

# Purge or Remove: Persecutions for Jews in the Late Medieval Germany

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## 1.

Anti-Jewish violence in the Middle age related with a notion of Diaspora. It was accepted widely that Jews were forced to be a kind of rootless wanderers in the medieval Christendom. Moreover Jews themselves seemed to keep their own identity as a minority, who were expelled from the Christian society. However, is the tragic situation of Jews unavoidable in medieval Europe? It is an attempt about Pogroms against Jews in the late medieval Germany from a point of view of historical analysis, how evaluated a phenomenon such as a brutal oppression against heretics in a Christian society.

Here is an example for Jewish Diaspora-image; “Der Rabbi von Bacheracha”, which is a fragment written by Heinrich Heine, a romantic poet. As a Jew, Heine wrote a story about kick out of another Jew in Bacharach, which were a small riverside settlement. That was an exactly milestone of the history of oppression against Jews. “Here you can see a group of people who are separated from each other, having missed inhabitants. They are people in a small Jewish community. Jews lived in Bacharach from the times of Roman Empire, and accepted their religious fellows who escaped from persecution even when they had hard time to survive (Heine 55: L.11-15.)”. The hero of the story, Abraham, a rabbi in Bacharach, was one of them. He ran away out of the settlement because of his suspicion as a murder of a baby. “He was born in the town and his father was a rabbi of the town. The last will of his father was that he got engaged with the same work as his father, and never left Bacharach unless he was in a threat to life. That was his last order (Heine 56: L.16-19.)”. Rabbi Abraham left the settlement not because of his spontaneous motivation, but because of proscription based on a false charge. This story by Heine was established on a certain concept: persecution against Jews in the Middle age. The Roman written in early 19th century shows us a subject of Jews, who have been aliens in a community and just an expelled Diaspora.

In the current world, quite a various people are forced to leave their hometown, moving to unfamiliar countries. The concept of Diaspora has been reanalyzed to enlarge its notion: It is not only for Jewish history, but also for any other historical entities. Jewish-Diaspora is assumed to be a representative example of various kinds of Diasporas (Akao 46). It may be well accepted that the concept of being Jewish shown by Heine is linked with the current Diaspora-discussion.

Here is an issue, have Jews stood for the notion of Diaspora to begin with? In history of the Medieval Europe, had Jews been persecuted or expelled consistently? It was said Jews were just alien and Diaspora as it literally meant. However, had Jewish destiny being Diaspora as necessity based on their idiosyncrasy in a given society? Was the tragic situation of Jews unavoidable, for example, in medieval Germany? Indeed a peculiarity of German history with the holocaust has been

mentioned without any supporting evidence. But such a widely accepted understanding, persecution for Jews was actually done and that has kept going on from the beginning of the Middle age, needed to be investigated from a historical point of view.

It is looking for a key that to explore such an issue. Persecution against Jews was not the absolute unique phenomenon in the medieval Christendom, especially in the medieval Germany. The persecution against Jews in the late medieval Germany was more like pioneer of religious violence in the early modern times. In particular, St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, 1572 at France, was a remarkable case to be compared. Nathalie Z. Davis, American Historian, showed that St. Bartholomew's Day massacre did not only come from a modern, rational element such as economical reason. She argued that the affair happened based on a "rational" reason, which seemed to be fanatic belief on religious concept at present. The concept of religious violence defined by Davis can be applied to persecution for Jews in the late medieval Germany. "Religious violence was that all kinds of violence against a certain religious target with words and arms by average inhabitants who have nothing to do with any political not relational power (Davis 203)". Certainly there was a connection between Christianization in the medieval Europe and persecution against Jews.

