

THE JAPANESE INTERNMENT OF JEWS IN WARTIME INDONESIA AND ITS CAUSES

It was only in the early 20th century that the Jews living in the Dutch East Indies began to form a substantial community. On the eve of the Pacific War it comprised a few thousand members, mostly of Dutch origin, and several hundred 'Baghdadis' as well as refugees escaping Nazi persecution in Europe. The Japanese occupation of the archipelago in early 1942 triggered the disintegration of the community. Within a few months the greater part of the Jewish community was interned, together with their fellow gentiles, for being Dutch civilians. In the latter half of 1943, however, most of the Jews who remained outside the camps were also detained, now for being Jews. This study offers the first detailed account of the fate of the community during the war together with an analysis of the abrupt Japanese change in attitude in 1943. All in all, unique circumstances led to this Japanese persecution: German pressure for harsher measures; determination to mobilise local support using, inter alia, an anti-Semitic campaign; and the earlier experience of the Java Kempeitai with a Jewish minority. As a result, the Jews of Indonesia experienced harsher treatment than that of any other Jewish community in the Asian territories under Japanese occupation.

Jews lived for centuries in the Indonesian archipelago, mainly in Java, but until the early 20th century they did not form a genuine community. Growing rapidly thereafter, on the eve of the Pacific War (1941–1945), the community comprised nearly 3,000 members, the majority of them Europeans of Dutch nationality and refugees fleeing Nazi persecution, and some of Iraqi origin who had arrived in the colony several decades earlier and were concentrated in Surabaya (Hadler 2004; see Figure 1). In

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FIGURE 1 A bar mitzvah ceremony in pre-war Surabaya at the home of the Mussry family attended by members of European and Iraqi Jewish groups in the town. Photo: courtesy of Dr Eli Dwek.

early 1942, as the winds of war were sweeping the seemingly tranquil shores of the Dutch East Indies, the Jews of the colony, among many others, encountered for the first time the military might of the empire of Japan. Soon after their takeover of the archipelago, the Japanese forces interned most Europeans, including many members of the Jewish community, in an effort to topple the remnants of Dutch colonial heritage. Asia, wartime Japan preached, was a place for Asians, and here, like elsewhere in their expanding empire, the occupiers did not have a place for non-Asians.

Although a minor issue in the great drama that engulfed the archipelago in the 1940s, the Japanese treatment of the Jews of Indonesia deserves elaboration. It has much to tell us not only about the racial worldview of Imperial Japan in general and its attitude to colonial subjects in Southeast Asia in particular, but also about the wartime Japanese-German nexus in this region. If the Jews of this colony were an undistinguished element of the general population, be they Europeans or natives, there would be little meaning in examining, separately, their wartime experience. This, however, is not the case since most of the Jewish non-combatants, in contrast to the native population, were incarcerated in camps, where many of them were later segregated from their fellow gentile Europeans. Thus, the crux of this study is to determine the extent to which their Jewishness affected their experience and how unique it was. This question can be divided into two. First, what were the characteristics of the treatment local Jews were meted out; how different was it from the treatment meted out to non-Jewish groups under similar conditions; and what were the motives for this divergent treatment? And second, were the Jews of Indonesia treated differently from Jews under similar conditions elsewhere in the Japanese empire, and, if yes, for what reasons?

The facts regarding the internment of the Jews in wartime Indonesia are fairly straightforward. During the first year of occupation, the Japanese authorities incarcerated all the western prisoners of war (POWs) captured in the archipelago and then gradually began to arrest the primary ethnic segments of the colonial society that could hamper their rule. Realising the logistic constraints of large-scale incarceration but also the acute need to maintain, at least temporarily, much of the personnel of the former colonial administration, the Japanese sought initially to purge only the most high-risk segments of the population who had ruled the colony. For this reason, their policy focused, first and foremost, on interning Dutch and Eurasian combatants, followed by Dutch male non-combatants, and then their family members (de Jong 2002: 47–144). In principle, there was nothing unique about these measures, either those against combatants or even civilians, since the Dutch authorities too had taken very similar precautions in the colony and arrested the entire Japanese population on 8 December 1941, the day the Netherlands declared war on Japan. So had the United States when in early 1942 it interned close to 120,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese residing on the West Coast of the United States and, to a lesser extent also in Hawaii. In reality, however, the Japanese treatment of POWs and interned civilians was drastically different from that of the Dutch or the Americans, resulting in far higher mortality rates (Kowner 2009: 92, 109).

The Japanese authorities began to sort the local population shortly after the Dutch colonial regime had capitulated. Initially, they detained the personnel of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger; KNIL) and the Royal Dutch Navy, while leaving the non-combatants unharmed. Shortly later, when they released native Indonesian POWs, Jewish soldiers remained incarcerated since they were considered European Dutch. The main criterion for detention was the level of Europeanness, although loyalty to the previous regime was also crucial. The colonial authorities considered Jews of Dutch origin fully Europeans, although they sought in the census of 1930 to determine their number separately. Many of the Jews, however, concealed their origin before and during the census, perhaps for fear of discrimination (e.g. Cohen 1925: 211). Still, Jews of Iraqi origin were a completely separate category for the authorities: they were non-European residents similar to the Arabs and Armenians living in the colony. In those definitions, the Japanese authorities could easily rely on local classifications of race and ethnicity formed by the Dutch during centuries of colonial rule, as well as on their perceptions of loyalty and warlikeness of various groups.¹ Initially, at least, the Japanese followed those ethnic guidelines closely. As a result, Dutch and Dutch Eurasian soldiers were incarcerated with non-Muslim soldiers from Ambon and Manado. In the camps, nonetheless, the Japanese distinguished between 'full-blood' and 'mixed-blood' Dutch, and in Java each category was placed in separate sections of the same camp or in different camps (Touwen-Bouwisma 1997: 37). In the same vein, Jews who served in either the Army or the Navy were incarcerated together with their non-Jewish Dutch comrades, unless they had one native parent.

The initial non-discriminatory attitude to the local Jews continued when the order to arrest all non-combatant Dutch males between the ages of 17 and 60 was first implemented in Batavia on 17 May 1942. However, facing severe logistical problems as to how to intern so many civilians in a short time, the Japanese authorities revised

¹For Dutch classification, see Bosma and Raben (2008: 160–1, 215–19); Blakely (1993: 245).

slightly the criterion for detention, so in the following months it centred on the place of birth and nationality, rather than merely on the level of Europeaness. With this revised criterion at hand, the new rulers began to arrest all Dutch, regardless of sex and age, born in Europe (Ind. *Belanda totok*), including a few European-born Eurasians, and citizens of other allied nations, British and Americans in particular. At the same time, they left free, especially in Java, all those Dutch civilians born in the colony – primarily Eurasians (Ind. *Belanda indo*) but, occasionally, also some full-blood Europeans as well as ‘Foreign Orientals’, such as the Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and Armenians. Altogether, by late 1942 the Japanese interned throughout the archipelago close to 100,000 Dutch civilians (including 30,500 women and 33,700 children). They were mostly ‘full-blood’ ones but also a small number of Eurasians belonging to the higher classes of the colony, and other Allied citizens, while leaving outside the camps about 220,000 Dutch, nearly all of whom were Eurasians (de Jong 2002: 421, 510).

