

**THE *PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION*,
AUM, AND ANTISEMITISM IN JAPAN**

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Beginning in the mid-1980s, dozens of books based on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* began to appear in Japanese bookstores and sold millions of copies. Jews were described in these books and in the large, gaudy advertisements that appeared for them in mass circulation daily newspapers as a clandestine cabal plotting to destroy Japan and rule the world. The Jewish plot, the books charged, had already succeeded. The United States, Japan's chief ally and most important trading partner, was controlled by Jews, who formed a "shadow government" and manipulated U.S. policies for their own perfidious ends. Certain ministries within the Japanese government had already been taken over by Jews, it was said, and Japan was doomed unless something could be done. The enemy was ruthless, and the response, it was implied, had to be equally so.¹

How should this phenomenon be understood? Many theories have been advanced. Some writers have understood the popularity in Japan of books based on the *Protocols* as sublimated anti-Americanism.² Others have traced antisemitism in Japan back to Japan's World War II alliance with Nazi Germany.³ A few have argued that Japanese attitudes toward Jews should be understood in longer-range terms, as an extension of Japan's complex history of imagining foreigners.⁴ Some place outlandish ideas about Jews in the same category as fantasies about the paranormal, UFOs, and the Lost Continent of Mu. The exploits of the powerful and threatening *Yudaya* (Jews), they contend, are for the Japanese akin to the adventures of space aliens and the terror of mythical demons.⁵

¹ For a full description, see David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype*, rev. ed. (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000).

² Robert J. J. Wargo, "The Jewish Conspiracy Scare: An Exercise in Paranoia," *PHP Intersect* (Jan. 1988): 30-34. David G. Goodman, "Japanese Anti-Semitism," *The World and I* (Nov. 1987): 401-409. David G. Goodman, "Current Japanese Attitudes Toward the Jews and Their Implications for US-Japan Relations," Occasional Paper, Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Sept. 1989.

³ Muramatsu Takeshi, "Mata arawareta 'Nachi no bōrei'" ("The Nazi ghost" appears again), *Sankei shimbun*, 10 Apr. 10 1987; Katō Shūichi, "Nihon ni okeru han-Yudayashugi" (Antisemitism in Japan), *Asahi shimbun*, evening ed., 15 June 1987; Yamaguchi Yasushi, "Naze ureru 'han-Yudaya-bon': shin-nashonarizumu ka" (Why "antisemitic books" sell: A new nationalism?) *Asahi shimbun*, evening ed., 8 Apr. 1987; Ian Buruma, "A New Japanese Nationalism," *New York Times Magazine*, 12 Apr. 1987, 22-29; 38.

⁴ Yoshi Tsurumi, "Anti-Semitism in Japan: The Ghost that has Returned to Haunt," *Pacific Basin Quarterly* (Winter-Spring 1990): 21-22; David G. Goodman, "Han-Yudayashugisha to shite no Momotarō [Momotarō as antisemite], *Sekai* (Jan. 1988): 329-39. Fujiwara Hajime, "Tōsakuteki sakoku seishin o haisu" ([We should] reject the perverted spirit of a closed country), *Sekai shūhō*, 14 Apr. 1987, 4-5.

⁵ To-Gakkai (Academy of Outrageous Books), ed., *Tondemobon no sekai* (The world of outrageous books) (Tokyo: Yōsensha, 1995). The title is glossed on the cover of the book as "Mondo Tondemo," a play on words meaning "outrageous world." See also Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 156-71.

Finally, some commentators have seen antisemitism in Japan as a paradox and historical anomaly. Antisemitic expressions, they believe, are actually inverted feelings of kinship and admiration expressed as fear and envy. These analysts have pointed to the amity between the Japanese and Jewish peoples that has prevailed throughout the modern period, beginning with Jacob Schiff's financial rescue of Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, through the way Japan sheltered more than 20,000 Jews in Shanghai during World War II, up to Japan's continuing cordial relations with Israel in the postwar years. Ben-Ami Shillony has pointed to a strong sense of affinity he believes exists between the Japanese and Jewish peoples, who are both "successful outsiders," non-Western (or at least non-Christian) groups that have competed successfully with the West.⁶

All of these views contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of antisemitism in Japan, and I would not discount any of them. Where I part company with some of my colleagues, however, is on the question of consequences.⁷ Some have contended that expressions of antisemitism in Japan are benign, epiphenomenal, and inconsequential. They argue that if the proliferation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and its description of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy have had any consequence at all, it has been to instill a sense of awe and respect for Jews among the Japanese that, particularly during World War II, led them to befriend Jews rather than regard them as enemies.

By contrast, I have taken the position that, in Japan as in the West, the *Protocols* and its ideology have been imbricated with the politics and cultural history of the 20th century. In this, I follow Hannah Arendt, who, while acknowledging that "the Jewish question and antisemitism [are] relatively unimportant phenomena in terms of world politics," points out that they nevertheless "became the catalytic agent first for the rise of the Nazi movement...then for a world war of unparalleled ferocity, and finally for the emergence of the unprecedented crime of genocide..."⁸ In the case of Japan, while clearly of only minor importance in the broader scheme of Japanese culture, the Jewish question and antisemitism contributed to the rise of fascism, helped justify the Asia-Pacific war, and by extension abetted its manifold atrocities. I do not "consider Japan an anti-Semitic country,"⁹ but I believe that antisemitic ideas and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* have played an identifiable and deleterious role in the history of modern Japan, a role that continues to be played out.

