints and afford the Japanese a place as "honorary Aryans." More importantly, however, the censorship of *Mein Kampf* presents an obvious example of incompatibility between German and Japanese racial ideology. For both countries, self-serving racial theories were central to wartime propaganda. Although antisemitism did not conflict with Japanese world view, Hitler's racial hierarchy ran contrary to the concept of *hakko ichiu* ("eight corners under one roof"), which suggested that it was the Japanese emperor's divine destiny to lead the world in a new moral order. The notion of being a borrower of civilization, rather than a creator, was certainly not an idea the Japanese were willing to accept, as evident in its use of that concept in wartime propaganda against America during the Pacific War.⁹⁹ The Allies, too, declared Japan a "third-hand culture" in its wartime rhetoric, suggesting that the emperor

⁹⁷ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 300; Manabe, *Waga Tōsō*, 267.

⁹⁸ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 242; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 589.

⁹⁹ *Nippon Times*, 18 January 1943, 2. "[America] has transplanted into her soil the old manufactured stuff called European civilization in its original form and pretends herself to be a civilized nation."

“never invented anything important of his own, but copied everything he saw.”¹⁰⁰

The adoption of racial antisemitism contradicted Japan’s purported racial tolerance, as expressed in a statement by Koyama Takeo in 1941: “From its inception in ancient times, the Yamato Race has always treated with love and understanding those peoples who have submitted to us, and we have never abused or harmed them in any way.”¹⁰¹ Koyama concluded that European antisemitism was not appropriate for Japan and that Jews should be dealt with in the spirit of universal brotherhood. While racial harmony and equality were certainly not practiced in reality by the Japanese, it was essential that they refrain from casting the conflict as a race war. Still, Japanese belief in the inherent superiority of the Yamato race never waned, a notion that could not be reconciled with German views of Aryan supremacy.

In 1933, the Nazis introduced the Law for Restoration of the Public Service, which stated that “officials of non-Aryan origin are to be retired.”¹⁰² Although aimed at German Jews, the law raised concerns in Japan: were they considered non-Aryans? Memories of the early twentieth century “Yellow Peril” scare, a term Kaiser Wilhelm claimed to have personally coined, were still fresh in the Japanese mind.¹⁰³ Germany’s initial refusal to exclude Japan from the classification of “colored races,” as well as its

¹⁰⁰ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 98, 110.

¹⁰¹ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 124-125.

¹⁰² John P. Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 84.

¹⁰³ Akira Iikura, “The Yellow Peril and Its Influence on Japanese-German Relations,” in Christian W. Spang and Rolf-Harald Wippich, eds., *Japanese German-Relations, 1895-1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 80-98.

prohibition of marriage between Germans and non-Aryans or “colored” people in 1935, strained the Japanese-German relationship. When hopes of an alliance led the Germans to adopt a pro-Japanese policy in 1938, they quickly sought to remedy the race issue by forbidding the media’s use of the term “Yellow Peril.” Soon after, Japanese achievements were singled out as evidence of its particular “racial genius.”¹⁰⁴ Despite these efforts, the Japanese were well aware of the discriminatory racial policy Germany pursued at home and they were doubtful a different policy would be pursued abroad.

In addition to the blatant differences in Japanese and German racial ideology, German anti-Semitism also conflicted with a Japanese tendency to classify “real” Jews according to their nationality, rather than their race or religion. That mindset was clearly evident in the Japanese consuls’ treatment of Jewish refugees. From the mid-1930s, the Foreign Ministry advised its ambassadors to treat refugees who were German citizens as German nationals in accordance with Japanese law. Germans did not need transit visas for Japan, just as Japanese did not need transit visas for Germany. Although the passports of Jews were labeled with a large letter “J,” Japanese consuls seldom emphasized the racial backgrounds of visa applicants. Lists and charts of applicants for visas almost always referred to nationality.¹⁰⁵ Because of Japan’s alliance with Germany, German Jews were afforded higher status than Jews from other countries. Ironically, the link to Nazi Germany granted German Jews a certain degree of protection in Japanese-controlled areas. After the outbreak of the war in China in 1937, the Japanese consul general in

¹⁰⁴ Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis*, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 41-43.

Tientsin suggested that Jews living there hoist the Swastika flag for their protection in case of approaching Japanese troops.¹⁰⁶ The German Foreign Ministry promptly rejected that suggestion, but the incident indicates that the racial and ethnic identities of Jews were subordinated to their national identities.

It should also be noted that, due to the primacy of nationality over race, not all Jews were consolidated in the Shanghai ghetto in 1943. Only those classified as “stateless” (from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) were forced into the ghetto. Jews from Middle Eastern countries, such as Iraq, were exempt, and Japan’s delicate relationship with the Soviet Union during the 1940s prevented the ghettoization of Russian Jews.¹⁰⁷ “Real” Jews, therefore, were not viewed as a collective race by the Japanese, but as diverse groups of nationals with different languages and customs. Still, they were sometimes grouped together as the “Jewish enemy” for propaganda purposes. In a radio broadcast on May, 5, 1943, Shanghai was decried as “a paradise for Jewish adventurers,” where Jews “were responsible for large-scale introduction of opium” and had control of commercial and financial life.¹⁰⁸ This announcement came just fifteen days prior to the deadline for evacuation to the Jewish ghetto in Shanghai, suggesting that, in this case, antisemitism may have served to soften public admonition and dissent. The Japanese justified the ghettoization of groups that had little or no connection with each other, let alone with

¹⁰⁶ Krebs, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” 110, 120.

¹⁰⁷ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 501-502; Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 557.

¹⁰⁸ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 92.

Japan's wartime enemies, by invoking the mythical "Jewish enemy."

Despite the German-Japanese alliance and the efforts of German antisemites, the Japanese did not adopt the German form of racial antisemitism. In that respect, Matsuoka's statement to Lev Zikman was accurate. As ostensible champions of racial equality, the Japanese government could not officially embrace antisemitism, nor could the war against the "Jewish enemy" appear to be a driving force of the Japanese war effort, as it was in Germany. Because they could neither accept Aryan supremacy nor advocate the destruction of other ethnic groups, Japanese were forced to pick and choose those aspects of Hitler's platform they found most useful. However, if Germany's role as ideological transmitters was minimal and the Japanese themselves, through their various opinions of Jews, were not ideologically united under antisemitism, why did it survive in Japan throughout the 1930s and 1940s? In order to answer this question, it is imperative to contextualize antisemitism within Japanese imaginings of foreigners and, more specifically, Westerners. Doing so reveals that antisemitism was not simply an aberration in Japanese history, but rather a continuation of a centuries-old Japanese obsession with the "Other."

CHAPTER IV
THE JEWISH ENEMY: FOUNDATIONS AND FUNCTIONS OF JAPANESE
ANTISEMITISM

In January 1943, a major exhibition opened at Tokyo's Matsuya Department Store with the sponsorship of the *Mainichi Shinbun* and support of the Japanese government's Information Board. Titled "Free Masonry and Its Secret International Influence," the month-long Tokyo exhibition, along with a second held in Osaka, reportedly drew more than one million visitors.¹⁰⁹

An advertisement in the *Nippon Times* highlighted the purpose of the exhibition:

It's Jews that dare to invade Nippon by manipulating a double-headed monster, America and Britain. We should make every endeavor to bring that dreadful monster to broad daylight at all cost. . . . That dreadful power of Free Masonry is working in secret and silence against us under the cover of America and Britain in military, economic, and thought warfares. . . . The sole aim of this exhibition is intended to expose the secret Jewish machinations in order to annihilate America and Britain.¹¹⁰

In this instance of Japanese antisemitism, as in many others throughout the war, "Jews" became synonymous with the Allied enemy (or, in other contexts, "America,"

¹⁰⁹ Kase, "Nihon no naka no Yudayajin," 243; Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*, 485; Although the title of the exhibition did not include "Jews," the linkage between Jews and Freemasons was an idea imbedded in the *The Protocols* and supported by antisemites around the world (Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 28-31). In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler described Freemasonry as a "weapon in the service of Jews," and its practice was eventually outlawed in Germany (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 315). In Japan, too, Freemasonry and Judaism were often used interchangeably.

¹¹⁰ *Nippon Times*, 21 January 1943, 8.

“Britain,” “the West,” “Anglo-Saxonism,” or “Anglo-Americanism”). At times, that correlation was strikingly obvious. David Kranzler notes that certain antisemitic books, such as *Yudaya-jin no inbō to hainichi mondai* (The Jewish Conspiracy and the Anti-Japanese Problem), contained the word “Jew” in their titles but not in their text (“the West,” “Britain,” or the United States” served as substitutes). In fact, the negative values attributed to Jews by Japanese antisemites had long been associated with the non-Japanese “Other” (most often the West). For some Japanese, the Jewish conspiracy provided a useful explanation for the Western tendency to dominate nations and exploit peoples, as well as their impure individualism, materialism, and greed. Thus, the Tokyo exhibition not only echoed typical antisemitic criticisms of Jews found in *The Protocols*, it also reflected Japanese criticisms of the West that had existed for centuries, as evident in the titles of several exhibits: “What is Materialism?”; “Destruction of Humanity”; “Anti-Japanese Campaign of Jews”; “True Cause of the Outbreak of the Present World War”; “Peculiar Manipulations of Jews.”¹¹¹ These titles illustrate the variety of ways the Jewish “Other” was used in prewar and wartime Japan: highlighting its negative, purportedly non-Japanese characteristics (i.e. materialism, treachery); emphasizing its desire to oppose and ultimately dominate other nations, including Japan; and referencing its threat to “humanity” to reinforce Japan’s self-appointed position as the champion of equality, morality, and the savior of not just Asia, but mankind.

