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The Selected Aspects of Jewish-Japanese Relations : the Face of Japanese anti-Semitism

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THE SELECTED ASPECTS OF JEWISH-JAPANESE RELATIONS. THE FACE OF JAPANESE ANTI-SEMITISM

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ABSTRACT

There are many factors that significantly influenced the Japanese attitude towards the Jews. Certainly, the most important are: more than 250 years of isolation and cultural dissimilarity, mainly in terms of religion. Within a short space of time, after Japan was forcefully opened to the outside world – with knowledge of art, literature, technological achievements and political and social changes – the Japanese learned about European opinions of the Jews, including the religious ones. However, it did not have an impact on the Japanese attitude towards the Jews. Political developments in the late 1800s and early 1900s created an image of the Jew as an influential person with a great ability in finance management. Japanese elites were convinced that loans granted by Jewish banks contributed to the victory over Western power – Tsarist Russia. Western politicians realised then that Japan has become an important player on Asian political scene. What influenced the Japanese attitude towards the Jews were accusations of inciting chaos in the world – for instance the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Japanese became more cautious, especially when it came to the basic premises of the so-called Fugu Plan but it did not change Japanese-Jewish relations. This attitude preserved even during the times of the Japan's seemed-to-be close cooperation with the Third Reich – although other countries would tighten their policies towards the Jews.

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To analyse the interrelationship between the Japanese and the Jews we have to take into account Japan's political and social dissimilarities, different from the European ones. One of the most important factors was the geographical location and the isolation of Japan from the early 1600s to the 1850s. Due to this voluntary seclusion that lasted nearly 300 years, the Japanese did not perceive the Jews in the way that the Europeans did. It can lead to the view that there were no encounters between both societies until the forceful opening of Japan's borders in 1855. Among others, the supporter of this view is a Jewish researcher Ben Ami Schillony who claims:

The Jews and the Japanese were hardly aware of each other until modern times; and theories about earlier contacts are sheer speculation. During their centuries long dispersion throughout the world, the Jews did reach East Asia, settling in India and China in the ninth and tenth centuries, but they probably never settled in Japan before the nineteenth century as Japan was too far, too poor, and for a long time closed to foreigners¹.

Except from the opinions of the researchers represented by B.A. Schillony and related to the Jews and the Japanese, it is worth mentioning that there are some hypotheses among other researchers concerning somehow close Japanese-Jewish relations before 1855 (which will be discussed in the further part of the paper).

They claim that the interactions between both societies were not possible on the assumption that the Jews appeared in the Southeastern Asia during the times when China was the political and cultural centre and Chinese political and social thought played a vital role in shaping political and social systems in the neighbouring countries, including Korea and Japan. Frequent encounters between the representatives of Chinese and Japanese imperial courts or between scholars and monks created opportunities to learn (superficially, however) about Jewish culture that during that time became more and more distinct in China.

It is worth noting that the early rule of the Song dynasty (960–1279 AD) is considered to be the beginning of Jewish settlement in China.

A contemporary Chinese researcher Wangzhi Gao claims that according to the stone inscriptions, it can be assumed that the arrival of the Jews in Kaifeng during the times of the Song dynasty was very solemn.

¹ B.-A. Schillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*, Charles E. Tuttle, Tokyo 1992, p. 111.

The Chinese emperor decreed: “You have come to our Central Plain, then preserve your ancestral customs and settle yourself in Bianliang (Kaifeng)”².

It expressed Chinese openness and tolerance. The settlers were provided with convenient living conditions. In 1163 the first synagogue in Imperial China was erected in Kaifeng. A few years later, the Torah was translated into Chinese also in the city of Kaifeng. It is widely believed that the Torah had an impact on neo-Confucianism.

All researchers agree that everyday life of the Jews was free from hatred and violence. They could practice their ceremonies, religious rituals and preserve their identity and national distinctiveness. Wangzhi Gao says unambiguously: “Under such tolerant and peaceful circumstances, the cohesion of the Kaifeng Jewish community was gradually relaxed”³. He adds: “This should be one of the main reasons for the assimilation of the Kaifeng Jews”⁴.

According to the studies by Chinese and Jewish historians, it is concluded that at the beginning there were around 2000 Jews in Kaifeng. They dealt in weaving, pottery and making everyday tools.

China was conquered by Mongol tribes in the second half of the 1200s which contributed to the rise of a new dynasty – Yuan (1271–1368). This was the time when more and more Jews emigrated to China from Western and Central Asia. During the Yuan Dynasty’s reign, the position of the Jews was stronger and their status and importance increased thanks to their financial and administrative abilities that were appreciated by the Mongols.

However, the opponents of this view indicate that even though the Japanese Confucianists maintained lively contacts with the Buddhists and the representatives of the imperial court communicated with the Chinese cities, there are no written sources that will prove the encounters between the Jews and the Japanese. Jewish historical sources do not acknowledge the encounters in the remote past either. Ben-Ami Shillony brings up the fact that supports all above-mentioned arguments:

The Hebrew language does not contain a name for Japan, as it does for India (Hoddu) and China (Sin). Yappan, the modern Hebrew word for Japan, derives from German⁵.

² P. M. Needle (ed.), *East Gate of Kaifeng. A Jewish World Inside China*, China Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1992, p. 17.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ D. A. Kapner, S. Levine, *The Jews of Japan*, *Jerusalem Letter*, 425 (2000), p. 3, <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/jl425.htm>, accessed: 29 September 2015.