## 2.

Here is a question that Christianization and persecution against Jews have done in a fixed manner which we easily imagine. It was strongly emphasized that 1096 could be regarded as "the fateful summer (Poliakov)" in European anti-Jewish history. It is common to be said that "the function of Christian Crusade on civilization in the medieval Europe is well-known fact: that is, evolution of commercial activities and intelligent background, which provided development of bourgeois class in cities, and, the most important thing was, confirmation of self-consciousness as Christendom, that reflected on historical literature written in the early stage of Christian Crusade (Runciman 113)". Such a fact has both sides. "Jerusalem was emphasized as the place of crucifixion in evangelistic words to support Crusade. The contents, however, focused exactly on Jews. The obvious enemy of Christendom was Muslims because they offended Christians. Jews were worse than them, however. It was because they offended Christ himself (ebd.)". A lot of people gathered together to respond sincerely to the Crusade. Some people among them came up with considering that their first target to set out was not Muslims but Jews. As a result, bloody violence took place in several settlements such as Speyer, Worms, or Mainz, which used to be important places for Jews in Germany.

Did Jews predict the wide-range violence? Judging from literature, presumably they never predicted such a persecution by Christian. When the first Crusade was set up, there was a rumor in France. That was, a lot of Crusaders were scared to terminate Jews if they did not come back from the Holy Land. A Jewish community in France told another community by the Rhine about the rumor.

The letter for the problem contained a request that they saved Jews in France out of their enemy. A reply for the request was very much surprising. The Jewish community in Mainz received the request, and they of course cared their neighbors in France. Nonetheless, they made an optimistic reply to them that they had no fear on it, because they had never heard such a rumor so far (Aronius No.177). This was a typical situation in Germany at that time. Not many people thought that their life was threatened when the first Crusade was going on. Such an optimistic estimation was disappointed based on a bunch of literature about persecution over Jews. Consequently the wide-range persecution for Jews in Christendom was not predictable, at least on the summer in 1096.

Of course, powers of both church and politics did not estimate the violence, let alone approved it tacitly. Jews as so-called "Das Kammerknecht" was economically developed and highly evaluated by people with power for their administration. Literature about the side of domination showed that protection for Jews was always covered, with the restriction that they were not allowed to spread their religious faith. The late 13th century revealed that such a security for Jews went over the limit because collapse of the Hohenstaufen dynasty made the power of king weakened. That caused a lot of violent persecutions for Jews in several places in Germany. The breakdown of political power was not the only reason to cause such persecutions. Another element which threatens Jews was their economic power. Without economic power Jews were useless for governors. This element caused expel of Jews by governors. That meant, pressure for Jews was given in two ways: violent persecution by the ruled, or expel by various rulers.

Based on the two types of pressures, it seems to be plausible to argue that oppression over Jews was not unique phenomenon in Germany. From the latter half of 13th century to early 14th century Persecution and expel of Jews took place not only in Germany but in other places. In France, for example, Jews suffered from exclusion at 1321 (Nahon; Chazan; Mentgen). The case followed another that Jews were excluded from Angevin-region in England and the continent at 1290. Other groups of Jews also went on the same track of expel; region of Count of Champagne, Burgundy, and Bar. Persecution in these areas caused increase of incoming of Jews into the West of the Holy Roman Empire.

It is considered that such a situation provided not only external conflict between Christian and Jews, but also internal conflict among Jews in their societies. Cases in Brabant and Netherlands were investigated as examples of increase of Jews. Christoph Cluse argued that Jewish overpopulation was directly due to exclusion in France. This situation was used for political conflicts between Brabant's district and several cities in the early 14th century. Henceforth, it was plausible to argue that persecution on Jewish community in Brabant's area was restricted with respect to a certain political relation and the local area.

It was meant that persecution against Jews was done in neither a whole country not all over the Europe, but it took place in a certain small area. The most of violent exclusions seemed to be just in

a settlement, never spreading their influence outside of local units.

### 3.

It is necessary to consider that exclusions took place because of separate reasons in each location. It is hard to say that lots of persecutions against Jews in the same time at many places were just coincidence. Anti-Jewish movements developed by tight association with development of Christendom.