¹¹¹ *Nippon Times*, 21 January 1943, 8. Interestingly, none of the titles included the word “Freemasonry.” The remaining exhibits included: “Lists of Monarchs and Dignitaries Assassinated”; “Protocols”; “Double-sided Policy of Red and Black”; “Wordy and Monarchical Court Warfares”; “Oriental Policy”; “China Incident”; “Reform of China’s Monetary System”; “Sian Incident, Outbreak of China Incident”; “European War”; and “Outbreak of the War of Greater East Asia.”

Throughout Japanese history, the “Other”— usually defined as the West or, in the past, China—was used as a counter-image of Japanese identity. That practice was certainly not unique to Japan: in White American imaginings of Native Americans, British myths of Africa, sixteenth century European artistic representations of New World inhabitants, as well as inventions of a unified “Orient” and “Islam,” Western cultures have frequently invoked the backwardness of the “Other” to solidify their claims of superiority.¹¹² In Japan, “Others” have been objects of both emulation and criticism, but in either case they have defined Japanese identity through the anti-image of “foreignness.”¹¹³ Centuries before the arrival of *The Protocols*, Japanese used outsiders to establish their uniqueness as a symbol of their special favor among the gods and centrality in world affairs. The West, too, helped define what was uniquely Japanese. It is not possible to reduce all aspects of Japanese relations with the West into a single mode of action or a single strain of thought, as reactions and ramifications were complex and diverse. However, there were certain characteristics of Japanese conceptions of the West that transcended historical periods. Especially at times of national uncertainty—whether caused by the arrival of Western missionaries or Commodore Perry’s gunboats, or by the rapid Westernization of Japanese society, humiliation of Western racism and, ultimately, the onset of the Pacific War—“the West” (the definition of which evolved over time) could be viewed as a destroyer of indigenous cultural values that, whether in reality or imagination, were said to have always been fundamental to Japanese identity. Fears of

¹¹² Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” 15-16.

¹¹³ Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 11.

Western domination inspired national cohesiveness, resulting in the creation of an imagined community in which Japanese were ethnically and culturally bound to one another. Through “the imaginative power of nationalism” Japanese juxtaposed their purity, morality, spirituality, humanity, and collectivity alongside the antithetical “Other.”¹¹⁴ In the wartime atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s, as in other instances of national uncertainty, the Japanese were compelled to reiterate their unique identity and superiority in order to unite and organize the nation for a protracted, total war.

For antisemites, Jews could be either the carriers of Western civilization or the products of it, but in either case they were cast as the “demonic other” in contrast to the “pure” Japanese, a long-standing fixture of Japanese relations with “Others.” As a universal enemy, Jews were simultaneously democratic, socialist, capitalist, communist, liberal, individualistic, materialistic, cowardly, and dominating. Existing only in myth, the “Jewish enemy” could not retaliate against such accusations, and the Allied countries’ record of Jewish mistreatment, combined with the indifference evident in their rejection of Jewish refugees, meant little fear of counter-propaganda. In fact, Japanese antisemitism was lent legitimacy not only by Japan’s Axis partners, but by its Allied enemies as well. America, for example, was home to more than one hundred antisemitic organizations by 1939.¹¹⁵ A variety of factors influenced that increase, including

¹¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 158.

¹¹⁵ Leonard Dinnerstein, “Antisemitism in Crisis Times in the United States: The 1920s and 1930s,” in Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz, eds., *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 218-219.

nativism inspired by the rise of scientific racism and economic depression, as well as the association of Jews with radicalism and communism. However, distrust or hatred of Jews was not confined to the radical fringe of society. Respected figures such as Charles Lindbergh and Henry Ford did not hesitate to publicly express their antisemitic views. In his book *The International Jew* (which included a translation of *The Protocols*), Ford suggested that Jews controlled world finance, manipulated governments, and had a majority stake in American big business and media. He also surmised that the true intent of Zionists was to create a master state, Israel, and force other nations to serve as its vassals.¹¹⁶

Japanese antisemites also frequently referenced *The Protocols*, echoing the accusations made by Western antisemites such as Ford. The threat of Anglo-American Jewry, while frequently referenced in Japanese antisemitism, was also widely voiced in German antisemitic circles. Yet despite these similarities, suggesting that Japanese antisemitism was merely “adopted” from abroad risks oversimplification. “Adapted” is perhaps a more useful term, as it implies that Japanese antisemitism was a product of foreign influence yet served a distinct Japanese purpose. For Japanese antisemites, the Jewish conspiracy answered a historical imperative for the Japanese to define themselves against the Western enemy, and it offered a convenient rationale for the West’s history of domination, its racism and anti-Japanese sentiment, and even its purported instigation of World War II. It mattered little that Japanese contact with Jews had been historically

¹¹⁶ Henry Ford, *The International Jew* (New York: Filiquarian Publishing, 2007), 8-12.

sparse. Tropes of the “Other” often exist regardless of real contact or endure beyond the physical presence of the “Others” themselves. In sixteenth-century China, for example, Japanese were often referred to as “dwarf pirates,” a label based on real Chinese experiences with Japanese marauders’ in the distant past.¹¹⁷ That most “dwarf pirates” were actually Chinese by the sixteenth century did not prevent stereotypes of the Japanese as “black demons” and “bloodthirsty sharks” from persisting long into the future.¹¹⁸

Antisemitic stereotypes have also endured in areas where few Jews have historically resided, based on skewed memories of contact with “real” Jews and exacerbated by myths from the outside world. Although Jews were excluded from England in 1290, antisemitic Christian attitudes formed prior to expulsion lived on through preachers, playwrights, writers, and storytellers, the “the molders of public opinion.”¹¹⁹ Actual contact with Jews was not necessary to maintain antisemitism, but by preserving and publicizing Jewish myths and stereotypes, English antisemites ensured that, when Jews returned to England in 1656, few greeted them with open arms.

Although the Japanese did not have significant physical contact with Jews prior to the 1930s, they laid the groundwork for sustaining antisemitism centuries before.

¹¹⁷ Wang Yong, “Realistic and Fantastic Images of ‘Dwarf Pirates’: The Evolution of Ming Dynasty Perceptions of Japanese,” in Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002), 37.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Bernard Glassman, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes Without Jews: Images of the Jews in England, 1290-1700* (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 9, 14-15.

Japanese contact with foreign “Others” occurred from at least the third century, when Chinese, Koreans, and Manchurians were known to have established small settlements in Japan. At the same time, a number of Japanese visited China, which was viewed as the model “Other” for much of Japan’s early history. Regardless, the Japanese soon developed their own visions of superiority.

From at least the eighth century, the opposition of “purity” and “impurity” shaped the Japanese world view. In 712, the *Kojiki* (The Chronicle of Ancient Matters) described the most important Japanese gods as being born out of purification rites.¹²⁰ Those practices, fundamental to Shintō, became an essential part of ensuring not only the purity of the Japanese body, but also the mind and spirit. The Japanese translated their “cleanliness” into virtuosity and godliness, developing a distinction between inside and outside (pure and impure) that resulted in a world vision in which divine Japan (“The Land of the Gods”) assumed the leading role. While China was long held in high regard as a model of emulation, its frequent infiltration by “barbarians” dampened its position of superiority from the Japanese perspective. Gradually, the notion of Japanese centrality appeared in foreign relations and discussions of politics, especially during diplomatic crises.¹²¹

In 1270, the Kamakura Shogunate (1192-1333) rejected Khubilai Khan’s demand that Japan submit to his control or face invasion by the Mongol armies. The centrality of

¹²⁰ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 35-38.

¹²¹ Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), 223.

Japan in Japanese world view made the idea of foreign rule inconceivable, and the Mongols' unsuccessful invasion attempts in the 1290s only reinforced the myth of Japanese divinity. That notion of superiority was somewhat shaken, although not displaced, by the arrival of Portuguese and Spanish missionaries in the late 1500s. The strange dress and customs of the *nanbanjin* ("southern barbarians") became the subject of much fascination. The barbarians were said to come from a land of beasts, as evident by their hairy faces and terrible smells, and they were often described or depicted as having bestial features. One of the first accounts of Japanese contact with the Western missionaries, *Kirishitan Monogatari* (Tale of the Christians), described the creatures disembarking from the first *nanbanjin* ships as having sharp claws, yellow, owl-like eyes, large teeth like a horse, and long manes of hair. The "padres" were seen as ludicrous or pitiable creatures, but also as objects of fear, as it was said that they were witches and magicians, practitioners of "demonic trickery" who intended to turn Japan into a "Realm of the Beasts."¹²² In the first century of contact, the terminology describing the West revealed the obvious link to barbarism: Christianity was referred to as *banshū* ("the barbarian sect"), Western studies were sometimes known as *bangaku* ("barbarian studies"), and the governments' bureau for translating Western books was known as *Banshō Shirabesho* (Barbarian Works Investigation Bureau).¹²³

Shortly after the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate (1600-1868),

¹²² George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 125, 144, 214-216, 232-233, 321, 450-451, 457.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, *Deus Destroyed*, 450, 496.

government fears of Western infiltration through religious conversion resulted in the banishment of Christianity and expulsion of Westerners. Although contacts with the West were limited over the next two centuries, Japanese captivation with the Western *nanbanjin* endured. They were commonly featured in Japanese paintings and sculptures, and they were even mimicked at elitist costume balls. Following the exclusion of Westerners, the Japanese reverted to Koreans, Ryūkyūans, and Chinese for tropes of “Otherness.” However, “barbaric” Western features, such as beards, plumed hats, frilled collars, and boots, were transposed on Japanese visual representations of East Asian “Others.” In addition, Japanese artists began to depict *nanbanjin* not only in their native habitat, as they had in the past, but also in Japanese settings. Thus, the previously “out there” *nanbanjin* were afforded status as foreign occupiers and cultural usurpers, if only in the Japanese imagination. Undoubtedly, the potential of the Western “Other” to dominate “The Land of the Gods” aroused feelings of both awe and fear in Japan that persisted long after contact with the West had ceased.¹²⁴

By the time Commodore Perry’s black ships steamed into Tokyo Bay in 1853, it was clear that the Western “Other” had become more than an object of Japanese curiosity. Many denounced the Western intrusion and its potential to damage the “unique Japanese spirit.” In his 1825 *Shinron* (New Theses), Aizawa Seishisai advocated emperor-centered state Shintō and developed the idea of the unique national polity (*kokutai*) in hopes of unifying the Japanese people against the threat of the West. He also claimed that

¹²⁴ Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 334, 351.