As with the Jewish combatant detainees earlier, non-combatant Jews of the colony were not treated initially as a distinct ethnic or religious group. Those born in the Netherlands and those who held other Allied citizenship were arrested indistinguishably from non-Jews with similar conditions. By contrast, the Japanese left unharmed the Iraqi Jews, like other ‘Foreign Orientals’; Jews coming from the Axis nations (Germany, Italy, and Romania) like their non-Jewish compatriots; Jews of non-belligerent nations and neutral nations (e.g., Switzerland); and, even, a number of Dutch Jews who were fortunate to be born in Indonesia or demonstrated sufficient Asian roots. On the whole, during the first year and a half of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia more than half of the Jewish members of the local community were detained, either as soldiers or as non-combatant Dutch. Their Jewishness, however, was by no means the reason for their tribulation.

This unbiased treatment, so to speak, did not last long. In the latter half of 1943 the Japanese policy vis-à-vis the local Jews changed dramatically. The most salient aspect of it was the arrest of the Jews who remained outside the camps, regardless of their origin and nationality, solely for being Jews. This measure was without a parallel action against non-Jews and it was accompanied by gradual segregation of many of the Jews already detained. Critically, it occurred only in Indonesia. Those arrested now belonged to ethnic and national categories that were left unharmed elsewhere in the Japanese empire, notably in Shanghai and Harbin, the two largest single urban communities in East Asia. Despite its uniqueness, this new discriminatory policy vis-à-vis Jews, for being Jews, did not emerge without a warning. It was preceded by a minor anti-Semitic campaign, which the Japanese authorities had promoted in Java. Its harbinger was Major (and, later, Lieutenant Colonel) Murase Mitsuo (1908–1949), the deputy head of the Sixteenth Army *Kempeitai* (military police of the Imperial Japanese Army) and the chief of its Tokkō (acronym for *Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu*, Special Higher Police) unit. His anti-Semitic speech in front of propaganda officials in Batavia on 4 April 1943 was echoed, during the same month, by pronouncements of similar content in the local Indonesian press (Benda 1958: 255, 272; Kwartanada 2009).

Several historians have speculated on the sources of the Japanese sudden turn against the Jews in Indonesia. Focusing on the Japanese anti-Semitic campaign rather than on the internment of the Jews, Didi Kwartanada (2009), for example, proposed insightfully several ‘actors’ in the modified Japanese policy in 1943. The first of them were the Indonesians. From 1943 onwards a few Indonesians writers, primarily Dr Gerungan Saul Samuel Yacob Ratulangji (1890–1949) and Sukarjo Wiryopranoto (1903–1962),

followed the Japanese lead and produced anti-Semitic materials (Klinken 2003: 222). It remains questionable, however, whether the Japanese anti-Semitic appeal to the indigenous and mostly Muslim population of the archipelago affected the local Jews. While pre-modern Indonesian literature had occasionally portrayed Jews in a negative light (see Ricci's article in this issue), it was only during this very period that a substantial burst of indigenously anti-Semitic literature emerged. Hence, it is obvious that the Japanese campaign could not rely on local sources but rather stimulated them. If any, indigenous anti-Semitism was confined to very limited segments of the population and at any rate it does not explain the initial Japanese unbiased treatment of Jews. Even more important, the emergence of Indonesian anti-Semitic writings in 1943, like its earlier antecedents, was a typical case of 'anti-Semitism without Jews'; it did not target the local Jewish population.

Westerners, mainly subjects of neutral countries, remaining unconfined in wartime Indonesia, Kwartanada (2009) contends, were a second 'actor' in the Japanese campaign. Some of them took part in Japanese propaganda broadcasts, but obviously they were too few and negligible politically to be a target audience or a trigger for the campaign. This was not the case in the pre-war times, as in the 1930s an active right wing and anti-Semitic party, De Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (NSB), was fairly popular among the Europeans in the colony. Within less than two years from its establishment in late 1933, it reached its zenith with about 4,500 members, almost half of them holding German citizenship (de Jong 2002: 24). It was the political situation in Europe, the rise of nationalism among the Muslim population and the economic crisis in the Dutch East Indies that contributed to the rising popularity of the party. But this popularity was short-lived and by the end of 1939 its membership dwindled to 1,708, less than half at its peak. Finally, with the outbreak of the war in Europe, the Dutch authorities in Indonesia abolished the party and four months later began to act against Nazi members, Germans in particular, detaining 19 of them (McKale 1977: 304–5). If this measure was not enough, two years later, with the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, the Dutch deported most of those holding German nationality, primarily to India and Australia (Jong 2002: 27, 107, 497n). It was not the end of the plight of NSB members in Indonesia, since those who stayed in the colony were soon interned by the Japanese for being Dutch. Behind fences, they were unlikely to serve as a target audience for an anti-Semitic campaign. The authorities regarded them and their Dutch brethren as an unwanted element and refrained from coaxing them into cooperation.

So what else could set the anti-Semitic campaign in motion? The key, it seems, is found back in Japan. During the war the Japanese public witnessed an unprecedented wave of anti-Semitic writings, partly under German influence, but mostly due to local needs (Shillony 1981: 156–71; Goodman and Miyazawa 1995: 106–34). In fact, it was only in response to German suggestions in 1938, when the Army's pressure for a military alliance with Nazi Germany turned into a full blown campaign (Bix 2000: 368). While army officers had been exposed to anti-Semitic propaganda during the Siberian Intervention of 1918–1922, by the late 1930s some of them were producing it independently. Still, neither then nor towards the end of the war did any of the most vehement anti-Semitic writings refer to the Jews living in Japanese territories. Military propagandists in Indonesia were no different and none of their anti-Semitic statements in 1943 or during their second campaign in 1944 referred to the local community (see Benda et al. 1965: 97–100, 107–9, 112–14). For most of them, Jews

were an almost abstract and certainly distant entity. So remote were the evil Jews (usually referred to indirectly as ‘Jewish economics’, ‘Jewish conspiracy’, or at most ‘Jewish scholars’) that, usually, there was little correlation throughout the empire between adherence to anti-Semitic theories and policies against local Jews.

The writings of Japanese ‘experts’ on Jewish issues, such as Captain Inuzuka Korshige (1890–1965), bear testimony to the ‘remoteness’ of his subject matter. Serving as the head of the Japanese Imperial Navy’s Advisory Bureau on Jewish Affairs in Shanghai from 1939 to 1942, this naval officer produced some of the most virulent anti-Semitic tracts ever written by a Japanese (Kranzler 1976: 170–3; Shillony 1981: 168–70; Goodman and Miyazawa 1995: 124–32). His writings, however, had little relevance to the local Jewish community. After all, imaginary international Jews were a threat to Japan’s mission but the refugees he encountered were nothing but a miserable lot. For Inuzuka, like other officials of his ilk, German-style persecution of Jews seemed at odds with his likely moral distaste for the Nazi racial worldview (Kranzler 1976: 326). This sentiment was shared by many Japanese, military personnel and diplomats alike. Despite German assurances, they were wary of Nazi racial policy since essentially it also considered the Japanese people, alongside other ‘Mongolians’ as inferior.² On top of that, actual persecution of Jews in East Asia was incompatible with Inuzuka’s practical perspective of utilising the Jews as well as his fear of any measures that would be used by enemy propagandists against Japan (Krebs 2004a: 120).

