

Japan

World Role

OFTEN REFERRED to as “the country-in-between,” Japan is the great ambiguity of the Far East—a democracy but not Western, it is Asian but not underdeveloped. Other Asians call it “the bat”—neither bird nor beast—not exactly “Far East” or “Far West” in character.

Since the height of the Cold War, its defense has tied Japan to the United States, by the Security Treaty, a legacy of the American occupation. Thus, despite an informal adherence to the West in matters of foreign policy, the shift of major international tension from Europe to Southeast Asia in the 1960's and Japan's proximity to the Indochinese battlefield have naturally increased its sensitivity to both regional developments and to world problems in general. Moreover it has been difficult for many Japanese today to reconcile their nation's status of overwhelming economic power with a continued low posture in international diplomacy.

Meanwhile, the focus of Japan's foreign policy remained primarily economic, with present diplomatic activity aiming to keep options open rather than adopting firm new commitments. Examples of this approach are Japan's simultaneous trade contacts with Communist China and Taiwan, or with North and South Korea. Only in the Middle East has this policy of *seki bunri* (the separation of politics from trade) faltered. The pressures of oil interests and the influence of the Arab boycott are examined below in the analysis of Japan's political and trade relations with Israel.

Japan's external goals have so far remained unclear, but the miracle of its postwar economic transformation together with a rising popular nationalism would imply a more independent and assertive role in future world political developments.

Japanese-Israeli Relations

Israel was among the first nations to establish diplomatic contacts with Japan, even before the American occupation was formally terminated by the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951. An Israeli trade mission that year prepared the way for opening a legation in December 1952.

Despite the distance between the two countries and the fact that the Eastern Mediterranean was geographically, historically, and culturally a suburb of Europe, interest in Israel has been rapidly rising among the Japanese people. Diplomatic representation was now at the ambassadorial level, and relations were continually expanding in three areas: political, trade, and cultural exchange.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

Japanese were always impressed with the fact that Japan and Israel had some common characteristics. Israeli diplomats stressed the ancient origins and traditions of both countries and the fact that the two were lacking in natural resources and have had to depend on the development of their human skills and know-how. Like Japan, Israel was seen as a unique combination of East and West; in fact, one Japanese called Israel "the most Eastern of the Western Nations," while Japan was "the most Western of the Eastern Nations."

The stable relations between the two countries have been marked by an absence of conflicting political interests. But while Japan's dependence on the Arab Middle East for most of its oil supplies has certainly limited trade relations with Israel, it has consistently maintained a neutral stance in the Arab-Israel conflict.

The recently expressed desire of Japan to obtain a permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations would imply a more assertive role in international politics. Its future policy towards Israel will probably be shaped by Japan's fear that fighting in the Middle East might escalate into global war. Present Japanese policy was a declaration of faith in the United Nations as the key to the problem's solution.

Press opinion during and after the six-day war of June 1967 reflected the supersensitivity of Japan to questions of invasion and territorial integrity. Several editorials compared Israeli conquests with those of Japan on the Chinese mainland in the 1930's. The psychological impact of Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution, renouncing the nation's right to make war, made it very difficult for the Japanese public to conceive of the defensive aspects of any war.

Leftist organizations, such as Gensuikyo (Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs) reacted with complete support for the Arabs. The Maoist student group Sekigunha (Red Army) adopted the slogan "Down with Israel, running-dog of U.S. imperialism!"

On the other hand, some circles tried to compare Israel's situation with that of Japan—a garrison state surrounded by untrustworthy neighbors (in the case of Japan, the Soviet Union and Communist China were perceived as the threats). These groups admired Israel's military prowess and hoped that Japan's self-defense forces could, if necessary, emulate it. Today the same individuals insisted that the USSR's refusal to recognize the fruits

of conquest in the Middle East should be similarly applied to the Japanese Northern islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai, occupied by Soviet forces since the end of World War II. Japan was demanding their return.