Christianity, an “occult religion,” was a vital part of a Western global conspiracy to destroy the Japanese:

The barbarians employ occult religions and other mysterious doctrines to seduce foreign people into their fold. Should the barbarians win our commoners over to their cause, their paucity of numbers would become a great multitude. . . . These barbarians will settle for nothing less than subjugating the rulers of all nations and conscripting peoples of all peoples into their ranks.”¹²⁵

Aizawa’s writings helped spark a movement to “revere the emperor, expel the barbarians” among the Tokugawa shogunate and its supporters. Although that revolt was ultimately unsuccessful, Japanese fears of geographical, spiritual, and cultural usurpation remained a fixture of Japanese relations with the Western world well into the twentieth century. Antisemitism fit nicely within that long-standing animosity, as evident in a statement made in 1942 by Shiratori Toshio, a member of the Diet and former ambassador to Sweden and Italy: “The aim of the Jews is to establish hegemony over the world, by the grace of *Jehovah* their racial god, in order to force mankind to worship that deity. . . . This scheme is absolutely incompatible with our imperial institution The present war is therefore a struggle between the Japanese and the Jews.”¹²⁶

While Shiratori’s statement bears a striking resemblance to the writings of Aizawa, it is not the only instance of similarity between the anti-Western writings of the past and the antisemitic language of the 1930s and 1940s. In many cases, one need only substitute the words “Jews” or “Judaism” for the terms “occult religion” and “Western barbarians,”

¹²⁵ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 18.

¹²⁶ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 159.

as David Goodman and Miyazawa Masanori have done in examining an anti-Christian tract by Ōhashi Totsuan:

Now, the intentions of the [Jews] in promoting trade are roundly to be despised and deeply to be feared. As I have said before, their aims are grounded in the [Judaism] that is their guiding principle. The fundamental aim of the [Jews] is to annex all countries of the world, to treat them as undifferentiated members of the same world order, and to make their national polities, their institutions, and their religions uniform throughout. In order to achieve this goal, the [Jews] must first involve themselves in every aspect of life and subvert people's minds."¹²⁷

References to Western beastliness and barbarism continued into the twentieth century, eventually becoming commonplace in Japanese wartime propaganda. At times, that beastliness was literal. Westerners were depicted in cartoons in a variety of animal forms, from reptiles to dogs, sparrows to fish.¹²⁸ Jews, too, took on animal qualities. Tokyo radio announced that Jews were “extending their tentacles” into the commercial and financial life in Shanghai, and journalist Takeda Seigo labeled international Jewry a “vicious mad dog” who would stop at nothing to achieve its goals.¹²⁹

In other cases, the inhuman attributes of barbarians were referenced to define what was “Japanese” by highlighting the immoral or impure characteristics of the enemy. As was true in descriptions of the demonic and conspiratorial Christians in the Tokugawa and Meiji Periods, Westerners were described as treacherous and cowardly. However,

¹²⁷ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 27-28.

¹²⁸ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 239-241.

¹²⁹ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 92; Takeda, *Shinbun to Yudayajin* [Newspapers and the Jews] (Tokyo: Oa Tsushinsha, 1944), 3.

those features were not only ascribed to “the West” but also to other Japanese enemies. In the late nineteenth century, the Japanese government and media cast the Sino-Japanese War as a battle between civilization and barbarism, and the Chinese enemy was depicted as easily corruptible and cowardly. Later, during the conquest of Manchuria, the Japanese Army distributed an army propaganda pamphlet claiming that Chinese forces would invariably retreat in the wake of Japanese assault, after which they would quickly turn to banditry.¹³⁰ In the Pacific War, Jews, too, were associated with cowardice and treachery. In 1942, a *manzai* group called The Lucky Seven Team created a popular routine known as “The Pacific Sumo War,” which described a fictional sumo match between the Japanese Hayabusa fighter plane and the Allies' Boeing B-17.¹³¹ The B-17 was described as “originally from Yankee prefecture, in the country of the Jews, from a pirate village. . . . His specialty is fleeing into the mists of the clouds.”¹³²

While the Japanese desire to “expel the barbarians” continued through World War II, it is important to note that Japan’s relationship with the West was not inherently antithetical through history. With the onset of the Meiji Period (1868-1912), a crash program of cultural borrowing was adopted under a new slogan, “revere the emperor, emulate Western civilization.”¹³³ As had been true with China in the past, the Japanese

¹³⁰ Lousie Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 98; Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 135.

¹³¹ Kushner, *The Thought War*, 109. *Manzai* is a type of stand-up comedy in the style of Abbot and Costello, featuring two-comedians trading jokes at a rapid pace.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, “Introduction,” in Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

began to define their progress in terms of their compatibility with the “Other.” The Japanese government argued that Westernization was the key to achieving *bunmei kaika* (“civilization and enlightenment”). In order to regain its rightful position of superiority in international affairs, the Japanese people were instructed to “search for new knowledge throughout the world” and to “eliminate old customs based on the universal way.”¹³⁴

Admiration for Western culture continued into the twentieth century. By the end of World War I, many Japanese viewed America as the leading consumer culture and the ultimate symbol of modernity, and the terms *amerikanizumu* (“Americanism”) and *amerikanaizeishon* (“Americanization”) became representative of Japanese consumerism.¹³⁵ In addition, new Japanese identities emerged with the rise of the middle class and the modernization of Japanese life achieved in large part through Westernization. The *mobo* and *moga* (modern boys and modern girls) of the 1920s, for example, represented a new, cosmopolitan Japanese with their Western outfits, love of material objects, frequent visits to cafes and jazz clubs, and public displays of *ero*, *guro*, *nansensu* (erotic, grotesque, nonsense). According to one magazine of the period, they possessed an international outlook, but were also loyal and patriotic citizens.¹³⁶

Japan’s successful modernization, achieved in large part through Western

¹³⁴ Tetsuo Najita and H.D. Haritounian, “Japan’s Revolt Against the West,” in Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought*, 208-209.

¹³⁵ Barbara Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 31.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63-66.

influence, could not be ignored by the Japanese, even in the increasingly anti-Western atmosphere of the late 1930s and 1940s. Yet the mythical Jewish enemy, while often associated with the West, was also referred to as an enemy apart. In that way, it did not assume any of the positive characteristics of Westerners, nor did it have a role in the modernization of Japan. Attacking the Jewish enemy was a convenient way to bypass comparisons with the West, as well as the debate concerning whether Japan was a “culture borrower” or “culture creator,” the latter of which was fundamental to Japanese wartime propaganda. For some antisemites, the Jewish enemy was the victimizer of the world, and even Westerners could be portrayed as casualties of Jewish domination and treachery. In a 1942 article in the *Yomiuri-Hōichi*, Akita Shigetoki accused Jewish doctors of spreading flu epidemics in America and Europe in order to weaken Western society.¹³⁷ Diet member Shiratori Toshio claimed in 1944 that “. . . there is no democracy in the US, and the American masses know nothing. A clique of Jews, numbering less than twenty and headed by Roosevelt, has been running the US for the last twelve years. . . .”¹³⁸ In an article titled “Inferior America,” the *Mainichi* blamed Jews for sending the “uneducated, uncultured, and ill-mannered” Americans to the front to be slaughtered en masse, and on Tokyo radio, the “problem” of American juvenile delinquency was attributed to the immoral Jewish front in America.¹³⁹ In separate broadcasts, Jews were said to have “forced the peace-loving American people into this

¹³⁷ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 162.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 162; Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 89.

war,” and Yogotaka Ashirdin, President of the Nippon Moslem Association, reported that “. . . the Anglo-Americans are suffering from the pressure of the Jews. It is these Jews who are the root cause of the war.”¹⁴⁰

Of course, not all Japanese viewed Westerners as victims, or even as models of emulation. The current of anti-Westernism that existed alongside positive interpretations of Westernization or Americanization grew dramatically in the years following World War I. Drastic changes in domestic and international circumstances, including economic depression, political reorganization, militarism, and international isolation, increased fears of the West. In addition, the rise in Japanese consumption of Western goods, along with the actions of “West-worshipping” individuals such as the *mobo* and *moga*, increased anxiety among intellectuals, who feared the supplanting of native tradition by the “hedonistic culture” of the Americans. Takasu Yoshijirō, founder of the ultranationalist New Oriental Society, argued that Japanese consumerism was increasingly imitating America, in which men and women “lost themselves to jazz and dance.”¹⁴¹ Japanese newspapers, too, targeted the “Western infection” that threatened Japan’s national culture, often criticizing the Westernizing excesses of high society.¹⁴²

Japanese anti-Westernism of World War II continued to highlight aspects of cultural hedonism deemed “un-Japanese” and, therefore, indicators of Allied weakness of

¹⁴⁰ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 91.

