Summary

This dissertation sociologically analyzes the ideological aspect of the Zionist movement in the Russian Empire, particularly the faction that mainly used Russian as a language for publication. The main sources of this study are Russian Zionist (virtual) organs such as the monthly Evreiskaia zhizn’ and Rassvet (Razsvet) as well as other Russian brochures. The main figures of the faction whose arguments I consider several times here are Abraham Idelson, Daniel Pasmanik, and Vladimir Jabotinsky. In this dissertation, I call this faction “Russian Zionism,” because it was the mainstream among the Zionists including Socialist Zionists who remained in the Empire throughout the period between the two revolutions in 1905 and 1917. Although the main sociopolitical field of this faction was abolished after the Bolsheviks took power in Soviet Russia, a part of this faction—Vladimir Jabotinsky, for example—became Revisionists.

While the systematic investigation of the ideological features of Russian Zionism itself is new, more specifically, the dissertation’s hypothesis is that, contrary to the conventional view that Zionism was the rejection of the Diaspora, the Diaspora should have been profoundly significant for Russian Zionism in two ways: first, Russian Zionists themselves should have considered the Diaspora (the residence...
in the Empire) to be a crucial element in Zionism; and second, the influence of the Diaspora as a historical experience and a sociological environment should have had a great impact upon the formation of the ideology and world view of Russian Zionism.

In considering these issues, it is important to apply the theoretical viewpoints of the “objective context” and the “subjective context.” In this study, the “objective context” consists of the complex conditions that everyone at that time could perceive; the “subjective context” is the context that the Zionists conceived or imagined through their own interpretation of the “objective context” and the prediction of the future state of affairs. Although scholars have related Zionism with the “objective context” (e.g., anti-Semitism, modernization, and the spread of national ideas) in their own way, few have investigated the context that Zionists themselves had in mind (Zionists’ “subjective context”).

In Chapter One, after overviewing the features of the Russian Empire and the relationship between the Empire and its Jews, I analyze the Zionist thought in its initial period (particularly, Leo Pinsker, Moshe Lilienblum, and Ahad Ha’am). In the second half of the nineteenth century, maskilim (Jewish enlighteners), from which many Zionist leaders emerged, endeavored to improve the status of Jews in the Empire, while preserving the collective nature of Jewry. The objective context that made this outlook possible was the sociopolitical condition that, virtually, the Empire was constituted by several collective entities and governed based on these entities as a unit of political group. Thus, Jews were able to conceive the Empire as a framework that secured such diversity of collectivities. The 1881–82 pogroms urged them to reconsider their premise until then. The Jews who became Zionists, however, did not consider the emigration to Palestine as a simple escape from the Empire. They rather continued to conceive of the context of multinationality, and through Zionism, they attempted to secure the sociopolitical position of the Jews as a nation. For the Zionists, while Jews until then had been seen as a special, inferior group by non-Jews, Palestine as the “national” basis seemed to convince non-Jews of the nationhood of Jews. In a word, the attitudes toward the Empire or the subjective contexts of maskilim and Zionists were not different fundamentally. They both considered that how non-Jews perceive Jews as a group was significant for the status of
Jews in the Empire.

Chapter Two, which deals with the period around the 1905 Revolution, further investigated this aspect. The periodicals that I mainly analyze are the virtual Zionist organ Evreiskaia zhizn’ (monthly), the official Zionist organ Rassvet (monthly), and other periodicals that were virtually the same as Rassvet but had different names. By using the conceptual viewpoints of “intragroup identity” and “intergroup identity,” this chapter examines the position of the concept or category of nation within the Zionist world view. The intragroup identity of Jews means the identity of Jews for Jews themselves. The intergroup identity of Jews concerns the problem of to which family of collective groups Jews as a group belong—whether Jews are a family of nations, religious sects, classes, castes, and so forth. In the Empire, Zionists saw the benefits of the category of nation as the following three points. First, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the category seemed to raise the status of Jews as a group to a respectable group equal in value to other nations. Second, the Zionists expected that if Jews were recognized as a nation, peoples in the Empire would recognize Jews as an inseparable political group, as Russians and Poles. Third, they thought that within the multinational milieu, it was important that Jews were considered to be an independent entity that was never a puppet of any other nation. That is, the claim that Jews were a nation also meant that Jews had interest only in their own national affairs and no other interest as to Russify Poles or, as the pseudograph Protocol of Zion implied, to rule the world. In this manner, the category of nation had significance in the realm of intergroup identity, i.e., vis-à-vis non-Jews in the Empire. Interestingly enough, however, Russian Zionists did not connect this intergroup identity with Jewish intragroup identity; on the one hand, the Zionists claimed Jewish nationhood and promoted Zionism as its proof, but on the other, they did not discuss any essence concerning Jewishness. This can be proved quantitatively by the fact that articles in Rassvet hardly covered issues that positively defined some Jewishness and qualitatively by the fact that the central figures of the organ Abraham Idelson (the editor) and Daniel Pasmanik unequivocally criticized the argument of Jewish essences.

