

# TRANSLATIONS OF ANTISEMITISM: JEWS, THE CHINESE, AND VIOLENCE IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL INDONESIA

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‘Tell me,’ he says. ‘I’ve often wondered how you know . . . how you recognize one another. I mean, how did you know that [he] was a Jew? Did you give each other signals, or are there secret signs, or what? I mean, what do you do when you are introduced?’

. . .

I raise my trouser leg. ‘That’s what we do,’ I say, ‘we show each other our cloven hooves.’<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

This is a history of the Jewish community and antisemitic discourse in the colonial East Indies and modern Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> The topic was inspired by my research experiences in West Sumatra, where the triumvirate of introductory questions included ‘what’s your religion,’ along with the usual prying into nationality and marital status. Judaism is not among the officially recognised religions in Indonesia. During the New Order period, when I conducted doctoral research (1994–1996), there were only five legitimate religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, with local indigenous beliefs tolerated though not sanctioned. Foreign Jews encouraged one another to proclaim themselves ‘Buddhist’ or better yet ‘Unitarian’ rather than face the prejudicial and bureaucratic headaches that could come with being *Yahudi*. I was certainly attuned to ‘Malay’ antisemitism. Living in a boarding house across the street from a

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<sup>1</sup>Clive Sinclair, quoted in Gilman (1991: 242).

<sup>2</sup>While I was formulating this project in 1998 I was fortunate to have both Benedict Anderson and James Siegel read and comment on my original proposal, titled ‘Translations of antisemitism: violence and minorities in Indonesia’. Professor Siegel similarly engages many of my proposal’s sources and themes (including the Jewish-Chinese connections) in his fascinating and inspired article, ‘*Kiblat* and the Mediatic Jew,’ Siegel (2000). Preliminary research in Indonesia in 1999 was funded by a grant from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. Open lectures on Judaism at the State Islamic University in Jakarta and the Institut DIAN/Interfidei in Yogyakarta in 1999 and 2000 further helped me to refine my ideas. A version of this paper was given with the panel *Hidden Forces: Lost Histories of the Netherlands East Indies* at the AAS Annual Meeting, San Diego, 12 March 2000. While doing research Michael Leifer and Moshe Yegar generously provided materials and suggestions from afar, and Dadi Darmadi, Guy Sharett and Daniel Ziv helped with contacts and concepts in Jakarta. While in Berkeley correspondence with Joan Bieder, Raimy Che-Ross, Matthew Cohen, Djoko Pitono Hadiputro, Margaret Kartomi, Didi Kwartanada, and Arjan Onderdenwijngaard has been essential in thinking through this often elusive topic. Marianne Dacy of the Archive of Australian Judaica, University of Sydney, deserves my deepest gratitude for making the Hirsch Munz Collection accessible to me from Berkeley. Most of all the friendship and guidance of the historian Langgeng Sulistyio Budi of the National Archive in Jakarta made the research not just possible, but a pleasure.

mosque forced me to listen to Sunday diatribes against Israel and the Jewish Menace; bookstores regularly featured antisemitic literature in their displays. But I felt I had a responsibility to be truthful about my religion – I hoped for truth from Minangkabau friends and teachers, and believed that starting a relationship with a lie would not be wise. I also refused to be cowed by social pressure and become self-censoring so as not to cross the SARA laws (forbidding discussion of ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group interaction). Even though in faith I tend to what Indonesians would call *abangan* – more cultural than scriptural in my religious identity – I confessed that I was an unrepentant *Yahudi*. Particularly while doing research in Yogyakarta I was constantly asked about the influence of the ‘Jewish lobby’ on the American government. When I revealed there that I was in fact one of those fearsome Jews the Gadjah Mada students would invoke a litany of allegations regarding Jewish wealth, control of the media, and antipathy towards Muslims. Denial on my part only served to confirm my membership in the ‘conspiracy’. The superficiality of my own understanding of Judaism made these discussions unproductive and I began to do peripheral research into my own identity, in order to make *Yahudi*-ness meaningful in an Indonesian context.

When I returned from the field I set about cataloguing the claims made by the Indonesian antisemites. The most interesting were put forth by an Indonesian politician in a series of two booklets entitled *Fact and data on Jews in Indonesia* (Saidi 1993, 1994).<sup>3</sup> The author describes a Zionist-Masonic-Theosophical conspiratorial network established under Dutch colonialism and still active today. This thread had been picked up by the national magazines *Ummat* and *Media Dakwah* in articles that trace the colonial Zionist presence and the sinister role of unseen Jews in modern Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> I initially assumed this was typical alarmist rhetoric borrowed from Saudi and Kuwaiti propaganda; that there is not and never was a legitimate Jewish community in Indonesia. Since the Indonesian government requires that all citizens and official visitors claim a religion, and Judaism is not legally recognised, in census enumeration Jews cannot exist in Indonesia. There has been very little written on the history of a Jewish community in Indonesia; common wisdom has the colonial Dutch Jews being well-assimilated and non-practicing. So I assumed that the Jewish community was not an important historical force in either the colonial Indies or Indonesia. I believed that Indonesia was another case of ‘antisemitism without Jews’ – a peculiar discourse to which I will return.

While doing research on the Minangkabau press I was surprised, then, to stumble over a *Zionist* newspaper that began publication in Padang in 1926 (Creveld 1926).<sup>5</sup> And I was even more surprised to read that the Zionist meetings were held in Masonic Lodges and Theosophical Halls. Following the leads in *Erets Israel* research indicates that there was in fact a substantial number of Jews, of various nationalities, active in the colonial Indies. With the Jews came antisemitism.

Through the late 1920s and 1930s the *Vaderlandsche Club* of Medan funnelled plantation monies to and was eventually superceded by the Dutch Nazi Party (Reid 1979: 38–40). The Japanese occupation saw native Indonesians participating in politics and propaganda, and prominent intellectuals translated antisemitic discourse in Indonesian.

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<sup>3</sup>A novel by Saidi (1996) illustrates his claims, tracing this network of Theosophical Jews from the colonial era through the late 1970s, in the form of a hounded romance between a Jewish woman and Indonesian Islamic activist.

<sup>4</sup>For analyses of these journals see Liddle (1996) and Hefner (1997). Neither article historicises the context of Islamic antisemitism beyond the 1970s.

<sup>5</sup>This monthly newspaper was first published in Padang, and later moved to Bandung. It only closed in 1942 with the Japanese occupation.

After the occupation, the Ashkenazim and most of the Sephardim left the Malay world. Many of the Eurasian Jews of Surabaya and Batavia emigrated to California, where, based in Los Angeles, they continue to contribute to the journal *De Indo* and maintain an Indonesian-Jewish identity. The Sephardic Jews of Singapore still support two synagogues, and one of their community, David Marshall, was the nation's first chief minister (Marshall 1986). The number of Jews in Indonesia today is extremely small and growing smaller – in the past year leaders of the Jakarta and Surabaya communities have left Indonesia for the United States (Shanson 1994).<sup>6</sup>

J.S. Furnivall described colonial Indonesia as a 'plural society' where the various communities (Dutch, native, and 'foreign oriental' in official categorisation) associated in particular public places but maintained a strict separation of identities. This was not true for the Jews. Colonial Dutch Jews would interact with eastern European, Armenian, Baghdadi and even Chinese Jews. And the space of interaction was often trading floors or Masonic and Theosophical halls – elitist but ideologically universalist and humanitarian institutions. The Jewish community of Southeast Asia was centred in Singapore and headed by the Sassoon family. Its networks cut across and often broke down the proto-national colonial boundaries.<sup>7</sup> These major Jewish families were active in broad-based trade networks, and especially the distribution of opium, living and thinking beyond the tinted borders of imperial maps (Trocki 1999: ch. 6). It is largely assumed that these Indonesian Jews disappeared with the Dutch, but this is not the case.