¹⁴¹ Sato, *The New Japanese Woman*, 38.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 72; Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 186, 217-218.

character and spirit. The West was often described as a place of individualism, where a focus on profit-making contributed to selfishness and greed. That notion was evident in *The Way of the Subject*, an ideological manifesto published by the Ministry of Education in 1942, which suggested that American Western expansion was the result of an insatiable appetite for local resources and markets.¹⁴³ The media also frequently referenced the impurity of Western life and its threat to Japanese society:

[The Americans] gathered the money of the whole world by her products obtained from the land and soil of her usurpation. . . . In less than a century she has made herself a mighty Power of the world. . . . But in their spiritual life the Americans of today differ little from their vagabond forefathers who dreamt of making a fortune at a stroke. . . . No nation is so poor and feeble in its spiritual life.¹⁴⁴

Jews were also associated with materialism. Takeda Seigo feared the Anglo-Americanization of Japanese life that Jewish control of world politics, economies, ideologies, and cultures would bring: “We must sweep clean the existence of the materialistic, aggressive ideology of the Anglo-American Jews and then repair morality.”¹⁴⁵ Takeda viewed jazz, sex films, mixed dances, and permissiveness as aspects of “Jewish culture.” The editor of *Mainichi* also lamented the appearance of materialistic “Jewish culture” in Japan, as evident in an increase in vending machines and ready-made foods.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 24.

¹⁴⁴ *Nippon Times*, 18 January 1943, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Takeda, *Shinbun to Yudayajin*, 2, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 161.

Throughout modern Japanese history, contact with the West inspired a sense of unity, both real and imagined, in response to fears of encroachment on Japanese ways of life. While calling for Westernization, the Meiji reformers attempted to preserve notions of Japanese superiority over foreigners as well as the myth of Japanese cultural similitude. In the decree proclaiming the Meiji Restoration, Japanese leaders called for a return to Japan's ancient roots, a time before the corrupting influences of Buddhism and Chinese civilization, by reestablishing the emperor as the nation's ruler. Like the nation-states of Europe and America, Japan did not enter the modern era with a strong sense of national identity despite its relatively high degree of common ethnicity, language, and culture. Thus, the Meiji leaders used the "invented tradition" of unbroken dynastic succession to instill a consciousness of "imperial subjects" among Japanese. In doing so they created a memory of an emperor-centered history that had never actually existed, but helped bring "the common people into a highly disciplined national community and a unified and totalizing culture."¹⁴⁷

As Japan struggled to define its niche in the international order in the late nineteenth century, *minkan* ("among the people") ideologues—journalists, intellectuals, and public figures who "produced a disproportionate amount of the 'public opinion'"—used defensive nationalism to attack the foreign in order to define what was Japanese.¹⁴⁸

Cultural nationalists concerned themselves with the distinctiveness of the Japanese

¹⁴⁷ Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History," in Stephen Vlastos, ed., *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 11.

¹⁴⁸ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 137.

cultural community as the essence of the nation, suggesting that particular cultural traits were intrinsic to the Japanese people. Kinship, religion, and race were combined to create a sense of collectivity or oneness, a “family nation.”¹⁴⁹ The loss of those unique traits, for some, was equivalent to the destruction of the Japanese nation. In the 1880s, Kuga Katsunan, editor of the newspaper *Nihon*, argued, “If a nation wishes to stand among the great powers and preserve its national independence, it must strive always to foster nationalism. . . . If the culture of one country is so influenced by another that it completely loses its own unique character, that country will surely lose its independent footing.”¹⁵⁰

According to sociologist Kosaku Yoshino, cultural nationalism “aims to regenerate the national community by creating, preserving or strengthening a people's cultural identity when it is felt to be lacking, inadequate, or threatened.”¹⁵¹ Thus, for Kuga and others, nationalism was a defense mechanism, and a unified nation was seen as crucial to forestalling international threats. Inoue Tetsujirō, one of the most prolific ideologues of civil morality in the Meiji period, expressed that sentiment:

“Since there are those that swallow countries with impunity, we must consider the whole world our enemy. . . . Foreign enemies are always watching for any lapse on our part, and then we can rely only upon our forty million fellow countrymen. Thus, any true Japanese must have a sense of public duty, by which he values his life lightly as dust, advances spiritedly, and is ready to sacrifice himself for the

¹⁴⁹ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 1; Bruce Armstrong, “Racialisation and Nationalist Ideology: The Japanese Case” in *International Sociology* 4, no. 3 (1989): 338.

¹⁵⁰ Kenneth Pyle, “Meiji Conservatism,” in Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought*, 111.

¹⁵¹ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 1.

sake of the nation.”¹⁵²

Inoue concluded that the Japanese must “prepare for any emergency by nurturing the spirit of collective patriotism.”¹⁵³ These notions of fear, combined with a strong desire to achieve unification, became a fixture of the defensive cultural nationalism that would continue, albeit at various levels of intensity, through World War II.

The sense of collective sacrifice and unity were fundamental to Japanese propaganda in World War II. According to the Ministry of Education’s *Kokutai no Hongi* (Cardinal Principles of the National Polity), Japanese unity was found in their “cloudless, pure, and honest” national character. The Yamato Race was divinely descended from the emperor, and the nation was said to have developed “on the basis of a pure, unclouded, and contrite heart” from which all Japanese customs, habits, and language emanated. One of the most famous slogans of the era was introduced to the Japanese public the day after the Pearl Harbor attack: “One hundred million advancing like a ball of flame.” To carry on a protracted war against America, it was argued, unification of the “unique racial power” of the Japanese people was essential.¹⁵⁴

Like anti-Western propagandists, Japanese antisemites stressed the importance of national unity for defeating the Jewish enemy. They often espoused ethnic nationalism, suggesting that the supposed homogeneity of the Japanese race was fundamental to the

¹⁵² Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, 130.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 215-216, 221-222.

well-being of the Japanese nation. As early as 1925, Shiōden Nobutaka linked the concepts of nation and ethnicity in declaring that the war against Jews was a battle to preserve the “unique and unrivaled Imperial Institution of Japan, its *Kokutai*.” Protecting the emperor from the Jews was part of the “perfect and flawless mission of the Yamato Race” that would “not only serve Japan but all the nations of the world.”¹⁵⁵ According to both anti-Westernists and antisemites, foreign influence and ideologies were weak in comparison to the Japanese *kokutai*. Atago Hokuzan suggested that democracies were particularly susceptible to Jewish influence and that Japanese expressions of ethnic nationalism were tantamount to “the extent to which they have thrown off the Jewish yoke.”¹⁵⁶ In *Yudaya minsoku no tai niche Kosei* (The Jewish Offensive Against Japan), Teiichi Muto chastised those who sought Jewish friendship, as “the Jewish policies of capitalism, communism and democracy are fundamentally such that they and our national structure cannot survive together.”¹⁵⁷

The importance of race and state were also clearly expressed by Inuzuka Koreshige and Yasue Norihiro. In his 1939 “Letter to the Leaders of the Jews,” Inuzuka contrasted the superiority of the Japanese race with Jewish statelessness: “In contrast to the Yamato race, who are flourishing in concert with the universe through our all-encompassing character, the fact that you Jews who pride yourselves on your own superiority have had no country of your own for 2,000 years demonstrates that the

¹⁵⁵ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 127.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁵⁷ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 89.

guiding spirit of your race runs counter to the spirit of the universe.”¹⁵⁸ Yasue Norihiro also suggested that Jewish statelessness was indicative of their lack of virtue. In *Yudaya no hitobito*, he distinguished between peoples with states (*omote kokka*) and those without states (*ura kokka*): “the actions of an *omote kokka* people are all positive, of a yang quality; those of an *ura kokka* people are of necessity negative, of a *yin* quality. . . . The *ura kokka* peoples, who are negative, all use treachery to compete. The Jewish people use treachery to attack people; it is natural for them to do so since they are not an *omote kokka* people.”¹⁵⁹

The desire to achieve unity through nationalism, as evident in wartime anti-Westernism and antisemitism, related to the long-standing fears of cultural and territorial infiltration by “barbarians.” As was true in earlier periods of history, Japanese commonly associated Western barbarism with a desire to dominate other nations and peoples. In fact, the Japanese government justified the bombing of Pearl Harbor by blaming it on America’s “selfish desire for world conquest.”¹⁶⁰ Numerous articles, speeches, and broadcasts echoed this view, including a 1944 *Nippon Times* article titled simply “Americans are Barbarians”: “We are firmly determined to safeguard the glorious culture of the Nippon Empire against the American ambition of world domination.”¹⁶¹

The fear of Jewish world domination in politics, economies, and cultures is

¹⁵⁸ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 131.

¹⁵⁹ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 302-304.

¹⁶⁰ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 205.