German pressure as a trigger for a differential policy

The anti-Semitic campaign in occupied Indonesia in 1943–1944 though important in its own right was not necessarily the cause for the discriminatory detention of the Jews in 1943 and the segregation of some of those already incarcerated. Indonesia, it should be emphasised, was not the only site in the Japanese empire of anti-Semitic propaganda. Mainland Japan witnessed at the very same period far more elaborate bursts of anti-Semitic campaigns, but it did not lead to any evident harm for the few Jews living in Japan or the larger communities of Jews living in Manchuria under Japanese rule for nearly 12 years. Thus, the search for a trigger for the policy change in Indonesia should focus on policy and actual treatment rather than on propaganda.

The most plausible single trigger was German pressure. This notion is not new but it has never been examined thoroughly. The Dutch historians Jacob Presser (1965 I: 452) and Louis de Jong (1985 II: 853; 2002: 498), for example, suggested the policy change emerged in April 1943 around the time of a visit of a high-ranking German official while ‘actual regulations’ were imposed following another official visit in July. Others, such as Jan Bouwer (1988: 173–4) and Kwartanada (2009) also blamed Berlin for instigating the anti-Semitic campaign. Neither of them, however, seems aware of the background and motives of the German visits, nor did they delve into Japanese motives. They merely pointed out the causality between the German visits and pressure, and the Japanese measures against the Jews. There were, however, special circumstances in occupied

²On the ambivalent view of Japan in Nazi Germany, see Furuya (1995); Maltarich (2005); Iikura (2006).

Indonesia that mediated between this pressure and actual policy vis-à-vis the Jews; and therefore, they ought to be elucidated further.

Like Japanese anti-Semitism, German pressure was not unique to Indonesia. During the entire course of the war, Nazi Germany urged Japan to treat the Jews in all of its territories in a harsher manner and preferably eliminate them. Its pressure was exercised in two major ways: first, in a diplomatic manner, the government in Tokyo was directly urged to treat all the Jews in its empire harshly, and second, in the form of local persuasion and incitements against Jews, much of it within the German expatriate community in selected urban centres (e.g. Kranzler 1976: 324–35; Freyeisen, 2000: 356–67). The ‘Jewish problem’, nonetheless, was not the first priority of German representatives stationed in the Japanese empire, since concerns over economic and military issues always prevailed. Indonesia was no exception. During the first half of 1943 there was an unusually intensive German activity in the colony, which included visits of high-ranking officials to Batavia and negotiations over the exploitation and shipping of local resources. Among the visitors were the consul-general in Mukden, Ernest Karl Ramm, the consul in Kobe H. Bräunert, and the economic envoy Dr Helmuth Wohlthat (van Velden 1963: 316; Presser 1965: I, 451; Jong 1985: II, 853; Jong 2002: 498).³ The conjunction of the German visits with the subsequent Japanese anti-Jewish measures is undeniable, but how were they linked?

Of all the German visitors in 1943, the *Staatsrat* (state councilor) Wohlthat (1893–1973) was not only the highest ranking, but also the one most associated with the Jewish question. A graduate of Columbia University, this versatile man had earlier served as director of Hermann Göring’s four-year plan and dealt, inter alia, with programmes to resettle German Jews (notably the Madagascar Plan) and utilise their property (Browning 2004: 64, 81–9; Stallbaumer 1999: 12–13). As Göring’s right-hand, Wohlthat also assisted in confiscating (‘Nazifying’) the Dutch banking system following the takeover of the Netherlands (*Time*, 1940) and was subsequently appointed *kommissar* of the Netherlands Bank (Presser, 1965 II: 168). A year later his activities intersected for the first time with Japan, as Tokyo asked Berlin for technological aid. The Germans were not blind to this sudden opportunity to press for the long coveted preferential status in China. In April 1941 Wohlthat arrived in Tokyo as the head of Berlin’s economic delegation (‘The Wohlthat mission’). He was attached to the local embassy and, in the wake of the attack on the Soviet Union two months later, was forced to stay in the Japanese capital until the end of the war. As the chief economic negotiator (*Wirtschaftssachverständiger*) in the Japanese empire, he was in charge of promoting the commercial status of the Third Reich in Greater East Asia and gaining access to essential raw materials found in the region (Martin 1995: 277).

From a German viewpoint, the essence of the alliance with Japan, at least during the first three years of the war in Europe, was more economic than military. The signing of the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Japan, and Italy on 27 September 1940 did not diminish mutual suspicions in the tense relations between Tokyo and Berlin. With the German conquest of the Netherlands and France and, even more so, after the Japanese takeover of Southeast Asia almost two years later, both countries were grappling with

³Wohlthat, however, noted in a report written at the end of the war that he had visited the East Indies in spring 1944 (Politischen Archiv, Folder 27918, band 10, page 2). By all likelihood, the German envoy sent from Tokyo in April 1943 was Wohlthat’s assistant, SS-Untersturmführer Werner Kölln (Bundesarchiv, microfiches NS19/1812).

various economic discords, especially over their respective rights to exploit the natural resources of the occupied European colonies. Back in Europe, Germany controlled the rulers of some of those colonies, but by early 1942, when Japan took over the colonies' reins, the diminishing ties between the conquered powers and their colonies were abruptly cut off. Now, even the semi-independent colonial administrators of the Dutch East Indies were put behind bars. With their fall, the colony, and especially its resources, became one of the prime bones of contention between the Axis powers. The archipelago was rich in natural resources such as oil, rubber, bauxite, and tungsten – all highly important to the war efforts of Japan and to a lesser extent, also of Germany. Among the strategic commodities that the Wohlthat mission was interested in, natural rubber was the most urgent. It was essential for the production of tyres, gas masks, and countless other military products, and it could not be obtained in Europe. On the eve of the war in Europe, 37% of the world rubber export came from the Dutch East Indies and the entire region of Southeast Asia, all now in Japanese hands, provided about 85% of the global consumption (Kratoska 1997: 223, 225). At the time Germany was able to produce synthetic rubber, but the production did not meet its entire military needs, let alone that natural rubber remained an important material in producing the synthetic admixture (Jeffreys 2008: 202–6, 216–20).

While the occupation of much of Western Europe in 1940 provided Germany with huge stockpiles of natural rubber they could only solve its acute shortage temporarily. Fortunately for the Axis powers, Dutch East Indies and Indochina – both leading exporters of natural rubber – fell in July 1941 and early 1942, respectively, into Japanese hands. That year, indeed, Germany had access to natural rubber, although shipping it safely to Europe grew extremely difficult. Still, at stake was more than rubber, and as both parties regarded the exploitation of Southeast Asia as a major issue in their long-term plans, German-Japanese negotiations over the colonial resources of the region took far longer than initially expected (Presseisen 1958: 222–49). The fact that the relations between the two allies were far from firm did not ease the negotiations. Only a few years earlier, at the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Germany had served as a major weapon supplier of Nationalist China (Drechsler 1964: 13, 54), and it took another half year before it put an end, at least officially, to its pro-China policy (Bloch 1992: 344). The Tripartite Pact in 1940 and Japan's entry into the war in December 1941 strengthened the German-Japanese relations, but Tokyo remained unswerving in its determination to prevent Berlin from obtaining free access to Southeast Asia's raw materials and the vast Chinese market.