The Indonesian Jews reappeared in international media following the attempted recuperation of their community in the early 1990s through the efforts of the Australian Lubavitch movement. In the autumn of 1990 two Lubavitchers entered the synagogue in Surabaya, and with kosher foods, a Torah, and educational materials, brought the remnants of the Indo-Jewish community together for Sukkoth (the harvest festival).<sup>8</sup> Through the 1990s expatriate Jews in Jakarta took an active role in fundraising, and were particularly interested in building a wall around the Jewish cemetery in Surabaya. But the synagogue-keeper there hoped that the foreseeable normalisation of Israel-Indonesia relations under President Abdurrahman would bring a surge of Israeli tourism, and that her Madurese neighbours could be evicted in order to build a Jewish guest house.<sup>9</sup>

There is a common formulation that Indonesia and Malaysia are cases of 'anti-Semitism without Jews' (Leifer 1989: 62–65). In a recent collection of essays comparing European Jews and Southeast Asian Chinese, the Southeast Asian Jews are present only as phantoms. 'In Malaysia and Indonesia today, the crudest racial formulations of the demonology of modernization are directed against a "Jewish" minority known only as a theoretical construct.' The essay continues, asserting that since the 1970s schooling in Islamic countries '... exposed Southeast Asians to explanations for Muslim weakness deriving from the Middle East ...'. (Reid 1997: 63).

These statements are incorrect. For while Indonesian antisemitism exists (and in the post-*Reformasi* period started to thrive), it remains popularly an anti-Israelism. What

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<sup>6</sup>David Mussry, the scion of the Jakarta community, and Rivka Sayers, who tended the synagogue in Surabaya, have reportedly both emigrated to America.

<sup>7</sup>Singaporean Jewry's ties to Penang, Batavia, and Surabaya are discussed in Nathan (1986: 171–77).

<sup>8</sup>See *Lubavitch* (1992). Of course, the community was hardly as deteriorated as the Lubavitchers claimed, and their visit is today largely forgotten.

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Rivka Sayers at the Synagogue in Surabaya (Jl. Kayoon 4–6). Under intense criticism the President backed down from an early promise to create ties with Israel, and so the throngs of young Israeli tourists never materialised. It should be noted that group tours from Israel do visit two Indonesian sites: Bali and Tanah Toraja.

real antisemitism one encounters is entirely European in origin, brought to Indonesia in the colonial period and during the Japanese occupation, and only occasionally re-invigorated by Middle Eastern anti-Zionism. It is not a new phenomenon. Furthermore, Indonesia has never been a place without Jews. Jews were a concern of the colonial regime and a presence in colonial trade and society. Their supposed absence or 'invisibility' is a result of colonial and national policy and is easily dispelled. Research on the Jewish community allows for insight into both Dutch colonial and Indonesian national ideologies, and however small in number this community should not be lightly dismissed.<sup>10</sup>

### **East Indies' Jewry**

The presence of early Jewish settlement and trade in the Dutch *West* Indies is well-documented (Israel 1998). The Paramaribo synagogue in Surinam is hailed as the oldest in the Americas (Cohen 1982). The West India Company encouraged and funded Jewish settlement. But there is extraordinarily little written about Jews in the East Indies. Early accounts are largely incidental, for example, 'Being at *Atcheen* in 1762, I enquired particularly of a Jew linguist, named *Abraham*, why the *orankayos* (men of rank and substance) were not allowed to trade freely, as they did many years before' (Forrest 1792: 39). But the Indies Jewish population comprised more than a few stray Abrahams. The reason for the absence of an organised East Indian Jewish community is addressed in an important though obscure book, Israel Benjamin's narrative of his travels among the Asian Jewish diaspora in the mid-19th century (Benjamin 1859).

Benjamin did not visit the Dutch East Indies, but he wanted to do so. He had arranged support from the Amsterdam and Rotterdam Rabbinate, who petitioned the Dutch government on his behalf, that he might be permitted to 'undertake a journey to the East-Indies in the Netherlands (Java), in order to establish there a Jewish community; for although a considerable number of our brethren dwell there, no such community is as yet in existence' (Benjamin 1859: 316). The letter of petition, written in May of 1857 and signed by B.S. Bernstein (Chief-Rabbi of the Jewish Community at the Hague), Ib. van Ib. Ferares (Chief-Rabbi of the Portuguese Jewish Community at the Hague), and Dr. J. Isaacsohn (Chief-Rabbi of Rotterdam), is extraordinary. The letter mentions specifically the state-supported establishment of the Jewish community in the West Indies, speculating on why there is no such community in the East Indies. Only 'solitary adventurers, mostly from the lower class' comprised the Jews of the Netherlands East Indies. Such men were not suited to establish a religious community, the Rabbis proclaim. However with the dissolution of the VOC, there was now a need to provide for the burgeoning population of East Indian Jews. The Rabbis requested 'colonial funds', and that Benjamin be allowed to undertake a preliminary community survey. The reasons set down by the three Rabbis were compelling. They argued that there was a need to establish a synagogue on Java, if only that the Jews attain parity with the other religions who already had houses of worship provided by the state. Tropical Europeans in particular require 'moral influence and powerful remedies for the restraint of human passions, and the checking of immorality'. There was also a need to encourage industry among colonial Jews, who were often obstructed by 'old prejudices' and hindered by antisemitism. At the very least, the East

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<sup>10</sup>James T. Siegel also has a stake in reaffirming the invisibility and insignificance of the Jews who live in Indonesia. He asserts: 'Practically speaking, there are no Jews in Indonesia' [p. 9], continuing, 'As soon as the Jew appears in Indonesia he disappears' [footnote 36 p. 25] and concluding, 'It is not altogether surprising to find anti-Semitism without Jews' [p. 40]. Siegel (2000).

Indian Jews deserved a synagogue and a cemetery, the Rabbis wrote (Benjamin 1859: 321–31).

Benjamin received letters of recommendation for the trip from Professors of Oriental Languages at Leiden and Delft. He secured a waiver so that he would not have to prove possession of the substantial sum of money that was a standard prerequisite for issuance of a travel permit to the colony. But still the government stalled, and the trip was eventually cancelled.