⁶ Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Successful Outsiders: The Jews and the Japanese* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1991).

⁷ I have been arguing since 1987 that expressions of antisemitism in Japan would eventually end in mass murder. See David G. Goodman, "Han-Yudayashugisha to shite no Momotarō" (Momotarō as antisemite), *Sekai* (Jan. 1988): 329-39; this article is reprinted in a slightly altered version in my *Hashiru: Kokusaiika jidai no chichiyo-jutsu* (Running: Fatherhood in an international age) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), 148-64. The reference to the consequences of Japanese antisemitic ideas is on page 153 of the latter text.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, "Preface to the First Edition," *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), xiv.

⁹ Contrary to our clearly stated position in *Jews in the Japanese Mind* (see p. 269 and *passim*), Gerhard Krebs erroneously attributes this view to Miyazawa Masanori and me in his otherwise worthwhile essay, "The 'Jewish Problem' in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945," in *Japan in the Fascist Era*, ed. by E. Bruce Reynolds (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 125.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion¹⁰

The origins of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are shrouded in mystery. Even its original language is debated. Suffice it to say that the work, which purports to be a collection of twenty-four secret lectures delivered by a figure called the “Grand Rabbi” to representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (the Elders of Zion) clandestinely assembled in a Prague cemetery is a forgery cobbled together from plagiarized sources around the turn of the 20th century.¹¹ The tract, which occupies less than one hundred pages in English translation, and purports to document an ongoing and successful Jewish conspiracy to control the world, was first widely published in Russian in 1905 as an appendix to a book by the mystic Sergei Nilus titled *The Great in the Small: The Coming of the Anti-Christ and the Rule of Satan on Earth*. The *Protocols* had very little impact, however, until 1917, when they were reprinted in an expanded edition of Nilus’s book, retitled *It is Near at Our Doors!* This was the year of the Russian Revolution, and the Jews were held responsible for the Communist takeover. The *Protocols* was interpreted as an uncanny predictor of what had happened and an unparalleled guide to the methods and intentions of the Jews. Not only did the *Protocols* explain the revolution in simple terms as the product of a centuries-old Jewish conspiracy to wreak havoc on the gentile nations, overthrow divinely sanctioned monarchs like the tsar, and subjugate the world’s people to a Jewish dictatorship, but it also exculpated the defenders of the *ancien régime* for their failure to protect the old order because of the powerful and diabolical nature of the enemy.

Translations of the *Protocols* began to appear almost immediately. The first one in English was issued in 1920 under the title *The Jewish Peril* by the prestigious publishers Eyre and Spottiswoode, who also issued the Authorized Version of the Bible and Prayer Book with the imprimatur of “His Majesty’s Printers.”¹² The automobile magnate Henry Ford published the *Protocols* in the United States in the same year under the title *The International Jew* and became its most outspoken proponent.

The *Protocols* came to Japan at virtually the same time. In 1921, under the pseudonym Kitagami Baiseiki, Higuchi Tsuyanosuke (1870-1931) published a series of lectures titled *Yudayaka* (The Jewish peril), which introduced the main ideas of the *Protocols*. Three years later, Yasue Norihiro (1888-1950) under the pseudonym Hō Kōshi prepared the first complete Japanese translation as *Behind the World Revolution*

¹⁰ Portions of this essay were delivered at a conference on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* held at the Stephen Roth Institute, University of Tel Aviv, 26 Oct. 2004, and at the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 27 Oct. 2004.

¹¹ Maurice Joly’s *A Dialogue in Hell: Conversations Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu about Power and Right* (1864), an antiauthoritarian work, provided 160 paragraphs, more than half of nine of the *Protocols*’ twenty-four chapters. The conceit of the address of the Grand Rabbi derives from a 1868 novel by one Hermann Goedsche (1815-1878), titled *Biarritz*. See Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews: Reflections on Antisemitism and the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 84.

¹² Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Brown Judaic Studies 23 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 152.

(Sekai kakumei no rimen). Both Higuchi and Yasue had served as interpreters and Russian language instructors with the Japanese Army during the Siberian Intervention, an effort by American, Japanese, French, British, Canadian, and Czech forces to reverse the Russian Revolution. Japan dispatched a larger force to Siberia (72,000) and kept them there the longer (until 1922) than any another nation. Higuchi, who had trained at the Russian Orthodox Nikolai Seminary in Tokyo and received a divinity degree from the Theological Seminary in St. Petersburg, and Yasue, who had studied Russian at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, were introduced to the *Protocols* by White Russian troops while serving in Siberia.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, the *Protocols* and its theory of a global Jewish conspiracy spread in Japan.¹³ As a political tract, it was originally popular with right-wing ideologues who used it to explain the failure of the Japanese military in Siberia and to promote their emperor-centered nationalism. As Japan became more isolated in the world and drew closer to Nazi Germany, concluding the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936 and the Axis alliance in September 1940, however, the *Protocols* achieved much wider influence. “During the war,” the historian Saitō Takashi later recalled, “all the knowledge we had about Europe and America was what we could glean from our Western history and world geography textbooks. Books describing ‘the Jewish global conspiracy’ and ‘the Masonic threat’ were available, and our knowledge was so poor that we readily believed the theories they presented.”¹⁴

The highly respected liberal historian Irokawa Daikichi, who was a high school student during the war, later recalled making the following entry in his diary:

Stalin, Chiang K'ai-shek, Roosevelt, and Churchill are all puppets of International Jewry; the roots of their strategy lie in secret Jewish organizations of Jewish military industrialists, international businessmen, finance capitalists, the members of secret societies, speculators, and the like; Hitler and the Nazis are the saviors of mankind for combating them.... Japan has also been victimized by the Jews, who initiated the present war. Any Japanese with an ounce of sense knows that we are not imperialists.... Our theory of “eight corners of the world under one roof” [Hakkō ichiu] is far greater, more introspective, and sublime than the theory of “the absolute superiority of the German Volk....” Hitler is the hero of the century, an agent of Nietzsche, the savior of Western civilization, and anything but an imperialist!¹⁵

¹³ For a recent contribution to our understanding of the way the *Protocols* were domesticated in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, see, Christopher W. A. Szpilman, “Fascist and Quasi-Fascist Ideas in Interwar Japan, 1918-1941,” in *Japan in the Fascist Era*, 81-85.

¹⁴ Saitō Takashi, “Rekishi to no deai,” *UP* (Tokyo University Press) (Sept. 1975).

¹⁵ Irokawa Daikichi, *Aru Shōwa-shi: jibunshi no kokoromi* [One man's history of the Shōwa Era: An attempt at a self-history], (Chūō kōronsha, 1975), 91-92; 115; see also, Kimura Hiroshi, “Yudayajin-nettsu ni toritsukarete” [Taken captive by the Jewish fever], *Shokun* (Jan. 1971); and Mizuta Hiroshi in “Issatsu no hon, 137,” *Asahi shimbun*, 13 Oct. 1963. The Japanese were not unique. As Frank Dikötter notes, “Contempt for the Jews [among Chinese intellectuals], and even a feeling of hatred towards them, remained vivid for decades. Wu Zelin, an outstanding anthropologist active in the 1930s, recently recalled that he and his colleagues used to find the Jews ‘laughable, despicable, pitiable, admirable, enviable, and hateful.’” Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 114.

During the war, the *Protocols* was deployed to reinforce the sense of embattlement and galvanize support for the hostilities: Japan was not simply fighting against the Allies, it was also struggling to defeat the shadowy Jewish menace. At the same time, the *Protocols* was used to suppress domestic dissent and enforce ideological conformity by discrediting groups like the Christian Holiness Church, which sympathized with Jews and challenged the divinity of the emperor.

The Japanese did not persecute the 20,000 Jews living under their control in Shanghai during the war. There were those, like Shiōden Nobutaka (1879-1962), who favored extermination. Shiōden was a retired army lieutenant general who had studied in Germany and, running in the final Diet election of the war in April 1942 on an explicitly antisemitic platform, polled more votes than any other candidate. But Shiōden was in the minority. Not that the Japanese were averse to persecuting the populations under their control, but they were unwilling to allow their Nazi allies to dictate their policies, especially on what was essentially a domestic matter.

The majority of Japan's "Jewish experts" were in favor of exploiting the Jews for the benefit of the Japanese empire. They were outspoken believers in the "global Jewish conspiracy" and never doubted the veracity of the *Protocols*, but they drew conclusions from the *Protocols* that accrued to the benefit of the Jews.

Among these "Jewish experts" was Inuzuka Koreshige, the Navy captain responsible for the Jewish refugees in Shanghai between 1940 and 1942. Inuzuka had authored numerous articles based on the *Protocols*, vehemently arguing that the Jews constituted a powerful threat to Japan. Rather than exterminate them, however, Inuzuka concluded that Japan should exploit their power for the benefit of the empire. Among other things, Inuzuka co-authored a memorandum that Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz have dubbed the "Fugu Plan," which proposed that Japan create a Jewish homeland in East Asia in order to avail itself of Jewish capital and expertise.¹⁶ The memorandum never became government policy, but it was indicative of efforts by some Japanese to mobilize Jewish support for Japan.¹⁷

After the war, in a stunning reversal that was nevertheless consistent with Japan's reinvention of itself as a peace-loving democracy and friend of the West, Inuzuka reinvented himself as a democrat and "friend of the Jews," and he played a prominent role in Japanese-Jewish organizations. Even after his wartime writings were exposed, he continued to serve as president of the Japan-Israel Association until his death in 1965. In Inuzuka's mind and in the mind of his wife Kiyoko, who later wrote a revisionist book defending him, there was no contradiction in Inuzuka's attitude toward the Jews: he had been totally consistent in his awed respect for Jews and his desire to foster a relationship with them that would benefit Japan.¹⁸

¹⁶ Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II* (New York: Paddington Press, 1979).

¹⁷ Details of these overtures are contained in Tokayer and Swartz.

¹⁸ Inuzuka Kiyoko, *Kaigun Inuzuka kikan no kiroku: Yudaya mondai to Nippon no kōsaku* (Tokyo: Nihon kōgyō shimbunsha, 1982).

The *Protocols* fell out of favor but did not disappear after the war as Japan strived to recover and reestablish itself as a democracy. Matsumoto Fumi reprinted it in her 1958 book, *Building the Altar at Mount Fuji*,¹⁹ and in 1971 Nagafuchi Ichirō published *The Jews and World Revolution: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.²⁰ It was not until the 1980s, in the context of U.S.-Japan trade friction, however, that the *Protocols* once again became fashionable in Japan. Commentators exploited the *Protocols* in order to argue in one way or another that the United States was controlled by Jews who were determined to destroy Japan as part of their conspiracy to take over the world.