¹⁶¹ *Nippon Times*, 18 January 1943, 1.

fundamental to most antisemitic tracts, including *The Protocols*. For some Japanese, Jews were the real force behind the Western fixation on world domination that had existed since the first contact with the West. In *Yudaya Mondai to Nippon*, Inuzuka Koreshige claimed that Japan had long been a prize sought by Western imperialists, thanks in large part to “Jewish explorers” such as Marco Polo and Columbus. And a 1944 article in the *Yomiuri* suggested that Commodore Perry had served as the spearhead for a Jewish invasion of Japan.¹⁶²

According to Japanese antisemites, the domination of Jews was most evident in their firm control of America. In his *Citizen's Reader for Certain Victory*, Tokutomi Iichirō claimed that the first American immigrants were represented by two groups: Puritans, who “in their self-righteousness and arrogance achieved their freedom by suppressing others;” and haughty, contemptuous Anglo-Saxon pirates who settled primarily in the South. Each group helped fashion the notion of American supremacy over minorities, which in turn led to anti-Japanese sentiment. However, controlling both groups was the “evil and ugly plutocracy” of the Jews.¹⁶³

In all forms of Japanese media, Jews were accused of controlling America. Radio broadcasts from Tokyo alleged the leaders of America to be “. . . a group of plutocrats and financiers; namely, the Jews and Free Masons. If they lose the war it will mean the end of their race, so they cannot lose the war. . . .” Another claimed that “Jewish-dominated Anglo-American powers . . . through their capitalistic and imperialistic

¹⁶² Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 108.

¹⁶³ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 224.

policies are seeking world hegemony.”¹⁶⁴ The *Mainichi shinbun* and the *Tokyo shinbun* labeled Jews the “Rulers of America” and claimed that democracy in America and Britain were equivalent to Jewish plutocracy.¹⁶⁵ Jewish domination was even expressed in cartoons. In a 1942 caricature of the ABCD powers in *Manga* magazine, America and Britain were depicted as beastly thugs burning in the rays of the Imperial Sun, and a crown with a “J,” representing the control of Jews, was shown falling from the American figure’s head.¹⁶⁶

Authors also railed against “Jewish plutocratic hegemony.” In Tokutomi Sohō’s *Hisshō kokumin dokuhon* (Reader for the People Determined to Win), Jews were labeled “the curse of mankind. . . . Under the guise of democracy they wield their plutocratic hegemony in the United States. American democracy has become a Jewish den.”¹⁶⁷ And Yasue Norihiro argued in *Yudaya no Hitobito* that if the Japanese understood the Jews, they would understand the true nature of America and Europe.¹⁶⁸

In explaining Jewish control over the American government, Japanese antisemites made frequent reference to Franklin Roosevelt’s Jewishness (although he was not a Jew), as well as his supposed adherence to Jewish will. He was dubbed a “running dog of

¹⁶⁴Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 90.

¹⁶⁵ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 109; Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 162.

¹⁶⁶ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 192.

¹⁶⁷ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 161.

¹⁶⁸ Yasue Norihiro, *Yudaya no hitobito*, 305.

Jewish imperialists” by the *Tokyo shinbun*.¹⁶⁹ A radio station in Tokyo branded him a Jewish pawn in September 1942, claiming he had succumbed to the evil influence of Jewish bankers, merchants, and money lenders. His “selfish egoism,” “Jewish ancestry,” and submission to “the powerful Jewish clique” were said to explain his hatred for Germany and his motivations for instigating the war.¹⁷⁰ His Christianity was a facade, claimed one broadcast: “Roosevelt is nothing but a condottiere of the Hebrews. Rather, he is a slave of the Hebrew. Through his veins flows pure Hebrew blood.”¹⁷¹ Some Japanese citizens also believed that Roosevelt was dominated by Jews. After hearing a speech by Shiōden Nobutaka, postwar historian Irokawa Daikichi, a graduate student at Tokyo Imperial University during the war, recorded in his diary: “Stalin, Chiang Kai-shek, Roosevelt, and Churchill are all international clowns of the Jews.”¹⁷²

Roosevelt’s relation to Jews was also parodied in cartoons. In “Grieving Statue of Liberty,” a sketch by Ono Saseo, a demonic caricature of Roosevelt sits atop the Statue of Liberty, waving the slogan of “democracy” while brandishing the club of “dictatorship.” On Liberty’s crown sit a number of different figures, including an “antiwar” sailor, a worker waving a strike placard, and a clownish Jew wearing a dunce cap inscribed with the Star of David, inflating a balloon of profits disguised as the American flag.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 162.

¹⁷⁰ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 90.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁷² Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 161.

¹⁷³ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 194.

Japanese propagandists not only targeted Roosevelt for attacks, but also Churchill, Uncle Sam, and John Bull. In Japanese representations, these figures were often portrayed as elderly and decrepit, which John Dower argues is representative of a Japanese focus on the dwindling powers of Anglo-America, “a declining force in the face of the new Japan and the emerging new global order.”¹⁷⁴ While Japanese often focused on highlighting their important “traditions” and ancient roots as a way of establishing their uniqueness, they worked with equal vigor to evoke the image of a “new” Japan. Achieving a fresh start, a new level of racial and spiritual purity free from Western racist imperialism, was a view widely shared among Japanese. Newness was often expressed through youthfulness, as was evident by the appearance of the folk icon Momotarō (The Peach Boy)—a young, conquering hero who subdued demons in a distant land—over and over in Japanese propaganda. Momotarō represented both Japan’s ancient roots and its quest to usher in a new era.¹⁷⁵

From the perspective of Japanese antisemitisms, Jews were perfect representatives of the old, oppressive order. The centuries-old Jewish domination of world affairs was an idea frequently voiced among antisemitisms worldwide. Writer Kumamoto Arihisa argued in his *Collected Lectures on Morals* that the Pacific war was a rivalry between new and old world views. Kumamoto wrote that the new world view “awakens independent people to self-consciousness, coexistence and coprosperity, each helping the other to be secure in his place.” The old world view, however, was based on “Jewish economic

¹⁷⁴ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 259.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 252, 256.

monopolism, freedom and capitalism, seeking to subjugate the world through the influence of money on politics.”¹⁷⁶ Atago Hokuzan, a professor at Tohoku Imperial University, contended that democracies (the old way) were weak and subject to Jewish influence, while fascist nations (the new way) rooted out the Jewish threat with nationalistic fervor. Author Takeda Seigo also made frequent references to the old Jewish way, suggesting that “The old order of the Anglo-American Jews was extremely inhumane and immoral,” a place where Jews enjoyed the pleasures of life at the expense of other nations. The present war, Takeda argued, “is a moral war to crush evil and spread the truth.”¹⁷⁷

The Jewish domination of international media was also commonly reiterated by Japanese antisemites, most often in relation to the spread of anti-Japanese sentiment. When Japan faced increasing international scorn in the 1930s, “Jews” were blamed for promoting an anti-Japanese attitude in Great Britain, America, and the League of Nations.¹⁷⁸ In a 1939 letter to Inuzuka Koreshige, industrialist Tamura Mitsuzō pondered the anti-Japanese air of the American media: “American arrogance is one factor, but also the six million Jews who have a dominant foothold in the financial, industrial, and political worlds. They have no scruples.”¹⁷⁹ In *Shinajihen to Yudayajin* (The China Incident and the Jews), Koshi Akarike argued that worldwide news was controlled by

¹⁷⁶ Masanori Miyazawa, “Japanese Anti-Semitism in the Thirties,” 26.

¹⁷⁷ Takeda, *Shinbun to Yudajin*, 1, 2.

¹⁷⁸ Kranzler, “Japan Before and During the Holocaust,” 559.

¹⁷⁹ Kiyoko Inuzuka, *Kaigun Inuzuka kikan no kiroku*, 156.

Jews in London and New York, who printed inflammatory articles that led the world to “misunderstand the true nature of the China incident.”¹⁸⁰ And in his 1944 book *Shinbun to Yudayajin* (Newspapers and the Jews), Takeda Seigo argued that Jews used newspapers as one of its main weapons for achieving world domination: “While we Japanese unconsciously read their newspapers and listen to their news, our very way of life is becoming Anglo-American Judaized.”¹⁸¹ Thus, the supposed Jewish control of the media resonated with historical fears of domination and Japanese resentment of Western racism, while also downplaying Japanese culpability by transposing blame onto a mythical “Other.”

In contrast to the barbarism of Westerners, Japanese stressed their moral superiority and humanity. While some anti-Western propagandists identified with “real” Jews as common victims united against Western oppression, antisemites used the threat of the international Jewish enemy to bolster Japan’s position as the savior of Asia and mankind. In these cases, Jewish power as described in *The Protocols* merged with Japan's divine mission to liberate the world of Jewish domination. It also related to the broader goals of liberating East Asia from Western imperialism and reestablishing a new order under Japanese guidance. In January 1940, Itō Ken claimed that Japan’s real purpose in the war was to rid Asia of Jewish influence, as “small steps Japan takes are giant strides for Asia.”¹⁸² Similarly, Yasue Norihiro argued that it was Japan’s divine

¹⁸⁰ Tolischus, *Through Japanese Eyes*, 90.

¹⁸¹ Takeda, *Shinbun to Yudayajin*, 3.