While Benjamin was thwarted another Jewish traveller, Jacob Saphir, was successful in reaching the Jews of the Indies. Saphir was in Singapore in June 1861, waiting for a ship to take him to Australia.<sup>11</sup> Eventually he was advised to try his luck in Batavia, where vessels carrying produce to Australia are far more plentiful. Saphir spent seven weeks in Batavia and was able to investigate the deplorable spiritual condition of the Jews there (Saphir 1874: 119–23).<sup>12</sup> In his Hebrew-language account he includes a letter to his colleagues:

Shalom to Beit Ya'akov [a girls' school in Jerusalem]! Last month I told you of the journey, now I will tell you of my safe arrival here. I am alone in this garret for a month now, I know no one and no one knows me. I have yet to find a ship bound for Australia, and each day seems like a year. My expenses here (for survival alone) are very great and 1 Guilder a day is not enough even for bread and water. After inquiring I learned that there are many Jews here but they do not call themselves Israel and their sons have all but forgotten that they come from the loins of Judea. Of these are some twenty households, all rich European merchants from Holland and Germany, who initially came here to do military work for the Dutch kingdom. For since Holland's government first came to rule this land it has not given permission to Europeans civilians to reside here aside from military men who live out their lives and their sons' lives at work, or for great merchants who can afford to meet a set residence payment, and so are useful to the land. And these Jews are also of three sorts: some are rich merchants, some are military workers, and some have finished their military service, or their sons have, for in Holland there are merchants who wish to trade in this land but cannot afford the set fee, so they hire themselves out to the king to be sent here and, while soldiers, also do trade. Few have Hebrew wives whom they brought along or married later, but most have native or Christian wives, and give away their daughters, too. They have here neither synagogue nor cemetery, neither teacher nor cantor, no slaughterer and no mohel [circumciser]. They are mixed with the people of the land in all they do. Even though in their hearts they are Jewish and not heretics, God forbid. In word, too, they do not deny their faith to those they know, but they have abandoned the signs that signify Israel, for they do not circumcise their sons, and say 'we are forced to this, as we have no mohel here'. I told them that I will circumcise all who wish to enter the covenant of Abraham, our father, and they answered

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<sup>11</sup>The date of Saphir's visit to Batavia has been confirmed by L.F. Brakel (1975: 88–89).

<sup>12</sup>Preliminary translation with Yeheshva Shay Sayer, April 2003. Further translation advice from Paul Hamburg, April 2004.

that they hold to a custom of Israel from Holland and Germany that a mohel needs a certificate and authorisation from the Rabbi and the government. Their sons learn not book or even prayer of Israel and so are ashamed of their fathers' faith and deny it. More people like these are found in Semarang and Surabaya, great merchant cities in this state, and all do the same. Their descendants will no longer know that they come from the loins of Judea, and the name of Israel shall not be remembered by them, Forbid! So too did many children of Israel interbreed in ancient days in the lands of Madai and India, a practice at times forced and at times committed willingly, both from great labour and burden or from happiness and plenty.

Most honourable amongst them in this city of Batavia is an old merchant who learned the knowledge of God in his youth, William Hachgezunt [Wolf Samuel van Hogezaand] of Amsterdam. Time's revolutions brought him and his wife to this place, and now they have sons and daughters, and some have married locally. Not one of the sons was circumcised or learned the prayers of Israel. The eldest son recently married a Jewish woman of fine descent who came from Amsterdam with her brothers. In her father's home she kept the Jewish faith and was meticulous and kosher, and here she too is like a forgotten child, and even had a son and did not circumcise him. I also came to know an honourable young man who recently came here as a military clerk and started a great house of trade, Abraham Zeehandelaar of the Haag. His father is also a great merchant in his town, and he showed me the talliths and tefillin and Siddur for prayer that he still has with him, but can he keep his religion alone? Soon the moths shall gnaw him hollow. He sighed to me: what will he do when the day comes when it is time for him to marry and he too will be forced, forbid, to take a woman from the people of the land instead of a daughter of our people. Along with him I met two brothers, rich merchants of young age from FFDM [Frankfurt-on-Main] and a great man from Hanover and more, and more. And others who hide their faces and are ashamed to name the house of their fathers – for they have already settled and surrendered their faith. My stomach turned and my heart like a steam pot boiled the blood in my veins. How, in this place of freedom, under a government of grace and mercy such as the kingdom of Holland that granted freedom to the Jews to keep the faith of the Torah of God, and here with all the riches of this land in their hands? From this place of plenty and joy they cast away all institutions of their faith and relieve themselves of the burden of the kingdom of heaven with no regret! Not so with our Baghdadi brothers in India who, wherever even ten of them gather, they first set up a synagogue and a slaughterer and a congregation for themselves, and do not kick away the commandments of God in disgust. Many times I chastised these Jews of Java, saying: 'learn a lesson from the Mohammedans, who also live in this land and who also came from a distant land, from Arabia, from Miskut [perhaps Muscat], from Hadhramaut, etc. . . . they too grew rich like you. Won't you learn shame from them,

observe how they keep their faith in all rules and minutiae even here, and separate themselves from the people of the land wherever they reside, and build mosques, and know no shame in keeping their faith, for all people follow in the name of their God. And you, Sons of Israel, you whose fathers were never ashamed to say that they are slaves of God and called out his name wherever they went . . . . You, is it not enough that you do not observe the laws of the living God, you are even ashamed to say that you are Hebrews? Then the old man I mentioned above argued that they have already awakened to this situation, and are acting. That first among them a rich old man named [Benjamin Josua] Leon of Amsterdam, who sanctified a room in his home as a house of prayer, now on high holidays gathers all the Jews in the city, even those working by permit of the governor, to pray there. And the previous year he travelled to Amsterdam and received a permit from the government that allots the Jews a place for a synagogue and a cemetery, and returning he brought with him talliths and tefillin and Siddurs for prayer etc. He wished to found for them a kosher community, but the devil came by way of his good intentions, for not many days after his return he took the path of all mortals, and with his advanced years so too his aspirations were taken away and there is no man amongst us to continue in his footsteps. And this old man added that he still expects that the day will come when these things come to pass. Yet, what can a desiring soul give or receive if it refuses to act? How easy it would be to found a congregation for Israel here, and yet no one rises up and hardens to the task! This man also told me that the aforementioned Leon, before his death, ordered his Christian wife, whom he took here (she is of Dutch aristocracy and gave him two sons and two daughters), that a year after his death she should go with her children to Amsterdam and with them convert, and this she promised him. Once this man brought me to the house of the widow, who was mourning her husband, and I saw mezuzahs set in the doorways. She showed me the splendid room that her husband established as a house of prayer with the prayer-shawls and tefillin and books that he brought with him for the people who would come and pray in it. Only a book of Torah was missing, for it was being sent from Amsterdam. I spoke with her (for she knows German and English and is learned and honourable) and she said that she is about to leave for Amsterdam to convert as she promised. I gave her encouragement for this long trip. She was honoured by my visit to her large garden home, and asked me to stay there until evening. In the evening she called me to the table to dine, and since she knew that I would not eat with them, she said that she had prepared for me only coffee without milk, and bread and butter, for they also do not eat meat at night. She showed me that she teaches her children, the oldest of whom is eight years old, the Jewish way to bless the bread and every dish, before and after eating. She also does this, as her husband taught her, and prays the Shema Israel with them, and the children also say that they want to be Jews and go to Amsterdam. May God grant speed to their wishes! After dinner she sent me in her carriage to my lodging, two hours away.