But it would be a mistake to reduce the appeal of the *Protocols* to anti-Americanism. In the 1980s and 1990s, the *Protocols* appealed to a broad spectrum, ranging from fundamentalist Christian ministers and prominent academics to left-wing ideologues and religious preachers. A description of some of the individuals who promoted the *Protocols* will reveal the broader range of motives Japanese advocates have had.

Four Portraits

Uno Masami: Christian Fundamentalist Xenophobe

The author who spectacularly reintroduced the *Protocols* in the mid-1980s was Uno Masami (1941-). In two bestsellers published in 1986 that sold a combined total of more than a million copies, Uno reactivated and exploited latent Japanese images of Jews and showed that a savvy author could make a lot of money in the process. His theories were accorded a high degree of credibility in mainstream journalistic, business, and political circles, worrying foreign and, to a lesser extent, Japanese observers.²¹

Uno resurrected and refurbished Japan's xenophobic ethnic nationalism, arguing that Japan faced a mortal threat from the Jews, who were out to destroy it. Uno explained the U.S.-Japan trade fiction by asserting that the United States was controlled by a secret, all-powerful Jewish "shadow government." Japanese-U.S. relations had to be understood as Japanese-Jewish relations, he insisted. He claimed that "if you understand the Jews, you will understand the world," which was the title of one of his 1986 bestsellers.²²

Uno tried to discredit Japan's postwar democratic institutions, including the American-drafted postwar constitution, because they were agencies of the Jewish plot to destroy Japan.²³ Democracy and internationalism were simply the "Judaization of Japan," according to Uno, and he urged his countrymen to emulate

¹⁹ Matsumoto Fumi, *Fuji kaidan'in konryū* (City unknown: Fujisan Myōkōin, 1958).

²⁰ Nagafuchi Ichirō, *Yudayajin to sekai kakumei* (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu ōraisha, 1971).

²¹ For a more detailed discussion, see David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, expanded ed. (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 1-2; 225-32.

²² Uno Masami, *Yudaya ga wakaru to sekai ga miete kuru* (If you understand the Jews, you will understand the world) (Tokuma shoten, 1986), 147. Hereafter, *Sekai*.

²³ Uno, *Sekai*, 149-50; and Uno Masami, *Yudaya ga wakaru to Nihon ga miete kuru* (If you understand the Jews, you will understand Japan) (Tokuma shoten, 1986), 161. Hereafter, *Nihon*.

Adolf Hitler and devise policies that would protect the interests of the Japanese ethnic nation (*minzoku no riekai*).²⁴

Christian theology also played an essential role in Uno's thought. A fundamentalist minister in the Osaka Bible Christian Church (Osaka seisho kirisuto kyōkai), Uno had previously published explicit works of Christian prophecy, including *Great Prophecies of the Old Testament: The Jews and Armageddon*, which appeared in 1982. Uno was on his sixth trip to Israel in June 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon, and events seemed to confirm his apocalyptic theories. Upon his return to Japan, he issued the sequel to his earlier book, titled *Great Prophecies of the Old Testament, Continued: Armageddon and the Qualifications of the Leader*.²⁵

In these books, Uno preached that the ultimate aim of the Jews is to precipitate World War III in order to bring about the Messianic Age.²⁶ As foretold by the prophet Ezekiel,²⁷ a Soviet invasion of Israel will precipitate the war, which the Jews will win.²⁸ A Jewish autocrat will be anointed and benevolently rule the world from the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, but the Jewish dictatorship will last only three and a half years, after which the real Messiah, the returned Jesus, will appear on the Mount of Olives to usher in the true Millennium.²⁹

Uno's argument is based on Revelation 13:5-8 and closely resembles the apocalyptic theology of the American premillennialist preacher Hal Lindsey, whose immensely popular *The Late Great Planet Earth* was first published in 1970 and reportedly had sold eighteen million copies in the United States by the mid-1980s. The cataclysm Uno predicts is identical to the one Lindsey describes, and he uses the same exegetical evidence.³⁰

Uno Masami thus combined Japan's indigenous xenophobia and ethnic nationalism with Christian fundamentalism in a conspiracy theory that derived from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In so doing, he achieved both financial success and respectability. Uno's books were advertised prominently in all of Japan's major news papers; he was quoted in news articles about the Japanese economy³¹; and he was invited by a conservative faction of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party to speak at a Constitution Day rally in May 1987.³² Not only did Uno's success embolden others to follow his example, but his notoriety made the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

²⁴ Uno, *Nihon*, 127; 135; 193-96.

²⁵ Uno Masami, *Kyūiyaku seisbo no dai-yogen: sekai saishū sensō to Yūdayajin* (Great prophecies of the Old Testament: The Jews and Armageddon) (Tokuma shoten, 1982) and idem, *Zoku kyūiyaku seisbo no dai-yogen: sekai saishū sensō to shidosha no jōken* (Great prophecies of the Old Testament, continued: Armageddon and the qualifications of the leader) (Tokuma shoten, 1982).

²⁶ Uno, *Sekai*, 241-42; idem, *Nihon*, 237-52.

²⁷ Uno, *Sekai*, 7; 234-36.

²⁸ Uno, *Nihon*, 244.

²⁹ Ibid., 249-52; 225-26.

³⁰ See Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), especially 135-68. In the two works that brought him international notoriety when the *New York Times* cited them in March 1987, "Japanese Writers are Critical of Jews," *New York Times*, 12 Mar. 1987.

