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## **The Contribution of Historical Geography to the Historiography of the Establishment of Israel**

### **Historiographic Background**

A century of Zionist strivings to create a Jewish polity in Eretz-Israel and half a century of Israeli statehood have spawned a stratified historiography.<sup>1</sup> The events, typically enough, were recorded in both real time and after the fact. The first instance produced a literature of memoirs and diaries; the second resulted in volumes of documentation and the development of research by both a founding generation and a generation of critics representing historiographic revisionism.

As might be expected, the historiography of the State of Israel, especially as regards its early years, is still in its incipient stages, given that the archives were opened and documents released for the 1950s and 1960s only recently. This access to primary sources permitted Israeli history to be written by a generation removed from its making and committed to its research. In this sense, the term *New Historians* reflects neither a New History, methodologically, nor New Historians, as concerns changing generations, but simply the beginning of professional history. It signals a transition from a generation of writers who were themselves involved in the historical events or who relied on secondary sources to a generation of writers laying the foundations for a historiography based on primary sources.

In effect, historical revisionism per se is still a few years down the road, although its thrust can already be seen in the present historiography. This thrust, evident in the public furor sparked by researchers of the past decade, may be attributed to the relatively short time that has passed since the period under study and the lingering impact of those days on Israel's current events and problems. The ink on their pages not yet dry, historians of the state period have thus, and not surprisingly, found themselves at the hub of public debate, professional polemics, and sharp personal clashes.

The growing number of studies and the ensuing reactions have produced numerous essay collections that examine the historiography of the period from a perspective of “zero time.” This phenomenon is unique. Historiographic review generally takes place after enough research has accumulated and enough time has elapsed to allow for a variety of fresh historical or methodological approaches. In Israel’s case, the nature of the research, the public, and the events seem to be organically linked, significantly shrinking the interval between the writing and evaluation of history. Thus, the past decade has seen a substantial number of historiographic anthologies on the rise of the State of Israel, the preceding decade (touching on World War II and the Holocaust), and the first decade of statehood.

One example, *Zionism: A Contemporary Controversy*, published in 1996, contains no less than twenty polemical articles on Zionism and post-Zionism in relation to the creation of the State of Israel.<sup>2</sup> It was followed a year later by another collection—*From Vision to Revision*—which, like the symposium on which it was based, was meant to examine historiographically a century of Zionism but focused instead on episodes surrounding the British Mandate and the establishment of the state.<sup>3</sup> Some of the contributing authors participated in both anthologies and the collateral public debates.

A different approach is represented by Mordechai Bar-On, who dates the start of the historiography of the State of Israel to early statehood. During and after the actual events, reports were written and research was begun on the 1948 war.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, entire journals are devoted to the polemics on the state’s creation, and the subject is treated in dozens of books, hundreds of articles, and the intense public discourse in the media. Taken all together, they attest to the central position occupied by the historiography on the State of Israel and its establishment, including the historiography of Eretz-Israel and Zionism. And all this has developed in the very brief period since the writing of professional history on these subjects began.

The academic disciplines chiefly involved in this historiography are history (political and social) and sociology, with many points of contact and mutual stimulation. This can be seen in the volumes just mentioned, in *Studies in Zionism, Theory and Criticism, Cathedra*, and *Israeli Sociology*; and other collections. The participants in the discourse come mostly from the disciplines of (Zionist) history, sociology and, to a certain extent, political science. Contributions by Israeliographers have been

steadily increasing, mainly from the subdiscipline of historical geography, though also from other subfields.

### **Disciplinary Setting: (Historical) Geography in Israel**

Since the first half of the twentieth century, modern geography has been forced to make a radical adjustment to the advancing frontiers of knowledge in the natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences. The regional paradigm that ruled geography from the end of the nineteenth century was marked by attempts to integrate knowledge that tried to explain the landscape features of different areas by means of local, continental, and global criteria. To this end, geographers availed themselves of information in the natural and earth sciences, humanities (history, languages), and social sciences (economics, statistics, demography). Tremendous strides in all these disciplines, particularly in the social sciences, caused geographers to delve deeper into their own subdisciplines—physical geography, human geography, settlement geography, urban geography, transport, and the like—so much so that there was a centrifugal effect as scholars began to cluster around three separate axes. Physical geographers gathered around the earth sciences (geology, climate, land, soils, water), human geographers around the social sciences and the quantitative revolution that has come to characterize them, and a smaller stream chose to remain with the humanities, particularly history, to explain the landscapes of the past and the geographical conditions of different historical periods.

Historical geography owes its beginnings to the researches of Clifford Darby in England in the 1920s. The field flourished, however, mainly in the 1970s, a quasi reaction to the quantitative revolution and the modular approach of geographers in the social sciences.