Studies on Jewish settlement in China were remarkably significant in the late 1800s. Many researches (Jewish and non-Jewish) relied on Chinese tradition and they tried to prove that the Japanese are descendants of Jewish tribes that went missing around 721 BC⁶. It is worth noting that Engelbert Kaempfer was the first to head Japanese-Jewish unions. He was a doctor of German descent; from 1690 to 1693 he stayed in Nagasaki and travelled, among others, to China and Korea. After coming back to Europe, Kaempfer wrote a book in which he described his observations.

He claimed that the components of Japanese culture such as language, religion and customs differ from Chinese or Korean culture. According to him, the dominant Japanese race does not derive from China or other parts of the continent but it bears a resemblance to the tribes from Babylon that came to Japan. It shaped the dominant Japanese race. Kaempfer wrote: "The Japanese must be of a tribe who emigrated directly from the area of Babylon"⁷.

The supporters of the hypothesis about the early encounters between the Japanese and the Jews (not that early though) are political scientists Daniel Ari Kapner and Stephen Levine who claim that "although Jewish travelers are known to have entered Japan with Portuguese and Dutch merchants as early as the sixteenth century"⁸, but they agree that: "Jews did not permanently settle in Japan until after Commodore Perry's arrival there in 1853"⁹. It should be assumed that even if there were encounters between the representatives of these two nations, there is no evidence of the interaction between these two distinct cultures.

Apart from the presented hypotheses and presumptions by the nineteenth century researchers, it is undisputedly considered that the Jews arrived in Japan in the second half of the 1800s. This time was characterized by the increased surge of the Western immigrants to the Japanese cities, including the Jews.

⁶ Read more on this topic: M. Hoborowicz, „Zaginione” plemię Izraela – japońskie źródła mitu [Israel's „Lost” Tribe – Japanese Roots of The Myth], *Euro-Facta 2*, vol. 2 of *Kultura a komunikacja*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2010, p. 193–210.

⁷ A. Kubo, *Did the Lost Tribes of Israel Come To Ancient Japan?*, [in:] *Israelites Come to Ancient Japan*, p. 1, <http://www2.biglobe.ne.jp/~remnant/isracam3.htm>, accessed: 29 September 2015.

⁸ D. A. Kapner, S. Levine, *The Jews of Japan...*

⁹ *Ibidem*.

The first Jewish settlers came to Yokohama after 1855. The Maks brothers came there in 1861 and soon they were joined by Raphael Shoyer, who was a merchant and a photographer. They published the first foreign-language newspaper in Japan – “Japan Express” – from 1865 to 1867. Shoyer contributed to the development of photography in Japan, which proved to be remarkably useful in this technologically and economically growing country.

Historical sources inform that around 50 Jewish families arrived in Yokohama until the end of the 1870s. Most emigrants came from England, Germany, France, Russia and from Polish areas under Russian and Austrian rule.

The 1870s and the 1880s were characterized by the increased surge of specialists and scientists of Jewish descent. They were invited by the Japanese government, so they could actively participate in the reconstruction and modernisation of the Land of the Rising Sun. Ludwig Riess and Albert Morse were among the newcomers. Riess was a historian who was the first to present Western scientific methods related to Japanese history studies and Albert Morse was a specialist in administrative law. From 1886 to 1890, altogether with a lawyer Herman Roester, they worked on a new Japanese constitution that was kept in the spirit of Prussian legislation.

Europe at the turn of the century was politically and economically strife-ridden. It encouraged anti-Semitic sentiments and led to the rise of aggression towards local Jewish communities. Anti-Semitism prevailed in Germany, Austria and Russia. Jew-baiting reverberated through the Russian Empire which led to the increase in immigration. Persecuted Jews moved to Japan, among others, in order to avoid repressions.

Nagasaki was another city that became the centre of the Jewish community life. More than 100 families settled there until the 1895. The Jewish community in Nagasaki developed dynamically and in 1894 the first synagogue was built there.

At the beginning of the 1900s the next centre was built in Kobe by the Jews from Russia and Germany. They came to Kobe from the Manchurian city of Harbin. The Jewish community in Kobe consisted of 30 000 people.

The Jews settled also in Tokyo, but this centre developed slower. According to Kapner and Levine, the reason was that “indeed, the Japanese capital only became an important center of Jewish life with the arrival of

the American Jewish servicemen”¹⁰. There were also other reasons. A great earthquake occurred in Tokyo in 1923, which caused significant material damage. Afterwards, most of the Jews moved to Kobe. We also have to take into consideration the fact that Kobe and Nagasaki provided more opportunities for trade than Tokyo, because they are port cities.

What Japanese-Jewish relations looked like?

In his book dedicated to Japanese-Jewish relations, Ben-Ami Shillony explains that the Jews were a minority among the foreigners coming from different European countries and they were not perceived by the Japanese as a culturally or religiously different community: “To the Japanese, Judaism was just another Christian sect (...)”¹¹. The Japanese were afraid of the Christian religion that was perceived as an *occult religion* (*yōkyō*). According to D. Goodman and M. Miyazawa, this was the reason for aggressive polemics and attacks from Jewish scientists and therefore it became “the basic pattern for many types of Japanese xenophobia in the modern period, including anti-Semitism”¹². “Japanese attitudes toward Jews have inevitably been conditioned by general Japanese attitudes toward foreigners”¹³.

And the attitude was hostile. We need to bear in mind that the opening of Japan in 1855 was forced, which led to the outburst of anti-Western sentiments. According to the researchers of modern Japanese history „(...) the degree of panic of the Japanese people was so enormous that we cannot imagine it now. Japan had no information of foreign countries. Foreigners had been recognized as barbarous enemies and animals (...)”¹⁴.

However, this attitude was changing. From hostility characteristic for the 1850s and the 1860s to the temporary fascination with Western culture and a renewed increase in anti-Western sentiments at the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s. The Japanese attitude towards the Jews was changing as well.