³¹ "En: haisui no kōbō" (The Yen: Last ditch defense), *Yomiuri shimbun*, 17 Jan. 1987.

³² "Backers, Protestors Mark Constitution's 40th Year," *Japan Times*, 4 May 1987.

and its theory of a Jewish conspiracy to destroy Japan and rule the world common knowledge in Japan.

Yajima Kinji: Humiliated Academic

It is often argued that feelings of humiliation go far to explain the acts of terrorism. In the Japanese case, feelings of humiliation do serve as a justification for the turn of some Japanese intellectuals to the theories of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Yajima Kinji (1919-1994) is an example. A prominent professor of politics and economics, Yajima taught at a number of prestigious institutions over the course of his career, including Tokyo Gakugei University, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Aoyama Gakuin University, and Beijing University. Yajima was also a well-respected scholar. He translated the works of the important Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992) and co-edited Hayek's collected works.³³ In 1979, Yajima translated the liberal philosopher John Rawls' highly influential *A Theory of Justice* into Japanese.³⁴ As a reliable expert on economic affairs, Yajima was twice quoted by *Time* magazine in 1987.³⁵

Yajima's academic credentials notwithstanding, in 1986 he published *The Expert Way to Read the Jewish Protocols* (*Yudaya purotokōru chō-urayomi-jutsu*), which purports to analyze Japan's current position in the world and predict its future over the next ten years on the basis of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.³⁶ By 1987, *The Expert Way to Read the Jewish Protocols* was already in its 55th printing, and according to Amazon.com in Japan, it is still available and usually ships to readers in two business days.

In the introduction to *The Expert Way*, Yajima traces his fascination with the *Protocols* to his experience in October 1972, when he visited California during the Nixon-McGovern presidential campaign. He writes that he was invited to participate in a panel to discuss trade friction between Japan and the United States; but when he read the coverage of the event in the *Sacramento Chronicle* the next day, he was deeply offended by the way the paper described him. From Sacramento, he traveled to San Francisco, where he visited the Bohemian Grove Club, an exclusive men's club. There he became convinced that the world is not run by institutions, as the uninitiated might think, but by secret societies of the rich and powerful that operate behind the scenes. In the clandestine reaches of secret groups like the Bohemian Grove, individuals, business enterprises, and political parties that appear on the surface to be opposed are in fact working in concert. For Yajima, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is the manual or bible that details the consensus strategy of these powerful forces that control the world.

³³ *Collected Works of Hayek in Japanese*, 10 vols., ed. by Nishiyama Chiaki and Yajima Kinji (Tokyo: Shunjyū-Sha, 1986-1990).

³⁴ *Seijiron* (Tokyo: Kinokuniya shoten, 1979). This translation is of the 1975 edition of Rawls' original 1971 version.

³⁵ See *Time*, 6 Apr. and 9 Nov. 1987.

³⁶ Yajima Kinji, *Yudaya purotokōru chō-urayomi-jutsu* (The expert way of reading the Jewish *Protocols*) (Seishun shuppansha, 1986). The subtitle is “*kore kara no jūnen*” (The next ten years).

Aware that *The Protocols* is universally regarded by responsible people as a forgery, Yajima defends his decision to accept its theories in the following terms:

Here is my view: I think the *Protocols* is a forgery. But the Jews are the only ones capable of the particular, concrete expressions in the *Protocols* regarding ideology, politics, economics, and religion. Consequently, the *Protocols* were either written by someone more familiar with the Jews than the Jews themselves, or, if that is not the case, then it was put together from the results of all the research ever done on the Jews. In either case, there is no doubt that the contents consist of the wisdom of the Jews.³⁷

Just as Uno Masami seems to have been influenced by the fundamentalist Hal Lindsey, Yajima was influenced by Gary Allen, a prominent right-wing ideologue for the John Birch Society and speechwriter for the former Alabama governor George Wallace.³⁸ Yajima explicitly identifies the Jews as Allen's "insiders" and "power elite"; and he identifies the Council on Foreign Relations, the Royal Institute for International Affairs, and other favorite targets of conspiracy theorists as the loci of Jewish power.³⁹

Ultimately, however, the purpose of Yajima's *Expert Way to Read the Jewish Protocols* is to respond to the sense of humiliation and inferiority engendered by a prominent Japanese academic's encounter with the United States. Despite his scholarly achievements, the world seems to have remained opaque to Yajima until he encountered the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which explained to him what was really going on beneath the surface. The *Protocols* helped to salve his bruised ego by revealing that he was a victim of the racist conspiracy at the root of world politics.

Ohta Ryū: New-Left Ideologue

The German socialist August Bebel coined the phrase "the socialism of fools" to describe the activities of those who blamed the Jews for the world's ills instead of the real culprit, capitalism. Bebel would have applied the phrase to Ohta (or, Ōta) Ryū, whose career reflects the steady degeneration of the Japanese left in the years since World War II.

Ohta was born Kurihara Ryūichi on the island of Sakhalin in 1930. He joined the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) in 1947 but left it ten years later, in the wake of Khrushchev's 1956 revelations of Stalin's crimes. After leaving the Party, Ohta formed the Trotskyist League of Japan (Nihon Torotsukisuto renmei), which was the immediate forerunner of the League of Revolutionary Communists (Kakkyōdō, short for Kakumei-teki kyōsanshugisha dōmei), which Ohta formed in December 1957 with Kuroda Kan'ichi and others. Kakkyōdō spawned the two most important sects

³⁷ Yajima Kinji, *Yudaya purotokōru chō-urayomi-jutsu* (The expert way of reading the Jewish *Protocols*) (Seishun shuppansha, 1986), 57-58. This is essentially the same argument that Hitler made in *Mein Kampf* (Book I, chapter ix): "What many Jews may do unconsciously is here consciously made clear. And that is that counts." (Arendt, 358n.)