The response of business interests was a fear that the closure of the Suez Canal might harm Japan's international trade, affect its supply of oil, and have a long-term impact on the stock market. Some industrialists have expressed the belief that peace in the Middle East would eventually close Arab markets to Japan, with Israel replacing it as the supplier of sophisticated electronic and technical machinery.

Such views expressed by these and other pressure-groups must, to some degree, influence Japan-Israel relations at the political level.

TRADE RELATIONS

Since the opening of the port of Elath to Israeli shipping after the Sinai campaign in 1956, a natural trade route has existed from the Red Sea to the Far East. Indeed, Zim Israel Navigation Company now operated three cargo shipping lines touching at Japanese ports: Pacific Star Line to the United States, Gold Star Line to South and West Africa, and Zim-Elath Line to Israel itself. These contacts, however, have had only a limited impact on the volume of Japanese-Israeli trade.

Among Japanese imports from Israel were phosphates and potash fertilizers, bromide salt and potassium chloride, copper ore, industrial diamonds, and a small amount of fashion wear.

Israeli imports from Japan included mechanical equipment for the textile, chemical, and metal industries, electrical appliances, cameras and other optical equipment, and two 46,000 ton super-tanker ships.

Japanese exports to Israel rose from \$2.5 million in 1960, to \$20 million in 1965 and \$29 million in 1968. Figures for exports to the Arab countries were \$260 million in 1966 and \$376 million in 1968.

The balance of trade between Japan and Israel was almost at equilibrium, while Japanese imports from the 14 members of the Arab League (in 1968, \$1.1 billion, mostly in oil) put Japan at a great disadvantage; the Arabs absorbed only 3 per cent of Japan's total exports.

Thus, after the six-day war, Japan moved to diversify its oil supplies. Yet, despite obtaining 32 per cent of its requirements from Iran, 11 per cent from Indonesia and the Soviet Union, it remained dependent on Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq for 57 per cent of its needs. It would appear that, barring the discovery of large reserves in Southeast Asia or an economical method to transport Alaska's untapped wealth, the Tokyo government would be susceptible to Arab pressures for some time to come.

While Japanese industries have resisted all external political pressures in dealing with both Chinas and both Koreas, the vast conglomerates—descendants of the "Zaibatsu," or family cartels—have shown complete obedience

to the demands of the Arab Boycott Office representative in Tokyo, and have refused any involvement with Israeli companies.

Until 1965 two major electronics firms agreed to do business with Israel indirectly and secretly. In the hope of persuading Japanese companies to deal equally with Israel and the Arab countries, the Israeli government then announced that further trade agreements would have to be direct and open. Complaints by some Jewish-owned United States businesses to their Japanese trading partners have had some effect in breaking the boycott.

Though such well-known brand names as Honda, Sony and Toshiba were beginning to be seen in Israel, a large-scale expansion in trade with Japan would require the Tokyo government to show business a lead in overcoming Arab pressures. The hierarchical pattern of Japanese business and its traditional ties with the political sector meant that few of the smaller companies would have the courage to deal freely with Israel until the huge cartels set a precedent.

An improvement was anticipated in a communiqué issued by Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister Shaie Jurauchi during a visit to Israel in June 1968, which said that "the two governments favor increased economic, technical and cultural cooperation between the two countries . . . [and] agree that political interference in normal trade relations should not be permitted."

But beyond such considerations as Arab oil and rising Japanese investments in the Arab world, the financial potential of the Middle East was simplified in the Japanese business mind as a market of 100 million Arabs as against one of three million Israelis. The decision by Israel not to participate in the "Expo '70" world's fair at Osaka for reasons of economy, while five Arab pavilions displayed their resources and wares, may have reinforced this image in Japanese business circles.

Yet in many respects the two economies complemented each other: Israel's minerals, chemicals, and sophisticated consumer goods for Japan's heavy industry and semi-manufactured goods. Israeli buying power and demand for technologically advanced equipment was potentially greater than that of the Arab nations combined. Furthermore, Israel's geographical location offered, as an alternative to the untrustworthy Suez Canal, a land bridge for trade between Asia and Western Europe.