In this house there is another Jewish maiden, the niece of Leon, whom he brought recently from Amsterdam. My heart broke at her weeping for her uncle who left her unsupported, and for her father's kosher home, for Shabbat and holidays, and for her soul, impure with forbidden foods. Since it was three days before the ninth day of the month of Av, I asked her if she wished to atone for her soul on that day, and if so to then fast every year and not abandon her Father's faith. She showed me that she has a prayer book for mourning and atonement. They also invited me to break the fast with them. I asked: 'What will you make?' 'Meat and wine and all that you wish,' they answered. 'Is this a fast?' I said, 'Is this the way of atonement?' 'Better you do not fast yet do not eat unkosher meat,' said the Almighty. And the girl sighed heavily and replied with tearing eyes: 'What shall I do for my poor father who sent me to hell and where should I go? If my aunt wishes to go to Amsterdam, I'll go back with her to my people and my God, but if not –who will save me from this hell?' Of all the Jews here none fasted on the Ninth of Av but this girl. And of all those devoted to God I was the first to come unto this land. I have reported this to you today, and perhaps someone shall journey from Jerusalem to Amsterdam and have the honour of telling these things to the great and righteous Rabbis there, who I think have the power to return these people to the Torah. For those who live on Java value their Jewish brothers in Amsterdam greatly (the man mentioned above told me that in the past he would collect money to send to the Rabbi of Ehrin [perhaps Arnhem, or Haren], who had made such a request). If you write to the Rabbis they can easily get the permission of the government to send a slaughterer and a cantor and a mohel, and these men will prosper here for the people are very rich. Let them joyfully found a congregation of Israel. A mere breath of such pure spirit into the hearts of the seed of Israel shall rekindle their dimmed flame into a great blaze. I need not say much more, for he who he revives one soul of Israel in this world, it is as if he created a whole new world and many souls for the next. And who would be so cruel as to wield the power to do this and yet not act? Let alone a holy congregation like Amsterdam, whose Rabbis and regents are great men of might whose hearts wish nothing but to do good for Israel. Will they not arise to revive their distant brothers at the far end of the earth, who remain of Israel? I am only allowed to ask for this because I know of the situation and they do not. I may not hide from and ignore these things that my eyes see for they are like a fire in my bones that I can not tolerate. And I am filled with prayer that we should all be privileged to witness the day when spirit is poured into all flesh, to worship the name of the one God together on the holy mount in Jerusalem. May it come to pass.

Saphir concludes his letter with hope, claiming that he did not fail to act and that on his advice steps were being taken to rehabilitate the Jewish community of the Indies:

So did I write, especially for the rabbis and heads of the congregations of Amsterdam, and my words failed not, for I heard that they sent a wise and God-fearing rabbi to found congregations for the sons of Israel

here in Batavia and in Semarang, and the government granted them land for a synagogue and a cemetery. And they stand for honour and glory. Yet this rabbi did not live long on Java for he could not bear the harsh air of the land and died there in good standing.

However I have found no record of this rabbi, or of synagogues in Batavia or Semarang.

The full survey of the Jews of the Indies would at last be undertaken in 1921 by the Zionist fundraiser Israel Cohen (Cohen 1925). The community described by Cohen was active, and though still lacking state support, not particularly degenerate. Cohen had a five-day tour of the Jewish centres of Java. In Batavia he spoke in the Theosophical Hall, 'I learned that there were several hundred Jews – perhaps as many as 2,000 – scattered about from Batavia to Soerabaya, but as most of them concealed or denied their Jewish origin it was impossible to form an approximate estimate of their numbers.' The colony still had no synagogue, and Cohen feared that the Dutch Jews were on the verge of assimilation, 'But despite the apparently determined efforts of the community to efface itself, one of the local papers, *Nieuws van den Dag*, persisted in reminding its individual members of their racial affiliation by its periodical anti-Semitic pin-pricks' (Cohen 1925: 211–12.) In Surabaya he again lectured at the Masonic Hall, and met a few Jews with 'native' wives who had become social outcasts. He learned too that the Baghdadi Jews had recently established a cemetery there, on land sold by the government at a nominal price (Cohen 1925: 215, 221). But it was in Semarang where Cohen had his most intriguing experience. Escorted by Mr Sayers (the Sayers family is Sephardic, and is one of the Jewish families still remaining in Indonesia) and Dr Leo Straus, Cohen finds a local branch of the *Keren Hayesod*, an international organisation raising funds for Palestine. He spoke at the Masonic Hall, and attended a performance of a Yiddish-Russian opera company (Cohen 1925: 217). In all, Cohen was introduced to an Indies Judaism that included Dutch, Austrian, Russian, Rumanian, and Baghdadi congregants. It was also an Indies where antisemitism was institutional. While in the early 19th century Jewish participation in colonial administration was permitted in principle, the Netherlands Trading-Company (*Nederlandse Handelmaatschappij*) blocked Jewish membership on its board until 1936, and until 1925 there were no Jews in leadership positions in the Javanese Bank (*Javasche Bank*), the Dutch East Indies Commercial Bank (*Nederlandse Indische Handelsbank*), and the state shipping company (*scheepvaartmaatschappijen*) (Glaser 1991; Blom and Cahen 2002: 287–89).

One year after the publication of Israel's *Journal of a Jewish traveller*, and in the wake of another Zionist fundraising tour by Alexander Goldstein, the first explicitly Jewish periodical appeared in the Indies. *Erets Israel (Het Joods Land)* was published in Padang, West Sumatra, and owed its existence to one man – the committed Zionist S.I. van Creveld. It was the official organ of the Netherlands East Indies secretariat of the Palestine fundraising group Keren Hayesod (*Hajesod* in contemporary spelling). The journal appeared on the first of every Hebrew month, and its first issue of 9 September 1926 (1 Tischri 5687) announced proudly that it would be Zionist in conception, and distributed free to the Jews of the Indies. Van Creveld nodded to Surabaya as the Jewish 'community-in-embryo' (*gemeente-in-embryo*), and believed that both *Erets Israel* and Indies Judaism would flourish there. As had been the case on Israel Cohen's junket, local Zionist lectures were held in Masonic Halls – in Padang at the 'Mata Hari' Lodge in Kampoeng Djawa.<sup>13</sup> In *Erets Israel* we learn that Surabaya was the centre for the Keren Hajesod, with one D. Bachrach running the committee. By March 1928 there were Keren Hajesod offices in Batavia, Surabaya, Bandung, Semarang, Malang,

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<sup>13</sup>*EI* 1.3: p 1, 8 Nov '26. On this Lodge see *Gedenkboek* (1917).

Yogyakarta, Medan, and Padang. In the late 1920s both the *Nederlands Indië Zionistenbond* and the *Vereenging van Joodsche Belangen* were established, making Jews an officially visible colonial category.<sup>14</sup> And when in October 1928 van Creveld moved operations to Bandung, *Erets Israel* began to publish more local features on Jewish holiday-making and less Zionist propaganda. The journal ran for 13 years, the final 8 May 1939 issue marking the departure of van Creveld from the Indies.<sup>15</sup> With the folding of *Erets Israel* the Jewish community again disappears from the accessible historical record, for a while.

On 16 July 1927, inspired by the Zionists, the Association for Jewish Interests in the Netherlands Indies (*Vereeniging voor Joodsche Belangen in Nederlandsche Indië*) was founded. The following minutes are from the first meeting, held at the rear auditorium of the *Maison Versteeg, Weltevreden* (ANRI 1928, translation by Eric Jones).