Here is an example: a case of exclusion against the Good Werner, “Der gute Werner” at middle Rhineland as an example to consider relationship between development of anti-Jewish movement and actual violent activities (Müller 2002; 2004). Its scene was close to Oberwesel, small town at middle Rhineland, at a Mass on Saint Friday in 1287. Werner, a Christian boy, was tortured over 3 days by a group of Jews. He was exsanguinated, resulting in death. His body was left at a small settlement named Bacharach, which located in the South of Oberwesel. It showed its own location by giving off light. Another miracle of his body was that a lot of people who worship him visited Bacharach, to which his body was moved.

It was widely accepted that Jews in Oberwesel were charged in murder of “Der gute Werner”. The fact could not be revealed any more, but at least we had to admit that exclusion for Jews occur at that time. Additionally, such persecution was not done only in a place. More than twenty settlements of Jews, such as areas along Mosel, Rhine, and Ruhr, got involved in violent exclusions for Jews. Even princes or kings could not prevent the exclusions. A hagiography about Werner established in 14th century had asserted that the martyrdom for his faith were based on a kind of ceremony for murder, and this occasion led blame for desecration of the Host (Rubin 1992). It argued that Jews in Oberwesel arrested young Werner on the way back from a Mass for Holy Communion on a Saint Thursday. Their purpose was to deprive Werner of the Host which he received right at mass. As a result of the occasion, a tradition of deep reverence for him occurred. Worship for Saints was recognized under its relation with exclusion for Jews.

It is generally agreed that worship for “Der gute Werner” has been known in wide range over the middle Rhineland. Supporting evidences revealed that other contemporary persecutions for Jews occurred in a narrow area. However, similar persecutions took place in various locations in Europe. Expel of Jews in France, which already mentioned, had something to do with a story of profanation for the Host in 1290s at Paris (Chazan). Profanation for the Host was well known at the time. Stories about the topic tell us occasions where Jews rob Christians off the Host. The side of Christians in the story often contained ladies or children. Jews were supposed to do the crime in a group with some members of fellows. They stole the Host and made a torture on it. That meant this occasion should be addressed in both sides. On a side, persecution for Jews had individual occasion which occur separately in each area. On the other side, however, the tradition to support anti-Jewish activity was

widespread behind activities of violent persecution.

Spread of such a story took a long time, not arising just in the late 13th century all right. But it was said the Fourth Council of the Lateran could to define the period of the origin (Dekrete 230). Its first constitution revealed the concept of transubstantiation (Rubin 1991), which was a kind of theory arguing that a piece of bread and a glass of wine were converted into the body and blood of Christ at Mass. The spread of the theory gave rise to a concept that the Host could be assumed to be a body of Christ, which led to recognition that the Host itself was a substance for worship. The process of spread of such a concept went side by side with stories of profanation for the Host by Jews. That was to assume that persecution based on such patrimony begin at the early 13th century.

The story of "Der gute Werner" could be recognized as a typical example of occasions which came from violent persecution against Jews. The story also contained murders for honor and profanation for the Host by Jews. This patrimony justified both religious intolerance to observe religious faith of Christianity and attack to belonging of Jews. Stories on the concept often ended up with a scene where Jews seized the Host and kept it in their place. Taking the Host back was a reason to justify looting of Jewish houses.

Some cases of steal of the Host by Jews were reported in narrative literature written by Rudolf of Schlettstadt in about 1300 (Rudolf von Schlettstadt; Gurevich. about role of Mendicants, Cohen). The most of the reports were literature of material for evangelical work, which had something to do with so-called the persecution of Rindfleisch. This massacre began at Röttingen in Franconia on April 20th, 1298 (generally Lotter). Within three month, about 130 places around Franconia suffered from attacking. Rindfleisch, the leader of the attack, was regarded as a butcher or a descending nobility class, and it was said that he has claimed to be a king. Inhabitants in petty class having the king Rindfleisch attacked Jewish communities. These violent persecutions were justified later on, based on a claim from the attacking side that Jews had done profanation to the Host.