The options for increased Japanese-Israeli trade thus remained open and depended on the further implementation of Japan's policy of *seki bunri*—the separation of trade from politics.

CULTURAL RELATIONS

The rising interest among Japanese in Israel, and among Israelis in Japan, was marked by the increasing number of books published in Japanese and Hebrew about the two countries. Japanese tourism has been growing by 20 per cent annually, and the Israeli Ministry of Tourism established a new department for Japan and the Far East to serve the more than 2,000

Japanese who visited the country in 1968. "Israel Fashion Weeks" have been held at major Tokyo department stores, exhibitions of modern Israeli art and posters have been arranged under the auspices of a prominent Japanese newspaper (*Yomiuri Shimbun*), the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra has played to thunderous ovations, and a month-long "Israel Festival" at the Tokyo Hilton in 1970 featuring celebrated Israeli entertainers was extended by public demand.

Similarly, exhibitions of Japanalia, especially of flower arrangement, have been very popular in Israel. There was even a permanent Museum of Japanese Art in Haifa.

Growing numbers of young Japanese were studying for degrees at Israel's institutions of higher learning, their interest directed mainly towards religion, Jewish history, Hebrew, archaeology, and sociology. Meanwhile, several Israelis were studying at universities in Japan, mainly in departments of engineering and science, though some have been attracted to judo, karate and classical Japanese dancing.

A course in Japanese was being offered at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, while classes in Hebrew for Japanese were arranged by the Israeli embassy in cooperation with the Jewish Community Center in Tokyo.

Large numbers of Japanese, repelled by the materialism of megalopolises such as Tokyo and Osaka, were being drawn to the concept of the *kibbutz*. The Japan Kibbutz Association was founded in 1962 by Nobuyoshi Tezuka, a Hokkaido factory owner who was interested in the problems of Japanese farmers. After retiring, he took a world tour, stopping in Israel to visit some *kibbutzim*. He was much impressed and thought that Israeli methods, combined with the Buddhist concept of nonpossession, were well applicable to Japanese needs. Though agricultural communes have existed in Japan longer than the *kibbutzim* in Israel, they were always poor and uncoordinated. The functions of the Japan Kibbutz Association were to aid in the development of these communes; to recruit new members for the country's largest collectivist movement (Yamagishikai, now running 22 communal farms); to publicize the concept of collectivism through its monthly journal and its seminars, and to sponsor groups of young Japanese who would spend one year working on Israeli *kibbutzim* at their own expense. Since 1966 several hundred have been through this program, working at Dalia, Ramat Yochanan, and Kiryat Anavim. The Association, claiming a membership of 5,000, hoped to revitalize Japanese farming by reversing the current migration from the land to better paying jobs in the cities. The Israeli *kibbutz* experience coincided with the Japanese interest in varieties of Socialism, but, what was more important, the experience was seen by many as the key to the development of the virgin territory of Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan.

This interest in Israeli Socialism extended also to the Histadrut, Israel's General Trades Union Federation, and several Japanese students and unionists have taken courses in cooperative and labor studies at the Afro-Asian Institute in Tel Aviv. Alumni of these programs have formed the Shalom

Society in Tokyo. Likewise, Japanese experts on problems of development have participated in the conferences on the developing countries held at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot.

Other agencies for promoting cultural exchange programs were the Japan-Israel Friendship Association (JIFA) and the Japan-Israel Women's Welfare Organization (JIWWO). The former was founded in 1958 and reorganized in 1965 under the patronage of Prince Mikasa, the Emperor's younger brother and an expert in biblical archaeology, who has shown great interest in the affairs of the Tokyo Jewish Community. JIFA held regular social meetings, arranged lectures, showed films, and published a bimonthly bulletin. JIWWO was more concerned with work of a charitable nature.