In the meeting, convened on the occasion of the arrival of Br. Goldstein, [it] was decided to establish a society/club/organisation/association for the protection of Jewish interests in the Dutch East Indies, and the Provisional Administration was chosen by acclamation. This Provisional Administration underwent a small alteration, because Mr Smalhout felt that because of personal reasons [he] would not to be able to accept such a function and by mutual consent is replaced by Mej. Van Gelder.

The speaker wishes in the first place to take a short look back at the attempts, made in the last 12 years to establish a Jewish Society in the Dutch East Indies.

About 12 years ago in Batavia, a Jewish Association was set up. Its life-span was really very brief. We will not delve into all of the reasons for this, yet the speaker feels, that primarily the religious foundation/principles of this Association was the cause of its short existence.

Several years later attempts were made to establish a Zionist organisation in Batavia. This Association was [indeed] set up, but its existence was of an even shorter nature.

Some years passed in which no attempts were made to establish a Jewish Association in the Dutch East Indies until in 1922 several Jews put their heads together to move towards an organisation, which would serve Jewish interests. Its establishment was decided on, but everything worked against it. Of the 16 Jews who initially joined, only 3 were left over in but a few months. The reason was that these Jews were for the most part Government officials, who were transferred.

No mention was made of a surviving Jewish Association until several months ago [when] Dr Goldstein came here promoting his Association.

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<sup>14</sup>And in 1930 the sub-category of Jews made its appearance among Europeans in the colonial census. I am indebted to Siddharth Chandra for bringing this to my attention. Census data is appended to this essay.

<sup>15</sup>The National Library in Jakarta's collection is more extensive, with issues through 1942. I have not had a chance to review these additional issues.



Figure 1. Nazis in Padang, late 1930s. Munz Collection photograph #53, Archive of Australian Judaica, University of Sydney

This campaign was a complete success and the financial results were splendid. At the first meeting with Dr Goldstein the foundations were actually laid for this Association.

The Temporary Administration has already set forth the goal of the Association in a circular. That this circular truly reflects that which is felt by the Jews in general, is shown in the many expressions of sympathy which have streamed in from East-, Central-, and West Java. This is a delightful sign.

The goal of the Association appears most clearly in the statutes: The Association sets out with the aim:

The protection and promotion of Jewish interests in general and especially for those Jews who live in the Dutch East Indies.

The proclamation of the founding of the Association was publicised in an 'Extra-Supplement to the Javasche Courant of 22/3 - 1928 No. 24', and a Zionist presence was announced to the general Dutch population (ANRI 1928). The archival materials relating to colonial Zionism are not extensive, however, and community activities remain most thoroughly observed in *Erets Israel*. By 1929 the Association could make use of a 'military clubhouse' in Weltevreden, and in 1932 a Joods Militair Tehuis (Jewish Military Hostel) in Batavia was established (Blom and Cahen 2002: 288).

There are occasional glimpses of Jews in unconventional social and ideological categories. In 1930, travelling to Batavia to take up the post of Chilean consul, Pablo

Neruda had a tryst with a zaftig, blonde Jewess named Kruzi. Kruzi was a mail-order bride who had been recruited by a firm that matched European women with wealthy Asian husbands. She had opted for a Batavian Chinese merchant rather than a 'maharaja [or] a prince of Siam'. On arrival, tragedy: 'She was about to get into the Rolls-Royce when the immigration officers stopped her and subjected her to a brutal interrogation. She had to confess everything. The Dutch authorities considered it a grave offense for her to live as the concubine of a Chinese' (Neruda 1977: 102–4). Of course beyond the occasional anecdote it is hard to gauge the number of stray Kruzis in the Indies.

Throughout the 1930s the German population of the Indies became increasingly active in their support of Hitler's government. The Hirsch Munz Collection in the University of Sydney's Archive of Australian Judaica contains approximately 80 photographs of Nazi activities in the Indies in the 1930s, and features scenes from Medan, Padang, Semarang, Malang, Surabaya, and Menado. The collection also details Nazi propagandising in the pre-war period, including efforts to place sympathetic articles in the Malay-language press.<sup>16</sup> Although the colonial state was wary of the German community many Dutch citizens were sympathetic to Hitler's politics. The *Vaderlandsche Club* was founded in 1929 in Medan, and was superseded in 1934 by the Dutch Nazi Party (Reid 1979: 39–40). These organisations funnelled plantation money back to pro-Nazi organisations in the Netherlands.

### **The Japanese occupation**

The self-described leader of the current Indonesian Jewish community told me of his experiences during the Japanese occupation and Revolution. David Mussry was born in Surabaya on 30 August 1930, in his mother's house on Wilhelmina Laan.<sup>17</sup> (The house is now used as a Garuda Airlines dormitory, but still has the name J.S. Mussry etched on a column.) He is Sephardic, and calls himself an 'Iraqi' Jew. He would have been referred to as a 'Baghdadi' in the colonial period. His family were Dutch citizens; this was certainly not typical of the Iraqi Jews.<sup>18</sup> At the time of my interview (8 February 2000) David was living in Jakarta where he ran a travel agency and internet café; he has since relocated to Southern California, home of many of Indonesia's Sephardim. But he recalls fondly the Jewish community of colonial Surabaya – a 'fun' and 'cozy' place for Foreign Orientals and non-Dutch Europeans, compared to Batavia. It was during the Japanese occupation that David came to understand the significance of his Judaism.

In March 1942 the Japanese forces occupied the Dutch East Indies. For the Sephardim (and German Jews) of the Indies, there would still be 'one good year' before the hair snapped and the sword dropped. Japanese soldiers made house-to-house searches in the European quarter, marking the houses of both friendly (German, French) and enemy nationals. They first went through the Armenian neighbourhood, and asked the Armenians

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<sup>16</sup>Hirsch Munz Collection, box 3 folder 4.

<sup>17</sup>Mussry claims he has publicly taken on the role of 'Indonesian Jew' in an article in the *Jerusalem Report*, and has asked me to correct the *Report's* miscasting of him as a victim of Indonesian anti-Semitism. There is no anti-Semitism directed against the Indonesian Jewish community, he says. See Shanson (1993: 32). While the Mussry name is mentioned in the article he is not the focus of it.

<sup>18</sup>It is also possible that he meant Dutch 'subject' rather than citizen – an honour extended to the 'foreign Asiatic' residents of the Indies. After the Revolution, these subjects were offered citizenship; to a young boy this might have been confusing. As 'Baghdadis' the Mussrys would likely have been classified as Arab Foreign Asiatics, see Fasseur (1994).

what they were.<sup>19</sup> The Armenians explained that they were Armenian, that they had no country, that they had been living in the Indies for generations. The Japanese responded that they were at war with countries, and not with races. Deracinated and countryless folk fit into no wartime categories, and so the Armenians would be considered 'friends'. Immediately the Armenians telephoned the Jews and advised them to claim that they were just Jews, and not to reveal their true nationalities. The strategy worked. All the enemy Europeans were interned and placed in a cordoned-off section of town with the exception the Armenians and Jews, who were left to roam and trade freely.<sup>20</sup>

The 'one good year' darkened in 1943, as rumours spread of the arrival of Gestapo officers in Surabaya. The Nazis supposedly asked the Kempeitai: who have you imprisoned? The Japanese answered that all enemy nationals except the two white races, Jews and Armenians, were jailed. The Gestapo was apoplectic, and ordered the immediate arrest of all Jews.