In the main, historical geography is distinguished by the nature of its sources, as well as its research goals, which have been variously defined by different scholars. Essentially, it studies a geographically significant historical period or process. The historical geographer treats the landscape of the past just as the geographer of the present treats the existing landscape; however, whereas the latter is able to rely on substantial contemporary data or to create the necessary data (surveys, mapping, or measurements), the former is restricted to the available sources of the period under study. As a result, historical geography drew nearer history as

a supporting discipline, using the tools of historians: documents, papers, maps, data, and so forth. But, while the methods are the historian's, the approach is the geographer's: an emphasis on findings that help to reconstruct the landscape of a given era. The geographer lends historical sources a geographic interpretation: settlement and its characteristics, the cultural landscape and its design, and the connection of changes in the landscape to historical processes. In contrast to the historian, the geographer of the past not only will deal with documents and papers but will prefer maps, photographs, pictures, drawings, building plans, travel accounts, and so on. Often he or she will also go into the field to study the remains of the past landscape and the role that these play in the present landscape—whether this role is functional or inert, whether the remains perpetuate the past or belong to it.

Schematically, the methodology of historical geography may be seen as a segment of knowledge derived from overlapping segments of the two larger circles comprising its parent disciplines. Drawing on materials from both, it attempts to reconstruct a new, integrated picture of a bygone landscape, thereby contributing, in turn, to both larger circles: to geography an understanding of the past, to history an understanding of the landscape in which historical processes took place. The research was of course influenced by methodological and historiographical developments and branched out in three main approaches.

Horizontal or “cross-sectional”: creating a geographical picture of a given past period

Vertical or “long-sectional”: tracing changes and processes in the landscape over time

Visual: researching remains of the past in the landscape and their applied modern expression, essentially contributing to the preservation of sites (akin to archaeology)

Historical geography has been considerably influenced also by post-modern methodologies (feminist, Marxist, structuralist, semiotic, and others), which in the past two decades have made it, too, a multifaceted and heterogeneous discipline.

All these developments were mirrored by Israeli progress in the field, which was pioneered by Yehoshua Ben-Arieh in his study of nineteenth-century Eretz-Israel and Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Although prior to Ben-Arieh, geographers such as David Amiran, Moshe Brawer, Itzhak Shatner, and Yehuda

Karmon had also dealt with historical aspects, Ben-Arieh created *ex nihilo* a school of historical geography that was distinct from both Israeli geography and historical geography abroad. He in fact helped mold three generations of students and researchers who have determined the boundaries and characteristics of Israeli historical geography.<sup>6</sup>

Israeli historical geographers use more or less the same methods and materials as other scholars. They prefer primary, archival sources alongside cartographic sources, which are available for Eretz-Israel mostly from the nineteenth century on. As for fields of research, inroads have thus far been made into several major subjects. Within the historical periods of the nineteenth century and the British Mandate, these include such diverse aspects of Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel as land acquisition, settlement forms, urban development, agriculture, and settlement institutions.<sup>7</sup> The present generation of historical geographers has moved on to topics current in international research: women, minorities, the establishment, landscapes, and more.<sup>8</sup>

Nor, as noted, has the contribution of Israeli historical geography been limited to purely geographical knowledge. It has extended the scope of historical research on Eretz-Israel by treating topics ignored by historians, by using typically geographic research sources, and by revealing the actual landscapes of past periods. This has resulted in a better understanding of daily life in bygone centuries, an acquaintance with the material culture, a picture of the past landscape, and original insights into major historical processes. Instances of the latter pertain to determining borders; population growth and areal spread; land acquisition processes; rural settlement and urban expansion; modernization of construction, agriculture, and preparation of infrastructure; changes in the traditional village; and so on.

These insights have enabled historical geographers to join the scholarly and public discourse on major events and qualitative issues such as the essence of Zionism and its activity in Eretz-Israel, relations between Jews and Arabs, the formation of the Jewish entity in Eretz-Israel, and so on.

The contribution of Israeli geography, and specifically of historical geography, to the historiography of the State of Israel, its establishment and initial development, has not received its due in the publications noted here, nor has it enjoyed the same recognition as the inputs of history, sociology, and political science.

In general, Israeli historical geography and the historiographic discourse intersect at six main points.

The population of Eretz-Israel: growth, distribution, and changes

The borders of Eretz-Israel and the State of Israel

Land and settlement prior to 1948 (rural and urban)

Geographic aspects of the 1948 war

Immigrant absorption, population distribution, and settlement prior to 1967 (and after)

The historiographic polemic itself

The remainder of the essay considers these issues.

### **Historical Geography Research Areas Pertaining to the Establishment of the State of Israel**

#### 1. The Population of Eretz-Israel

The question of Eretz-Israel's population prior to Zionist settlement (which began in 1882) and during the Mandate has aroused sharp controversy not only politically but also in demographic, geographic, and historical geographic research. The controversy may be phrased as the "eternal" theoretical question of whom the land belongs to or who are/were its "local" inhabitants. This question is no longer relevant. The country now has some nine million inhabitants. Nevertheless, so long as the political conflict remains unresolved the issue continues to feature in both political and media debates and confrontations: how many inhabitants lived in Eretz-Israel in the decisive modern periods, that is, before the Jews came to create a new entity, and under the British Mandate, when plans were drawn up for the land's partition? Related aspects are the origins of the Arab population in Eretz-Israel in modern times and the time of their settlement in the country.