Chapter Three investigates why, then, Russian Zionists were against discussing Jewishness. Here, too, the impact of non-Jews is evident.
Before revealing this point, this chapter overviews the incidents, the Uganda Controversy in particular, in which Zionists from the Empire emphasized Jewishness in relation to Western Zionists over the hegemony of Zionism. In actuality, Russian Zionists emphasized Jewishness strategically, rather than as a result of their natural inclination or affection toward some Jewishness. Then what did they strive for? In order to inquire into this question, Pasmanik’s autobiographical novel published in *Evreiskaia zhizn’* in 1905 is a clue. The novel bespoke that what was neither assimilationism nor metaphysical preservation of the past was Zionism. The following two points are the backgrounds of this ideological inclination. First, due to industrialization and capitalization, the specific roles of Jews within the economy in the Diaspora became almost needless. As a result, Zionists feared the assimilation of the Jewish masses into their surrounding peoples for the sake of economic opportunity. For this reason, Russian Zionists considered it important to think positively and materialistically, rejecting metaphorical thinking and dogmas. Second, the historical experience of anti-Semitism had significance. What the Zionists hated the most was the history that Jews defined Jewishness apologetically in a form that flattered non-Jews. Russian Zionists saw that the more a Jew was assimilationist, the more he/she tended to define Jewishness; Russian Zionists were hostile to such definition or the fixation of Jewishness. The assimilation pressure and the logic used in the pressure on the sides of Russians also affected this hostility. Russian liberalism and nationalism as well as socialism were inclusive and expansive, and they demanded assimilation particularly of Jews. Their logic was that the Jewish culture did not have any value. In response to this claim, Russian Zionists raised the concept of rights. By this concept, they argued that any nationality must secure their existence regardless of their culture and its value. To put forward culture or value would have contradicted this ideological claim. Moreover, their positivistic or sociological view revealed for them that what were called Jewish essences were the result of the historical and social environments in which Jews lived, and not inherent essences of Jews; in particular, they were, the Zionists asserted, the result of the sociological conditions of the Diaspora. For the Zionists, the concept of “Jews” was burdened by various negative images in
such environments. Rebelling against such a status of the concept of Jews, the Zionists sought for what this dissertation calls “pure social relation,” which had no colors and no enforcement. Based on this perspective, they attempted to establish the social center of the Jewish nation in Palestine, where, in the ancient period, according to the Zionists, Jews were creative enough with no obsession with dogmas. Striving for Palestine meant to “reset” the concept of Jews with so many “essences” against Jewish will. Therefore, they primarily attempted to build the Jewish society, rather than the Jewish state.

Chapter Four describes the international (not interstate) norm or theory that Russian Zionists conceived in connection with their ideology and world view revealed above. This revelation would be important in understanding Zionists’ imagination systematically in that period as well as in considering the Zionist perception of Palestine. After outlining the Austro-Marxist theories of nationalities (such as Karl Renner’s and Otto Bauer’s), which not only Bundists but, in fact, also Russian Zionists referred to somewhat positively, I review the process by which the Bundists became nationalistic and began to stress Yiddish culture and its autonomy. Thereafter, I analyze the Zionists’ conception of nation, especially in relation to the state, and reveal that the Zionists conceived the context in which any nation can secure its rights within the framework of a state. They were conceiving the space within a state where the basic unit of political participation would be a nation. Then, why did the Zionists criticize the Bundist program of “national cultural autonomy”? The point revealed in the previous chapter, that the Zionists put the sphere of the social at the center of their ideology, is crucial. Although they took for granted the Austro-Marxists’ presumption that various nations were to be united under a same state framework, they noted that the Austro-Marxists never considered that a nation had no territory of its own anywhere in the state and that a territory was necessary for the survival of a nation. The Zionists asserted that the central point in nationalism was not a particular culture but the social field where creation would continue eternally and that for the establishment of the social field for Jewish creation (i.e., the condition that Jews constitute a majority in a society), a specific territory was necessary. Therefore, for the Zionists, cultural autonomy was simply
meaningless and impossible where Jews were a minority population. In this manner, the Zionist conception of the international order was that any nation should have its own territory somewhere and would be granted its national rights concerning national lives outside the territorial stronghold; Jews would have their territorial base in Palestine, whereas they were to be granted their national rights as a minority nation in the Empire (this conception was different from the Austro-Marxist premise that a nation would have its territorial base in a state and be granted its national rights based on the personal principle within the same state). What the Zionists were bringing into Palestine was such a conception of the international order. On the one hand, the Zionists categorized the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine as “Arabs” and theoretically connected them with other Arabs in the Arab countries. On the other, they presumed that Jews would be granted their rights as a majority nation (i.e., to govern the territory) in Palestine, while these “Arabs,” who had, according to the Zionists, their territorial base in other Arab areas, would be granted the rights as a minority there.

In the epilogue, the first section illustrates the situation of Russian Zionism at the time of the two revolutions in 1917, where the vision of Russian Zionists that we have seen above became even more evident at the time of the February Revolution and collapsed after the October Revolution. In the second section, briefly reviewing the arguments of this dissertation, I suggest that rather than viewing Zionism as a history of the expansion of the system of nation-states of Western Europe, it would be helpful in understanding the development of Zionism in Palestine to draw an analogy of the Soviet theory and policy toward nationalities, which in fact were influenced by the Austro-Marxist theory of nationalities. Also, I indicate that the sphere of the social, which is rarely discussed today in relation to nationalism and multiculturalism, should be considered when we investigate the period dealt with here, because it is obvious that a mode of thinking based on the sphere of the social was crucial in the Zionist ideology and world view in that period.

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

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