³⁸ Allen's most popular books, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* and *The Rockefeller File* were published in Japanese translation in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

³⁹ For more details, see Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 229-30n.

of the Japanese New Left: the Revolutionary Marxist Faction (Kakumarū, short for Kakumei-teki Marukusu-shugi ha) and the Nucleus Faction (Chūkaku). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, these two sects engaged in internecine urban warfare, known in Japanese as *uchi-geba* (internecine *gevall*), which resulted in hundreds of violent clashes annually and caused numerous deaths and injuries. This sectarian warfare disgusted the Japanese public and contributed importantly to the general loss of sympathy for the left in Japan in the 1970s and beyond.

Calling himself a “pure Trotskyist” (*jūn-Toro*), Ohta left Kakkyōdō in July 1958, but he remained a seminal thinker in the Japanese New Left movement. He was involved in the establishment and dissolution of numerous left-wing sects and movements, and attempted, among other things, to infiltrate and hijack the Japan Socialist Party.

As the New Left degenerated and it became clear that it would never achieve its goals, Ohta turned his attention to other radical causes. He called, among other things, for a revolution among Japan’s indigenous Ainu minority and for an ecological revolution to protect the environment. He promoted what he called *Tenju no gaku*, which demands the repentance of the human race, who are the enemies of the earth, and the peaceful coexistence of all species throughout the universe. He has also had parliamentary ambitions, and in 1990, he ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the Lower House of the Japanese Diet.

Ohta is a prolific author. A search on the Kinokuniya Book Web, an Amazon.com-like web site, produces eighty hits with Ohta as author or translator. Before 1991, Ohta’s books focused on Marxist theory, with titles like *The Road to World Revolution* (Sekai kakumei e no michi, 1978), and, with Saeki Yōsuke, *The Revolution in Revolutionary Theory* (Kakumei riron no kakumei, 1979). In books like *Introduction to Japan’s Indigenous People* (Nihon genjūmin josetsu, 1981) and *Japan’s Indigenous People and the Emperor System* (Nihon genjūmin to tennōsei, 1982), Ohta concerned himself with Japan’s dwindling Ainu minority; and he wrote about the environmental and animal rights movements in books like *Manifesto of a Japanese Ecologist* (Nihon ekorojisuto sengen, 1986) and *Toward the Elimination of Animal Domestication* (Kachiku seido zenpai-ron josetsu, 1985).

Ohta wrote *Religion and Revolution* (Shūkyō to kakumei) in 1980, but he did not turn his full attention to religion and the occult until 1991, when he published *The Principle of UFOs and Celestial Civilization* (UFO genri to uchū bunmei). Ohta’s first book about Jews appeared in 1991: *The Global Strategy of the Seven Great Jewish Cartels* (Yudaya shichi-dai-zaibutsu no sekai senryaku), which he followed with a similarly titled sequel the following year. Since 1991, Ohta has published at least sixteen books with the word “Yudaya” (Jew) in the title and many more volumes of conspiracy theories that deal with the “Jewish threat.” In addition to his original writings, Ohta has produced numerous translations, including Martin Luther’s *The Jews and Their Lies* (2003) and works by American conspiracy theorists Eustace Mullins and John Coleman.

Today, Ohta Ryū is Japan's most prolific popularizer of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He has also experimented with electoral politics, having founded the Society for Global Restoration (*Chikyū ishin kai*), which one surmises is identical to the Global Restoration Party (*Chikyū ishin tō*), which fielded candidates in the 1992 Upper House Diet election on a platform opposing “the ambitions of the Jews (Pharisees) to conquer the world and turn it into a global pasture for the human race.”⁴⁰ Although the Global Restoration Party polled only 11,883 votes or 0.03 percent of the electorate,⁴¹ it was the first time since 1942 that a candidate for public office in Japan had run on an overtly anti-Jewish platform.

Ohta Ryū is not the only Japanese leftist to be seduced by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In the October 28, 1993 issue of *Sapio*, a biweekly news magazine with a circulation (in 1989) of 230,000, for example, Hirose Takashi asserted that a Jewish conspiracy headed by the Rothschilds controlled the world's media, military, and governments; and he produced a chart to prove it.⁴² But Ohta Ryū's career offers the clearest example of the descent of a Japanese leftist from orthodox communism to a quixotic struggle with imaginary demons. Ohta demonstrates how a left-wing activist was seduced by the *Protocols* and converted, in August Bebel's famous phrase, to “the socialism of fools.”

Asahara Shōkō: Religious Fanatic

By the mid-1980s, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had been popularized in Japan and its central contention that the Jews were threatening to destroy Japan and control the entire world was circulating widely, appearing in best-selling books, widely read periodicals, and in large, gaudy advertisements in mass circulation daily newspapers. A political party had been formed and candidates had run for office on a platform drawn from the *Protocols*. The *Protocols*' conflation of the Jews and Freemasons⁴³; the calumny that Jews control the media and manipulate world governments, including the U.S. and Japanese governments, was frequently repeated; and the identification of the United States as a “Jewish nation” was widely disseminated and, to some extent, believed.