As is well known, at the start of the British Mandate and according to its 1922 census, the population of Eretz-Israel was approximately 752,000, comprising some 590,000 Muslims (78.5 percent), 72,000 Christians (9.5 percent), 84,000 Jews (11 percent), and others (1 percent).

At the end of the Mandate, the population of the entire country was estimated at about 1.8 million inhabitants, of whom 630,000 were Jews (about 35 percent). Thus, between 1922 and 1948, the Jewish population

grew at an accelerated rate, mainly due to immigration (about 430,000 people).

Since no comprehensive censuses were conducted by the Ottoman Empire, the issue of population size in the nineteenth century remains academic. Commonly accepted estimates put the country's population in the early nineteenth century at about 250,000, the great majority (about 80 percent), Muslim. On the eve of Zionist settlement in 1882, there were in Palestine west of the Jordan between 350,000 and 450,000 inhabitants, about 10 percent of them Jews. By 1914, the overall figure had risen to about 750,000, about 85,000 (11 percent), Jews. This population growth was due mainly to migration from nearby regions such as (today's) Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, as well as from Europe; a small percentage stemmed from natural increase.

Without going into the diverse research on the topic, suffice it to say that the subject developed into a full-blown historiographic conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Palestinian question appeared on the world agenda as a political issue. In 1984, Joan Peters's controversial book was published.<sup>9</sup> This work presented the "Zionist" argument that the Land of Israel had been sparsely populated, mostly "empty," until the start of the Jewish settlement and its ensuing development and modernization led to a large increase in the population of the Arabs, who were drawn to the hubs of growth. Thus, according to Peters, the great majority of Palestine's Arabs arrived in the country at the onset of, or only slightly before, Jewish-Zionist settlement. These arguments crowned the accumulation of much sundry data and sources put together with little scholarly discipline. Their purpose, of course, was to counter the Arab argument of ownership of Palestine. Peters was neither the first nor the last to try to substantiate the well-known Zionist phrase "a land without a people for a people without a land." Her book provoked fierce public debate, though not a single scholar sided with her; on the contrary, Israeli researchers panned the book and its methods and do not relate to it as a source worth citing.<sup>10</sup>

In those years, the historiographic debate encompassed a number of historians and demographers, who published a great deal of data, tables, and in-depth historical demographic discussions on the subject.<sup>11</sup> The geographers involved adopted the profession's basic inductive method: they plowed through most of the relevant sources, culling information on the distribution of settlement in Eretz-Israel at various periods in the nineteenth century. Their sources included travel literature, official demographic figures, tax figures, maps, reports of consuls, surveys and estimates,

and wherever possible (principally for the Mandate period) lists of settlements and official demographic censuses.

The main researchers involved were Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and David Grossman. Ben-Arieh strove to reconstruct as fully as possible the settlement landscape at the levels of district and region, village and town, for Christians, Muslims, and Jews, respectively. With the help of his students, he compiled long lists of villages in every subdistrict (*qadha*) and district (*sanjaq*), as well as lists of towns and urban settlements, and juxtaposed the data with the figures for population growth in various periods from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the British census of 1922. The results of this meticulous work, based on every available source, were published as a series of six articles on each of the four *sanjaqs* (Acre, Nablus, Jerusalem, and Gaza) and two summary essays published in different books.<sup>12</sup> In a number of additional articles, Ben-Arieh examined Jerusalem and other nineteenth-century urban settlements in Eretz-Israel.

This research provides a marvelous example of historical geography's contribution to the controversial historiography of Eretz-Israel. Historians and demographers tended to work with large units of information on the macrolevel, using tables to explain pan-Ottoman or pan-Middle Eastern processes. In contrast, Ben-Arieh chose the classic geographic method of gleaning data on the microlevel from every relevant source and assembling them into general tables and summary maps both at intermediate levels and in an overall picture of Eretz-Israel. This full, transparent presentation of data, free of deliberate bias, can serve as a reliable foundation for historiographic discussions and even political polemics on the sensitive subject. In general, Ben-Arieh determined that Eretz-Israel in the mid-1870s had a population of some 350,000 permanent inhabitants, dispersed in some seven hundred settlements, with an additional nomadic population of some 20,000 to 30,000. The country was not empty, but it could certainly be defined as sparsely populated and able to absorb many more settlers, as indeed it did in due course. The prevailing Western image of an empty land stemmed from the large expanses of terrain with few sedentary dwellers and small settlements. This image, exaggerated by Western travelers, was also expedient for Jewish purposes.

David Grossman addressed Arab rural settlement and population in Eretz-Israel from the sixteenth century on with an emphasis on the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> He studied the country area by area, analyzing the relative size of villages given the restricted expansion opportunities

under Turkish land laws and noting the formation of “daughter villages” as offshoots of a major one. He produced a comprehensive, plausible map of rural settlement in Palestine that illustrated patterns of landownership, utilizing a particularist-inductive analysis that had not been attempted by historians.

