

UNHOMING HOMELAND: Jewish Diaspora and *Neturei Karta* Community

Leonard C. Epafras

| Indonesian Consortium for
Religious Studies
Yogyakarta

ABSTRACT

Neturei Karta is a Jewish group that usually considered belongs to larger 'ultra-Orthodox' Judaism. This group established its community in Jerusalem since early 19th century, but never acknowledges the modern state of Israel and its administration. Its members never take Israeli Shekel notes, never join the Army Reserve, which is compulsory for adult Israeli, never sing Israel's national anthem, never celebrate Israel Independence Day, and never set foot to the holiest place in the Judaism, the Wailing Wall – but they pay taxes to the state they hate so much. This paper explores the nature of this group and its position against Zionism. The main focus is about their anti-Zionism ideology in connection with the notion of Jewish 'homeland' and 'diaspora'. Neturei Karta is a transnational religious phenomenon. It may differ from other transnational religious groups in its challenge to Zionism on the issues of '(Jewish) homeland' and 'Jewish diaspora'. This dissident voice within the Jewish history is deemed important to reassess the the exercise of power by Israeli in dominating and colonizing the Other, the Palestinians.

Key Words:

•*Jewish* •*Judaism* •*Zionism* •*anti-Zionism* •*ideology* •*diaspora*
•*homeland* •*ultra-orthodox* •*exile* •*holy land* •*promised land*
•*chosen people* •*alienation* •*geopiety* •*'hyphenated' Jews*

Introduction

May 14 and 15, 2008, the Faculty of Social and Political Science, University of Indonesia and Voice of Palestine: Indonesian Society of Palestine Freedom, organized an international conference. The theme of the conference was “The Independence of Palestine, the Rights for the Return and the 60 years of the Ethnocide.” Among the speakers of the conference was a Neturei Karta International representation from London office, Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss. *Neturei Karta* (hereinafter NK) is a Jewish group that usually considered belongs to larger 'ultra-Orthodox' Judaism – some even called NK hyperbolically 'ultra-ultra Orthodox' Jewish. Pejorative designation of NK as 'ultra-ultra Orthodox' Jews is mainly for the reason that they never slightly given a chance not to criticize Israeli government for its Zionistic policy, including the policy toward the Palestinians. Rabbi Weiss was quoted saying that Zionism severs the long good relationship between the Jews and Arabs [in the Palestine land]. The conflict between Israel and Palestine, for him, is the result of the propaganda of United States and Israel. “Muslims should be careful not to fall into this snare ... [and] we have to join rank to end Zionism,” he concluded (KOMPAS 2008). For general public perspective, let alone in Indonesia, which tends to maintain negative attitude toward Jews and everything 'Jewish,' this position generally peculiar for a Jewish group usually portrayed as the supporter of Israel as to the Jewish state. Peculiar further is that this group established its community in Jerusalem since early 19th century, but never acknowledges the modern state of Israel and its administration. NK members never take Israeli Shekel notes, never join the Army Reserve, which is compulsory for adult Israeli, never sing Israel's national anthem, never celebrate Israel Independence Day, and never set foot to the holiest place in the Judaism, the Wailing Wall – but they pay taxes to the state they hate so much!

This paper will explore the nature of this group and its position against

Zionism. However, the main focus is about their anti-Zionism ideology in connection with the notion of Jewish homeland and diaspora. The main source for its native perspective is based on its official website on Internet, the “Neturei Karta International: Jews United Against Zionism.”¹

With its branch offices in Vienna, London, and New York, and its network among the anti-Zionist Jewish groups worldwide, NK is certainly a transnational religious phenomenon. Religion in transnational setting in some way challenges the authority of the state. It holds potential conflict especially if they spread through conversion. It is no more the threat of inter-state that prominent today as to the internal conflict within civil society, where the transnational religions play significant role (cf. Tully 1998). However, NK may differ significantly from other transnational religious group in its challenge to Zionism upon the issue of the legitimation of the notion of '(Jewish) homeland', which is strongly encouraged by Zionism, and the priority of 'Jewish diaspora'. If other transnational religious group may challenge only to the authority of the state upon religious life, here we have a case of the challenge to the legitimation of the establishment of a state upon a presumably 'land of origin'. Here, I will demonstrate the tension between the two currents, in which a group such as NK represents the extreme end of the spectrum.