In this milieu appeared Asahara Shōkō. Born Matsumoto Chizuo in Kumamoto in 1955, Asahara was legally blind from birth. Having partial sight in one eye, he nevertheless had an advantage over the completely unsighted pupils at the schools for the blind to which he was sent, and he had high intellectual aspirations. After failing it once, he moved to Tokyo in 1977 to try a second time (also unsuccessfully) to pass the entrance examination for Tokyo University. Always interested in the

⁴⁰ This slogan appeared on a campaign poster.

⁴¹ *Asahi shimbun*, 27 July 1992.

⁴² *Sapio*, 28 Oct. 1993, 20-21.

⁴³ Akama Gō has been writing about the Jewish-Freemason conspiracy and its designs on Japan for almost twenty years. See, *Nihon = Yudaya inbō no kōzū—Nihon chūsū ha furiimeeson ni dō geikeki shite kita ka* (Japan is a construct of the Jewish conspiracy: how Japan's leaders have responded to the Freemasons' threat (Tokyo: Tokuma, 1986); and *Yudaya-furiimeeson saishū mokuroku* (The final revelation of the Jewish-Freemasons) (Tokyo: Raiin shuppan, 2001).

occult, he joined Agonshū, a neo-Buddhist sect, in 1981. In 1982, he was convicted of selling herbal medicines without a permit; and in 1984, he founded Aum Shinsen no Kai (Aum Mountain Hermit Society), the forerunner of Aum Shinrikyō, the Aum Supreme Truth cult.

The turning point in Asahara's career from simple charlatan to megalomaniacal guru came in 1985, when he claimed to have received his defining vision. In January 1986, he made a short trip to India and announced on his return that while there he had achieved enlightenment. In 1987, he changed the name of his sect to Aum Shinrikyō; and in 1989, it was recognized as a tax-exempt religious corporation by the Japanese government.

Asahara immediately began his quest to achieve salvation through a world-encompassing apocalypse. In 1989, he published *From Annihilation to Emptiness* (Metsubō kara kokū e), a bizarre reading of the book of Revelation through the prophecies of Nostradamus and Buddhist casuistry in which Asahara predicts that Armageddon will take place in 1999 and will usher in an age that will be governed by the thought of Adolf Hitler and a resurgent Nazi Party.⁴⁴

Although he does not acknowledge them, Asahara was clearly studying the deluge of antisemitic and neo-Nazi books being published at the time and was anxious to establish the superiority of his version of the apocalyptic predictions that were being made by any number of others. As the journalist Tachibana Takashi has suggested, *From Annihilation to Emptiness* relied heavily on the apocalyptic, neo-Nazi theories of the deranged psychologist Kawajiri Tōru, who, in a 1985 book titled *Scenario for Annihilation* (Metsubō no shinario), had claimed that Hitler was alive and well and living on Alexander I Island off the coast of Antarctica, where he was plotting World War III, which would bring ultimate peace and prosperity to the world.⁴⁵

In February 1990, Asahara stood for election to the Lower House of the Diet, but, like Ohta Ryū, who ran in the same election, he was disastrously defeated, polling only 1,783 votes, even less than his photogenic lieutenant, Joyū Fumihiko.⁴⁶ Stymied at the polls and stunned by the failure of his "astral vision," Asahara hosted an "Armageddon seminar" on Ishigaki Island in the Ryukyu chain in April to plan the implementation of his apocalyptic vision by other means.

Aum began experimenting with weapons of mass destruction the same month by launching an unsuccessful botulism attack in Tokyo. Two years later, Asahara and members of Aum leadership visited Zaire, supposedly to missionize and provide medical assistance, but more likely to try to acquire the Ebola virus, which was then raging in area. In 1993, Aum began the large-scale production of sarin nerve gas and bought an army-surplus helicopter in Russia, presumably to use as a delivery vehicle. On June 27, 1994, Aum released poison sarin gas from a truck in Matsumoto, a city west of Tokyo. This was, as Robert Lifton has pointed out, "the first large-scale

⁴⁴ Asahara Shōkō, *Metsubō kara kokū e* (Tokyo: Aum shuppan, 1989), 40-45.

⁴⁵ Tachibana Takashi, "Aum no 'Kongōjō' to wa nani ka," *Shūkan Bunshun*, 27 July 1995, 165.

⁴⁶ Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 2000), 154-55.

nonmilitary use of nerve gas anywhere on earth.⁴⁷ Seven people were killed and hundreds injured, including judges who were about to rule against Aum in court. Then, on March 20, 1995, Aum members released sarin on the Tokyo subway system, killing twelve people and injuring more than 5,000 others.