These two scholars contributed decisively to the historiographic discourse, providing an understanding of population size and distribution in Eretz-Israel’s past. Neither eclectic nor polemical, their approach both reconstructed the past and created tools with which to comprehend it: data, maps, and explication. While their findings may still be subject to ideological or scientific discussion, the finely detailed picture they painted cannot be overlooked.

## 2. Borders and Partition

The question of borders is a highly charged issue, borders of both the State of Israel and, prior to the state, Palestine under the British Mandate, as well as the proposed partition between Jews and Arabs. The subject remains relevant, as Israel’s permanent borders, internally (with the Palestinians) and externally (with Syria and Lebanon) have yet to be determined by international agreement.

As is well known, the borders of Eretz-Israel/Palestine, as a political unit in modern history, were first fixed at the end of World War I. Earlier, in 1906, the country’s southern boundary with Egypt had been agreed between Britain and the Ottoman Empire. The northern and northeastern boundaries, with Lebanon and Syria, were also set by Britain, now the mandatory for Palestine, and France, the mandatory for the Levant. These two powers drew an arbitrary line between the Mediterranean Sea and the Hasbani River, dividing Palestine and Lebanon chiefly along the watershed of the Jordan and Litani rivers. As a result, south of this line there were only a few Shi’ite settlements; most were Sunni, Christian, and Druze. The Jewish *moshavot* (early farming communities featuring some mutual cooperation) in the Hula Valley and the north, particularly Metulla, were also taken into consideration and were included in the area of Eretz-Israel. The border with Syria was set at the foot of the Golan mountains so that all the water sources, especially the whole of Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee) and the entire Jordan River, would be within Palestinian rather than Syrian territory, thereby ensuring control of the water supply.

Britain alone determined the border between (western) Palestine

and (eastern) Transjordan, creating from scratch the entity that we know today as the [Hashemite] Kingdom of Jordan. The frontier was demarcated in 1922, along (from north to south) the natural course of the Yarmuk and Jordan rivers, the midline of the Dead Sea, and the line connecting the lowest points in the 'Arava Valley with the head of the Gulf of Eilat ('Aqaba). The borders of Eretz-Israel (Palestine—Land of Israel) were thus determined by the British mandatory with the country's inhabitants having no real say in the matter.

Since, by their very nature, borders are “a matter of geography,” it is hardly surprising that geographers were drawn to them. Moshe Brawer and Gideon Biger were the principal geographers to address the subject. Brawer, like his father, Y. A. Brawer, specialized in producing atlases and leaned toward political and rural geography.<sup>14</sup> His cartographic expertise led to his appointment as a reporter who covered the 1949 armistice negotiations with the Arabs. The combination of professional specialization, historical research, and hands-on experience made Brawer a recognized scientific authority on the country's borders, as reflected by numerous articles, as well as a book,<sup>15</sup> which first addresses the question of how the borders had been determined between Britain and France, Britain and Turkey, and Britain as the mandatory for Palestine, dividing the country between eastern Transjordan and western Eretz-Israel. Against this background, Brawer expounds on the borders drawn at the armistice agreements, making two key points. The first is the almost perfect congruence between the mandatory borders and the borders finalized between Israel and Egypt, and Israel and Jordan, in the armistice agreements, even though the respective borders had been drawn at different times and by different parties. The earlier borders had long been recognized as international boundaries, and recognized international boundaries, it would seem, are not easily changed.

The second point relates to the geographic pattern of settlement: the extent to which the border demarcators considered—and affected—the needs and wishes of villages and inhabitants, the ethnic element (the northern border), and the human element (the division of villages in 1949). By providing the necessary geographic background, Brawer contributed significantly to an understanding of the phenomenon of “infiltration” in early statehood.

Following Brawer, Gideon Biger delved deeper into the historical geographic background and with the help of maps and relevant documents set out, in a series of articles and a recent book, the manner in which Palestine's international boundaries had been demarcated since

Turkish times.<sup>16</sup> In so doing, he furnished the international context for the determination of the mandatory borders, which is not only important per se but still relevant today.

Another border question relates to the political partition between Jews and Arabs. In this field, the literature is rich and diverse, historians having dealt with such topics as the political setting, international and British aspects, the Jewish-Arab dispute, internal Jewish conflicts, and internal Arab conflicts.<sup>17</sup>

The question of partition, which to this day has not been implemented, has benefited from treatment by researchers in a range of disciplines, resulting in a variegated literature. Scant attention has been paid, however, to the geographic aspects of partition apart from the work of Biger and, primarily, Yossi Katz.<sup>18</sup>

Katz published a series of articles (summarized in a book) on the practical aspects of settlement in which he shows that the Jewish Agency accepted the partition principle on the basis of the proposals of the Peel Commission and its successors, a principle that has never been put into practice.

He sheds light on the variety of alternative partition proposals that the Jewish Agency prepared, which included a broad array of derivative issues: the division of Jerusalem, population transfer by agreement, the status of the Arab minority in the Jewish state, the structure of the regime in the Jewish state, and of course wide-ranging settlement plans in various regions of the country, including land acquisition, preparation of the infrastructure for water and roads, and allocation of land for settlement.