The Guardian of the City

Jewish population in Israel consisted of two sub-cultures: the religious (*dati*) and the secular (*chiloni*). 15% of Israeli Jews are belongs to religious sub-culture. Among the religious, there are further two large groups, i.e. Haredim (often pejoratively dubbed 'ultra-Orthodox') and Religious Zionist (Beit-Hallahmi 1992, 22). Because of their resistance toward the basic idea of Jewish homeland, which culminated in the Zionism ideology, Haredim immediately becomes a transnational phenomenon. All Chasidic groups established branches elsewhere. If their center is in Israel then they have branches in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and other Western countries. Outside Israel, usually their centers are in the United States – State of New York holds large number of Chasidic centers, e.g. Brooklyn and Crown Heights. Even Lubavitcher Chasidism is the most active in Jewish missionary and controls hundred of branches worldwide. As far as there is a Jew in the edge of the earth, they will send Chasidic missionary to help her/him to maintain Judaism.²

NK is part of the above Haredim group. Most of the members are Hungarian Jews that emigrated from Hungary in the early 19th century to Palestine. They do not speak (Modern) Hebrew as suggested by the Israeli government; they speak Yiddish instead, since they consider Hebrew is a sacred language that may become impure to use it for ordinary usage. They lived in the Jerusalem municipality - in Meah Shearim and Batei Ungarin - but they refused to visit the Wailing Wall, the most sacred spot for Judaism. The rabbis of this Hungarian Jews forbid their adherents to set their eyes toward the Wailing Wall until the coming of the Messiah. They ritually spit when the State of Israel mentioned and they fast on Independence Day (Thubron 1976, 154). NK stresses are based on rabbinic literature that the state of diaspora/exile was because of Jewish people sins. Additionally, they maintain the view, basing it on the Babylonian Talmud, that any form of forceful recapture of the Land of Israel is a violation of divine will. They believe that the restoration of the Land of Israel to the Jews should only happen with the coming of the Messiah. Zionism then, in this view is a blasphemous deed toward the will of God (Wikipedia 2008). This position goes further by their preferential toward the Palestinians, and even one of their chief Rabbis had been appointed by the late Yasser Arafat cabinet as the minister of Jewish affair. They are also the Jewish group who went to Teheran to attend the International Symposium of Holocaust, and at the time they were welcomed warmly by President Ahmedinejad.

Neturei Karta is Aramaic phrase that means “the Guardian of the City/Gate,” which is based on the passage from Jerusalem Talmud³ that says:

In one town they [Rabbis] asked to see the 'guardians of the city' and the city guard was paraded before them. They said that these were not the guardians of the city but its destroyers, which prompted the citizens to ask who, then, could be considered the guardians. The rabbis answered, "The scribes and the scholars ..."⁴

The passage tells us the role taken by this group that they are the 'Torah scribes and scholars', the real guardian of the Judaism against deviation. According to their website, NK, “[T]he name was given to a group of Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem who refused (and still refuses) to recognize the existence or authority of the so-called "State of Israel" and made (and still makes) a point of publicly demonstrating their position, the position of the Torah and authentic unadulterated Judaism.”⁵ In this position, NK features

some similarities with the Anabaptist sects, such as Amish and Hutterite in the United States, or some Islamic groups such as Darul Arqam in Indonesia and Malaysia. The group's posture is always at odds with larger society, which is its exclusiveness and its strong barricade toward out-groups, as to the government. Quick observation may conclude that these groups are the farthest end modernity and they seemingly embraced anti-modernism, which in some cases also means anti-Western.