On 20 January 1943, however, this policy changed course, when the two nations consolidated their economic relations in a long-awaited agreement entitled *Abkommens über wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit* [Agreement on Economic Cooperation] (Schwind 1943: 272). Although it eventually had minor impact on the meagre economic cooperation between the two nations, the agreement was unquestionably Wohlthat's greatest achievement during his long sojourn in Japan. It finally secured Germany a preferential treatment in Greater East Asia while confirming Japan's economic hegemony over the European colonies it occupied (Martin 1969: 152–71). The German-Japanese agreement also facilitated greater military cooperation between the two allies. During the following months Germany began to transfer to Japan various samples of its advanced technology, which the latter needed urgently for its own survival, as well as several experts who offered technical assistance, especially in implementing mass production of weaponry (Pauer 1999: 59–60).

Among other things, Hitler presented Japan with two of the *Kriegsmarine's* latest submarines in the hope that Japan could accelerate its submarine warfare and tip the war in favour of the Axis powers (Martin 1995: 277–8). In June 1943 Penang became operational as a naval base for German submarines hunting for Allied shipping in the Indian Ocean. The first submarine arrived in mid July and until the end of the war in Europe, almost two years later, German submarines also frequented Japanese naval bases in Batavia, Surabaya, and Singapore (Krug et al. 2001: xxi, 62).

However, it was not until August 1943, that another outstanding economic dispute between the two nations was finally resolved with Wohlthat's assistance. This concerned the compensation Japan was to pay to IG Farben, Germany's chemical industry conglomerate and its exclusive producer of synthetic rubber, for disclosing new technical data on the production of synthetic oil (Meskill 1966: 104, 170–1). Thereafter, the flow of raw materials to Germany and military technology to Japan became relatively smooth, although losses en route grew alarmingly large. On 16 September, the first of Hitler's two submarines arrived in Japan with a German crew and was handed over to the Imperial Japanese Navy (Krug et al. 2001: 186). Nine days later, the Imperial General Headquarters-Government Liaison Conference decided, partly due to Wohlthat's involvement since 1941, to modify its previous policy of systematically ousting German trade from its occupied territories. Japan agreed also to compensate German firms for the losses incurred in its onslaught on Southeast Asia (Hattori, 1953 III: 16f). Finally, in 1944, when the voyage of merchantmen to Europe became practically impossible, Japan began to despatch transport submarines carrying rubber, among other materials, from occupied Dutch East Indies to Europe in return for further transfer of advanced military technology from Germany (Kratoska 1997: 225).

Still, Wohlthat's interests in the formerly Dutch colony were broader than mere trade relations. Considering his earlier assignments, it is not surprising that during the visits of German officials to Java, they also discussed the state of the local Jews. Due to their limited number and the fact that most of them were already incarcerated, the Jewish problem was obviously a minor issue in the German itinerary. And yet, their treatment was not ignored during the negotiations and the eventual economic settlement. At the time of Wohlthat's visit the destruction of Europe's Jewry was in full motion. The Jews of Netherlands did not escape this fate. On 26 May 1943 German forces surrounded the old Jewish quarter in Amsterdam and searched every house. By the end of the day, some 3,000 Jews were captured and soon deported. The deportations were resumed in July and, by October, Nazi sources stated, the exclusion of Jews from the Dutch life was almost complete (Lifmann, 1994 I: 170; Jong 1976). Wohlthat was not in Europe when his benefactor Göring instructed Reinhard Heydrich to work out a 'final solution' for Europe's Jewry, but earlier he had been involved in a search for less inhumane solutions.⁴ While his genuine attitude to the 'Jewish problem' is unknown, he was nonetheless an efficient instrument of an inexorable juggernaut. Since the early 1940s other Nazi officials in East Asia were pursuing the very same policy of persecution, although without soldiers they had to resort to persuasion. In Shanghai, for example, they were plainly more active in urging the Japanese to pursue an anti-Jewish policy (Kranzler 1976; Kaneko 2008: 118–22). Wohlthat acted in a similar manner despite his appointment as economic

⁴On Wohlthat's involvement in the rescue of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, see Rigg (2004: 69–70).

envoy. Meeting with top Japanese officials in the colony, he and other German delegates expressed Berlin's resentment that some of the Jews in Java were left in relative peace (Bouwer 1988: 173–4).

Jews, in fact, were not the only ethnic group that formed part of the negotiations between German representatives and Japanese authorities in Indonesia. In an almost identical case of instant compliance with German demands, the Japanese authorities in Java arrested all the Italians on the island soon after Italy, under Marshal Pietro Badoglio, had signed an armistice with the Allies on 3 September 1943 and then, on 13 October, declared war on Germany. Shortly later, however, the Japanese released those Italians willing to swear allegiance to Mussolini and, by the end of the year, when Mussolini established a new government in North Italy, they released the rest (de Jong 2002: 108). To emphasise the special Japanese-German nexus in the region, it should be noted further that the Japanese forces in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean were willing to adopt, upon German instigation, much graver measures than the mere arrest of a few more European civilians. On 18 January 1943, for example, the crew of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) cruiser *Tone* massacred 65 survivors of the British *SS Behar* in the Indian Ocean. The incident dates back to early 1942, when Hitler met with the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, Ōshima Hiroshi, and urged that the Axis powers should kill captured crews of Allied merchant ships. Destroying the skills acquired over a long crew-training period, he stressed, could compensate for the Axis inferiority in ship construction. Ōshima duly concurred and transferred the message to Tokyo. On 20 March 1943, the chief of staff of the Japanese Sixth Fleet also issued a massacre order to the submarines operating in the Indian Ocean, which they followed for the first time in December (Kimata 1993: 539–42; Krug et al. 2001: 79–81).

After the war, eight commanding officers of warships involved in those massacres were convicted for war crimes. In their defence they insisted that they merely followed their superiors' orders, but the highest authority tried, Vice Admiral Nakazawa Tasuku, maintained that the orders had come from the Germans (Krug et al., 2001: 81). Still, the impact of Nazi Germany did not end in the naval arena. German wartime ideology and its anti-Semitic bent appealed to quite a few Japanese intellectuals, radicals and Germanophiles in the late 1930s and early 1940s (Goodman and Miyazawa 1995: 104–5). At the same time, a fairly large number of officers serving in the Imperial Army or Navy also adhered to Nazi racial ideology and gave credence to its propaganda against Jews. After all, it was Hitler himself who noted in *Mein Kampf* (1924) that 'in his millennial Jewish empire', the Jew 'dreads a Japanese national state, and, therefore desires its annihilation even before establishing his own dictatorship'. In the context of increasing isolationist anxiety in Japan in the early 1940s, Hitler's notion that the Jew 'now incites the nations against Japan as once he did against Germany' seemed more than relevant (Hitler 1943: 640). The most notorious case is that of Shiōden Nobutaka (1878–1962), a retired lieutenant-general and wartime member of the Imperial Diet, who admired Germany and promoted anti-Semitism. A less likely instance, albeit not surprising, is the Japanese commander of a POW camp on the island of Flores, east of Java, who rounded up a dozen Jewish prisoners for inspection. He compared their faces with anti-Semitic caricatures he found in the Nazi weekly *Der Stürmer*, but reportedly concluded that there was no resemblance (Presser, 1965 I: 451–2; de Jong 1985 II: 853n; 2002: 498n).