Such thorough preparation, in Katz's view, helped shape Zionist policy in the 1940s in anticipation of the state's establishment and the 1947 partition plan. His contribution to the historiographic discourse on partition and "transfer" is thus not limited to a presentation of the facts; it suggests that partition be viewed as a leitmotif dictating elements of Zionist policy in the decade preceding statehood. To some extent thereby, he aligns himself with Benny Morris on the connection between the transfer plans of those years (1937–38) and their seeming materialization in the War of Independence.<sup>19</sup> While there is a huge difference between the "transfer by agreement" of which Katz speaks and the creation of the refugee problem, which, according to Morris, occurred without either a guiding hand or a definite plan, Katz reinforces Morris's reading of events, highlighting its similarity to the earlier Jewish Agency plans and policies.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Land Purchase and Settlement prior to 1947

Israeli historiography has devoted much time and effort to the question of land and Jewish settlement prior to statehood, especially in the context of the Arab-Jewish confrontation during the British Mandate. More than three generations of researchers have examined the issues of land, ownership, settlement, and settlement features and the impact of all these on Eretz-Israel and its Arab inhabitants, yet, there is still room for quite a few basic studies and certainly for discussion.

From the dawn of the Zionist movement, and even before, Jewish national aspirations were marked by a drive to “return to the soil.”<sup>21</sup> The new national identity was to be formed by Jews reverting to a “healthy, normal” existence, living off agriculture in rural communities. Thus, from the start of Zionism’s practical work in the country through the establishment of the State of Israel, supreme importance was attached to land acquisition and agricultural settlement. Most of the obtainable land (whether from the government or private owners) was to be settled as massively as possible. This was basic both normatively and in terms of political goals. Dozens of books from various disciplines, including history, sociology, political science, and law, have been written on the question of land, land acquisition, and the different systems and forms of settlement created.<sup>22</sup>

Since land and settlement draw on classic geographical elements such as maps, measurements, considerations of location, accessibility, physical planning, and all the other spatial facets, the subject fell naturally within the purview of historical geography. Equally germane to the historical geographic approach is the development of the cultural settlement landscape (the genesis of landscape). Israeli geography is thus closely bound up with the major issues of the historiography of settlement and has made a decisive contribution to the historiographic discussion on the questions of land acquisition and rural and urban settlement.

Apart from Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, whose work broadly covered this field too, the subject at its formative stage was addressed by Shalom Reichman. Unfortunately, his work was cut short by his untimely death. Reichman, a geographer with a predilection for economics and planning, explored the roots of Israel’s physical planning. Finding it necessary to clarify the basic instruments of planning, namely, land and settlement, he set out to trace the original design of Zionist policy on regional land preferences and the physical planning of Jewish space. His study, *From Foothold to Settled Territory*,<sup>23</sup> consisting of a central essay and wide-rang-

ing historical documents, sheds light on the constitution of Jewish space in Eretz-Israel prior to statehood: the reasons for preferring particular sections of land at different periods, the input of political factors, geopolitical considerations in the preference for certain lands in other periods, the creation of the so-called N-shaped spatial pattern of the Jewish settlement map (up the coastal plain, across the Jezreel Valley, and up the Hula Valley), and the attempts to diverge from it.<sup>24</sup>

Ben-Arieh, and Reichman after him, created the conceptual underpinnings of the geographical approach to historical research into settlement and land acquisition, which spawned three generations of students and researchers, who in turn cultivated other students. Among the first generation, Ruth Kark stands out. She pioneered studies on Jewish interests in the Negev from 1880 to 1948,<sup>25</sup> before moving on to aspects of urban settlement in Jaffa and Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup> These basic studies yielded a series of substantive works on processes of land acquisition in various regions and periods, the stress being on geographic preferences in terms of area, locale and placement, as well as the feasibility of farming, construction, and so on.<sup>27</sup>

The conceptualization of acquisition processes enabled Kark to take a broad historiographic view and abstract insightful generalities. For example, she suggested linking “land, man, and divinity” in the traditional cultures of Eretz-Israel and elsewhere, and she extended the time span to include lands for sale in Eretz-Israel from the mid-nineteenth century to the middle of the Mandate period. Going beyond Zionist activity, she examined pre-Zionist land purchases and the land dealings of non-Zionist entities such as missionaries, Christian communities, and others.<sup>28</sup>

The second generation of Ben-Arieh’s pupils to address the subject of land and settlement fundamentally changed the classic settlement historiography by focusing on pioneering sectors that had been inadequately illuminated and underrepresented. Yossi Ben-Artzi, Ran Aaronsohn, Zvi Shiloni, and Yossi Katz examined the roles of the *moshavot*, of the settlement work by Baron Edmond de Rothschild’s officials, and of private enterprise. Ben-Artzi’s and Aaronsohn’s studies on the *moshavot* and the baron’s administration revamped the historiographical approach.<sup>29</sup> The part played by the *moshavot* in the development of Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel was duly acknowledged and has featured in studies published since.<sup>30</sup>