¹⁰ D. A. Kapner, S. Levine, *The Jews of Japan...*

¹¹ B.-A. Shillony, *The Jews...*, p. 132.

¹² D. G. Goodman, M. Masanori, *Jews in the Japanese Mind, The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000, p. 22.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

¹⁴ T. Osatake, *Kokusaihou yori Mitaru Bakumatsu Gaikou Monogatari [The Story of the Foreign Affairs in Japan at the End of Edo Era]*, Tokyo 1926, p. 1, [in:] Y. Susumu, *Civilization and International Law in Japan During The Meiji Era (1868–1912)*, *Hitotsubashi journal of law and politics*, no. 24 (1996), p. 1.

Contacts of the Japanese with the West contributed to the isolation of the Jews. They became a social group that was evoking extreme emotions. More and more social circles learned about the Jews from Western publications and literature that were translated into Japanese. At the end of the 1800s Japanese elites could watch Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* that was translated into Japanese and was considered to be an anti-Semitic play¹⁵.

The first years of the 1900s in Europe and the communist movement which resulted in the abolishment of tsardom and the seizure of power in Russia, sparked a new wave of accusations against the Jews. They were accused of plotting and trying to seize power over the world. Numerous publications of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*¹⁶ enhanced accusations not only in Russia but in other European countries as well. The reports of the so-called White Russians who escaped the October Revolution and forced their way through Siberia only confirmed the accusations. Their stories made an enormous impact on Japanese Army officers who stayed in Siberia from 1918 to 1922 during the so-called Siberian Intervention. B. A. Shillony claims that was the first time when the Japanese linked Jewish actions with communism. Thus anti-Semitism became synonymous with anti-communism.

In order to characterize Japanese anti-Semitism, B. A. Shillony divides it into two phases: the first one that grew up on the basis of anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiments with anti-Communist elements and was influenced by a pan-European attitude, and the second one that began in

¹⁵ According to D. G. Goodman, M. Miyazawa, *The Merchant of Venice* was first performed publicly in 1883. Read more on this topic: D. G. Goodman, M. Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese...*, p. 29–36.

¹⁶ *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a set of writings, brochures, notes and pieces of literary works that were written during several dozen years in the 1900s. At the end of the century they were put into book form that contained accusations against the Jews and revealed that the Jews were conspiring to dominate the world. *The Protocols* have been published regularly in Russia since 1897 in order to eradicate the Jews. The importance of the *Protocols* increased at the beginning of the 1900s when tsardom was abolished in Russia and the Bolshevik Revolution called also the Jewish revolution occurred in 1917. Even Lenin and his co-workers: Leon Trotsky and Yakov Sverdlov were accused of being Jews. *The Protocols* were a part of the Third Reich's propagandist arsenal that aimed at explaining the persecution of the Jews.

the 1930s after Hitler came to power and the cooperation between Germany and Japan was tightened¹⁷.

General Nobutaka Shiōden was the leading exponent of aggressive (as for Japan) anti-Semitism¹⁸. Likewise other supporters of the Jewish-threat theory, he was influenced by Hitler's conception that Jewish agitators try to subjugate Japan and introduce Jewish dictatorship in this country. In regard to Japan's actions in the international area and its relations with other countries involved with Asian politics, the passages of *Mein Kampf* that was often called the Nazi bible, made a deep impression on the exponents of anti-Semitism. Translated into Japanese passages asserted that apart from other misdeeds done by a Jew – who was considered to be an embodiment of evil – “a Jew incites other nations against Japan, as it was with Germany before”¹⁹. As is well known, Hitler's conception assumed that there is only one chosen race – privileged Aryan race. B. A. Shillony explains:

The Hitlerian conception depicting the Japanese as a lower race was not acceptable in Japan, but the theory of the power-hungry manipulators in Western capitals plotting against Japan was very popular²⁰.

Shimpei Goto²¹ was one of the experts on Jewish matters who represented the civil government centre. He was also a politician responsible for, among others, the colonial strategy in Taiwan and Manchuria from 1919 to 1935. Goto studied in Germany and after coming back to Japan,

¹⁷ B.-A. Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, p. 156–158.

¹⁸ Nobutaka Shiōden (1878–1962) graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1899. He served in the Imperial Guard and stationed in France as a military attaché from 1914 to 1918. At the beginning of the 1920s he served in the Special Operations Department of the Kwantung Army. During his stay in France he came into contact with the case of Captain Alfred Dreyfus – a French officer of Jewish background who was accused of spying for Prussians. Over the years, it was proved that the accusations were forged.

¹⁹ The passage of *Mein Kampf*: B.-A. Shillony, *Politics and Culture...*, p. 157.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ Shimpei Goto (1857–1929) – one of the leading figures in the Japan's social and political transformation that happened there after the so-called Meiji Restoration. A doctor by profession, performed political and national functions as an executive in the Hygiene Department in the Ministry of the Interior where he has been working since 1892 after his graduation in Germany. Consecutively, he became the Minister for Transport and Minister of Internal Affairs. It is to his great merit that he managed to implement the restoration plan of Tokyo after Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923.

he translated into Japanese many German papers that explained the complex nature of the Jewish threat. There were two aspects that contributed to this complexity:

1. The religious aspect – the Jews did not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and were responsible for his death, and hence they remained in opposition to the whole Christian world.
It should be stressed that, what seems to be obvious, the Japanese were completely indifferent to the religiously motivated European prejudices against the Jews. Because of the cultural distinctiveness they remained entirely indifferent to this issue. Politics posed a more serious problem, which was reflected in the subsequent governmental surveys concerning the Jewish matter.
2. The financial aspect – the European stereotype depicting the Jews as moneylenders who earned money at the cost of the inhabitants of the country where they lived was not justified in Japanese-Jewish relations. It might be even said that due to Jewish financial help, Japan could implement to some degree an imperial policy. The ideas of using Jewish bank capital were coming out over the 1920s and 1930s. The financial-economic aspect that dominated in the 1980s will be mentioned in the further part of the paper.