In their anti-Zionism position, NK is often confused with Satmar Chasidism⁶; though are in the same position, they are different groups. Formally, the group was established in Palestine in 1938 as a reaction toward the above anti-Zionist movement, Agudat Yisrael. Agudat Yisrael later recognized the State of Israel and even, participated in the political arena, while at the same time maintained its anti-Zionistic policy. NK was established as a strong criticism toward the meekness of Agudat Yisrael. NK refuses any attempt to establish a Jewish state during the present period of 'exile'.⁷

Obviously, among the Haredim, NK is the most stringent position toward Zionism and adopted the non-cooperative policy. This position furthers the marginalization of NK even within the Haredim in Israel. Nevertheless, NK's position is unbearable. An advertisement of Orthodox Judaism, which included anti-Zionist groups, denounced NK for joining "the enemies of our people" (Rocker 2002). It refers to NK close relationship with Palestinian Authority, in their friendship with other 'enemies' of Israel, such as Iranian President Ahmedinejad and Neo-Nazi.

Anti-Zionism among religious Jews goes back almost to the birth of the Jewish nationalist movement. In 1912 meeting, Orthodox Rabbis established an organization named the above Agudat Yisrael in response to Zionism. The fact that Zionism was largely secular in nature alarmed many leading eastern European rabbis, who saw Zionism as an attempt to supplant faith with nationalism. What is then, the difference between Haredim and the secular Jews regarding the State of Israel? The secular Jews want a state for Jews while Haredim wants a Jewish state (Friedman 1995 (1989), 300). The gulf of difference between the two is that the secular wanted a secular state that contained the Jews. Haredim wanted a state that fully accords to the Jewish faith and is characterized with Torah-driven society—something that may ring us the bell of the idea *Kilafah Islamiyyah* among the *shariah* promoters. According to them, this condition is only possible after the coming of Messiah and is carried out without any

intervention of humanity.

What follows is a short description upon the basic idea of diaspora and exile mentioned above that leads us to better understanding on the problem at stake.

Homeland, Diaspora, and Exile

Culture in the transnational context is partly the culture of deterritorialization. It is based on the weakening tie to the presumed homeland, and even further by a dislodging experience of the subject from particular or fixed locations in space and time (Inda and Rosaldo 2002, 10-11). Nevertheless, in reality, the way the link established between the homeland and faraway land is a complex matter, especially in the context of diasporic culture. In some cases, what we called of 'homeland' and 'diaspora' is further complicated by the multiple process of moving. The most prominent example of this, though no way exclusive, is Jewish people. The Jews have been moved from their ancestral land to other lands, because of various and different historical and social processing. They moved to another land over and over, and they are still moving even until today. However, the degree and speed of moving was varied from group to group. The two main Jewish groups, the Ashkenazim (*Ashkenaz* = German) and Sephardim (*Sepharad* = Spain) moved several times. A group of Jews who settled in Rhineland area made up what was called Ashkenazim, moved from German and spread out to Western and Eastern Europe, and British Isles and elsewhere (Australia and United States). The group of Jews who in earlier time settled in the Iberian Peninsula, later called Sephardim, spread out to the circum-Mediterranean, and later to the Netherland and its colonies (including Indonesia).

Yet, the Jewish experience was not the only diaspora within diaspora. The Indians of Uganda and Kenya have been driven out from the countries in 1970s and did not return to their ancestral homeland in South Asia area but to England and British Commonwealth. They re-return to Uganda and Kenya in 1980s to establish their economy power once again, but this time with a strong tie with Great Britain. That was also the story of Lebanese in Central and South America.

However, diaspora discourse as a transnational experience in some cases has also a religious tone. The separateness of the people between their homeland and the diaspora site in this case, is linked by religious narrative.

In some cases, the tie is moderate, such as the case of Hadrami community in South East Asia, in which they maintain the link between the ancestor land in South Arabia (and Arabia at large) in the sense of economic and religious continuity. In the other cases, the tie is profound, such as the case of Jewish diaspora.