The new place accorded the First *Aliya* (immigration wave) (1882–1904) in settlement history—Hovevei Zion, Baron de Rothschild, the Jewish Colonization Association, the *moshavot*—stemmed from a more

balanced treatment. The same trend, to a large extent, marked also Zvi Shiloni's trailblazing work on the Jewish National Fund (JNF). His was the first scholarly and academic (as opposed to propaganda and biographic) attempt to deal with the most significant institution in land acquisition in Eretz-Israel and the changing landscapes in the prestate period.<sup>31</sup>

Yossi Katz has published dozens of essays and several books on land and Jewish settlement prior to statehood. His initial focus, the private sector, had been overlooked by settlement historiography, and he demonstrated its significant contribution to land purchases and the development of towns and villages before 1914.<sup>32</sup>

Studying the activities of the JNF, he found the period from 1936 to 1947 to have been decisive in charting the map of Jewish settlement prior to the partition plan. In those years, the JNF bought six hundred thousand dunams of land, about a third of all the Jewish-owned land in Eretz-Israel prior to 1947. In other studies, he shed light on Jewish holdings in the Hebron Hills and the Etzion Bloc, as well as the role of the religious kibbutz movement in the country's settlement.<sup>33</sup> Katz's work rests on an enormous compendium of historical documents with spatial-geographic and economic relevance.

The third generation of historical geographers took the knowledge accumulated on land and settlement and carried it forward to the Mandate period, illuminating "hidden corners" in the historiography. Irit Amit and Rina Idan shed light on settlement activity in the center of the country, the Hefer Valley and the southern Sharon Plain. They illustrated the enormous complexity of national and class factors—which enjoyed priority in Zionist settlement—combined with private capital and new forms of settlement in this part of the land.<sup>34</sup>

The data amassed by historical geographers have won them a central position in the research of the history of modern Jewish settlement. The past is no longer studied just in terms of political, social, economic, or cultural processes but also as changing landscapes due to intensive settlement activity: land purchase, physical planning, and land reclamation. This new focus has produced fresh insights not only into changing landscapes but also into historical processes themselves and the major factors affecting these processes. Historical geography has added a new dimension to the work of recent historians; the historiography of the Yishuv and of Eretz-Israel prior to 1947 has been advanced not only by historical research but to a large extent also by the historical geographic insights introduced.

#### 4. Research on the War of Independence and Its Impact

The War of Independence has remained a constant on the research agenda of various disciplines: military history, political history, social history, geography, political science, law, and so on. Both the period of the war and its course have provided fertile ground for a multilayered historiography. The impressive harvest of scholarly war literature in recent years, even though it has been seen as historical revisionism,<sup>35</sup> in fact constitutes the first stratum of professional, directed historical research.

Benny Morris's outstanding contribution to a fuller understanding of the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem has laid the foundations of Israeli historiography for this issue and led him to define himself and others as New Historians.<sup>36</sup> But Morris's study of the problem cannot be defined as pure history for—in contrast to other historical issues—it remains a major factor in the political relationship between Israel and the Palestinians.

Unlike the earlier research, which was based on memoirs and oral documentation, the new, broader research, as stated earlier, was made possible by the opening of official (institutional) and private archives. At this stage, geographers, too, could enter the picture, contributing their own viewpoint on the war and its effect on the start of statehood and the fashioning of the settlement landscape in the early decades.

In fact, an important study on the war had been produced in the late 1950s, and formed the basis of the historiography on the subject for an entire generation. In anticipation of the state's tenth anniversary in 1958, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) History Department, headed by Netanel Lorch, undertook an extensive research project aimed at producing an official volume on the war as part of the Book of the State project. This official history was never published because of internal conflicts, which recently were described by Bar-On. Instead two abbreviated works were issued: an internal booklet, "The War of Independence," intended as a methodological tool for military lecturers and commanders; and a book entitled *The History of the War of Establishment (Toldot Mu'hemet Hakomemiyut)* based on Lorch's work, although his name was omitted.<sup>37</sup>

Less well known is the preparatory study conducted by Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Teddy Preuss, who mapped the battles of the War of Independence as background to the military-historical research just described. The only work of its kind done so far, this study was not published until recently, in a limited edition. Its value, in military historical terms, lies not only in its precise identification of the land battles but also

in its quantitative analysis of the war burden borne by various sectors and brigades.<sup>38</sup>

The first geographic treatment of the landscape changes caused by the war and its aftermath (1947–49) was Shalom Reichman's 1988 article on the partition of the land and the "*post-factum* transfer" of the Palestinian population from areas of the newly established state.<sup>39</sup> His article coincided with the initial books of the current wave of historiography on that period and received little notice, even though some of its formulations (such as *post-factum* transfer) are no less caustic than those of the New Historians. Reichman presented the shift in settlement policy from spatial-regional planning (settlement blocks), which was suited to the prewar land divisions, to a spatial policy adapted to the needs of state, covering far larger areas and including the exploitation of abandoned "Arab space" for Israeli spatial distribution, immigrant absorption, and agricultural production.