The 30th of August 1943, was David Mussry's 13th birthday. Business had been good that year, and young David would receive a bicycle and other treasures. The Mussry family, as with most Jews in Surabaya, were committed to the Dutch administration, and since Wilhelmina's birthday was on the 31st, the party would be a clandestine opportunity to toast the Queen. At midnight the guests all sang *Langs Al He Leven*, but substituted 'She' and chuckled at their daring and clever act of resistance.

The next day, 31 August 1943, the family was startled by a phone call at 5.45 am. The warning came too late. Japanese soldiers, bayonets ready, stormed the house. They rounded up the Jewish men, and tore down the Jewish ornaments shouting, '*Yudaya, bakayaro!*' [damned Jews!]. That same afternoon the women and children were collected by truck, and told that they were needed for temporary questioning. Those who suspected the truth packed small bags. But David Mussry took nothing, left his birthday presents behind, and one day into his 13th year became a prisoner of war.

Other Europeans were concentrated in a particular section of town, interned within their own neighbourhood. But the Jews were sent to the main Surabaya jail, on the Werfstraat (now Klosok). Jews of all nationalities were grouped together – Iraqi, German, Polish, and Dutch. The men were kept elsewhere in the same jail, segregated. A kindly Ambonese man brought the food to the women and children, as well as news of the men. The Jewish women complained of skin rashes, and asked him to fetch anti-itch powder prepared by the men, a *bedak 'obat khatut'*. *Khatut* is the Arabic word for letters, and concealed in tins of powder these could then be passed.

On 15 August 1945 the Japanese surrendered unconditionally. David Mussry was then in the contagion ward of the prison hospital, and not expected to recover from severe amoebic dysentery. But the British brought medicine and rations, and he soon recovered his strength. The Revolution was a chaotic time for the European civilians – they were technically no longer prisoners, although the Japanese military still operated the camps. The British and Dutch forces were not easily reassuming control of the colony; the Indonesian nationalist forces put up staunch resistance, particularly and famously in Surabaya. The prison camps now became a kind of protective custody with both British and Japanese troops protecting the Europeans from the Republican forces.

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<sup>19</sup>On this community see Sarkissian (1987). Incidentally, one foreign observer of the Armenian massacres had just completed his colonial tour as Assistant Resident in West Sumatra, see Westenenk (1986).

<sup>20</sup>The Japanese were equally uncertain in their policy towards the Indo-European community. See Touwen-Bouwsma (1997).

The men were removed to a protective camp in Cimahi, near Bandung in West Java. Now 15 years old, David went with the men. It was in this camp that he began to learn Arabic in order to avoid the eavesdropping Dutch-Nazi sympathisers. After the Dutch re-occupied Batavia and Surabaya the Jews returned home and regrouped. But news of the horrors of Germany began to reach the Jews in the Indies. The European Jews were impelled to go home and learn the fates of their families. For the remaining Jews Indonesia was a place of uncertainty and turmoil until 1949. The State of Israel was established, and the United States guiltily began readmitting refugees. There were options. Those Jews who left Indonesia after the war did not return.

Jews, like the other remaining Netherlanders, were offered either Indonesian or Dutch citizenship. At the time, in 1949, they could barely accept the idea of an Indonesian independence with the people who had once served and scraped now in charge of state affairs. So the Mussry family chose to stay in Indonesia, but as Dutch citizens. It was only with Sukarno's nationalising policy in 1957, and under coercion from their mother, that the Mussry children finally applied for Indonesian citizenship. And despite Indonesia's 'five official religions' policy, David's identity card (KTP) identified him as 'Hebrani' until his 1998 extension, when in the face of riots he was decorously shifted into the approved and uncontroversial 'Hindu' category. He was proud, at least, to keep the 'H'.

Other Dutch Jews describe similar experiences. Vera de Vries, the author of *The happy hooker*, was born in June 1943, in Surabaya, to a German mother and a Jewish father. It was the second year of the Japanese occupation. When she was two months old the allied Europeans were imprisoned.

A group of German liaison officers had recently arrived in Indonesia, and they persuaded the Japanese to segregate the Jewish prisoners from the Dutch 'Aryans'. Mick, of course, was classified as a Jew, and as his child I was as well; Germaine, untainted by Jewish blood, was entitled to better conditions in the non-Jewish camps, but she refused this 'privilege' and insisted on being assigned to different camps. Carrying her baby, she joined a line of women marching into the concentration camp. Over the walls fluttered a banner inscribed with the words BANKSA JEHUDI: Jewish Camp. (Hollander 2002: 50).

When asked how the Japanese were able to discern Jew from gentile she answered:

A lot of the people that turned in the Jews were Jews themselves, because they were bribed by the Japanese and promised all sorts of delights . . . A lot of Jewish doctors – they were members of the Dutch country club there – they were en masse taken away and treated a bit worse than the Dutch people in general but very few Dutch people even know that there were certain camps that had this done . . . During the war, suddenly, having a Jewish father made me totally Jewish.<sup>21</sup>

These personal stories are corroborated by the published historical record. Harry Benda, himself a Jew who was interned in a camp on Java, mentions the appearance

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<sup>21</sup>Interview with de Vries, now Xaviera Hollander, in Berkeley, 13 June 2002.

of antisemitic articles in occupation-era newspapers.<sup>22</sup> In the occupation journal *Asia-Raya* Dr Sam Ratu Langie railed against 'Judaisme'; in the *Soeara M.I.A.I.* articles by H. Tjokroaminoto and Umar Said exposed the Jewish influence on the Allied (and especially American) war effort (Benda 1983: 254–55, 272 note 75; Kowner 1997). Ratu Langie, a Christian 'national hero' from North Sulawesi, headed this antisemitic vanguard, introducing the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to an Indonesian readership for the first time, in April 1943.

The anti-semitic press campaign followed pressure from Japan's Nazi German allies and was launched by a radio-speech by Japanese Kempeitai officer Murase on 2 April. This was followed by two virulent articles from the pen of Sukarjo Wiryopranoto on 5 and 10 April, in which he depicted the war as a war of philosophies: Japanese *Hakko Ichiu* (family values), versus Jewish individualism. (Klinken 1996: 340).<sup>23</sup>

Van Klinken too notes that these articles presaged the arrests of the Jews in Surabaya. And Ratu Langie's 29 April article in *Asia Raya*, which quotes from the protocols, has been reprinted in modern antisemitic texts.<sup>24</sup> Current Indonesian antisemitism is neither new nor Islamic in origin.

The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fable of Jewish-Satanic world domination, was created in the late 19th century. It was a distillate of all European Christendom's fears brought on by the erosion of tradition and the urbanism and commerce of 'modern' society (Cohn 1996). In colonial society especially the whites needed to maintain a semblance of unity, particularly in the face of both embarrassing European pauperism and mixed-race 'Indo' children. But Jews sowed chaos, they undermined, they were Bolsheviks and provocateurs. In the British Empire Jews were blamed for colonial disturbances (Cohn 1996: 164–69). It is not unreasonable that Dutch antisemites might suspect that the unseen hand of the Jews (upon Tan Malaka, in Moscow) was behind the 1926–27 communist uprisings in the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately Dutch antisemitism proved to be more than simply discursive.