Apart from the representatives of the army or government, a circle of the Japanese publicists engaged in the polemics on the Jewish threat. They were specialists in Jewish matters and one of them was Kuroda Reiji. Reiji, influenced by the Nazi propaganda, called for taking up the fight with the Jewish threat. In December 1938 R. Kuroda who was not aware of the clear criteria related to the purity of the race defined by the Nazis wrote:

I realised that in order to pursue a unique – in cultural and national terms – destiny related to the purity of the race, Judaism must be attacked and destroyed in all its forms, both visible and not visible. In my opinion, this should be applied to Japan as well²².

The Jews: “They try to destroy the human civilisation using satanic methods, dancing diabolically in a wild delirium and erupting in gales of laughter”²³.

²² R. Kuroda, *Panama unga dai-gigoku monogatari: Yudaya-teki yarikuchi no kotekirei* [*The Scandal of the Panama Canal: A Prime Example of Jewish Perfidy*], *Kokusai himitsuryoku no kenkyu*, no. 5 (1938), p. 258.

²³ *Ibidem*.

Even though Kuroda referred to the European tradition, his views were not widespread and fell on deaf ears. The fundamental issue of Nazi anti-Semitism – the racial difference – did not find understanding among the Japanese because racism was not a constituent part of the Japanese political doctrine (Hakko – Ichiu). The Japanese political and intellectual elites understood well that the European racist conceptions placed the yellow race lower than the Aryan one. What seems to be the most important is the fact that anti-Semitism, regardless of the forms it took and how strongly it was stressed by the unfavourable to the Jews communities, did not exist on the basis of the Japanese ideology.

Anti-Semitic slogans preached by the Nazis at the beginning of the 1930s were considered to be the elements of power struggle by the Japanese society. In February 1933 Japan's official press organ – "Asashi shimbun" – added an editorial note dedicated to the situation in Germany. It was claimed that the threats towards the Jews were an example of pre-election populism that was also used by other political parties. It was believed that the Nazis would change their rhetoric after winning the elections because in practical terms, it seemed impossible that the Jewish intellectual and economic potential would be eradicated²⁴.

Disapproval of Nazi anti-Semitism was a dominant phenomenon. However, there were opinions that justified the German stance towards the Jews. In the comment to the Japanese edition of a book *Viertausend Jahre jüdische Geschichte* by a Hitlerian anthropologist Walter Brewitz that was published in 1935 in Berlin, Yonemoto Sanji wrote:

To some degree we all realize what the role of the Jews in the newest history is, especially if it comes to the French Revolution and the October Revolution, but if we take into account their betrayal, the fact that they stabbed the Germans in the back during the final gloomy days of the world war and the consequences of that, we understand Germany's policy towards them now²⁵.

²⁴ Both *Asashi shimbun* and other newspapers: "Central Review", "Japan Times" during the whole year 1933 added editorial notes and publications of the Japanese elite's leading representatives (Katsumoto Seiichiro, Kagawa Toyohiko, Minobe Ryokichi). Publications criticised German politics towards the Jews.

²⁵ W. Brewitz, *Yūdaya yonsen nenshi* [*Four Thousand Years of Jewish History*], Daidōshoin, Ōsaka 1943, trans. Yonemoto Sanji, p. 20. It is worth nothing that Yonemoto Sanji used Hitler's favourite phrase, repeated by the national socialists – "stab in the back" – describing actions of the socialists from the Provisional Government, especially

In view of the recent studies, the lack of references in the Japanese ideology results from many reasons. The average Japanese disapproved or even opposed to the Nazis' actions in Europe. It should not be forgotten that the Japanese considered the Jews to be wealthy and influential people who in the recent past contributed a lot to the development of Japan²⁶.

It does not change the fact that comparatively numerous and aggressive statements kept in the spirit of anti-Semitism by the press and army spokesmen were approved and applauded by the Japanese officer corps. Most of the anti-Semitic papers were used as teaching materials in the ideological training of the active list.

Japan's aggressive policies in Southeastern Asia posed a threat to Western powers that introduced economic sanctions against Japan and conducted various policies to prevent it from pursuing great-power politics. This led to the intensified anti-Semitic attacks. Russia and the United States were targeted by military and nationalistic clubs. Populist slogans of Jewish conspiracy and actions aiming at the submission of other countries were frequently recalled. Apart from the above-mentioned anti-Semitic manifestos, there were also statements such as:

They believe that they are entitled to intervention. We Japanese do not accept such rights. America has the Monroe Doctrine and we have our own doctrines. The whole West is in our sphere of influence and we must take control over them. China and Siberia to Irkutsk will be parts of the Japanese Empire ruled by our emperor, the only emperor with a divine power since he is a descendant of God and we Japanese are the children of God²⁷.

The above-mentioned General Shiōden, a leading specialist in Jewish matters, published his book in July 1941. Accusations described in the book were nothing new – the actions of Judeo-Masonry aimed at taking control over the world.

Friedrich Ebert's, that led to the end of the First World War and signing the Treaty of Versailles. As a result, German nation was covered with shame and humiliation. Read more on this topic: A. Bullock, *Hitler – A Study in Tyranny*, abridged ed., Harper Perennial, New York 1991.

²⁶ Read more on this topic: D. A. Kapner, S. Levine, *The Jews of Japan...*; J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction. Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1982; B.-A. Shillony, *The Jews...*, p. 143–150.