To learn something from the Jews, where the 'diaspora' (dispersion) coined at the first time, we will look into Jewish history briefly. The cultural and religious narrative of deterritorialization in the mainstream Jewish tradition⁸ revolved in the above mentions idea, 'diaspora' and 'exile'. The Hebrew Scripture recorded various 'deterritorialization' stories. Among them, the Abraham journey from his homeland in Ur (modern Southern Iraq) to Canaan, Joseph's story, and the most conspicuously important was the story of Exodus of the Israelite from Egypt to Canaan. To this we can add the story of exile to Babylonia and Assyria. Beyond the historical dispute, surely the Jewish community in Babylonia (and surrounds) has been existed in the very ancient times. The term diaspora also appeared for the first time in the biblical account.⁹

Besides the above story of forced and voluntary deterritorialization, the Jews in the later history – started from the 2nd c. BCE onward – spread out in the Mediterranean and Middle East world. The motive behind this phenomenon was varied, including economic, socio-political tension (especially after the Palestine controlled by the Romans), and other. However, besides the emergence of diasporic culture, those days were also marked with the affirmation of the biblical idea of 'holy land' and 'promised land' and further, the 'chosen people.' This idea became a working theological discourse, partly as an instrument to survive the Jewishness and Judaism from the then global force of Hellenization. Hellenization was brought by the Macedonian King, Alexander the Great that meant to 'standardized' the Middle East culture and politics through the culture of Hellenism (Greek). However, the theology of holy land extended, and produced two kinds of Judaism, Palestinian Judaism and Hellenistic/Diaspora Judaism. Earlier generation of scholars saw the former considered 'normative' and 'uncontaminated,' and restricted to the land of Palestine. The latter was seen as the adulterated, Hellenized and living in exile (diaspora) (Trebilco and Evans 2000, 282). However, recent studies showed how inadequate the picture was. Hellenistic influences were at work in the Palestine as elsewhere in the Mediterranean and Middle East, and more importantly the Diaspora communities regarded themselves as

genuine and authentic Jews, no less to their Palestinian co-religionists. Both geographical-based communities acknowledged much diversity and the development. Therefore, the theology of diaspora was maintained upon the idea of 'exile' (*galuth*), that made it lesser priority to the homeland Palestine. In line with this theology, the Jews in the rest of the world at the time should pay annual Temple tax and were persuaded (somehow obliged) to pilgrim to the Palestine in the three pilgrimage holidays (The Passover, The Tabernacle, and the Pentecost). Though, culturally speaking, the diaspora Judaism was no less vibrant religious life, it should stand subserviently under the spell of the Palestinian Judaism. Occasionally, there were some dissenting voices that challenge the 'center'. It seems that NK belongs to the dissenting voices.

Jewish in the end of Before Common Era and early millennium of Common Era provided different solution to this problem, where they have to deal with dominant Hellenistic culture. Roughly speaking, at the time significant number of Jews were just happy to join with Hellenization, the other, such as Qumran's community and Essenes 'retreated' from it, rabbinical authority resisted to it, while marginal group of Nazarene, notably Pauline Nazarene were living in 'twilight zone'. What most important cultural strategy in dealing with the difference was that the rabbinical authority invented the idea of diaspora or 'exile', even within the Land (Boyarin and Boyarin 2003, 109-110). We can imagine that Diaspora is not a sharp separation between the homeland and frontier. Diaspora could also mean an 'alienation' feeling at home, based on theological position. Probably the resentment toward 'Western' domination afflicting among certain section in Indonesian Muslims could in part be seen from this perspective, that even though Islam has been a dominant culture preferential and serves a kind of civil religion in Indonesia, these groups felt something is still missing. The Second Temple destruction and Jews expulsion from Judea by the Romans (between 70 and 135 CE) also helped shape the notion of Diaspora. Diaspora shaped Judaism into a more portable, less dependent on tangible entity (especially Land and Temple), more spiritualistic identity (Jews may belong to other national citizenship while still maintain Jewishness), and furthermore, shaped their understanding on the relationship between Jews and local non-Jews ruler. Since the priority of rabbinical authority is how to keep Jews within the Torah precepts, therefore, at least theoretically, it is desirable for Jews to suffer under harsh gentile ruler and kept their faith rather than enjoy

freedom and leave their faiths. Furthermore, given a chance to choose between 'foreign' ruler who would allow preservation of Jewish faith and domination by Jewish' ruler who would interfere religious life, the rabbis generally choose the former (Boyarin and Boyarin 2003, 109). In this point we can have better understanding of the position of NK.