His geographic viewpoint rested partly on primary sources and partly on the diaries of Yosef Weitz; Benny Morris did likewise at precisely the same time.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, Reichman passed away in 1992 before he had managed to flesh out his research or ground his outlook in the spatial changes caused by the war. His assertion that the political and settlement institutions had indeed accepted partition and anticipated the country's division from the end of the 1930s, and even more earnestly in the following decade, is partly buttressed by my own study on Mapai's settlement plans after the partition resolution of November 1947. Mapai, the main party in David Ben-Gurion's coalition, was fully aware of the enormous task it faced in having to establish a state. Various committees were involved in molding the basic image of the state to be; one of these, comprising representatives of all the settlement bodies, dealt with the questions of water and settlement.<sup>41</sup>

At a succession of meetings between December 1947 and February 1948, water expert Simha Blass and settlement expert Yosef Weitz put forward two main plans. These, more or less, became settlement policy guidelines for handling the absorption of the million immigrants anticipated over the course of the next decade.

Anyone perusing this settlement program cannot but conclude that Ben-Gurion's close associates believed that steps had to be taken for the establishment of a state within the borders of the UN partition plan. According to the plan, some 150 new settlements were to be set up, about half of them in the Negev, which was slated for inclusion in the Jewish state, and the rest along the lines of the partition map for the north and center of the country.

The program never reached the stage of detailed planning on account of the war's progression and consequent frontier changes. Nevertheless, many of its elements were assimilated into planning after the state's establishment, including the settlement blocks in the northern Negev, the settlement of the center of the country, and the idea of conveying water from the north to the south. This finding reinforces Reichman's contention on the adjustment from partition preparations to recognition of postwar realities. Mainly, this entailed an enlargement of the areas in the possession of the State of Israel, the presence of about four hundred deserted Arab settlements, and roughly 4.2 million dunams of arable land that had been owned by Arabs. These circumstances necessitated a new policy, which took shape gradually, as well as the formulation of legal and administrative mechanisms to deal with the enormous amount of property that suddenly constituted an unplanned potential for redrawing the map of the land.

While Benny Morris had devoted considerable space to geographic aspects such as demographic changes, rural abandonment, and urban destruction, the subject still required geographical elaboration.<sup>42</sup> Geographer Arnon Golan was the first to examine in detail the process whereby the State of Israel took over former Arab property and the means devised to utilize it. He devoted a wide-ranging doctoral thesis (later updated in a book) and a series of articles in Israeli and overseas journals to a systematic account and analysis of the transfer of Arab property to state control and the uses the latter made of it for the purpose of developing settlement: villages, towns, neighborhoods, highways, farmland, forests, and other infrastructures.<sup>43</sup>

Golan's historical geographic, positivist inductive approach considered each region in detail. He showed that Arab property served as an available, convenient tool to achieve various goals: political (boundary demarcation), economic (hundreds of food-producing agricultural settlements), and social (immigrant absorption and housing for state inhabitants). In addition, he also traced the development of the legal instruments for, and political processes behind, the exploitation of the new space and its accompanying assets. His studies provide an exhaustive survey of different territorial zones, town and country, and in fine detail he sketched the drastic landscape changes that occurred in so short a time. The knowledge he provided is both historical and geographic.

His attempt to reconstruct, as closely as possible, the daily, practical conditions of historical reality contributes to the historiographic discourse. Beyond the discussion of political/historical and military processes, which

were chiefly the domain of historians, Golan presents the war's effects on the ground step by step until they changed the realities. So different was the new situation that it, in turn, influenced political positions and processes. A mere two or three years after the war, the question of the refugees and their possessions was already a theoretical, political, and diplomatic issue. Whether or not it was desired, the terrain and landscape had so altered as to make it impossible to revert to the former situation even minimally.

The geographic importance of Golan's research on the war and its aftermath stems from his thesis as to the close correspondence between Israel's settlement landscape of the 1950s and 1960s and the space left behind by the Palestinian population. Both the urban array (new neighborhoods, towns, and metropolises) and the rural array (hundreds of moshavim and kibbutzim) reflected the filling of the great void left by the Arab departure. Golan thus offers a complex perspective on the first decades of statehood. The settlement landscape was redesigned using the abandoned Palestinian space. But the use made of it was not a strictly Israeli-directed process; it had begun in the Mandate period and intensified after it.<sup>44</sup>

Other geographically oriented investigations, though not by geographers, demonstrate the value of the discipline in the research of the War of Independence and its results. Such is the historian Tamir Goren's comprehensive study on the events in Haifa in 1948 and its transition from a mixed Arab-Jewish city to a Jewish city with an Arab minority.<sup>45</sup>

Goren analyzed historical processes such as the decline of Haifa's Arab population prior to the battles of April 1948, the treatment of the remaining minority, and the negotiations on the Arab surrender and continued presence in the city. His study, however, goes beyond the local or historiographic and brings to the fore geographic aspects of the process: the evacuation of neighborhoods, the destruction of Haifa's Old City, the changes in the Arab landscape, and the absorption of the Jewish immigrants who for several years took over the Arab space. The case of this mixed city is frequently cited to substantiate the Israeli claim that the Arab departure was voluntary and spontaneous rather than guided from above, politically or otherwise. The Israeli version of events took pains to highlight the call of Haifa's Jewish mayor, Shabtai Levy, for the Arabs to remain and continue living together with their Jewish neighbors. The Palestinian side made much of the Haifa case as clear evidence of British-Zionist collusion, blaming the fate of the Arab population on the handing over of the city by British commanders to the Jews.<sup>46</sup> Goren

largely adopts the Israeli version, but it is obviously difficult to extrapolate from the Haifa case to the country as a whole.