²⁷ H. Levine, *Kim Pan jest Panie Sugihara*, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa 2000, p. 78–79.

In September 1942 an article by Shiratori Tōshio, who was one of the Senior Officials in the Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was published in the Japanese journal "Yomiuri – hochi". He explained the reasons for the war with America:

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, which seeks to bring the world under one roof (...). The present war is therefore a struggle between the Japanese and the Jews²⁸.

In December 1942 an article was published in the Japanese newspaper "Tokyo Shimbun". In the article Roosevelt was accused of being the "running dog of Jewish imperialists, who form the general headquarters of world Judaism"²⁹.

Some of the representatives of the Japanese Zen sects took the floor on this matter. They tried to shift the issue onto ontological grounds.

Japanese Zen Master – Yasutuni Hakuun said in 1943:

We must realise that there are satanic teachings of the Jews that insist on equality in a phenomenal world. It would disturb the peace of our society and annihilate the power [of government]. But that is not all. Those diabolical plotters are in deep illusion and mistakenly believe that if it comes to the ontological human nature, there is a division into better and worse people. They fell into a trap of illusion, believing that they were chosen by God and [because of that] they are better people. As a result, they treacherously planned to take power and dominate over the world, which caused the chaos. It should be added that this is an extreme example of evil. Evil that results from superstitions and illusion³⁰.

In regard to the entire Japanese politics, during the whole period of the war, the anti-Semitic papers were being published, but no one, even the most ideologically obstinate enemy of the Jews – General Shiōden – called to kill them.

This in-depth study of knowledge concerning the Jewish threat and constantly repeated anti-Semitic slogans did not influence general Ja-

²⁸ B.-A. Shillony, *The Jews...*, p. 174.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ B. Victoria, *Zen na wojnie*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2005, p. 19.

pan's politics towards the Jews. Regardless of the active list or nationalistic communities' feeling and attitudes, almost from the beginning of the political transformation, the leading Japanese politicians and representatives of governmental clubs appreciated the Jews' position in politics and financial circles, because this enabled Japan to wage a war on China from 1894 to 1895 and launch military action against Russia from 1904 to 1905, which resulted in Japan's – even more propagandist than military – victory, proving that the Japanese can join other world powers. However, it is worth mentioning that the Japanese were very cautious in its admiration of Jewish achievements, which was caused by European stereotypes.

JAPANESE PLAN TO BUILD *GREAT ASIA* AND THE JEWS – „FUGU PLAN“

Fugu Plan was developed in governmental circles at the beginning of the 1930s. The aim was to establish Jewish settlements in Manchuria. According to the governmental plans, establishing major Jewish colonies would economically enhance this region due to Jewish bank capital. Moreover, they assumed that it would mute international criticism of Japanese actions in this region. Also worthy of note is the name of the whole plan – fugu – which refers to the Japanese cooking tradition. Fugu is the name of the highly toxic fish which has meat of a special taste. Preparing the dish requires remarkable cooking skills, because in case of a mistake, eating the fish would result in the death. This comparison – according to the Japanese – was relevant to the problem. Only by wisely exploiting Jewish potential, they would achieve success. Careless politics towards the Jews could result in serious political consequences. Even though Japanese governmental clubs admired Jewish merchant and financial skills, they realised that placing a large amount of Jewish people in the territories neighbouring with Russia and China would pose a serious threat because of the frequent accusations levelled against the Jews in Europe. They were accused of propagating communism and leading the Russian Revolution of 1917. Shimpei Goto, Yasue Norihiro and Inuzuka Koreshige were the representatives of the army who participated in the debates about the Jews. They raised more reservations than others and were the most cautious if it came to the plans of the Jewish involvement in making Japan a great power.

Taking into account Japan's fears, the question therefore arises as to what the reasons of such determination are.

For Japan the 1920s and the 1930s were the period of increased expansion in Eastern Asia. The plans were to conquer China, settle around 500 000 Japanese on the conquered areas of Inner Mongolia and use a significant bank capital in order to entirely subjugate the economy of Manchuria, which would enable Japan to build the Greater East Asia Co-Prospereity Sphere under Japan's leadership.

The above-mentioned Shimpei Goto described the vision of expansion:

If in 10 years' time as a result of the expansion of the South Manchuria Railway we convince 500 000 Japanese to immigrate to Manchuria, we will not be afraid of Russian power. The key to peace and war will be in our hands. And even if the Russians win a battle, we will have powerful foundations, which will allow us to keep our properties³¹.

The proclamation of Manchukuo as a new state on 18 February 1932, that in 1934 became the empire entirely subordinate to Japan, paved the way for the brave colonization ventures. However, these ambitious plans of conquest encountered difficulties. A special audience with the Emperor Hirohito took place in 1933. The representatives of the army and government presented the report on the settlement of Manchuria. The results were considered to be insufficient and it was stated that the reason, among others, was that "The Japanese are not popular in China (...). We are too sensitive to climate factors and that hinders the settlement attempts. Manchuria is too cold for us"³².

Another problem was caused by the USSR. According to Stalin's decision of 1930, the Jewish National District (Raion) was built in the Far East, close to the border with China that was renamed into the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in 1934.

In regard to Japan's military plans, Stalin's decision complicated the execution of basic political aims. But there was a hope – the Jews; Japan decided to incorporate them in their plan of conquering Manchuria.

³¹ H. Levine, *Kim Pan jest Panie Sugihara...*, p. 71.

³² S. Lewicki, *Pod znakiem chryzantemy*, Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, Warszawa 1987, p. 90. Read more on this topic: M. Tokayer, M. Swartz, *The Fugu Plan, The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II*, Peddington Press, New York 1979 and D. Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: The Jewish refugee community of Shanghai 1938-1945*, Yeshiva University Press, New York 1979, p. 9.