¹⁸² Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 107.

mission to not only liberate the Russians and Chinese from the stranglehold of the Jews, but also “rehabilitate” the Jews themselves so they might assume a role in the Co-Prosperity Sphere.¹⁸³

Some antisemites went a step further, reiterating the centrality of Japan in world affairs by suggesting that it alone determined the fate of humanity. Professor Atago Hokuzan suggested that sense of international isolation: “Only Holy Japan remains to strike down the Jews and save Mankind.”¹⁸⁴ Shiratori Toshio also claimed that, should Japan be defeated, the world would fall into the hands of the Jews and the future of humanity would be bleak.¹⁸⁵ In describing Anglo-American Jewry as the enemy of humanity, Takeda Seigo argued that the full strength of Japan should be mustered not only to liberate Asia, but also to “deliver world humanity from the misfortune of Anglo-America.”¹⁸⁶

Contextualizing Japanese antisemitism within discussions of Japanese relations with “Others, as well as within the context of wartime anti-Westernism, reveals that the Jewish enemy was far less foreign than one might assume. Similarly, the seemingly contradictory distinctions made between “real” Jews and the metaphorical “Jewish enemy” by the Japanese during the prewar and wartime periods becomes less incongruous when one broadens the scope of their investigation. In fact, Japanese condemnations of “the

¹⁸³ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 305.

¹⁸⁴ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 107.

¹⁸⁵ Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 160.

¹⁸⁶ Takeda, *Shinbun to Yudayajin*, 1.

West” in earlier periods of history were not necessarily intended to incite hostility toward “real” Westerners residing in Japan.

In the nationalistic atmosphere of late Meiji, the perceived threat of foreign peril led *minkan* ideologues to precipitate a number of patriotic controversies. Christianity, which many Japanese had accepted as both a personal faith and the religion of “civilization,” came under attack for its supposed threat to the spiritual unity of Japan, as well as its association with various Western ideals, such as republicanism, individualism, socialism, and colonialism.¹⁸⁷ But Western Christians were not the only ones targeted for attacks. Any Japanese who espoused Western ideals, such as Christianity, could become a “metaphorical” foreigner “in whose alien reflection the silhouette of patriotism emerged that much more clearly.”¹⁸⁸ However, Japanese Christians were allowed to continue practicing their faith as long as they were willing to also swear loyalty as Japanese. Thus, “the foreign” was used to define “Japaneseness,” but once defined, the native was used to nationalize the foreign. As Carol Gluck notes, the real significance of attacking Christianity was not to affect religious practices, but to strengthen “the civil morality to which all loyal and patriotic Japanese of any faith had now necessarily to subscribe.”¹⁸⁹

In other instances, “real” Westerners were clearly distinguished from the “Western enemy.” In 1899, new Japanese laws allowing foreigners to reside anywhere in the country and freely engage in commerce prompted concerns about the Western threat to

¹⁸⁷ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 18; Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 132, 134.

¹⁸⁸ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 135.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Japanese morals and customs. *Minkan* ideologues urged fellow Japanese to resist the immorality of Westerners manifested in materialism, greed, and lust, and to remain loyal, patriotic, Japanese citizens. Despite the scathing remarks and warnings made in 1899, the situation for Westerners residing in Japan did not change in the least. But “real” Westerners had never been the point, as Carol Gluck notes: “what had mattered was the idea of the West that the Japanese had created for purposes of self-definition. The real West was irrelevant; in the imagined West people were incapable of loyalty, and this was sufficient to define these traits as essentially Japanese.”¹⁹⁰ Foreigners served as ideological means to the patriotic ends of defensive nationalism. The same had been true in the Tokugawa Period, as the slogan “revere the emperor, expel the barbarian,” proved little more than a catchphrase devoid of meaningful content that was used to unite and mobilize the energies of dissident samurai.¹⁹¹ Both the imagined Western enemy of the Meiji Period and the imagined Jewish enemy of World War II were used in the cause of defensive nationalism. Once those aims were achieved (or defeated) and defensive nationalism waned, the fervent outcries of the ideologues also subsided.¹⁹²

While Japanese distinguished between “real” and imagined “Others” well before World War II, they also had a long history of harnessing the laudable qualities of “Others,” even those viewed as the antithesis of “Japaneseness,” for their own benefit. In Japanese folklore, *marebito* (visiting gods) were said to possess dual qualities of good and evil that

¹⁹⁰ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 137.

¹⁹¹ Hirakawa Sukehiro, “Japan’s Turn to the West,” in Wakabayashi, ed. *Modern Japanese Thought*, 94.

¹⁹² Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 135.

could be either creative or destructive. According to legend, when a *marebito* visited a village at an unexpected time, it brought evil and hardship. However, if proper rituals were followed, *marebito* could be brought into society under controlled conditions and kept at a distance, thus serving a useful purpose.¹⁹³

In the Tokugawa Period, the primary use of the “Other” was to highlight Japan’s superiority and preserve the legitimacy of its rulers. Even when a series of domestic crises in the 1830s seriously weakened the shogunate, and the onset of the First Opium War aroused fears of Western domination that the Tokugawa rulers seemed ill-equipped to repel, the Tokugawa turned to lesser “Others” to maintain the semblance of Japanese diplomatic centrality. Ryūkyū and Korea had long been viewed as vassal states expected to offer tributes to the Japanese emperor. By the 1830s and 1840s, the economic benefits of those tributes were minimal, but the shogunate managed to increase the number of Korean and Ryūkyūan embassies to Edo in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to “refurbish the mirror of Tokugawa glory.”¹⁹⁴

As Japan underwent dramatic political and social changes in the final years of the Tokugawa Period, calls for returns to “what was irreducibly Japanese,” became increasingly frequent among Japanese ideologues.¹⁹⁵ For many, Japan was already engaged in a war with the West, a battle to defend the distinctive Japanese spirit against the corrupting influences of modern civilization. Despite his skepticism, Aizawa

¹⁹³ Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan*, 39.

¹⁹⁴ Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, 243.

¹⁹⁵ Najita and Harootunian, “Japan’s Revolt Against the West,” 208-209.

Seishisai eventually conceded that the West was an overwhelmingly powerful force, and he argued that Japan could only regain its former supremacy by adopting Western learning and turning that knowledge against the West in a future confrontation.¹⁹⁶ As Japan entered the Meiji Period and began its rush to modernize, many other Japanese accepted Westernization as necessary in order to “know your enemy.”

Utilizing the “power” of “Others” continued into the prewar and wartime periods. The Fugu Plan represents an obvious example, although Jews were not the only group the Japanese sought to exploit for personal benefit. In Manchukuo, Japanese established a Cossack village around 1935 in order to use White Russians as intelligence operatives against the Soviets.¹⁹⁷ And in the 1930s, the Japanese worked to incite African American equal-rights riots in America. They encouraged a splinter group of Black Muslims to support the Japanese emperor, cultivated a relationship with the influential black leader, Robert O. Jordan, and set up a press service, the “Negro News Syndicate” (which was ultimately ineffective).¹⁹⁸ Thus, one might argue that the Japanese government’s flirtation with the Fugu Plan was part of a long desire to exploit lesser “Others” for the benefit of the “superior” Japanese.

In many ways, discussions of the Jewish enemy paralleled those of the Western enemy that had developed since the arrival of the first Christian missionaries. Like Westerners, Jews were said to be dominators of nation-states and cultures, and their

¹⁹⁶ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 24.

¹⁹⁷ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 90.

¹⁹⁸ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 174-75.

treachery, materialism, and cowardice afforded them status as barbarians in the minds of some Japanese. Using Jews, Japanese applauded the superiority of their national unity and humanity, emphasized their divine mission to free the world, and defined themselves through the un-Japanese characteristics of the enemy “Other.” For some, the age-old Jewish conspiracy theory proved useful in explaining the historical motivations of the West in relation to Japan, and the Jewish enemy became a convenient and defenseless scapegoat for wartime behavior and anti-Japanese sentiment. Japan could never divorce itself completely from the West, even in the wartime atmosphere, as many of its modern achievements were byproducts of Western influence. Yet invoking the Jewish enemy offered a way to bypass that history. Japanese afforded Jews a “double otherness” as both Westerners and Jews, associating them with the worst aspects of the West (as members or controllers of the Western world), but also with distinctly negative Jewish traits “legitimized” by works such as *The Protocols* and grounded in centuries of Western antisemitism.

The juxtaposition of Japanese antisemites’ discussions of the “Jewish enemy” to historical relations with the Western “Other” is not intended to minimize their culpability. With some exceptions, Japanese antisemites subscribed to their own rhetoric, adhering to an ideology that resulted in the slaughter of millions of people from a variety of nations and cultures whose only common link was their Jewish ancestry. In fact, it is by discussing antisemitism through a narrow historical lens that Japanese culpability is truly minimized. Whether viewing it as a product of German influence or as a bizarre aberration, simplistic dismissals of Japanese antisemitism echo postwar tendencies to

whitewash Japan's historical record. By providing a historical context through which to examine its development and persistence, however, antisemitism assumes a place in the long-standing Japanese essentialization of the Western "Other." While "the Jewish enemy" at times existed apart from the West, its similarities with "the Western enemy" suggest that Japanese antisemitism persisted in large part because of its correlation to a well-established image of Japan's ultimate enemy. Interestingly, the loss of the war and rapprochement with America coincided with a widespread dismissal of antisemitism and even a turn toward philosemitism. Thus, the long and complex history of Japanese relations with the Western "Other" is intrinsically connected to the persistence of antisemitism in Japan. By associating Japanese antisemitism with broader historical trends, the all too common labels of "peculiarity" and "incomprehensibility" can be disregarded, and antisemitism can assume its proper place within modern Japanese history.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Today, as in the past, “Japan” is seldom mentioned in the same sentence as “Jews.” Nevertheless, memories of Japanese-Jewish relations during the Holocaust have been preserved by Jews, Japanese, and scholars around the world. Historical realities are often colored by debates concerning whether “Japan” was savior, persecutor, or bystander. In recent years, Japan’s wartime atrocities have garnered considerable international attention, prompting nations such as China and Korea to demand Japanese apologies. However, the Japanese government has generally resisted these pressures, preferring to highlight the merits of Japan’s wartime mission and the sacrifices of its people while downplaying or completely dismissing atrocities. Although often overshadowed by other controversies, Japanese relations with Jews in the prewar and wartime periods have also become a part of the selective wartime memory, as evident in frequent invocations of “Sugihara” and “Shanghai.”