Of more than 140,000 Jews living in the pre-war Netherlands, approximately 107,000 were deported to the east and at least 102,000 were murdered or worked to death in the Nazi camps . . . The deported Jews constituted about 40 per cent of the total civilian casualties for the country as a whole . . . 73 per cent Jewish mortality of the Netherlands was compared with the figures for Belgium (40 per cent) and France (25 per cent). (Moore 1997: 2; also Sijes 1976).

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<sup>22</sup>In a now legendary story we know that it was Benda's prison conversations with another interred Jew, William Wertheim, that convinced him to become an academic.

<sup>23</sup>'Hakko Ichiu' is probably better translated as 'unity' than family values.

<sup>24</sup>'Judaisme' appeared in *Media Dakwah* and Saidi (1993: 85–98). Ratu Langie's was not the first Indonesian text on Jews; see the benign Langevoort (1894).

<sup>25</sup>A likely place in which to find Dutch colonial anti-Semitism would be the publications of the *Vaderlandsche Club*. As discussed above, this organisation was a leading donor to the Dutch Nazi party. *Vaderlandsche* (1929), *Statuten* (1933).

There is no easy explanation for these facts. And although Dutch people have pointed to the lack of any wilderness in which to base a resistance, and although they hold up (the corpse of) Anne Frank as proof of Dutch willingness to shelter Jews, the fact remains that the Netherlands was a country with a particularly effective core of Nazi sympathisers.

### **Independence**

The majority of Dutch Jews left Indonesia at the end of the Japanese occupation. Pockets of Sephardim remained, however, and Dutch Jewish soldiers returned to fight the Indonesian nationalists during the two ‘police actions’. The soldiers banded together to support the Zionist cause and were active in the *Nederlands Indische Zionistenbond* (ANRI 1948). The Jewish soldiers, through their ‘Jewish Spiritual Care’ initiative, did much to rehabilitate the community (Brasz 2002: 374–76). On 22 March 1953 a ‘Zionist Organisation’ was founded as the successor to the Association for Jewish Interests. In an Indonesian-language letter addressed to Sukarno’s cabinet, eight Jews representing the ‘Jewish Community of Indonesia’ offered to serve as informal advisors for Jewish affairs to the Indonesian state.<sup>26</sup> The World Jewish Congress (WJC) had been in contact with these organisations. After the war the WJC surveyed the community, finding 750 individuals in Batavia, 500 in Surabaya, 250 in Bandung, and a few hundred more scattered across the archipelago. After 1957 and the enactment of Sukarno’s nationalisation policies the community was decimated, and the WJC found only 30 families remaining in Jakarta, no activity whatsoever in Bandung, and in Surabaya ‘some Oriental Jews of the older generation [who] still keep Jewish traditions alive’ (Schwarzbart 1957).

### **Modern Indonesia: from Gestok to Gestapu**

Suharto’s New Order made use of many old and available hatreds. From the onset, the anti-Sukarnoists took pains to associate the failed communist coup with Nazis. Sukarno initially referred to the coup and the killings of the generals as the *Gerakan Satu Oktober* [October 1st Movement], abbreviated as Gestok. Anti-Sukarno activists, aware of the potency of neo-Nazi intimations, insisted on the term Gestapu. Arief Budiman remembers:

Entah pada sore itu juga, atau beberapa hari setelahnya, kita bersepakat menamakan gerakan itu Gestapu. (Sebelumnya disebut G-30-S PKI.) Tujuannya supaya diasosiasikan dengan Gestapo di Eropa. Kami mengontak teman2 wartawan minta mereka menyebarkan istilah ini. Segera istilah ini Gestapu menjadi populer.<sup>27</sup>

I don’t recall if it was that afternoon [1 October 1965], or several days later, when we agreed to name that movement Gestapu. (Before it became G-30-S PKI.) The purpose was to associate it with the Gestapo in Europe. We contacted journalist friends and asked them to start spreading this term. Immediately this term, Gestapu, became popular.

<sup>26</sup>The letter lists a board of eight, and is signed by F. Dias Santilhano (head) and I. Khazam (scribe). ANRI (1953).

<sup>27</sup>From a message posted on Edward Aspinall’s e-mail list, 27 Apr 2004, ‘Subject: [I-Discussion] Arief Budiman: Gestapu dan Gestok.’

Sukarno was reprimanded by General A.H. Nasution and others, and the nomenclature was formally shifted to the current *Gerakan September Tigapuluh* (30th September Movement), Gestapu.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, the most productive group of killers in the aftermath of the coup, the youth wing of the East Java Nahdatul Ulama (NU), also took its name from inspiring Nazi ideology. Yusuf Hasyim, uncle of President Abdurrahman Wahid and in the early 1960s head of Ansor, the NU youth corps, spoke to me in August 1999.

At that time [1964] we had a meeting, several discussions, to figure out how ... we studied how Hitler, reading *Mein Kampf*, we studied the theory of how to build power, strength. We studied how Hitler built up the Nazis so that they could take power. We felt that since the communists were going to be like *that* in Indonesia, well we would have to face them in *that* way too. Ah, so it was then that we established the BANSER [*Barisan Ansor Serba Guna*]. This BANSER, from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, we learned how to awaken the strength of the people, to face a threatening force. So in fact the BANSER was almost the same as Hitler Youth.<sup>29</sup>

The Suharto regime made violence a political tool while at the same time forbidding all discussions of subjects pertaining to violence through the SARA Laws. It is little wonder that the Jews proved an easy and safe target in the proliferating antisemitic literature noticed by so many scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Public anti-minority (Chinese, Christian) discourse was deflected and transformed into antisemitism. To date there has been only one substantial analysis of modern antisemitism in Indonesia (Bruinessen 1998). The bulk of antisemitic literature is, in fact, translations from Arabic and English publications. Very few of these antisemitic texts are original works written by Indonesians, but those that are original are interesting. One recent book tries to expose the Zionist hand in the shaping of the semi-secular state ideology Pancasila through use of the commutative theory of Hebraic influence (Sukarno was influenced by Jews like Kemal Attaturk and A. Baars) (Thalib 1999). Ridwan Saidi's books have already been mentioned. These books all suggest a Zionist-Masonic-Theosophical conspiracy – laughable until one recalls Israel Cohen's speaking venues in the 1920s. Two texts – one Muslim and the other Christian – describe the Surabaya synagogue (Baharun 1997: 33–35; Adiatmo, 1998: 35–46). Mohammad Baharun calmly mentions the 20 families, or 67 people, worshipping there. Indrianto Adiatmo reports that the Jews are usually known locally as 'orang Arab'. Neither book is alarmist or inflammatory.

The antisemitic publishing industry remained a niche market until 1999, when in an interview Suharto blamed the Jews for his downfall (Alghozali et al. 1999):<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>See the documents pertaining to 'Nawaksara' collected in Alex Dinuth, *Dokumen Terpilih sekitar G.30.S/PKI*, Jakarta: Intermedia, 1997.