These two territorial dimensions of 'homeland/promised land' and 'frontier/diaspora' have been permanently established in the Jewish collective memory, especially after the destruction of the Temple of Herod in 70 CE by Roman General Titus. The Jewish history afterward was marked with the 'exile' mentality intermingled with 'diasporic' state. The longing of the return deeply penetrated into the Jewish heart, as the Passover liturgical phrase, "*le shana ha-ba'a ve-Yerushalayim*" ("next year [we will celebrate Passover] in Jerusalem") echoed for centuries.

Yet, the diaspora discourse was far more complex than a simple dichotomy of center and periphery. The diaspora life was marked with fluctuation of experiences. The European Jews in many points of their history suffered discrimination, persecution, forced conversion, and faced the danger of assimilation; which brought the consequence of the constant migrations as a prominent panorama. The Jews of Islam were slightly in a better shape, though no less discriminated. Meanwhile, the Jews of Africa, South Asia, China and elsewhere endured different lives. These and other factors made the longing for the return to the homeland mostly resided in the realm of religious narrative rather than a programmatic action. After the French Emancipation and other liberal movements swept out Europe in 17th - 19th c., the life of diaspora crossed the threshold differently. It culminated with the Pittsburg Platform in 1885 that declared that the homeland for the Jews was no more encouraged. Different with the American Jewry, the European counterpart still in significant ways suffered difficulties, either in the way of assimilation as in the Western Europe, or on keeping their Judaic feature as in the Eastern Europe. The difficulties culminated in the Holocaust (*shoah*) that took millions of Jews and brought elimination of the Eastern Europe Jewry.

These two situations, that of 'comfortable' and 'assimilated' life of American and Western European Jewry and 'suffering' Eastern European Jewry, provided different response toward the Zionist proposal of Jewish homeland. Furthermore, the response also divided the Jewish world into the religious and secular aspirations, which in later history of Zionism up to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, there were many blurring areas.

Against this historical context the firm position of NK gives its prominence, that is, as a specific response toward the many 'compromise' and 'blurring' positions over the issue of homeland.

The Denial of Exile: The Politics of Zionism

Before we continue, briefly here we will inspect the rhetoric of Zionism, which later became the hallmark of NK criticism. First, Zionism as a political movement initiated by Theodor Herzl in 1896 after the publication his pamphlet, *Der Juden Staat* (The Jewish State). It means that prior to the Herzl groundbreaking move there were many proto-Zionist ideas among the religious and secular Jewish figures that provide the fertile soil for the incipient and recipient of the idea. Herzl himself was a secular Jew from Vienna and during his career witnessed the impossibility for the Jews to truly integrate into the European community no matter the Jews fought hard for it. The culmination of Herzl meditation upon the fate of Jews in Europe was that famous trial of Alfred Dreyfus, known as 'Dreyfus Affair'. Alfred Dreyfus was a captain in the French Army that came from highly assimilated Jewish family. He was tried for the treason accusation, which later has been proven a fraud. However, Herzl learnt that the Europeans could not accept the Jews as equal. From here on, Herzl promoted the establishment of Jewish State that he based on the newly emerging idea of nation-state. Since the beginning, Herzl's proposal for Jewish State was located in the Turkish Palestine and here laid the early problem within Zionism, i.e., the tension between the notion of 'advanced Occidental' and the 'backward Oriental'. Though Herzl and the subsequent Zionist put their vision of the Jewish State in the portion land in the Middle East (Palestine), but their face and heart were still staring at the West. There is a desire in this Jewish nationalism to remove the "Orient" from the self by whitening and Occidentalizing the Jew, usually at the expense of an Orientalized "Other," with the ultimate goal of producing an Occidentalized/modern Jew (Samman 2006, 4). Furthermore, Zionism was characterized with the mentality of denying the exile.