With the scale of German interests in the colony growing and following Wohlthat's intervention, the Japanese response with regard to the Jews did not take long. In mid

August 1943, shortly after his visit, the military authorities in Java completed the internment of the Jewish community on the island and in practically the entire archipelago (Presser 1965 I: 451). At this juncture, they arrested all those registered as Jews, especially the two groups that were not associated directly with the Dutch regime: Jews of Axis nationality and members of the Iraqi community. In addition, they gradually segregated Jewish detainees from non-Jews (de Jong 1985 II: 852; 2002: 498–9). For all these reasons, the thesis that Germany offered – and, indeed, pressured Japan into accepting – advanced military technology for rubber and implicitly also a harsher treatment of Jews is undoubtedly compelling. Nevertheless, the Japanese capitulation to German pressure in the Dutch East Indies in the form of a comprehensive arrest of the Jews as Jews is not self-explanatory. During the early stages of the war in Europe, Tokyo had been rather adamant in resisting German pressure to persecute the Jews living in its territory. Touchy over racial issues and keeping its mistrust of Nazi Germany after the latter had assaulted the Soviet Union without early notice to its Asian ally, Japanese officials throughout the empire were far from receptive to orders with regard to the daily handling of their empire. So, what in fact facilitated the persecution of Indonesia's Jews in mid 1943?

Local politics as a motive for Japanese compliance with German pressure

Following the January agreement and the increasingly closer relationship it fostered, recurrent German pressure coincided with changing circumstances in the colony. Jews were, relatively, a very small minority in Greater East Asia although it was assumed they enjoyed the backing of world Jewry. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, however, Japanese hopes of exploiting Jewish capital for the development of their empire quickly evaporated. Worse still, being situated mainly in the United States and the Soviet Union, world Jewry turned suddenly into a threat if not an enemy. For these reasons, modifying the treatment of the Jews in the few communities in their territories was probably a trifling gesture in the list of items the Japanese were willing to offer to Germany. In Indonesia in particular, Jews were marginal and their treatment did not denote any substantial change in the national policy nor did it involve any war crime or other transgressions of moral principle. In all likelihood, it did not even require authorisation from Tokyo.

Evidently, the treatment of the Jews in Shanghai, the largest community in the territories occupied by Japan, set the pace. In February 1943, the Japanese authorities in the city decided to establish a 'designated zone' (Jpn. *shitei chiku*, but often referred to as 'ghetto') in the ward of Hongkou. Three months later, they housed there 'stateless' Jews, namely refugees who had fled from Europe since 1937 (Kaneko 2008: 112–18), but not the Iraqi Jews. German representatives based in Tokyo, notably the police liaison officer and special agent of the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, Security Service) at the German embassy, Josef Meisinger, were meddling in the Jewish affairs in the city (Ristaino 2001: 178–9). Their pressure may have played a role in 1942 in the transfer to active service of Captain Inuzuka for being, allegedly, too lenient in shaping the Japanese Jewish policy in Shanghai (Krebs 2004a: 121). It was probably also instrumental, to a certain extent, in prompting the Japanese to make their seminal decision on the creation

of the ghetto. After the war, the German consul-general in Tianjin, Fritz Wiedemann, acknowledged the association between the ghetto and German pressure. 'I can say with confidence,' he wrote in an oft-quoted statement, 'that the [Japanese] proclamation . . . in Shanghai ultimately goes back to the action of the highest German authority' (cited in Kaneko 2008: 113–14, but see Freyeisen 2000: 460–1).

Whatever the motive, the differences between the Japanese attitude to the Jews in Shanghai and Indonesia are staggering. The cardinal contrast is not the fact that the Iraqi Jews in town remained free but the conditions of the Jews interned in the ghetto. The zone was not tightly guarded, visits out were permitted, food was less scarce (with some external help), and as a result the death toll was apparently far lower than in the Indonesian camps.⁵ Except for Shanghai and Indonesia, Iraqi Jews also lived under Japanese rule in Singapore and Hong Kong, and in neither of them was the entire community arrested during much of the war as happened in Indonesia. The more interesting case study is Singapore, where about 850 Jews of mostly Iraqi origin had lived before the war. Soon after the takeover of the city, the Japanese arrested 19 Jewish men and on 5 April 1943 they arrested another 103 men (about 17% of the wartime community). The remaining members, including women and children, were left unharmed for the next two years but were eventually arrested, together with a smaller number of Eurasians, on 25 March 1945, less than five months before the Japanese capitulation (Eze 1986: 188; Nakahara 2008: 200).

Jews in occupied Indonesia did not become a major concern for the military administration. Its main concerns remained from the outset, as Nakamura Mitsuo has put it succinctly, 'in the field of exploitation and persuasion' (Nakamura 1970: 7). Yet 1943 saw increasing demands and greater constraints. During that year virtually every Indonesian began to feel acutely the outcomes of the systematic exploitation of the local economy by the Japanese and the resulting deprivation of food and other basic resources. With fewer markets for export and falling food production, the standard of living in the colony declined alarmingly (e.g. Sato 1998; Raben 2005). The *Kempeitai*, understandably, faced growing discontent and fears of insurgency. There is much evidence for the general stiffening of the Japanese attitude in Java around mid 1943. In June, for example, the Japanese authorities ordered the local Eurasians to register again and, based on their family records, sorted them into certain areas according to eight racial categories, depending on the percentage of their European blood (Touwen-Bouwsma 1997: 40–1). The following month, Major Murase resolved, with the approval of the recently-appointed commander of the Sixteenth Army, Lieutenant-General Harada Kumakichi (1888–1947), to shorten the ordinary martial law proceedings in investigating those suspected of insurgency and espionage, in effect allowing executions without trial (Zenkoku Kenyūkai Rengōkai, 1976: 1032–3). In August, detained Dutch women and children were no longer allowed to leave the camps (de Jong 2002: 466). The same month, the *Kempeitai* arrested in Surabaya, where most of the Iraqi Jews were living, a ring of Eurasians suspected of reporting the movement of the Navy units in the large base in the city (Zenkoku Kenyūkai Rengōkai, 1976: 1036). Still in August, the authorities separated the Dutch from the Dutch Eurasians residing there and transferred the former, some 1,700 civilians, into a prison in central Java.

⁵On the conditions in the ghetto, see Kranzler (1976: 493–9); for the sharp difference in mortality rate of Western civilians in Japanese custody in China and Indonesia, see Hack and Blackburn (2008: 5).