Colonel Yasue Norihiro³³ and Captain Inuzuka Koreshige³⁴ were experts on Jewish matters and among others, the ones that suggested exploiting Jewish power.

In 1930 they developed a secret plan of creating favourable conditions for settlement in Manchuria. According to the plan, from 18 000 to even 600 000 Jews could settle there.

The plan contained all details of the land use, including education, health care and the organization of the social and religious life.

Taking into account Norihiro and Koreshige's knowledge of the accusations that the Jews were plotting to take over the world, the Japanese government decided to supervise the settlers in order to eliminate potentially destabilizing elements that the communists could have appeared to be.

The developed project was called Fugu Plan.

The government in Tokyo was perfectly aware that apart from the propagandist overtone, the main aim of the Russians was to create a buffer zone between the Asian part of the USSR and Japan. Communities of Russian Jews were suspicious of Stalin's proposal, which is completely understandable if we look at it from the historical perspective.

Apart from the economic importance, Japanese plan had – as in Russia's case – propagandist importance as well. Japan was one of the few countries that agreed to shelter persecuted Jews. It was supposed to be

³³ N. Yasue (1886–1950) belonged to the inner circle of the so-called military experts on Jewish matters. From 1918 to 1922 he served in the Japanese armed forces stationed in Siberia and helped White Russians in fighting against the Bolshevik army. During his stay in Siberia, he encountered Russian officers who preached anti-Semitic slogans, accusing the Jews of preparing and carrying out the Russian Revolution of 1917. Norihiro Yasue got a copy of a brochure, popular among Russians, and titled *the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. After coming back to Japan in 1922, he translated *the Protocols* into Japanese. His specialisation in Jewish matters attracted the attention of the Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he was sent to Palestine in 1926. Yasue was supposed to examine Jewish preparations to take control over the world. He was one of the originators of *FUGU* plan and the leading specialist in the idea of settling the Jews on the areas conquered by Japan in China.

³⁴ Koreshige Inuzuka (1890–1965) was an officer in the Japanese navy (this formation had a ministry representative who was also a part of the government). While stationing off the Vladivostok coast and helping White Russians, altogether with Norihito Yasue, they got a copy of *the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* from Grigory Semyonov who was the General of the Russia's Imperial General Staff. In the 1930s Koreshige became a part of the circle of the military experts on Jewish matters. Their aim was to prepare a plan of settling the Jews in Manchuria and on the vast areas conquered by Japan in China.

a clear signal for the United States. Since the beginning of the 1930s the Americans have been more and more dissatisfied with the emerging power of Japan that pursued to change the established order in this part of the world and introduce the Japanese equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine in Southeastern Asia, which would lead to the impoverishment of America.

In the meantime, the Japanese worked on improving Fugu Plan. The initial discussion related to the implementation of the plan took place in 1934. It is worth noting that Marvin Tokayer, the Jewish community rabbi of the time, became acquainted with the plan of Jewish settlement in Manchuria. The plan was very popular with the Jews which can be best described by a keynote from the book *Fugu Plan* by M. Tokayer and M. Swartz – “Japan was prepared to offer exactly what the Jews needed most – a safe haven from the increasingly brutal anti-Semitism welling up against them in Europe”³⁵.

Debates and works on the final version of the plan gained momentum at the same time when the wave of violence against the Jews intensified in Europe. Thus more and more people wanted to leave countries where the threat was really serious.

The leading representatives of the Japanese government gathered at the Five Ministers' Conference in November 1938. Apart from the Prime Minister, the meeting was attended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the representatives of the Army and Navy and the Ministry of Treasury. The basic aim of the meeting was to develop mutual measures preceding the implementation of the plan.

Also worthy of note is a specific document written by the representatives of the army. What is so special about it is that even though the priority was to tighten relations with Germany, the persecutions of the Jews, especially racial, were not approved of. What is more, the below-presented document is inconsistent, which is characteristic for the Japanese political elites if it comes to the so-called “Jewish question”.

Here are the basic theses outlined in the document:

What concerns the Jews: The basic task of diplomacy nowadays is to tighten the relations with Germany and Italy. So, as a matter of principle we will avoid the Jews in our Empire because they are strongly rejected by our allies. But the complete rejection (as in Germany's case) is not in accordance with the idea of racial equality in which we have believed for

³⁵ M. Tokayer, M. Swartz, *The Fugu Plan...*, p. 3.

many years. But that is not all. It should be remembered that due to the preparations for the threatening war, we will absolutely need a foreign bank's capital for the economic expansion. We should avoid worsening relations with the United States at any price. It will have a negative impact on our situation. We should therefore treat the Jews according to the guidelines presented below:

- 1) The Jews living in Japan, Manchukuo and China will be treated decently – like other foreigners – and no special actions will be taken to reject them.
- 2) The Jews coming to Japan, Manchukuo and China will be treated decently – according to the general rules of supervising foreigners.
- 3) We will avoid taking special steps to invite the Jews to Japan, Manchukuo and China. This policy does not apply to the representatives of financial or industrial circles³⁶.

Eventually, the plan of settling the Jews in Manchuria was not implemented because of the international situation and the internal situation in Japan, mainly due to the prevalence of the pro-German faction's influences.