'The denial of exile' (*shelilat ha-galuth*) was espoused by the Zionism that Jewish life were doomed in Diaspora because of assimilation, acculturation, and antisemitism. As noted by Yael Zarubavel, Zionism's vision upon Israel is revolved on the construction of Hebrew man, the land of Israel, and the Hebrew language (Semmerling 2004, 16-17). This rhetoric mainly puts a

negative correspondence with the diaspora condition. Hebrew man is standing against 'hyphenated' Jews (Arab-Jews, American-Jews, and so forth), thus given its purity of 'race'. The land of Israel is surely put diametrically opposite to the rootedness of Jews in diaspora. And the Hebrew language obviously is giving a sense of either ancestor's tongue and also the logical consequence of being the true 'Hebrew'.

At least in these two mentalities, NK challenges it as the following lines attempt to demonstrate.

The Denial of Homeland: The Politics of Diasporism of Neturei Karta

During the war of Israel independence in 1948, Arab Corps besieged the Jerusalem. At the time, NK leaders prepared themselves to surrender to the Arabs. It was not an ordinary surrender. NK believed that life under Muslim rule would be preferable rather than living under godless Jewish ruler (Elon 1995 (1989), 187 & Segev 2000, 501). Is this kind of theological reasoning over the survival issue distinct? Consider this. In 1812, most of the Chasidic rabbis in Russia believed that the war between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I was the apocalyptic war of Gog and Magog, that presaged the coming of Messiah. Among the rabbis and *zaddiq* ("holy men") who welcomed and prayed for the Napoleon force to defeat the Tsar's were Menahem Mendel, the Seer of Lublin, the *Maggid* ("preacher") Dov Baer of Mezeritch, and Menahem Mendel of Rymanow. They believed that Napoleon army would deliver the Jews from their sufferings and persecution. However, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of Chabad Lubavitcher Chasidism prayed for the Tsar to defeat Napoleon. He explained later: "If France should win, riches will increase among Jews and they will prosper. But they will become estranged from God. If Alexander wins the war, the Jews will become impoverished, but their hearts will be joined with God" (Dawidowicz 1992, 267). A century later, his descendents, the Lubavitchers appealed to God to 'frustrate' the Zionists (Rocker 2002).

The meaning of diaspora then, according to NK does not only disown the (promised) land but also a socio-political surrender and subscription to the non-Jewish ruler. It was part of the religious obligation as an act of piety to usher the coming of the Messiah era. Diaspora then also incorporates the eschatological dimension where the 'return to the homeland' only possible if there is a complete return to the Torah way. The diaspora experience in turn produces a consciousness called diasporic consciousness, that is a

consciousness because of constant pressure to define the self simultaneously in terms of the host standard, and its respective ethnic norms must resort to universal concept of belonging (Philipson in Blakely 2001, 252). Therefore diasporism is a rejection toward the idea that diaspora is a powerless pathology to be overcome in favor of renewal through statelessness rather than nationhood.

Diaspora seemed standing against the 'rootedness.' And in the case of NK, it bothered the comfortable idea of 'return home'. It challenged the 'at home' feeling, especially if its rootedness and implantation process omitted the Other's presence. In this point, its extreme siding with Palestinian could be understood because for them the diaspora has been much better place to usher the Jews toward the theologically legitimated possession of the land. Nevertheless, they replicated the days they lived in the Hungary by keeping the various customs. Paradoxically enough, they never maintained again the spiritual and demographical tie either with Lithuania (notably Vilnius) as their spiritual center, or with Hungary as the geographical origin. They feel 'at home' in Israel, United Kingdom, and United States. They maintained what is called 'geopiety', probably not that perfect but sufficient to fit into their identity and purpose to keep an idealized condition of Yiddishkeit (Jewish world). The Politics of Geopiety - coined by John Kirkland Wright in 1960s - that refer to the physical space often recreated geographic space or representation of it in highly idealized, romanticized or fantastic forms (Long in Berman 2002, 343). NK also showed how eventhough they lived in the 'state of diasporic', they does not show any subordinated feeling, and on contrary they maintain certain degree of independence.