The identity of those arrested is of vital importance. Side by side with the Jews, the authorities also rounded up the Eurasian leaders of the Freemasonry on the island and decided to close the experimental agricultural colony in Kesilir (de Jong 2002: 495). All in all, by September 1943 the *Kempeitai* arrested and detained more than 147 members of the Dutch freemasonry, 350 Jews and 174 missionaries of enemy nationality (Zenkoku Kenyūkai Rengōkai, 1976: 461). The concurrent arrest of Freemasons and Jews was not accidental. Shortly earlier, in June and July 1943, the authorities in Java held huge rallies under the slogan 'Destroy the Allies' (Klinken 2003: 155), and so the arrests can be seen as supporting the rallies. Still, the linkage between the two groups had had its historical roots elsewhere. Anti-Semitic propaganda in Europe, Germany in particular, had long associated ties between the two groups, although it definitely intensified after the rise to power of the Nazi party (Pfahl-Traugher 1993). Unaware that Jews had not been admitted to Masonic lodges in Germany before the 1840s (Hoffmann 2000: 151), Hitler (1943: 306) referred in the mid 1920s to the Freemasonry as 'an excellent instrument to fight for his [the Jew's] purposes or gain them by stealth'. The Japanese encounter with an explicit identification of the two groups occurred with the first translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* into Japanese in 1921 (Goodman 2005: 4), and it happened at about the same time and was probably based on the same source as Hitler's.⁶ However, the negative tone in Japan with regard to Freemasonry had been set by the late 19th century, when the government restricted the organisation's activities to foreigners. After the outbreak of the war with China it began persecuting these foreign members and with the Pacific War it abolished the organisation altogether. With suspicion rife, wartime Japan followed Nazi propaganda in linking Freemasonry and Jews. In January 1943 a large exhibition on the organisation and its international secret power was held in Tokyo and subsequently in Osaka, drawing more than one million spectators in total (Kranzler 1976: 485–6; Miyazawa 1982: 192).

The emphasis on the threat posed by Freemasonry and international Jewry and the link between the two was ubiquitous throughout the Japanese empire, but again the circumstances in Indonesia were special and so the desire to exploit them. The year 1943 signifies a turning point in the German campaign with its forces capitulating in Stalingrad on 2 February and in North Africa on 13 May. Although it is more difficult to identify a single turning point in the Asian theatre after the fiasco in Midway in June 1942, Japan too was beginning to feel the strain of fighting. In February 1943 Japanese forces started withdrawing from Guadalcanal while the Allies seized the Russell Islands as a preparatory step towards the twin-axis Operation Cartwheel. Shifting their war efforts to New Guinea, the Japanese faced increasing difficulties in combating the air superiority of the Allies. It was, nonetheless, the disaster in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March and the death of the illustrious Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku a month later that shocked the Imperial General Headquarters. But greater blows were still ahead. On 16 June, 11 days after the ashes of the great naval commander were interred in Tokyo, the Allies began their offensive in the Solomons and New Guinea, which was soon to cut off Japan from Indonesia (Spector 1985: 227–30).

With the war escalating and the anticipation of a large Allied offensive mounting, Japan was not only in greater need of German technology but also more willing to delegate powers to the peoples under its domination. On 1 August 1943 Burma became

⁶On German interwar anti-Masonry propaganda, see Katz (1970: 174–96).

'independent' and in October similar autonomy materialised in the Philippines (Stockwell 1992: 334). Indonesia, the largest Western colony under Japanese rule was by no means different. During a brief visit to Batavia on 7 July 1943, Japan's premier Tōjō Hideki met with Indonesian nationalist leaders and two months later a Central Advisory Council was set up under Sukarno (Rose 1987: 100). The promotion of local rule stressed the role of Islam and prompted the participation of Muslims in local administration, especially in the PETA (Ind. [*Tentara Sukarela*] *Pembela Tanah Air*, Volunteer Army of Defenders of the Homeland), the new Indonesian military force that was virtually born in October 1943 (Benda 1958: 137–8).

Alongside the promotion of a certain degree of local autonomy during the early half of 1943, the Japanese authorities endeavoured to crack down on resistance activities in the archipelago, and Java in particular. Free non-indigenous groups, especially Eurasians but also Chinese and Jews who remained outside the camps, were seen as subversive elements and potential sources for sabotage and insurgency. In contrast to Shanghai, where hostility to Japanese occupation came mainly from the local Chinese population, in Indonesia insurgency was the domain of minorities, such as people of mixed origin, Christian groups (e.g. Ambonese and Manadonese) still loyal to the colonial regime, and the Chinese who opposed Japan for its imperial design on mainland China. That year witnessed many Japanese reports on the growing fears that members of those groups were preparing to assist Allied forces before and after their landing. 'The problem was,' *Kempeitai* veterans stressed in their postwar collective memoir *Nihon kenpei seishi*, 'the mixed-blood (Jpn. *konketsu*) who superficially cooperated but were in reality extremely anti-Japanese. From the outset they were the cancer afflicting the body politics' (Zenkoku Kenyūkai Rengōkai, 1976: 1029). With dwindling workers and resources, however, it was virtually impossible to detain en masse the entire population of more than 200,000 Eurasians and other non-Muslim groups (such as the Chinese). The former were required to maintain the large civil administration in the archipelago, Java in particular, and the latter were important drivers of the island's economy.

Elsewhere in the empire, as Gerhard Krebs (2004b) suggests, Japan's distrust of the Jews and its fear of their involvement in espionage and sabotage was perhaps not entirely absurd. In Indonesia, however, Jews did not pose any risk. Free Jews were few and their arrest, among selected others, fit at best the propaganda against the 'International Jews' rather than solved a genuine security problem. Moreover, in this very place, their persecution could solidify the support of the native population for the new rulers. Such use of ethnic scapegoating had been a part of the Japanese arsenal elsewhere in areas where substantial minorities lived. A case in point is the Manchurian hub of Harbin, where the local *Kempeitai* had been successful in pitting white Russians against Jews.⁷ It was a mere coincidence, but most, if not all, of the *Kempeitai* personnel stationed initially in Java, over 500 in early 1943, had served earlier in Manchukuo (Kanahele 1967: 273; Zenkoku Kenyūkai Rengōkai, 1976: 1028). Some of them inevitably had come across Jews there and were, thus aware of the prevalent Russian anti-Semitism in the urban centres, notably in Harbin, and of ways to exploit it in a 'divide and rule' policy.

⁷Kranzler (1976: 212–13); Altman (2000); Ben-Canaan (2009); but see also Bandō (2001: 46–54) on Japan's role in protecting the local Jews.