<sup>29</sup>'Waktu itu kita mengadakan pertemuan, sih, diskusi berapa kali, bagaimana cara ... kita mempelajari bagaimana Hitler, itu, 'Mein Kampf'-nya Hitler ... Kita mempelajari teori Hitler, buku Hitler yang terkenal namanya 'Mein Kampf' ... itu teori bagaimana membawa kekuasaan, kekuatan. Jadi bagaimana Hitler membangun kekuatan Nazi menjadi bisa berkuasa. Kita berpendapat, karena komunis terlalunya 'begitu' di Indonesia, maka kita harus menghadapinya dengan 'begitu' pula. Ah, disitulah kita mendirikan Banser. Banser ini, itu di Mein Kampfnya Hitler itu, kita pelajari bagaimana kita membangun kekuatan masyarakat, untuk menghadapi kekuatan yang mengancam. Jadi sebenarnya Banser itu soalnya hampir sama dengan Hitler Jonker.' From my interview with Yusuf Hasyim, 19 August 1999. I was not fishing for this information; the interview was for a different project, and about the killings in East Java 1965–66.

<sup>30</sup>Not my translation.

**SI:** *Based on your own observations, do you think there was a conspiracy behind your downfall? Was it a conspiracy at the international level?*

**S:** It was a Zionist conspiracy. The Indonesian government was careless in its regard of the systematic and tactical machinations of the Zionists. The Zionists always know who their enemies are and there are two forces that they observe with caution. The first is the yellow threat posed by the Chinese. Their numbers spread from mainland China to every nation. Their political, social and economic conditions are always seen as a threat. The second threat is the rise of Islam throughout Central Asia, South-east Asia, the Middle East and even a number of European countries.

**SI:** *What has that got to do with us?*

**S:** Indonesia is not an Islamic nation but the majority of the population is Islamic and this is a huge force that the Zionists are very aware of. We enjoyed the yields of 32 years of development and growth. Among other things, the inflation rate was kept down, GNP increased, poverty decreased, self-sufficiency in rice and even exports were achieved and education and health were constantly improved. The influence of Indonesia in Southeast Asia and among the Non-Aligned countries was acknowledged by many and it was even rumoured in APEC circles that Indonesia, a developing nation, had a direct influence over the industrialised nations. The Zionists acknowledged this force and were concerned that Indonesia would become a centre for the rise of Islam. Indonesia's growth rate was therefore attacked as the economic and monetary crisis has shown. There are now a number of Indonesian politicians who refuse to acknowledge their own history and instead choose to look towards the West. They are happy imitating. People that do not have a strong character and sense of nationalism do not realise that when they studied in the West, they were involuntarily infused with Western ideals. The politicians that have studied in the West and have ambitions to rule this nation are influenced by Western ideals.

Perhaps with *Cendana*-sponsorship, mid-1999 saw several publications that confirmed Suharto's statements. One pamphlet, widely available, claimed that the Jews were to blame for Suharto's downfall both directly (their usual machinations) and indirectly (the very idea of 'reformasi' is Jewish in spirit) (Pujangga 1999). Occasional magazine articles have echoed this – most obviously the 1 March 1999 issue of *Garda* that devoted itself to the Zionist menace infiltrating Indonesia. On 17 November 1999 the more popular *Sabili* also warned of Jewish encroachment. When Abdurrahman Wahid, in almost his first act as president, announced the impending opening of economic ties between Indonesia and Israel, there was an uproar. The fears of folks were only compounded by Foreign Affairs Minister Alwi Shihab's comments that the Jews effectively ran the world and therefore needed to be engaged as political players (Tim Pustaka Cidesindo 1999; Husaini 1999). Under great pressure, the government backed down on the Israel 'issue'. But there have been visits by 'Israeli businessmen', and it has been reported that through one of his tentacular holding companies George Soros himself has begun to acquire Indonesian corporations.

## Conclusions

An important question is that of visibility. Why were West Indian colonies encouraged to have Jewish settlements (and today generate scholarship on those settlements), whereas in the East Indies the formation of a Jewish community was actively discouraged? It is related in part to the history of Sephardic-Ashkenazic relations in the Netherlands. It is linked to 18th- and 19th- century scholarship on 'Indonesia' that placed the archipelago at the front of a nascent struggle between two civilisational poles – Semitic and Indo-European (Hadler 2000: 333–41). It is also tied to early notions of the Semitic and fear that Jews might cooperate better with Muslim natives than Dutch compatriots.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore the ideological justifications for 1998's anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia were maintained throughout the New Order in easily-translated antisemitism.<sup>32</sup> If the violence of the late 1960s was hung on an anti-communist reed, then the racist rhetoric of 1998 echoed with antisemitism. Chinese are depicted as anti-nationalists, practitioners of native labour abuse and then reflexive capital flight. Such shadowy 'conglomerates' and peripatetic urban exploiters are as Jewish as they are Chinese stereotypes. Of course Southeast Asians have a much longer experience of Chinese contact than they do Jewish interaction. However, in the face of state-sanctioned silence when it came to discussions of the Chinese, anti-Chinese rhetoric was veiled as antisemitism in the Suharto era.

Since 'Jew' became 'Chinese' during the New Order, the real Jews of Indonesia would have been invisible to scholars; 'disappeared' writes James Siegel. The 'Jew' has never been a significant local trope in Indonesian literary discourse. *The Merchant of Venice* was first translated into Indonesian, in a prose summary, in 1932. Remy Sylado's *Cabau-kan: hanya sebuah dosa* places Jews in the context of colonial Indonesia, and Ridwan Saidi's *Diburu Mossad* tells the story of a young Indonesian Muslim activist and his Jewish girlfriend as they are hounded across the globe by Israeli agents. But Indonesians do not equate Jews with incarnated beings. That the synagogue in Surabaya has never been attacked – despite having displayed a prominent Star of David and placard and having been featured in studies by faculty from the local State Islamic University – suggests that Indonesians are better able to conceptualise *Yahudi* as an alien and international figure and not a local one. But the synagogue-keeper has now left for the United States, and the sign has been removed. In the context of American anti-Islamic actions the dwindling Surabaya Jews must wonder when the synagogue and their community will become targets.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>One article analyses the creation of a 'myth of the Jewish Islamic interfaith utopia' by 19th-century European Jewish intellectuals exasperated by the failure to assimilate in Europe. Cohen (1996: 50).

<sup>32</sup>Amin Sweeney has traced a sinicised Protocols in Malaysia, Sweeney (1999).

<sup>33</sup>I thank David Hirsch for an updated report on the synagogue. See too the essay by Kurlantzick (2004).

**Appendix 1**

Netherlands East Indies Jewish population, as a sub-set of the European population

	West Midden		East				Other		
	Java	Java	Jogjakarta	Soerakarta	Java	Sumatra	Borneo	Celebes	Islands
Male	228	89	24	6	190	76	12	19	0
Female	175	68	10	3	142	45	2	5	1

See the *Indisch Verslag* of 1933, Part II, 'Statistisch Jaaroverzicht Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1932, Uitkomsten van de Volkstelling 1930, Europeesche Bevolking, III'. This represented less than one half of one percent of the European population in the Indies. More peculiar was the census sub-division of this community into congregations: of the 1,095 'Israelite' Europeans 15 were categorised as Dutch Israelite Congregants, 6 were Portuguese Israelite Congregants, 1,061 were simply Jews, and 13 respondents were Zionists (Blom and Cahen 2002: 288).

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