The wider anti-Jewish movement was spread, the easier such violence could spread and persecution was fixed as a successive style. The latest wave of persecution originated at Röttingen in Franconia in 1336 again. There are two ways of analyses to investigate the source of the new wave of anti-Jews; an opinion said the Host was spoiled on the feast of Corpus Christi, and the other said a child of Christian was killed by Jews. Some persecutions were given by Arnold of Uissigheim, so-called the Armleder-king. The activities themselves went on just in a small area in Jewish communities around Jagst-river and Tauber-river area. On the next summer, however, the movement extended to all around of Franconia and even Main-river area. Attacking Jews was no more local occasion just in a small area. The attacking group was supported by a certain proportion of inhabitants in any settlements, as well as past persecutions. This was similar to persecution for Jews in the period of Crusade in 11th century. A different point was that the area of the movement: it was spread finally to Franconia, Rhineland, and area of Mosel. In the early 1338, the persecution reached

Alsace, and at the place new local leaders claimed to be a king, following the case of Arnold of Uissigheim. At that time the power of empire was obviously going down because of a conflict between Ludwig the Bavaria, the Emperor, and the Roman Curia.

Based on these cases, it was plausible to argue that absence or weakness of the absolute power was obviously connected with occurrence of the persecutions. The fact was that princes were not been able to prevent from any cases of persecution: Attack to “Der gute Werner” in 1287, the persecution by the king Rindfleisch in 1298, and by the king Armleder in 1336. All what princes did was exclusion to masterminds after each riot. In the case of the Aremleder persecution, for example, Arnold was arrested by Gottfried of Hohenlohe in 1336. He was judged in a court of Bishop of Würzburg, and put to death on the autumn. That means the prosecution by the king Armleder has finished around 1336. However, its influence went spread widely, and a series of occasions named so-called Armleder had gone through up to 1338.

#### 4.

Next case is ritualistic properties of persecution for Jews. A typical example was a case of uprising in Andernach, which broke out along with “Der gute Werner” persecution in 1287. Andernach is a settlement by the middle Rhine, where Jews had their houses around downtown near Marketplace. There were public facilities, such as synagogue, school, *mikveh* (public bathhouse), and bread oven, around the city hall. This Jewish community got attacked in 1287 because a rumor spreads in the settlement, saying that Jews murdered “Der gute Werner”. Inhabitants created flags and songs to set down Jews, and attacked their houses and robbed an archbishop of his properties. Jews left Andernach to escape to a close castle of an archbishop. Siegfried, who was an archbishop of Cologne on the highest position in the Jewish community, resigned arbitration court to judges and inhabitants (CDRM 2; No.325). In the judgment, knights, judges, city patricians, and the community were forced to swear the following: they should do their best to defend Jews at the place. Inhabitants and the sheriff (Schultheiss) should look for the stolen properties of Jews and take it back. All of the inhabitants should give back broken synagogues, Jews houses, and the initial condition of archbishop’s estate. Its background was that the privileges which the archbishop provided to Jews were also admitted by the cathedral chapter of Cologne and the community of Andernach itself. Anyone who destroyed properties of archbishop and the Jewish school should be relegated from the settlement and their properties should be confiscated. Additionally, the sheriff, knights, judges, and city patricians claimed that Jews should get back to their own houses immediately on August 11th.

An important thing here was that the reason why the community made such a judgment. Prelatures who accommodated relation between archbishop and the community of Andernach argued that giving damage to Jews meant giving another to the right of local lords as well. They particularly focused on criticism which gave rise to persecution. “Judges and patricians in communities should

stop flags and songs to set down Jews. Give punishment anyone who violates the rule, because such activities give rise to conflicts (*Item scabini prohibebunt et deponent vexilla et cantus pro brosos sub certa pena prout ipsis videbitur expedire quia de talibus possit discordia exoriri*) (ebd.)". The point was that the most important element here was not Jewish human right, but the concept that persecution for Jews spoiled the right of lords, archbishop of Cologne. Persecution by inhabitants meant a kind of message for the definition about a range of membership of a certain community. This definition was different from the one which was given by archbishops or prelates. When someone took part in such a persecution, the inhabitants showed his or her legitimacy and religious belief. Making flags and songs for set down meant a kind of ceremonious style to distinguish community members and outsiders.