It was even more of a coincidence that Lieutenant-General Harada Kumakichi, the commander-in-chief of the Sixteenth Army from November 1942 until April 1945 who governed Java and Madura and was directly in charge of the *Kempeitai* activities in those areas, had served in both locations where the largest Jewish communities in East Asia lived. Apart from a three-year stint in Manchuria as chief of the Rear Area Section in Kwantung Army, he spent five years in Shanghai as head of the Special Services Department (*tokumubu*) at the Intelligence Section of the Central China Area Army (Brook 2005: 37) and as adviser to that unit. During 1938–1940 Harada had been apparently in close contact with Captain Inuzuka, who was also stationed in Shanghai. In Java, he replaced Imamura Hitoshi (1886–1968), who had been repeatedly criticised during his short stint there for pursuing over-soft policies on the treatment of Allied POWs and enclaves of ‘hostile’ non-combatants (Nakamura 1970: 11–19). Harada’s experience was all the more uncommon among the staff at the *Sendenhan* (Propaganda Corps) in Indonesia, where only a few people, if any, had been stationed earlier in central or northeast China. The majority were Japanese urbanite intellectuals from a wide variety of backgrounds – journalists, novelists and film producers (Kuroda 1952: 73–6), who made radio transmissions from Batavia the spearhead of Japanese propaganda, often with anti-Semitic content, in the southwest Pacific (Meo 1968: 106, 111–14). While, in all likelihood, they had had no early experience with real Jews, back in Japan they were doubtless exposed to conspiracy theories relating to the role of international Jewry. Jews, at any rate, were merely a tool for them while the primary object was manipulation of the Muslim majority into subservience. Apparently, within the Japanese administration, they were the most sensitive to local reactions. In time of great hardship and economic deprivation for the local population, they were required to approach it with emotion and imagination rather than rationality, but the result of these conflicting pressures ‘was often cynicism and despair’ (Nakamura 1970: 8).

Within this context, it is evident that the anti-Semitic campaign the Japanese authorities in Java promoted aimed at marking a common external enemy and, consequently, allying the native Muslim population, and to a lesser extent also the Christian Eurasians, with the new rulers. In 1944 the messages were nothing but explicit. ‘It is only natural,’ a broadcast by the director of the General Affairs Department in the Military Administration Headquarters in Java announced, ‘that Jews are the enemies of all Moslems. The present Greater East Asian war itself is aimed at uniting Greater East Asia against these diabolical actions and seeks its liberation by eliminating mutual antagonisms and consolidating the total strength of the billion people of Greater East Asia.’ The economic decline of the region, the broadcast pointed out was the outcome of liberal economics, ‘a system designed for the United States and Britain, in other words, the Jews ...’ (Benda et al. 1965: 112). The renewed campaign against international Jewry in late April 1944 commenced at a time of renewed fears of losing control on the local population. Only a month earlier, on 20 March 1944, the Chief Army Civil Administrator in Java, Hayashi Kyūjirō, advised adopting immediate measures:

in order to enable the fifty million people of Java to further endure the deprivation of clothing, to deliver foodstuffs while bearing hardships, and to cooperate with the military administration in all aspects, the best policy is to clearly indicate to them

that they shall be granted independence when their preparatory education of the postwar future has been completed.

(Benda et al. 1965: 246)

The anti-Semitic propaganda in Indonesia was without parallel elsewhere in the Japanese empire. It is intriguing to ask why Japanese mobilisation of the native population resorted to anti-Semitic propaganda here, but not, for example, in Burma or the Philippines. The fact that most Javanese and Sumatrans were Muslim does not seem to offer a satisfactory explanation since the Christian population of Luzon was theoretically at least as susceptible to anti-Semitic suggestions on religious and economic grounds. Furthermore, the fact that a relatively large Jewish community resided in Indonesia does not seem to account for the anti-Semitic campaign either. Not only were most of the members of the community behind bars at that stage, but also the campaign was directed against imaginary 'international Jews' rather than the local Jewish community. What set Indonesia apart from other colonial sites seems to be a conjunction of three factors: the presence of a large Eurasian community that remained unconfined and predominantly anti-Japanese; effective German pressure to take harsher measures against the Jews; and the earlier Manchurian experience of the *Kempeitai* personnel stationed in Indonesia.

The impact of a differential policy on actual treatment

The extent to which German pressure affected the daily life of the Jews already incarcerated in the barracks remains obscure. Although Nazi Germany was able to exert certain leverage on high-level Japanese policy, Japanese officials in the field resented and often ignored any German attempt to impose their domestic racial policies in Japanese territories (Goodman and Miyazawa 1995: 113). This reflected an antagonism to German interventions in their local policies; to German racial haughtiness, which placed the Japanese together with the entire 'yellow race' in an intermediate position; or sheer decency (Furuya 1995). So, did eventual German pressure as well as certain permeation of anti-Semitic ideas among local *Kempeitai* personnel lead to harsher day-to-day treatment of the Jewish prisoners and internees? It is difficult to answer affirmatively. Recent interviews conducted with Jewish survivors of the camps do not reveal particular memories of aggravation of the conditions in the camps in mid or late 1943 (Kowner and Klemperer-Markman forthcoming). In the men's camps at least, the actual treatment of Jews seems to have deviated little or not at all from the treatment of non-Jews interned in the same camp. As for possible discrimination against Jewish women and children, there is partial evidence from a few camps of distinct treatment, although it is not necessarily due to sudden German pressure or even an independent Japanese policy. These camps were situated mostly in the vicinity of Batavia: camp Tangerang, west of Batavia, was one of the earlier ones, while later, in Adek, Jews were interned in separate barracks from non-Jewish captives. It is virtually impossible to assess, and let alone quantify, the captives' sense of relative deprivation. It is possible, nonetheless, that certain deprivations noted by the survivors were the outcome of Dutch discrimination within the camps, either because of a basic struggle for limited resources or on anti-Semitic grounds, as it was in the

Netherlands.⁸ Whatever the reason, it probably resulted in a lower position of the Jewish barracks in the local pecking order.⁹

The question of relative deprivation is in much lesser doubt when one considers the fate of other Jewish communities in East Asia during the war. It seems patent here that the Jews in wartime Indonesia were meted out harsher treatment than any other substantial Jewish community in the territories occupied by Japan. Nowhere else, was an entire community interned, the majority for more than three years in sub-human conditions. Even in Japan itself, Jews were treated better. After all, Jews who were allowed to land in Kobe shortly before the war and the few who remained there throughout the war were treated according to their nationality and not on account of their Jewishness (Shatzkes 1991; Kaneko 2003). In Harbin, where a community of similar size (about 2,500 in 1939) lived since the early 20th century, Jews were not interned, whereas in Shanghai the majority – ‘stateless’ Jews from Germany, Austria, and various other Nazi-occupied nations in Central and Eastern Europe – was kept in an open ghetto under much more humane conditions than in any Indonesian camp. Other Jews in this Chinese city, mainly Russian Jews and Iraqi Jews, remained free throughout the war, while a small number of Allied Jewish citizens were interned (Kranzler 1976: 501).

In accounting for the particularly harsh treatment of the Jews of Indonesia, several moderating factors emerge. First, most of them were associated closely with the Dutch colonial regime and thus were meted out the same treatment as other Europeans. Nowhere else in East Asia was such a large civilian population interned and nowhere else did the Japanese face such logistical difficulties to maintain them. In Harbin and even in Shanghai, the Jews were neither associated with the anti-Japanese Chinese majority, nor with the Anglo-Saxon enemies, and therefore were treated better. And second, the Jews in Indonesia were relatively marginal in size and economic importance – despite being a sizable community, and far from the sight of Western media or Jewish organisations. On the whole, the circumstances of internment in the Dutch East Indies were unfavorable to all internees, but once separated from the gentile majority and within a growing Anti-Semitic undercurrent, the Jewish internees seem to have faced particularly harsh conditions.