Finally, it may be said that young educated Japanese view Israel from three possible perspectives: as a sociological laboratory that can provide the formulae to cure the social ills caused by Japan's accelerated industrial development; as a source of spiritual revitalization to fill the religious vacuum of the postwar generation; and as an imperialist aggressor in the Middle East with a role like that of the United States in Vietnam.

The groups holding these views comprised a very small segment of the Japanese public, and it is disturbing to note that, though they were the best informed on foreign affairs, they each reflected a distorted image of the Israeli reality. The last view was held by members of the New Left who were victims of Arab propaganda. But representatives of the other two, in projecting their own desires, have exaggerated the relevance of Israel to the Japanese scene beyond any validity.

Other, more realistic, commentators have expressed deep respect for Israel's experiments in nation building and outstanding economic growth, comparing its rate of progress with that of Japan. It has been noted that the first stirrings of the Jewish Renaissance were contemporaneous with the beginnings of Japan's greatest period of development after the Meiji restoration in 1868. Their respective social and economic successes made it possible for both countries to be actively involved in technical assistance and cooperation with many developing countries. It has thus been suggested that while Japan presented one model for the development of its neighbors in Asia, Israel set an alternative example to other emergent nations. One Israeli diplomat compared the two countries as follows: "Though Japan and Israel are situated at opposite ends of Asia, both have faced, and still face in common, the task of synthesizing anew the values of their deep-rooted ancient culture and civilization with the needs of the twentieth century."

Japan and the Jews

From earliest times, the ties of the Jewish people have been with the Middle East and Europe. Thus Judaic concepts reached the Far East in the main indirectly, through Christian missionaries. However, the limited impact of Christianity in Japan resulted in a very superficial knowledge of Jews and

their history. Nevertheless, there were small groups who subscribed to the legend of Japanese origins as descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. This theory has been suggested by such phenomena as the *tallith*-like fringes worn by the High Priest of the Ise Shrine, or the rumor that the Hebrew ineffable name—"I Am That I Am"—was inscribed in the Emperor's mirror located in the same shrine. According to legend, this mirror was one of several objects given to Japan by the gods at the time of its creation; it has not been seen by anyone alive today. A Japanese Christian theologian has also claimed that the phrase "God is a Sun and a Shield" (Psalm 84:12) referred to the common destiny of Japan (Land of the Rising Sun) and Israel (whose symbol is the Shield of David).

It is possible that there were Jews or crypto-Jews among the Portuguese and Dutch merchants who reached the shores of Japan in the 15th and 16th centuries. Not until after 1854, however, when the ports of Japan were opened by Commodore Perry to foreign commerce, did an actual Jewish community establish itself.* It consisted of English, French, German, and Iraqi traders who settled in the ports of Yokohama and Nagasaki.

In 1884, at the initiative of the celebrated Elias Sassoon, the Beth Israel synagogue was founded in Nagasaki, and by 1905 it counted more than 100 family members. Among them were several Jewish prisoners captured in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. The Japanese probably treated them better than the non-Jewish Russian prisoners because of the influence of Jacob Schiff, the American financier who had underwritten several large war loans to Japan. Schiff, delighted at the defeat of the antisemitic Czarist government in Russia, was received in Tokyo by Emperor Meiji in 1906.

Meanwhile the Yokohama Jewish community, too, was growing, particularly after the 1917 revolution in Russia, when waves of refugees fleeing Siberia made this port the main Jewish center of Japan. After 1918 agents of the Hebrew Sheltering & Immigrant Aid Society of America (now United HIAS Service) began transferring Jewish women and children stranded in Siberia through Yokohama to the United States to join their husbands and fathers, who had managed to escape.

In 1923 Yokohama was virtually destroyed in the great Kanto earthquake, and all Jewish survivors moved to the port of Kobe in Western Japan. Sephardim and Ashkenazim founded separate synagogues, but both groups cooperated in maintaining contacts with other Far Eastern Jewish refugee communities, mainly in Shanghai and throughout Manchuria.