This point overlaps with what Davis suggests about an interpretation on St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. "As same as the 'game' of executioner for Christ, these manipulate acts and ceremonies covered real consciousness of riots about their own activities in 16th century". "The game and ceremony were parts of several conditions for bloodshedding without guilt feeling. The most crucial thing which murders should leave behind is the fact that men who they murder are also human as well as themselves. These undesirable elements were already transformed into 'parasitic worm' or 'demon', and the violent ceremony was the final piece of a dehumanizing process (Davis 233)". Princes intended to involve Jews in "their" communities even as properties or estate. Inhabitants, however, assumed Jews as outsiders and tried to kick them out against "their" community. This exact period witness the situation where settlements as Christian communities recognized Jews as outsiders, and rejected them.

## 5.

Why didn't Jews leave such intolerant Christian settlements? They could easily live their vagrant life if their communities were independent of Christian communities. The existence of such independent communities in the era of persecution for Jews would be a certification of identity of Jews as Diaspora. Such an image of Jewish community was related with, for example, an analysis given by Ytzhak Baer. "The kehillah is, then, an immanent creation of Jewish history. Diaspora life did not create it, although its organizational structure is suited to all places and to all social and economic classes - farmers, artisans, and merchants - with the self-evident proviso that the structure of the community must be in harmony with the socioreligious ideals that created it, and must seek to concretize them, in contrast to the surrounding pagan world and the contemporary Greek cities (61)". Baer showed a certain figure of Jewish community which was radically different from political communities in Ancient Greek or Rome. It seemed that this image of Jewish communities was inconsistent with what they really had been. Traditional research of the medieval cities was based on a consensus that Jewish communities in urban societies were idiosyncratic elements and independent

societies. However, did both sides recognize such a clear cut before 13th century? From the early middle age, a lot of literature in church prohibit and blame mixture of Christians and Jews. The fact showed us that both communities were not separated in an overt way. Looking back history, it was plausible to consider that Christian communities and Jewish ones were getting separated as persecutions for Jews had been going on from the last of 13th century.

The problem was that whether Jewish communities were able to be independent of Christian community in a process of fragmentation or not. Literature written in the age showed that it was hard for Jewish communities to be sustained their own system of society without connection with other societies. For example, take a responsa of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg at the age. The responsa, the legal advice contained a question if someone could stop a Jewish adult inhabitant who intended to leave a settlement or not (Agus No. 527). Rabbi Meir replied to the question that if more than eleven adult men still remained, had let the man go, but if less than ten adults were left, admitted his arrival with hiring someone else. It was because ten adult men were the *minyan* (quorum) to organize a Jewish worship service. This advice suggested a possibility that Jewish communities in the Holy Roman Empire consisted of few people normally, particularly adult male members. The responsa includes a regulation to hire people from other settlements for the appropriate way of adoration. It also contains another regulation that budget to make up the number of people or hire a chanter may be split in members of a community. Henceforth, it seemed that members of small Jewish communities had to live close to another big Jewish community in a settlement if they tried to follow the traditional way of life, worship service for example, based on Judaism. These men, after the early of middle ages, Jews sustained their own cultural habit by making a colony in a Christian settlement even though they were minority in a society where Christianity was the priority.