Conclusion

In fact, Diaspora and Zionism are twins that have produced a "creative tension" in Jewish life. NK becomes the voice of dissident within the boundary of Zionist Israel, by living in the homeland but keeping the mentality of Diaspora. Though implementing ancient rabbinical warrant upon modern issues, as NK strident proposals sound ridiculous for many people including many Jews, nevertheless it is deemed important. Rabbinical allergy to the power and keeping them out of power perpetually surely is the strategy of living in the diasporic condition and preventing them to justify any power domination and coercion toward the Other - here we see the example of how the State of Israel treats Palestinians.

NK criticism toward Zionism, by posing the latter as merely a human invention of the Jewish history, is only part of the story. Zionism, though strongly grounded in the European ideas on nationalism, as part of the response toward stringent antisemitism, and in large part reflected in the Eastern European Jewry struggle, and lastly it as part of the prolonging of the European racism, it showed a religious tone in it. The image of Jewish freedom from the burden of diasporic life was significantly drawn from the Biblical narrative. The inspiration of Bible is one of the points that makes it different from the religious perspective of ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionism, including the NK, and the point that makes Zionism catch the imagination of Christian Zionism in the West, mostly in the United States, and the Zionist Judaism. Talmudic interpretation of Jewish homeland was the product of exilic Jews that regulate the Jewish life within the non-Jewish environment. Meanwhile, Zionism did not take Talmud as the source of inspiration, but the Bible stories. However, the Bible in this point was not taken as God's inspired story but as the human initiatives to overcome their limitation. Therefore, there was an ambivalence feeling. At one side, Zionism simply wanted to abandon Jewish religious heritage, but at the same time it was nurtured by this tradition. The struggle of secular Zionism with its religious heritage is beautifully expressed by a Jewish scholar, David Hartman (Hartman 1999, 277):

Secular Zionists rebelled against their [religious] tradition but remained inside the national historical home of their parents. Zionism is like the young adult who rebels against his parents, cries out against their values, rejects nearly everything they stand for, and announces that he is going to leave home, never to return. He goes to the door, opens it with anger and close it with a bang – but forgets to leave the house.

This is simply to say that Zionism is a complex ideological phenomenon that could not easily fall into strict categorization. But, surely, it is the strongest character of secularism that was caught by groups such as NK.

The NK condemnation to the Zionism as the peril of Jews and the world is important to think of seriously for the immense effect of the exercise of power by Israeli in dominating and colonizing the Other, the Palestinians. Nevertheless, from my limited horizon of understanding, NK's effectiveness to deal with Zionism beyond the confrontation language is doubtful. The group's aligning with various anti-Israeli, anti-Zionism,

and antisemitism, even with neo-Nazi would not be accepted by even the most moderate Jews and Israelis, and other reconciliatory-seeker voices. NK seems only to stop at the politics of identity and difference rather than go beyond to give lesson to the Israeli Zionist on the important of giving the spiritual tone for Israeli's soul and on the importance to deal with the Palestinians in humanly manner - as done by various human rights NGOs, peace-building groups, and post-Zionist ideologues. After all, Zionism itself is an ideology which is still in a process of changing - nowadays we heard many voices of post-Zionism formation that critically evaluate their past decisions. We have to see further what Zionism can learn from the immense tension within and its relationship with other ideologies.

End Notes:

¹ The website is <http://www.nkusa.org/>.

² In 1990s for example, they send missionary to Indonesia to help tiny Jewish community in Surabaya observing one important Jewish holiday.

³ *Chagigah* 76c. Judaism considered Talmud as secondary sacred books after the Bible (*Tanakh*). There are two Talmuds, Babylonian and Jerusalem/Palestinian, which the compilation completed in around 450 and 500 CE respectively. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*) is the most popular and influential among Jews. Talmud consisted of many things, ranging from the interpretation of Oral Law (Mishnah), lore, homilies, doctrines, religious discussions and so forth, that regulates and guides Jewish life.

⁴ <http://www.nkusa.org/aboutus/index.cfm>, accessed February 18, 2008.