Sugihara, sometimes referred to as the “Japanese Schindler,” became the first Japanese to be declared a “Righteous Gentile” by Yad Vashem.¹⁹⁹ His acts of altruism have been recalled in numerous books, articles, television programs, and documentaries in Japan and around the world. Amidst the seemingly endless accounts of Japanese

¹⁹⁹ Levine, *In Search of Sugihara*, 6.

brutality and war crimes, Sugihara's story presents an obvious and much-desired example of Japanese kindness and humanity. Likewise, the story of the Shanghai Jews is a positive one in contrast to most Jewish accounts of the Holocaust. Numerous oral history accounts attest to the gratefulness of the Jewish survivors, and the facts suggest that life in the Shanghai "ghetto" was far less difficult than in any of its European counterparts. Ernest Heppner, a resident of the Shanghai ghetto, recalled the ghetto as a place of trial and tribulation, but also as a place where Jews from a variety of nations achieved a sense of solidarity and tested their capacity to create a single Jewish nation. More simply, however, Heppner appreciated that thousands of Jewish lives were saved: "Shanghai provided us with a haven from the Holocaust."²⁰⁰ In a similar way, historian David Kranzler refers to the ghetto as the "the miracle of Shanghai," leading him to conclude that Japanese policies were ultimately "pro-Jewish."²⁰¹

The image of Japan as a pro-Jewish nation during the Holocaust is also perpetuated among the Japanese themselves. Since the immediate postwar era, a selective wartime memory began to be fashioned, with the support of the American occupiers, which situated blame for Japan's destruction on a select group of militaristic, ultranationalist leaders. As the rest of the nation distanced itself from the wartime regime, unpleasant memories were removed from the historical narrative, resulting in a superficial version of events that has sparked numerous international controversies (i.e.

²⁰⁰ Ernest Heppner, *Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 175-176.

²⁰¹ Kranzler, "Shanghai Refuge," 401; Kranzler, "Japan Before and During the Holocaust," 562.

omissions of crucial details about the Nanking Massacre and “Comfort” Women in high school textbooks). In attempting to bury their militaristic past, Japanese adopted new notions of peace and democracy while rejecting the right wing ideas associated with the wartime leaders. Antisemitism, too, became unfashionable and was widely criticized by Japanese intellectuals. However, a number Japanese went much further than simply rejecting antisemitism. Many became philosemitic and attempted to befriend Jews: several Japanese-Jewish organizations, including the Japan-Israel Foundation and Japan Association for Jewish Studies, were founded to promote friendship, mutual understanding, and Zionism.²⁰² Well-respected intellectuals began to perpetuate the idea that this postwar cordiality was not a rapprochement, but an enduring characteristic of Japanese-Jewish relations. It became common to compare Japanese and Jews, or to search for similarities between the two “races,” regardless of the validity of such research. Intellectuals espoused common ancestry theories, suggesting linguistic relationships between Japanese and Aramaic—for example, the Japanese word *anata* and the Aramaic word *anta* both mean “you”—and even hypothesized that the Japanese were direct descendants of one of the Lost Tribes of Israel.²⁰³ In 1970, Yamamoto Shichihei, using the pen name Isaiah Ben-Dasan (who Yamamoto falsely claimed was a Jew born and

²⁰² Kase, “Nihon no naka no Yudayajin,” 240. Inuzuka Koreshige was one of those who abruptly changed his opinion of Jews. Following the war, he temporarily managed the Japan-Israel Association, visiting Tokyo’s Free Mason Club a number of times. As Kase Hideaki suggests, it is doubtful that Inuzuka forgot that the building housing the Free Mason Club was formerly the headquarters of the Retired Naval Officers Club where he had lectured on the threat of the international Jewish conspiracy. Inuzuka died of natural causes in February 1965.

²⁰³ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 64-70; Kase, “Nihon no naka no yudayajin,” 246.

raised in Japan), authored *Nihon to Yudayajin* (Japan and the Jews), the number one bestseller of any genre that year. In his book, which is believed by some to be the first of the *nihonjinron* (studies of Japaneseness) works, Yamamoto “became” Jewish to lend credibility to his theories of Japanese uniqueness, “pushing the postwar tendency to identify with the Jews to its logical extreme.”²⁰⁴ A former soldier stationed in the Philippines, Yamamoto’s work reveals his sense of frustrated Japanese nationalism, as he claims that “Nihonism” (Japanism) is as much a religion as Judaism or Christianity. The values of the Japanese are different from those of the Jews (or West), he argues, and those differences have propelled the Japanese people to their present condition (of economic success). Yamamoto’s descriptions of Judaism are often inaccurate and are sometimes confused with Christianity, and he makes use of a number of stereotypes, labeling Jews “nomads” and “skillful, cautious handlers of money.”²⁰⁵ Yet his point was not to provide a factually accurate portrayal of Jews, but rather to use them as a foreign mirror to provide a reassuring image of Japanese uniqueness and superiority.

More common than using Jews to highlight Japanese uniqueness, however, has been the postwar Japanese tendency to seek commonalities among “shared” experiences of Japanese and Jewish victimization. This idea, promoted by Japanese, Jews, and others, typically juxtaposes the inhumane destruction of life caused by the dropping of the

²⁰⁴ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 179, 181.

²⁰⁵ Isaiah Ben-Dasan, *The Japanese and the Jews*, trans. Richard L. Gage (New York: Weatherhill, 1972), 102, 133.

atomic bombs (“Hiroshima”) with that of the Holocaust (“Auschwitz”).²⁰⁶ Hiroshima and Auschwitz became the ultimate symbols of Japanese and Jewish suffering, and they were often discussed in isolation of other wartime events. That uniqueness was expressed by Ota Yoko, a Hiroshima survivor, in her novel *City of Corpses*: “We had been flattened by a force—arbitrary and violent—that wasn't war.”²⁰⁷ Hiroshima and Auschwitz thus became linked in the minds of many Japanese, which not only contributed to the skewing of wartime memory by obfuscating the “elementary distinction between victim and aggressor,” but also increased Japanese interest in Jewish victimization.²⁰⁸

Today, the Japanese-Jewish connection through victimization is a commonly invoked theme in Japanese representations of World War II. A number of Japanese museums, including the Osaka International Peace Center and Kyoto Museum for World Peace, feature Auschwitz exhibits immersed in what are otherwise Pacific War-oriented collections. At the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall, special ceramic masks were sculpted using soil from both the epicenter of the atomic blast and from Auschwitz, creating a physical and psychological association between the victims of the bombings and the concentration camps.²⁰⁹ Although Japan's Jewish population remains minuscule, a

²⁰⁶ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 173.

²⁰⁷ Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994), 92, 93, 101.

²⁰⁸ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 178.

²⁰⁹ Roger B. Jeans, “Victims or Victimizers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Contemporary Japan,” *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 1 (2005): 175, 181; Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” 230.

museum devoted exclusively to the Holocaust, the Holocaust Education Center, opened in Hiroshima prefecture in 1995, reportedly receiving 10,000 visitors in its first year.²¹⁰ Aside from the Holocaust Education Center, at least two other Holocaust museums, the Auschwitz Peace Museum and Tokyo Holocaust Education Resource Center, have opened since 2000. For Otsuka Makoto, Director General of the Holocaust Education Center, the primary function of the museums is to raise public awareness of the Holocaust. In an article stressing the need for Holocaust education in Japan, Otsuka applauded the recent media attention given to Schindler and Sugihara but stressed the need to develop a deeper understanding of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, his well-intentioned statements also included typical expressions of Japanese wartime victimization: “As the only country which was attacked with atomic bombs, peace education has been vigorously promoted in Japan. We have not, however, given much attention to teaching children to think about *why* the Holocaust took place and *what* can be done to prevent such an event from recurring, while, at the same time, not neglecting the tragic aspect of the war which brought so much suffering to Japan.”²¹¹

The victimization link also helps explain the popularity of Anne Frank in postwar Japan. For the Japanese, and for many others throughout the world, Frank epitomized “the Holocaust victim,” and her diary, first published in Japanese in 1952, sold more copies in Japan than in any other nation except the U.S. However, from the Japanese

²¹⁰ See the Holocaust Education Center website: <http://www.urban.ne.jp/home/hecjpn/index.html>.