In Asahara's paranoid view, Aum was merely responding in kind to the diabolical threat posed by a global conspiracy out to destroy the sect. The theme that characterized Asahara's entire worldview, the scholar Ian Reader has written, was

the notion that Aum was surrounded by hostile forces and that a vast conspiracy bent on world domination was seeking to destroy Aum as part of its fiendish plans.... Aum was the only force left standing between the conspirators (who included the U.S. and Japanese governments, the Freemasons, the Jews and numerous others) and their evil intentions.⁴⁸

This concatenation of Jews, Freemasons, and world governments in a global conspiracy had no other source in Japan but the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Three months before its attack on the Tokyo subway, Aum made its indebtedness to the *Protocols* explicit in the January 1995 issue of *Vajrayāna Sacca*, its organ publication. The issue featured a ninety-five-page "Manual of Fear" (Kyōfu no manyuaru) that quoted liberally from the *Protocols* and officially declared war on the Jewish "world shadow government," which, it asserted, was plotting to "murder untold numbers of people and...brainwash and control the rest."⁴⁹ It identified the then-crown prince and princess (the current emperor and empress); UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ogata Sadako; the head of the neo-Buddhist Sōka Gakkai sect, Ikeda Daisaku; the business consultant Ōmae Ken'ichi, and others as Freemasons (and therefore as Jews) who had "made a pact with the devil."⁵⁰

It is hard not to conclude that, in releasing sarin gas on the Tokyo subway in March 1995, Asahara and Aum saw themselves as retaliating against the vast global conspiracy described in the *Protocols*. Okuda Hirotaka comes to this conclusion in his book *Read Too Many Jewish Conspiracy Books and Aum is What You Get*, and the writer Nakajima Wataru agrees that "it all began with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 39-40.

⁴⁸ Reader, 11.

⁴⁹ *Vajrayāna Sacca*, 6 (25 Jan. 1995): 3. Although dated January, this issue was actually published a month earlier, in December 1994.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

⁵¹ Okuda Hirotaka, *Yudaya o yomu to Aum ga uarete kuru—Aum jiken no nazo o toku* (Tokyo: Kindai bungeisha, 1996). Nakajima Wataru, "Vaachuaru jidai no kaibunsho," in *Bessatsu Takarajima*, vol. 223, 37-48. See especially pp. 42-44.

CONCLUSION

To suggest, as some Japanese and foreign observers have, that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and its epigones could circulate as widely as they did in Japan in the 1980s and 90s without ill effect is to misunderstand the nature of the threat they pose. After Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168 people, and the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001, killing 3,000, it hardly seems necessary to repeat that we live in an age of terrorism, when an individual or fringe group armed with powerful weapons and an extremist ideology can cause untold damage. Mass movements, widespread hatred, and discriminatory government policies are not required for there to be a threat. All that is needed today is a disaffected individual or group, rudimentary weapons of mass destruction, and an enabling ideology. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* provides such an enabling ideology.

The *Protocols* is, to paraphrase Norman Cohn, a warrant for mass murder.⁵² It is not only a justification for killing anyone whom one chooses to define as a "Jew," it is also a catalogue of techniques for how to accomplish this on a large scale. In 1939, Hitler, who "did not care two straws...whether the story [of the *Protocols*] was historically true," told an interviewer that the Jewish conspiracy depicted in the *Protocols* had taught him "political intrigue, the technique of conspiracy, revolutionary subversion; prevarication, deception, [and] organization."⁵³ Heinrich Himmler put it more pointedly when he said, "We [Nazis] owe the art of government to the Jews."⁵⁴

The *Protocols* presents world conquest by a small, disciplined group as a practical possibility. "The delusion of an already existing Jewish world domination," Hannah Arendt observed, "form[s] the basis for the illusion of future...world domination" by others.⁵⁵ The *Protocols*, Arendt says,

present[s] world conquest as a practical possibility [and] implic[s] that the whole affair [is] only a question of inspired or shrewd know-how, and that nobody [stands] in the way of...victory over the entire world but a patently small people, the Jews, who rule...it without possessing instruments of violence—an easy opponent, therefore, once their secret [is] discovered and their method emulated on a large scale.⁵⁶

These lessons were not lost on Asahara Shōkō, who combined them with a Buddhist cosmology and rituals, yoga practices, Christian apocalypticism, and a belief in the prophecies of Nostradamus. By the time he appeared on the scene, the *Protocols* had been circulating in Japan as long as it had been in Germany and the United

⁵² Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*.

⁵³ Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks: A Series of Political Conversations with Adolf Hitler on his Real Aims* (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1939), 235; 238.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 360.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* I have converted the past to the present tense in this quotation and the preceding one in order to emphasize the continuing relevance of Arendt's observations, which is very much in the spirit of her work.

States, and it had played a role in Japanese intellectual life since the early 1920s. In the 1980s, Christian ministers, prominent academics, and left-wing ideologues were promoting the *Protocols* in order to further their diverse agendas. Mass circulation newspapers carried one-third-page ads trumpeting the idea that a Jewish conspiracy was in the process of destroying Japan and taking over the world. It was not necessary for the majority of Japanese to take these calumnies seriously, and in fact they did not, as survey research shows.⁵⁷ But a minority did believe them, and that was enough.

The Japanese case is also instructive and sobering in a larger sense. It suggests that real-world familiarity with Jews is not required for people to be seduced by the *Protocols*. As Jean-Paul Sartre observed, it is not the Jew who creates antisemitism, but antisemites who create Jews.⁵⁸ “Jew” for the antisemite is a free-floating signifier to designate the object of his animosity. Even the emperor of Japan, as Aum showed, can be a “Jew.” Aum’s gassing of the Tokyo subway was, in this sense, not only the first large-scale act of urban terrorism, it was also the first act of 21st-century antisemitism. Today, anyone can be a “Jew,” and everyone, even the Japanese, are at risk.

⁵⁷ See Rotem Kowner, “On Ignorance, Respect and Suspicion: Current Japanese Attitudes Toward Jews,” *Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism (ACTA)*, no. 11 (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University, 1997).

⁵⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, tr. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948, 1965).

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