After Japan's occupation of Manchuria in 1931, the large Jewish populations in Harbin, Mukden, and Hailar came under the direct administration of the Japanese military authorities.

The facts of this period were rather unclear, and the Jewish survivors, now

* A useful source for the history of Jewish settlement in Japan is Herman Dicker's study, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East: A Century of Jewish Life in China and Japan* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1962).

residents of Tokyo, often contradicted each other in describing the attitudes of Japanese occupation officials. Yet, the over-all impression seemed to be one of respect for the generally benevolent policy of the Japanese military towards the Jews in Manchuria. This was particularly striking at a time of increasing distribution of violently antisemitic propaganda by neighboring communities of White Russian refugees.

Japan's motives behind its policy regarding Jews were clearly propagandistic, economic, and political. Official views of the issue may be summarized as follows:

1. The Japanese foreign office, disturbed about the universally negative reaction to the occupation of Manchuria, sought to mollify world public opinion by showing that its treatment of the Jews was just and equitable.

2. The economic development of Manchuria, as a model of Japanese efficiency and as a source of raw materials for the imperial government, was to be fostered by the exploitation of Jewish international financial connections.

3. A thriving Manchurian Jewish community would compete for allegiance with the Russian Jewish region of Birobidjan, which lay across the Soviet border in Siberia. Though the Jewish refugees were mainly Russian-speaking, the Japanese always made a distinction between them and other Russians.

Efforts to obtain Jewish support increased after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese conflict in 1937, at a time when international goodwill toward Japan had virtually disappeared. In 1938 and 1939 the Tokyo government sponsored several Far Eastern conferences on the Status of Jews in Manchuria for the purpose of coordinating the activities of all Jewish communities under its control and of obtaining a better image abroad, especially in the United States. Also, the belief in the American government's susceptibility to its Jewish electorate, a belief strongly reinforced by Nazi propaganda, led the Japanese occupation authorities to declare their support for a Jewish national home in Palestine. At the same time, they arranged for Jewish leaders in Manchuria to visit the United States so that they could inform American Jewry of Japan's tolerance towards their brethren. Such measures were calculated to influence Washington to relent in its gradually hardening policy toward the China issue.

The outbreak of World War II had seen the closure of most European ports to the flood of refugees then fleeing the advancing German armies. By July 1940 the Trans-Siberian Railroad was the only route open to the "Free World." Those Jews who somehow obtained transit visas through Japan on their way to a permanent destination were permitted to remain in Kobe for a maximum of ten days. This was not long enough for many of these refugees who had to await permits for the next leg of their journey, and the local Jewish community managed to obtain from the Japanese authorities quite a number of visa extensions. A total of almost 5,000 European Jews, including the 300 rabbis and students of the famed Mirer Yeshiva,

were helped in this way. Personal relationships that were developed between some of the Jewish residents of metropolitan Japan and officials of the Tokyo military government also influenced Japanese policy towards the Jews of Manchuria and the 20,000 Jewish refugees in Shanghai.

The generally fair treatment of Jews in areas under Japanese administration continued even after Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in 1940, when Nazi pressure on Japan to adopt the Nuremberg Laws began to grow in intensity. Though Jewish citizens of Britain and the United States were interned after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 German liaison officers (agents of the Gestapo) in Japan achieved only very limited success in convincing their ally of the existence of a Jewish danger and the need to institute antisemitic measures. On the contrary, there was the quaint tale of an offer made by a senior officer in the Japanese military government to a prominent Jewish resident of Japan to establish Hawaii as a Jewish national home after the anticipated victory over the United States. It was never ascertained whether this was a serious suggestion, and if so, whether other members of the Tokyo government knew of it.

Many Jews in Japanese-administered areas believed that collaboration with the authorities was vital for their self-preservation. However, there was little doubt that they were delighted at the defeat of the German-Japanese alliance.