²¹¹ Makoto Otsuka, “Importance of Holocaust Education in Japan,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 1, no. 3 (1999): 460.

perspective, details concerning Judaism or the Holocaust remain less significant than Frank's personal struggle to overcome adversity. Junior high school textbooks in the 1970s and 1980s included Frank's story in *kokugo* (Japanese language) rather than in history or social studies. Her story was intended as a lesson in self-examination through the diary form, and her life was described as “a spiritual struggle to hold on to human values amid the duress of war.”²¹²

Perhaps in a similar way, the tale of Sugihara might be more often viewed as a story of individual struggle during the war than as a lesson on the Holocaust. Although an employee of the Japanese government, is often depicted as an individual resisting the wartime regime in the only way he could at the time, by refusing to comply with immigration regulations. Some even insist that Sugihara was dismissed for his actions (although the evidence is debatable), thereby becoming a victim himself. In this way, Sugihara becomes representative of the typical Japanese victim: an inherently moral person who struggled to do the right thing, or in some cases simply survive, against a group of powerful and oppressive government leaders. When Sugihara was honored at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2000, Japanese Ambassador Yanai Shunji expressed that sentiment in his speech: “When Japanese today look back on those days of deep regret and hardship, there is one life in particular that breaks through for us and that is the life of Chiune Sugihara.”²¹³

²¹² Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 168; Silverman, “Jewish Emigres and Popular Images of Jews in Japan,” 238.

²¹³ “U.S. Museum Opens Exhibition for Japanese Who Saved Jews,” May 8, 2000. http://findarticles.com/p/articles_m0XPQ/is_2000_May_8/ai_62170663

Some take Yanai's notion further, suggesting that "Sugihara's actions" are synonymous with "Japan's actions." That idea is presented in a book by Sugihara Seishirō (no relation to Chiune), a revisionist historian who, in reexamining the culpability of the Japanese Foreign Ministry during the war, suggests that leaking the story of Sugihara could have changed the outcome of the Tokyo Trials: ". . . even the pariah nation Japan had produced someone who saved the lives of six thousands Jews. . . . It is unfortunate for Japan that Sugihara's achievements were not appropriately recognized at that time."²¹⁴ The author does not elaborate on the ways in which the trials might have been changed, but his statements suggest that Sugihara's story would not have been told as a tale of individual goodness, but as a representation of praiseworthy "Japanese" values which would ultimately have improved the images of those on trial. Perhaps like Hiroshima and Anne Frank, the tale of Sugihara has come to exist in a realm somewhere between historical reality and selective memory.

Further evidence of Japan's reluctance to confront its antisemitic past lies in the controversial *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho* (New History Textbook). The text, first published in 2001 with the endorsement of the Japanese Ministry of Education, has sparked numerous protests throughout Asia for its omission or glossing over of Japanese military aggression in the twentieth century. While most of the controversy centers on the Nanking Massacre and "Comfort Women," the text also includes a brief yet revealing section on the Holocaust. Its examination of the Holocaust in Europe is facile, simply

²¹⁴ Seishirō Sugihara, *Between Incompetence and Culpability: Assessing the Diplomacy of Japan's Foreign Ministry from Pearl Harbor to Potsdam*, trans. Norman Hu (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1997), 158-159.

noting that Jews were subjected to intense persecution and that millions died in concentration camps and at the hands of the Germans. However, the Japanese relation to the Holocaust is mentioned several pages later in a special section, “Portraits of Japanese History,” under the title “Japanese Who Saved Jewish Lives: Higuchi Kiichiro and Sugihara Chiune.” While Sugihara's tale is accurate, Higuchi is said to have treated the case of Jewish refugees as “a humanitarian one based on the principle of 'harmony among five races' upon which the State of Manchuria was founded.”²¹⁵ The article makes no mention of Higuchi's role in supporting the exploitation of Jews through the Fugu Plan. Nor is there any discussion of Japanese antisemitism. While the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho* is not widely used in the Japanese education system, it serves as an obvious example of historical amnesia sanctioned by the state.

Japanese memories of the Holocaust and Japanese-Jewish relations during the 1930s and 1940s have become selective and overly simplified in the postwar discourses of victimization and Japanese wartime culpability. While one cannot ignore the historical facts—that Sugihara saved Jews, that Shanghai was a haven in comparison to the ghettos of Europe, or that the Japanese allowed Jewish immigration at a time when many Western nations did not—postwar philosemitism and notions of shared victimization have masked reality. In fact, antisemitism existed at all levels of Japanese society during the 1930s and 1940s. Even today, an undercurrent of antisemitism is present in Japan, at times drawing international attention. A 1995 article in *Marco Polo* magazine sparked controversy by blatantly denying the existence of the Holocaust:

²¹⁵ *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho* [New History Textbook] (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2006), 193, 202-203.

The “Holocaust” is a fabrication. There were no execution gas chambers in Auschwitz or in any other concentration camp. Today, what are displayed as “gas chambers” at the remains of the Auschwitz camp in Poland are a post-war fabrication by the Polish communist regime or by the Soviet Union, which controlled the country. Not once, neither at Auschwitz nor in any territory controlled by the Germans during the Second World War, was there “mass murder of Jews” in “gas chambers.”²¹⁶

Just two weeks after the appearance of this article, *Marco Polo* was permanently shut down. The affair made front page news in the Japanese press, although for the most part, journalists focused on the quality of the magazine’s journalism and the implications of the article for Japan, rather than engaging in discussions about Japanese antisemitism.²¹⁷

A little more than a month after the *Marco Polo* controversy, the notorious *Aum Shinrikyo* cult carried out poison gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system, killing twelve people. The group’s manifesto, “The Manual of Fear,” quoted at length from *The Protocols*, blaming Jews for “promoting mindless popular culture and fomenting endless wars of attrition in order to weaken the gentile nations of the world and turn non-Jews into docile cattle.”²¹⁸ However, it was not Western Jews on which *Aum* focused its attacks, but rather Japanese who supposedly espoused Jewish ideals. As was true with

²¹⁶ A translation of the article appears on the website of the Institute for Historical Review, one of the world’s leading Holocaust denial organizations: http://www.ihr.org/other/marco_polo.html.

²¹⁷ David Goodman, “Anti-Semitism in Japan: Its History and Cultural Implications,” in Frank Dikotter, ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 194-195.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 195-196.

anti-Christian and anti-Western Meiji ideologues', as well as with antisemites during the 1930s and 1940s, *Aum* did not confront "real" Jews, but rather used antisemitism to define "the foreign" as a way to express their definition of "Japaneseness."

Beyond the antisemitic fringe of Japanese society, Jews continue to arouse considerable public attention. That is clearly evident in the success of author Uno Masami, whose works first appeared in the mid-1980s. Uno achieved fame in Japan and abroad for his antisemitic tracts, which denied the Holocaust, described the United States as a Jewish nation, and referenced the international Jewish conspiracy theory of *The Protocols*. Uno was quoted approvingly by the Japanese media and was even invited to speak at a Constitution Day rally sponsored by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. Although he authored a number of works, his most popular were *Yudaya ga wakaru to sekai ga miete kuru* (If You Understand the Jews, You Will Understand the World) and *Yudaya ga wakaru to Nihon ga miete kuru* (If You Understand the Jews, You Will Understand Japan).²¹⁹ In the latter, Uno claimed that in seeking to destroy Japan, Jews diminished the nation's financial resources by luring Japanese companies overseas and engaging in devious stock market speculation.²²⁰ At a time of national uncertainty caused by economic recession, Uno revived familiar images of Jews that both highlighted and blamed "the foreign" without specifically attacking the West. Today, his books continue to sell, and a number of antisemitic authors, most notably Ōta Ryū, build upon the

²¹⁹ Goodman, "Anti-Semitism in Japan," 188-189; Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 228-229.

²²⁰ Uno Masami, *Yudaya ga wakaru to Nihon ga miete kuru* [If You Understand the Jews, You Will Understand Japan] (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1986), 6.

foundation he laid. While many contemporary bookstores include section of books related to the Jewish conspiracy, they are often described as *tondemo bon* (outrageous books), perhaps indicating that many Japanese do not take them seriously.

Indeed, it is as difficult to universally categorize Japanese opinions of Jews today as it was in the prewar and wartime periods. Yet this thesis has suggested that such labeling is impossible, as opinions are far from uniform. As was true in the prewar and wartime periods, the Jews have never assumed a single position in the Japanese mind, nor have they served a single purpose. Yet parallels do exist between the past and present. With members of *Aum Shinrikyo* and Uno Masami, as with Japanese antisemites of the past, Jews were used to define Japanese identity or offered as convenient scapegoats for periods of national uncertainty or crisis. And contemporary Japanese interest in the Holocaust, as reflected in the creation of Holocaust museums, is motivated by both feelings of common victimization as well as by genuine concern, tendencies clearly evident in the prewar and wartime periods.

Similarly, it is as difficult to pinpoint a single explanation for the persistence of antisemitism in contemporary Japan as it is for the prewar and wartime periods. However, the “Jewish enemy’s” similarity with the historical “Western enemy,” when combined with foreign influence and Japanese desires to unify under a monolithic identity, elucidates the persistence of antisemitism in Japan. Still, despite its usefulness in wartime propaganda, antisemitism did not culminate in the persecution of Jews. As was true at other times in Japanese history, a line was drawn between real and imagined “Others.” While the imagined represented the antithesis of “Japaneseness,” the real was

not bound to that identity. Accordingly, the simultaneous saving of Jewish lives and promotion of antisemitism is less contradictory than one might assume. After all, both interpretations of Jews contributed in different ways to the goals of expanding the Japanese empire, achieving national unity during the war, and defeating the Western enemy. However, that realization can only be achieved by properly contextualizing Japanese antisemitism, both in the wide array of Japanese imaginings of Jews, as well as in the broader history of Japanese relations with “Others.” In doing so, Japanese antisemitism is understood not simply as a bizarre departure from Japanese history, but as an ideological development shaped by historical experiences with the West and the nationalism, imperialism, and militarism that characterized prewar and wartime Japan.

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