Analysing the reasons for the Fugu Plan's failure, M. Tokayer explained that in the final version of the plan he assumed, what was indicated earlier, incorporating Jewish specialists who escaped Nazi persecution, into the plan. He wrote:

The Japanese wanted to save the Jews from Hitler and involve them into the building of their (Japanese) global empire. It was addressed to the Jews who possessed the best skills that could help the Japanese in gaining the dominant position in a global trade. Fugu Plan assumed that the Jews would be moved to a poor country so they could conquer it. The Japanese could not settle their own people there, because they did not have a sufficient number of the experts in different fields, such as industry, production, international trade etc. Eventually, Fugu Plan was destroyed by the militarists³⁷.

As a matter of fact, the Japanese pro-German faction that consisted mostly of the high rank representatives of the army was very cautious if it came to the cooperation with the Jews, bearing in mind Japan's relations with the Third Reich. Hitler was annoyed by the fact that the Japanese

³⁶ H. Levine, *Kim Pan jest Panie Sugihara...*, p. 171.

³⁷ M. Tokayer, M. Swartz, *The Fugu Plan...*, Introduction.

were cautious in persecuting the Jews and this overshadowed the relations between the Axis powers. The analyse made by the Japanese Department of Information confirmed that in relation to the Jews:

Japan will take a neutral stance. It means pragmatic politics which excludes elements of criminal racism and allows Jewish influences and Jewish bank capital in the Japanese economy³⁸.

The Japanese remained entirely independent and that was particularly apparent at the beginning of 1940. Yosuke Matsuoka, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the time, represented the pro-German faction. Even though the Tripartite Pact was signed by Japan, Germany and Italy in September 1940, Matsuoka declared at the meeting with the group of Jewish industrialists in December 1940:

I am the man responsible for the alliance with Hitler, but nowhere have I promised that we would carry out his anti-Semitic policies in Japan. This is not simply my personal opinion, it is the opinion of Japan, and I have no compunction about announcing it to the world³⁹.

Japanese anti-Semitism in the first half of the 1800s took the verbal form and did not resemble anti-Semitism of the nations and countries allied with the Third Reich or anti-Semitism that was a constituent part of the German nationalism.

Brian Daizen Victoria – a Zen master and a philosopher – and a student of the founder of Kyodan Zen – Yosutani Roshi analysed the issue of the anti-Semitic attitudes in Japan in the first half of the 1900s. He wrote:

Japanese anti-Semitism has always been superficial. It has been a putrid flower with shallow roots, springing from a cultural aversion to the notions of individual freedom and social equality, rather than from the grotesque, age-old rationale that ignited European pogroms⁴⁰.

The defeat of Japan in 1945 put an end to the activities of the military and pro-German groupings, whose members were the authors of the most incisive anti-Semitic statements. For the next nearly 40 years, the anti-Semitic questions were not discussed in an open forum in Japan.

³⁸ H. Levine, *Kim Pan jest Panie Sugihara...*, p. 110.

³⁹ B.-A. Shillony, *The Jews...*, p. 184.

⁴⁰ B. Victoria, *Yosutani Roshi: The Hardest Koan, Tricycle*, "The Buddhist Review", vol. 9, no. 1 (1999), p. 67.

Japanese political and economic elites focused on the reconstruction of the Japan's economic potential that was destroyed by the warfare. The situation changed drastically in the 1980s.

Anti-semitic publications have started to come out since the half of the 1980s. Their authors were well-educated people who represented the financial and political circles.

The most renowned and widely-read were among others: Uno Masami – President of Institute of Studies of Middle East Problems⁴¹, Saito Aisaburo – member of parliament, a director of the Liberal Democratic party's financial affairs division, and a member of the Nakasome faction, Fujita Den – head of McDonald's Japan (50% owned by the American parent)⁴².

Uno Masami became very popular as an author of two books dedicated to the Jewish themes: *Yudaya ga Wakaru to Nihon ga Miete Kuru* [Japan with Understanding of Jewish Power or To Understand the Jews is to Understand the Japan] and *Yudaya ga Wakaru to Sekai ga Miete Kuru* [World with Understanding of Jewish Power or To Understand the Jews is to Understand the World], Saito Aisaburo released a book titled: *Sekai Ugokasu Yudaya – Pawaa no Himitsu* [Secret of Jewish Power to Control the World], and the last of the mentioned authors – Fujita Den wrote a book: *Yudaya – ryu Kanemochi Rappa no Fukikata* [Jewish Way of Blowing Millionaire's Bugle].

It should be added that even though these authors were the most recognizable and the contents of their books were the basis of many discussions and polemics, they were not the only ones who spoke out on the Jewish-threat theory.

Among the less known authors were: Yajima Kinji – *Yudaya purotokōru chō-urayomi-jutsu* [Understanding of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion], Itagaki Hidenori – *Yudaya ga Nerai – Kabu Mokeru* [Make money with Stocks the Jews Aim], Ueda Kazuo – *Yudaya – jin* [The Jews], Yamakage Motohisa – *Yudaya no Sekai Shihai Senryaku* [Jewish Plan for Conquest of the World], Shioden Nobukata – *Yudaya Shisoo Oyobi Undo* [Jewish Thought and Its Effect].

The question is: what was or what could have been the reason for the anti-Semitic propaganda in Japan? The reason lies in the crisis of Japan's

⁴¹ Petite Saison Seibu – April 1987 – Advertisement for M. Uno's lecture of June 3, 1987 at Hotel Okura.

⁴² L. Martineau, *Bizarre Bestsellers*, "The Economist", May 24, 1987.

economy. Lisa Martineau, a publicist of “The Guardian”, writes at the beginning of the article *Jewish plot to destroy Japan* that was published in March 1987: Jewish conspiracy theories are alive and well and living in Japan. Over the past few months about a dozen books have been published which purport to show an international Jewish conspiracy in which Jews will take over the world – and destroy Japan. Last year, Japan had its worst economic performance for 12 years. All the books link this rougher economic climate (caused mostly by the yen’s rise against the dollar) to a conspiracy by international Jewish capital in which American Jews predominate „America is a Jewish nation”⁴³.