When the war ended, the American occupation forces brought to Japan a larger number of Jews than had ever come to the country. American Jewish soldiers and their chaplains joined with Jewish civilians who had survived the war to reestablish religious and communal institutions.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Civic Status and Composition

It must be emphasized that, though many members of the Jewish communities have resided in Japan for many years, they were Jews *in* Japan and not Jews *of* Japan. They were foreigners, without Japanese citizenship, who must annually have their visas extended at the pleasure of the Japanese government.

There were in 1970 approximately 800 Jews in Japan, exclusive of servicemen and their families at the various American bases throughout the country. Most of the Jews were affiliated with the community centers in Tokyo and Kobe. While the Tokyo community consisted of 150 families, or about 400 persons, the Kobe community was smaller. Both were composed of Jews from widely divergent backgrounds.

The make-up of the Jewish Community Center of Tokyo (JCC) was as follows:

1. American citizens residing in Japan on contract as representatives of United States companies, who comprised almost two-fifths of the members.

Though most of these came with their families, there were cases of long-term residents, e.g., ex-members of the U.S. occupation forces, who, to all intents and purposes, settled in the country and took Japanese wives. In the main, the Japanese spouses converted to Judaism and were active participants in community affairs.

2. Ashkenazi Russian-speaking former residents of Manchuria, many of whom spent the war years in Japan. In 1945 some of these families left the Far East for the United States, Israel, or Australia, and returned to Japan in the early 1950's as citizens of one of those countries. Other refugees of Russian origin arrived from Shanghai and Tientsin after the 1949 Communist victory in China.

3. A small group of French-speaking Sephardi Jews of Syrian and Egyptian origin.

4. A growing number of Israelis; officials, such as embassy personnel, Zim Shipping Line representatives, and others; businessmen mainly involved in import-export; students on Japanese government scholarships, and a miscellaneous group including several aficionados of judo and karate. Israeli citizens now constituted one-fourth of the JCC's total membership.

The Kansai Jewish community with its center in Kobe was a similarly polyglot group of Jews from widely varying backgrounds. Essentially more transient in character, they were engaged in business revolving around the activities of Kobe port and the industries of nearby Osaka.

The pre-war communities at Yokohama and Nagasaki were now defunct, though the Jewish cemeteries in those cities are open to inspection—the latter having been only recently rediscovered and refurbished.

Communal Organization and Religious Activities

In 1948 the Tokyo Jews organized themselves as the Jewish Community of Japan and began to look for an appropriate building for their communal activities. In 1953 a group led by the late A. Ponve, former chairman of the Kobe Refugee Committee, purchased a large property in a fashionable downtown area of Tokyo. In the same year, the community was incorporated as a non-profit religious corporation, with an executive board and president to be elected annually by the membership. Maintenance costs for the center and communal activities would be met from membership dues and private contributions.

The new building was redesigned to provide a synagogue, dairy restaurant, library, classrooms, lounges and an outdoor swimming pool. Religious activities included regular synagogue services on the Sabbath and on all holy days. The religious attitudes and observance of the members varied widely, but the ritual adopted was somewhere between Orthodoxy and Conservatism. Though there was no *mehitzah* (physical separation of men and women), it was customary for men and women to be seated separately. The Sabbath *kiddush*, which was, in fact, a light sit-down meal, gave Jewish visitors to

Japan an opportunity to meet members and learn something of the community's activities.

The community maintained a *Hevra Kaddisha* (burial society) and a Jewish section in the Yokohama cemetery. Other religious facilities included a *mikvah* (ritual bath) in the center, and assistance in circumcisions, *bar mitzvat*, and weddings. Wines and *matzot* were sold on the occasion of festivals, and kosher meat was imported in bulk from the United States.

Rabbi Marvin Tokayer has been the spiritual leader of the Tokyo Jewish Community since September 1968. He was the former rabbi of Temple Israel in Great Neck, Long Island, and at one time chaplain of the U.S. Military Forces in Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan. A graduate of Yeshiva University, with a master's degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Rabbi Tokayer spoke Japanese and worked assiduously to represent the Jews in Japan in dealing with the authorities and Japanese people. He was also responsible for the rediscovery and refurbishing of the gravestones at the Jewish cemetery in Nagasaki. He worked in cooperation with the U.S. Armed Forces Jewish Chaplains in Camps Tachikawa, Zama, and Yokosuka.