⁵ idem

⁶ Chasidism is a spiritual movement firstly emerged in Ukraine in 18th century. Immediately after the death of its founder, Israel ben Eliezer, the movement dispersed into several competing groups that usually based in specific towns in Eastern Europe. Therefore, we have Satmarer Chasidic that came from Satu Mare city in Romania, Chabad Lubavitcher Chasidic from Lubavitch, Belzecer from Belz, and so on.

⁷ <http://www.nkusa.org/aboutus/index.cfm>, accessed February 18, 2008.

⁸ I am speaking of 'mainstream Judaism' which mainly refers to Rabbinical Judaism religious construction. Rabbinical Judaism came to fore since the beginning of Common Era millennium and was based on the Rabbinic authority. This connotation is important in order to admit the other Jewish traditions that in some ways do not share the above narrative or projected different version of it. The Jewish traditions I refer to, for example the pre-Rabbinical Jews, the Ethiopian Jews (Falasha), Far East Jews, various groups that identified themselves as 'the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel'.

⁹ δῖασπορα (Gr. "dispersion") in the Greek Bible (Septuaginta, LXX) - one of the most ancient biblical text - i.e. Deuteronomy 28:25; 30:4; Nehemiah 1:9; and Jeremiah 15:7.

Bibliography

- Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin. "Israel's Ultra-Orthodox. A Jewish Ghetto within the Zionist State." *Middle-East Report*, November-December 1992: 22-24.
- Berman, Lila Corwin. "Book Review: Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels. By Burke O. Long (2003)." *American Jewish History* 90, no. 3 (September 2002): 342-345.
- Blakely, Allison. "Book Review: The Identity Question: Blacks and Jews in Europe and America. By Robert Philipson (2000)." *American Jewish History* 89, no. 2 (June 2001): 252-254.
- Boyarin, Daniel, and Jonathan Boyarin. "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity." In *Theorizing Diaspora. A Reader*, edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, 85-118. Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Dawidowicz, Lucy S. *What is the Use of Jewish History?* Edited by Neal Kozodoy. New York: Schocken Books, 1992.
- Elon, Amos. Jerusalem. *Battleground of Memory*. New York, etc.: Kodansha International, 1995 (1989).
- Friedman, Thomas L. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (Updated with a New Chapter). New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1995 (1989).
- Hartman, David. *A Heart of Many Rooms: celebrating the Many Voices within Judaism*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999.
- Inda, Jonathan Xavier, and Renato Rosaldo. "A World in Motion." In *Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, edited by Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, 1-34. Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.
- Jews of Indonesia in Israel. The Untold Story*. Directed by Arnon Kedem. Produced by Arnon Kedem and Shoshanna Lehrer. 2005.
- KOMPAS. "Palestina Bukan Konflik Agama. Indonesia Kurang Serius Mendukung Palestina." KOMPAS. May 15, 2008.
- Maimonides, Moses. *The Guide for the Perplexed*. 2nd Edition. Translated by M. Friedländer. New York, NY.: Dover Publications, 1956 (1904).
- Rocker, Simon. "In a State Over Israel." *The Guardian*, November 25, 2002.
- Samman, Khaldoun. "Assimilating to Power in Two Different World-Systems: An Analysis of Paul and Herzl." *Journal of World-Systems Research* XII, no. 1 (July 2006): 3-34.
- Segev, Tom. *One Palestine, Complete. Jews and Arabs Under the British*

- Mandate*. Translated by Haim Watzman. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000.
- Semmerling, Tim Jon. *Israeli and Palestinian Postcards. Presentation of National Self*. Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Thubron, Colin. *Jerusalem*. Amsterdam: TIME-LIFE International, 1976.
- Trebilco, Paul R., and Craig A. Evans. "Diaspora Judaism." In *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, 281-296. Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Tully, Mark. "Book Review: Transnational religion fading states, by Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and James Piscatori." *International Affairs* 74, no. 3 (July 1998): 654-656.
- Wikipedia. *Neturei Karta*. February 1, 2008.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neturei_Karta (accessed February 2, 2008).