There were a lot of regulations about how to accommodate leaving of Jews or conflicts in their communities. That was another evidence to show that Jews in the middle ages felt easily to live as a nomadic tribe. Rainer Barzen suggested that Jewish communities in the Holy Roman Empire had not relation with each other, but they created a network with each other communities (2002; 2004). The so-called *kehillot SchUM* consisting of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer was an example of the network in its early stage. In the late 13th century, the range of network of communities were widen giving rise to some communities such as Franconia and Rhineland. The network played an important role in Jewish life, having a tight relation with personal affairs as shown in the responsa by Rabbi Meir. The network of Jewish communities did work as a part of the Holy Roman Empire.

As we saw so far, Jewish communities were never separated from Christian (local) communities, but rather they were mutually connected with each other to confirm their properties as community. In the case of persecution in Andernach, Jews were expelled from the settlement. But they did not spread out to escape, ran into a castle of archbishop near Andernach. It demonstrated that their place to go back was not Jerusalem, but Andernach, which was their hometown. Jews had no choice but

going back to their hometown when they were temporarily expelled from a settlement. To consider the facts above, it was plausible that persecution against Jews was getting extended in process of construction of two communities; Christian and Jewish. Even when they were persecuted, the only place for Jews to go back was their hometown. They went back to their hometown again and again in spite of repeated persecutions, and that might cause another persecution. The great persecution in the period of the Black Death around the middle of 14th century was the result of such tension.

## 6.

Edward Said, who was born in Palestine and was regarded as a modern Diaspora, addressed a significant meaning and cultural situation which was given with a vague identity based on Diaspora. Analyses made by Said make us recognize two points. First, such a self identity is strongly based on modernity. Second, only theological scholar or educated people could reach such a self identity, as explained by Said using an example of Hugh of Saint Victor. An image of Jews who was expelled, that had been investigated by modern educated people, reminded us images of Heine, who was as a Jewish poet, and rabbi Abraham in Bacharach, who was described by Heine. He emphasized Jewish Diaspora as an absolute property. They could be as Diaspora just because they acquired the very knowledge which they really needed.

However, the most of Jews who lived on Germany around 1300 did not share such a concept as Heine and Said displayed. Only a small portion of Jews such as rabbi could relate their own position with a large framework of Diaspora. Jews in Germany had no ways to move out of their living place even though they were severely attacked. Situation was on edge with both development of anti-Jewish movement and continuity of Jews to keep staying the same place. Such a conflict collapsed because of the widely expansion of persecution caused by a rumor of the Black Death.

As far as investigated, there would be some hypotheses about situations of Jews people there. First of all, persecution for Jews took place individually separated from each other, at least Germany and Northern France up to the end of 13th century. The successive persecutions in each settlement rarely happened. Up to persecution for “Der gute Werner” in 1280s, each persecution occurred in a restricted small area, never spreading to external area. The common property of persecutions for Jews was locality before 14th century. Second, there was an exception of persecution, that was, the one under the process of formulation of Crusade. This occasion itself, however, could be seemed as a separated case from others. Persecution under Crusade did not keep going on so long time.

However, each temporal, separated persecution was a source of others which occurs in sequence in wide range of area beyond boundary. Inhabitants in each settlement shared the same historical experience. A lot of people had been getting to know the difference between Christian and Jews through the experience. In 13th century, several political deals were arranged to protect Jews; regulations of Jewish protection based on canon law or special political arrangement as “servant of

money safe” by the Holy Roman Emperor and kings. It was paradoxical that such deals played a role to make it clear that these two religious parties were different from each other. At the end, mendicant friars went to any places for Christianization in 13th century. These activities contributed to Christianization of inhabitants. It seemed that they were much more effective than religious principle or laws of princes. This Christianization provided confirmation for understanding and persecution for Jews as outsiders to be legitimated.

Finally, no Jews in 1300s in Germany might have economical power to accommodate with development of communities which provided persecution for them, and emotional comfort based on their identities as rambling people. As the responsa of Rabbi Meir showed, Jews in settlements didn't hope to leave their places to maintain their daily religious custom. That was the exact reason why Jews, who were minority in society, needed “their” settlements as connections for their network.

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