Other prominent communal figures included: Walter Citrin, president of the Tokyo JCC; Shaul N. Eisenberg, past president of JCC and one of the major contributors to its activities, now residing in Israel; Theodore Cohen, the center's secretary; Victor Moshe, president of the Kansai Jewish Community Center in Kobe, where a new synagogue was opened in 1969, and Mischa Ionis, secretary of the Japan-Israel Friendship Association.

Throughout the Jewish world there have been rumors of mass conversions by Japanese to Judaism. It was true to some degree that the shedding of the mantle of divinity by the Emperor at the end of World War II left a religious void. The search for faith ended for some Japanese in a superficial syncretism of Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity, and for many in the working classes in adherence to the highly politicized Sokka Gakkai (Value Creation Society) movement—an offshoot of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism. A number of small esoteric religio-ideological factions have also appeared, some of which have shown an interest in Judaism. However, these were mainly Christianity-oriented missionary groups, and their encounters with the Jewish community have been aimed more at recruitment than proselytism.

Conversions of Japanese to Judaism have been very rare, and usually a result of mixed marriage. In fact, it was not uncommon throughout the Orient for a wife to adopt the faith of her husband as a part of her new duties.

There have been, however, two highly publicized Japanese conversions worthy of mention here—those of Dr. Setsuzo Kotsuji and Rabbi E. Okamoto.

Dr. Kotsuji, who has taken the name Abraham, explained in his book *From Tokyo to Jerusalem* that his youthful conversion from Shinto to Christianity had never really satisfied him. Though he had studied in California for his Ph.D. in theology, he first made contact with Jews while working for the

South Manchuria Railroad Company in Japanese-occupied Manchuria during World War II. He claimed to have saved many Jewish refugees from deportation, but opinions among survivors regarding his role during this period were mixed. In 1959, with the help of the World Union for the Propagation of Judaism, he was sent to Israel for circumcision and formal conversion. He presently resides in New York.

Rabbi Okamoto completed his rabbinical studies at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. He then went to England for further studies, and was likely to take an academic position on his return to Japan.

Proselytization was by no means encouraged by the JCC. And although curious Japanese visitors were frequently seen attending Sabbath services, it was most unlikely that there would ever be more than rare and isolated cases of conversion in Japan.

Educational Activities

A religious Sunday school was begun in 1956 as a joint venture of the JCC and the United States military Jewish chaplaincy. The current program included an introductory course, three courses in Jewish history and two in Jewish festivals and religion. These services were being provided without cost to the children of members, and the present enrollment was about 60.

There were also weekday classes in Hebrew, and youth groups for teenagers and subteenagers. For adults, there was a course in Judaism for Japanese wives, and weekly seminars in Jewish history and Bible. The language of instruction throughout was English.

The faculty was headed by Rabbi Tokayer and consisted of his Israeli-born wife, the wife of one of the U.S. military chaplains, Israeli students, and other qualified members of the community.

The center's library included a Judaica collection of over 800 volumes on all aspects of Judaism, in English, French, and Hebrew.

Social and Cultural Activities

Like other private expatriate associations serving the Tokyo foreign community, such as the American Club and the British Royal Society of St. George, the Jewish Center provided a vigorous social life for its members. Recreational facilities on the premises included swimming pool and billiard room. Parties and dances were held frequently, but especially on appropriate Jewish festivals and Israel's Independence Day.

Regular cultural activities were offered in the form of chamber music and almost weekly movies, often Japanese classics or Israeli features. The center also offered lectures by prominent Jewish visitors to Japan, recently by Rabbi Shlomo Goren, chief chaplain of the Israeli defense forces, and Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress. Similarly, issues of

local interest and aspects of Japanese culture were often the topic of discussion at the monthly meeting of the Young Couples' Club.