Conclusion: the meaning of race and Judaism for wartime Japan

Although the Nazi ideology referred to the Jews as members of a single ethnic and religious community, this was not necessarily the case in Indonesia, neither in the eyes of the local Jews nor for the Japanese. Testimonies of survivors of the Japanese camps suggest there was rather limited contact between the European and the oriental Iraqi (‘Baghdadi’) Jews in the pre-war period, and it remained so during the Japanese occupation and even in the most appalling period of internment (e.g. Chagoll 1986). In the same vein, the Japanese authorities treated the two communities differently. Whereas most members of the European community and the newly arriving Jewish refugees were

⁸On Dutch anti-Semitism in this period, see Presser (1968: 327).

⁹For evidence of differential food intake among different groups of internees in the camps, see Heuvel (2008: 196).

soon incarcerated, members of the smaller Iraqi community remained outside the camps for more than a year and, even after their incarceration, were placed in separate quarters. The different treatment reflected the reliance on a practice that acknowledges both ethnic and national categories. While the European community was considered 'white' (Jpn. *hakujin*), Western (Jpn. *ōbeijin*) and mostly Dutch, the identity of the Iraqi community remained ambiguous. Like the Armenians in the colony (Sarkissian 1987: 8–14), they were virtually stateless subjects, who had resided there for a few generations. They were Asians but did not belong to the Mongol race (Jpn. *tōyōijin*). Much like the Middle Eastern Arabs and Indians living in the colony, the Iraqi Jews were to certain extent 'white' in Japanese eyes, but nonetheless Asian in terms of ethnicity and non-Dutch in terms of nationality.¹⁰ Hence, they were dissociated from the Dutch enemy in both ethnicity and nationality, while most of the European Jews, by ethnic or national association, were implicated.

This nuanced categorization is far from unexpected since the Japanese authorities distinguished even between newcomer Dutch of full European ancestry and Dutch of mixed ancestry (Eurasians). Applied initially also to the local Jews, this policy suggests that the definition of Jews for the Japanese authorities was completely different from that of Nazi Germany. At least at the outset, the Japanese associated only the local European Jews with the Dutch and European colonialism. Those who carried German citizenship remained free much after they had been stripped of their citizenship by their own government on 24 November 1941. In Japanese eyes, they remained 'German' in the same way the Iraqi Jews remained Asian, until, under Berlin's instigation, both lost their 'immunity'. For Nazi Germany, by contrast, Jews were Jews, regardless of their origin and nationality and, so, both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews (in the mixed communities of the Netherlands and Yugoslavia or in Greece and Libya where the entire community comprised Sephardic Jews) shared a common and tragic destiny.

These differences with regard to Jews correspond to the wide gap between the racial policies and worldview of wartime Germany and Japan. The former regarded Jews as an arch enemy in racial terms, whose presence it sought to eradicate from the very beginning of the Nazi rise to power, first by segregation and then by extermination (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991), whereas the latter paid very little attention to Jews in its racial worldview. Like Germany, wartime Japan regarded itself routinely as a leading race (Jpn. *shidō minzoku*), but its position in Asia was based on moral rather than physical superiority and national rather than racial ascendancy (e.g. Hashikawa 1980; Doak 2007). Furthermore, in contrast to Germany's large-scale ethnic cleansing in East Europe, Japan's plans for a Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were formulated following a Confucian family model of vertical relations (Jpn. *minzoku chitsujo*; an ethnic national hierarchy), advocating paternalism and loyalty in return. In more fundamental terms, perhaps the differences centre on the place of the Other. Whereas racism in the West, John Dower (1986: 204–5) has argued, and this is relevant to Nazi Germany in particular, 'was markedly characterized by denigration of others, the Japanese were pre-occupied far more exclusively with elevating themselves'. In the same vein, denigration of others in Europe turned into a systematic murder of those unfit to be part of the vision of a 'thousand year Reich', while Japan did not intend to exterminate systematically

¹⁰On the Arab minority in Indonesia, see de Jonge (1993, 2010).

‘inferior’ (Asian) peoples but to integrate them eventually in its sphere, and even confer on them a certain degree of autonomy after sufficient indoctrination.

Wartime Japan was resolute, however, in viewing Europeans, Ashkenazi Jews included, as an alien element and an obstacle to achieving its grand plans in East Asia, but nonetheless it did not resort to a Nazi-like ‘final solution’ to eliminate them. These differences notwithstanding, economic, political, and military requirements skewed increasingly the Japanese worldview towards that of its ally, Germany. This is especially evident in the case of the Jews – an essentially insignificant but long demonised minority. It is no wonder then, that Berlin’s instigation was the one to terminate the temporary impunity of both German and Iraqi Jewish groups. But despite the special circumstances of the German pressure in occupied Indonesia, it did not come out in a vacuum. Wartime Japan had its own peculiar sort of anti-Semitism, with idiosyncratic national motives and domestic nuances. This backdrop, together with local incentives in Indonesia, eventually facilitated compliance with German pressure.

In the long run the adoption of the Nazi indiscriminate racist outlook had little effect on the destiny of the entire Jewish community in the colony. After all, the majority of its members were still alive at the time of their liberation in August 1945. However, when the long-term effect of the Japanese occupation is examined, one must keep a different sense of perspective. Not only was it directly responsible for the three-year trauma most of the community suffered during the occupation, but the occupation was also highly instrumental in preparing the Indonesian liberation movement to fight for independence. Positive in its own right, independent Indonesia, like Imperial Japan in the early 1940s, had little room for foreigners, non-Asians and non-Muslim in particular. Rejecting its former rulers, it was reluctant also to accommodate Jews with European orientation and to all appearances Jews of whatever orientation. And so, within two decades after the end of the war, the community dissolved. It did not vanish in unison but in communal segments even the internment could not integrate; first the European Jews left and, several years later, the Iraqi Jews. This course was not necessarily the destiny of all foreign communities in post-war Indonesia. In fact, the Japanese occupation and the subsequent Indonesian war of independence accelerated the emancipation of the initially closed Arab community and triggered its assimilation into the local society (Jonge 2010: 347).

This study marks Indonesia as the colonial site where Japanese-German cooperation during the Pacific War was the closest, especially with regard to the treatment of Jews. Moreover, it suggests that the Japanese authorities in Java treated the local Jewish population in a slightly different manner from the non-Jewish European civilians. Evidently, it was the change in the Japanese policy towards Jews in 1943, rather than their initial internment, that makes Indonesia somewhat unique. The change was an outcome of *sui generis* circumstances that led to actual measures against Jews for being Jews: earlier experience with a Jewish minority of the Java *Kempeitai*; determination to mobilise local support using, *inter alia*, an anti-Semitic campaign; and German pressure associated with the exchange of raw materials from the archipelago for military technology. For these reasons, in addition to their close association with the Dutch and their invisibility to Western media and Jewish organisations, the local Jews received harsher treatment than that experienced by Jewish communities in other Asian territories under Japanese occupation. It was not an aberration of Japanese policies or ideology, but the final outcome of the local circumstances was more severe than anywhere elsewhere in East Asia.

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