The article published in April’s edition of the “Mainichi Daily News” was in the same tone: Two anti-Semitic books by a Japanese author who blames his nation’s economic woes on a worldwide Jewish conspiracy have sold 650 000 copies in recent months. Masami Uno contends in two best-selling books that a Jewish conspiracy explains the yen’s surge against the dollar, rising unemployment and growing American demands for trade laws to reduce Japanese imports⁴⁴.

Uno Masami in his book *Yudaya ga Wakaru to Sekai ga Miete Kuru* [World with Understanding of Jewish Power or To Understand the Jews is to Understand the World] leaves no doubt what his aim is. The names of the consecutive chapters introduce some kind of systematics that helps the reader in understanding the issue of the problem: Chapter I – Expensive Yen, Cheap Dollar is Designet By Secret Jewish Power, Chapter III – The US is a Jewish Country, Chapter IV – Japan – US Relation is Japan-Jew Relation, Chapter V – Jews Made Peace With China Again, Chapter VI – Japan, 1990’s Scapegoat⁴⁵.

Anti-Semitic books provoked a series of discussions in Japan and outside the country’s borders. The representatives of the politics and science, the publicists and critics participated in these discussions.

The above-mentioned publication from “Mainichi Daily News” refers to the words of Masao Kunihiro, a professor at Tokyo’s Sophia University, who stated: the popularity of Uno’s books may be „another sign of growing Japanese resentment toward America over recent trade wrangles (...). The resentment finds an immediate outlet in the Jews (...). Of course not every

⁴³ L. Martineau, *Jewish Plot to Destroy Japan*, “The Guardian”, March 18, 1987.

⁴⁴ *Author Says Japan Woes a Jewish Conspiracy*, “Mainichi Daily News”, April 1, 1987.

⁴⁵ U. Masami, *Yudaya ga Wakaru to Sekai ga Miete Kuru*, “Tokuma Shoten”, 1986.

American is of Jewish descent, but many Japanese erroneously associate Jews with America”⁴⁶.

The argument brought up in many discussions was: Japan is a country with practically no Jews⁴⁷.

The denial of Uno Masami did not stop the criticism and protests from the representatives of Jewish and American political and diplomatic clubs. Great emotions that accompanied an undoubted editorial success of another anti-Semitic books and protests of the members of the U.S. Congress forced the Japanese government to take a stance.

In the interview that was published in the New York Times in March 1987, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone answered the question related to the anti-Semitic sentiments in Japan:

(...) The freedom of thought and expression is guaranteed as a fundamental human right by the Japanese Constitution. Government cannot comment on each writing, but the mentioned publications don't represent our national morality. Also, they don't represent a view of our government. Japanese government and Japanese people never agree with any racism, racial discrimination, and racial or religious prejudice. The attitude will never be changed⁴⁸.

The opinion of the Western representative was important among the confusion caused by the anti-Semitic books and the related protests. The above-quoted correspondent from Tokyo, Lisa Martineau in her article titled *Bizarre bestsellers* that was published in May 1987 wrote:

The Japanese, it should be said, are not anti-Semitic. During the Second World War the Nazis tried to persuade them to kill the Jews captured in conquered Manchuria: they refused. In Hiroshima, there is a monument to the victims of the Holocaust⁴⁹.

Taking into account the Prime Minister Nakasone's firm stance on the so-called Japanese anti-Semitism and Martineau's comments, the

⁴⁶ *Author Says Japan Woes...*

⁴⁷ K. Shuichi, *Anti-Semitism in Japan. A Trend Towards Race Prejudice Surfaces Illogical Conspiracy Theory*, "Asahi Shimbun", June 15, 1987.

⁴⁸ *Prime Minister Nakasone's Reply to an Interview about Anti-Semitism in Japan*, "New York Times", March 12, 1987.

⁴⁹ L. Martineau, *Bizarre Bestsellers...*

question arises: why Uno Masami and other authors' books were so successful (it was estimated that Uno Masami's books were sold in around one million copies)?

The above-quoted professor Masao Kunihiro attempted to answer this question: Kunihiro called Uno's premises nonsense, but noted that some Japanese tend to „accept that kind of simplistic and overly naive explanation (...). This is not the first time that a ridiculous book has sold well here (...). It's simply another sign of the terrible intellectual immaturity of the Japanese reading public"⁵⁰.

Even though this spontaneous outburst of anti-Semitic sentiments in Japan in the 1980s did not last long, a number of publications, loanwords from the rich European literary output and scope of social impact will be the subject of different studies and publications.

From the beginning, Japanese suspicion of the Jews was being formed by the Western patterns – the European ones. Numerous Japanese delegations have been visiting Europe since the half of the 1800s. They gathered information on how modern Western societies work and at nearly every step they encountered signs of the animosity or even hostility towards the Jews. Numerous publications or literary works (*The Merchant of Venice*) consolidated stereotypes, crediting the Jews with the worst traits – and accusing them of trying to take over the world. These evil deeds of the Jews led to the persecutions and pogroms.

Japanese anti-Semitism of the turn of the 1800s and the 1900s century and of the 1980s combines – likewise in Europe – the common element – the reaction for cultural and economic threat. In each case the Japanese referred to the rich European bibliography, copying mechanisms that were used against the Jews in Europe over the centuries. Japanese version of anti-Semitism, what was indicated earlier, has never gone beyond the verbal framework and has never taken the form of ideology – whether religious or political, aiming at depriving the Jews of their lives or properties.

⁵⁰ *Author Says Japan Woes...*

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