The women among the members sponsored an annual center bazaar to raise money for a Japanese orphanage. Usually this event was honored by the presence of one of the princesses of the Imperial family. Other charitable programs were arranged under the auspices of the Japan-Israel Women's Welfare Organization and the Japan-Israel Friendship Association (p. 465) to provide scholarships for Japanese to study in Israel and funds for Japanese relief and welfare. There was also an annual United Israel Appeal campaign.

Though a major aim of the Jewish community of Japan was to represent the image of the Jew and Judaism to the host government, another concern of its members, since 1948, has been to foster good relations between their country of residence and Israel. Since many Jewish residents of Japan were Israeli citizens, the existence of an Israeli embassy in Tokyo has permitted broad cooperation between JCC and the diplomatic mission in communal, social, and charitable activities.

Discrimination and Antisemitism

The Japanese people were among the most tolerant of religious belief and expression. The only breach in this tradition was the deportation of foreign missionaries and the persecution of Japanese converts to Christianity by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1616. This was a political campaign to prevent the further intrusion of Western influence. However, Buddhism and Confucianism, have flourished alongside Shinto, the indigenous religion, since their introduction from the Chinese mainland. It is true that under the military regime of the 1930's and during World War II Christianity was again held suspect. But here, again, anti-Christian statements were rooted in Asian xenophobia and politically motivated against the West.

The small Jewish community of Japan lived in its own world, as did most of the foreign business communities in the country, and there has been little or no integration, assimilation, or interchange of values between the Jewish and the Japanese cultures. This has resulted in a very superficial and garbled knowledge of Jews and Judaism among educated Japanese, and almost total ignorance among the people at large.

In general, three stereotypes existed of Jews. They were known as the people who have produced the most outstanding businessmen and intellectuals in the West; who had been most cruelly persecuted by Nazi Germany (*The Diary of Anne Frank* was one of the most frequently shown foreign films on Japanese television); who established the State of Israel and were waging victorious wars against the Arabs.

The first antisemitic literature to arrive in Japan came from White Russian refugees in Manchuria soon after World War I, and proclaimed the dangers of an international Jewish plot. In the heyday of the Japanese alliance with Nazi Germany such material was imported in bulk, and Japanese translations

of the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were widely circulated. But this propaganda had little meaning in the context of official relations with Jews under Japanese administration. A recent example of such sentiments appeared in a book called *Japan Unmasked*, wherein its author, Ichiro Kawasaki, a diplomat who had formerly served in Poland, made a few uncomplimentary references to Jews. The book was also a caustic, unflattering characterization of Japan and its people. After publication, Kawasaki, then ambassador to Argentina, was relieved of his post.

This was a rare and isolated case, and had no impact on the Jewish residents of Japan who, in fact, were aware of no religious discrimination whatsoever. It cannot be emphasized too much that the average Japanese generally regarded all foreigners with great curiosity, but with little awareness of religious or national distinctions.

With rapid increases in the publication of Japanese-language books and articles dealing with the Jews, interest grew and distorted images were clarified. The men responsible for these publications were the few Japanese scholars of Bible, Hebrew, and Jewish religion. Special mention should be made of Professor Masayuki Kobayashi of Waseda University, who published several studies on Jewish history; the most outstanding among them were *The Jewish Problem During the French Revolution* and *The Jewish Policy of Frederick the Great*. He has also translated into Japanese Norman Bentwich's *Israel* and Harry M. Orlinsky's *Ancient Israel*. A Japanese language best-seller entitled *Japanese and Jews* had sold 150,000 copies and was awarded the Soicha Oya nonfiction prize. The author, who called himself Isaiah ben-Dasan, was thought to be a Jew born in Kobe, but he has kept his identity a mystery. Other books, mainly on Israel, written by young Japanese upon their return from a year of work on *kibbutzim* were too numerous to list here.

STANLEY T. SAMUELS