Another mainly geographic study, conducted with purely historical tools, is Osnat Shiran's examination of the wartime agricultural settlements. Shiran shows the adaptation of the sector, numbering some ninety new settlements, to the progression of the war and the growing needs of immigrant absorption, setting political targets, on the one hand, and supplying food on the other.<sup>47</sup>

Geography's contribution to the research on the War of Independence and its immediate aftermath is thus both diverse and considerable, though not always duly acknowledged. Apart from the lively discourse on political-historical and military issues, a multifaceted historical geographic research has developed, making for original and fresh insights. The mapping of the war, the understanding of its effect on the landscape, and the reconstruction of history's physical reality are the proper province of geography, hence its distinctive contribution to the historiography of the period and the grasp of the processes that followed in the wake of the war.

##### 5. Immigration, Absorption, and Settlement (up to 1967)

The massive change in the country's landscape in the first two decades of statehood marked the emergence of an entirely new geography. But geography was not only the setting and framework for historical processes; it was also an instrument used to reach important state targets deriving largely from the new geographic data, the framework of new borders, and the available resources. Israel's cardinal problems were geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geosocial, and they called for the following actions:

Establishing the new borders as a geographic fact

Filling the large, sparsely populated internal spaces in the Negev, the Galilee, and the center of the country

Absorbing the masses of immigrants who streamed in at a dizzying pace by meeting the concomitant needs for housing, employment, food, education, and social and cultural assimilation

Producing food and basic goods for the entire population

In addition, hovering over all of these for at least ten years were such existential issues as international recognition of the State of Israel, continuous fear of a second round of war with Arab states, and the Palestinian refugees, which had not been addressed in the armistice agreements.

The young state approached these challenges with the tools at its disposal, taking advantage of the concentration of resources by official bodies and the expertise in physical planning and rural settlement systems gained during the years of preparation for statehood. The response to most of the problems was geographic in nature as available land, capital, and manpower were channeled toward solving these problems (if only partially).

Within three years, some four hundred rural communities were created aimed at “marking the borders” with a chain of settlement and filling in “empty pockets,” including the center of the country and the Jerusalem Corridor. These communities were also meant to step up food production to alleviate shortages and the rationing of agricultural produce. Within ten years, thirty new towns of varying sizes were created as the chief instrument of population distribution and immigrant absorption and to buttress the rural settlement configuration. Abandoned Arab property was utilized to achieve targets of rural settlement and new towns; in large cities, deserted neighborhoods were used. Large development projects undertaken to bolster the new settlement map included draining Lake Hula, developing the Yarkon–Negev water lines and the National Water Carrier, constructing ports at Eilat and Ashdod, and building a network of roads to outlying areas, especially in Galilee, the Negev, the ‘Arava, and the Dead Sea.

Within a few years, the map of the State of Israel had changed beyond all recognition. The new geography was shaped out of political, economic, social, and security needs. It is thus hardly surprising that many geographers wrote about these processes and changes quite soon after they took place, dwelling on descriptions and analyses of the new landscape and all its urban, regional, and village components. Some geographers were actually involved in the planning processes; others wrote as the developments took place or shortly afterward.<sup>48</sup>

Only lately, however, has the period been subjected to critical geographic investigation, in conjunction with the recent historical awakening. Like historians, geographers of the past require distance in order to gain perspective. First and foremost, they need primary sources to be released so that the given processes may be examined historically. The discussions and correspondence of various bodies that worked on designing

a new map, the motives and different considerations involved—all of these are disclosed only after the passage of a generation or more. Consequently, the historical geography of the early statehood period is still in its initial stages. Geographic studies of a historical nature that relate to this period deal primarily with issues of land and Arab property, and the use made of these to reach the state targets, or with rural and urban settlement, including its ideological and social aspects.

Arnon Golan's doctoral dissertation was the basis for his articles on the design of the settlement map between 1949 and 1953. He traced the utilization of Arab villages as core footholds for dozens of kibbutzim and moshavim and the redistribution of Arab agricultural assets among these settlements.<sup>49</sup> In parallel, several of his articles showed Arab urban infrastructures to have been a principal means of absorbing immigrants during and after the War of Independence. Small Arab towns became the main instruments in the new towns policy, which was aimed at absorbing masses of immigrants and enabling population dispersal.<sup>50</sup>

The transformation from an "Arab landscape" to the new Israeli landscape was treated also by Amiram Gonen, in studies on the creation of the new towns and new suburbs in existing cities;<sup>51</sup> while Kark, too, shed light on housing and population policy.<sup>52</sup>

The subject of land continues to exercise geographers, although the focus has changed from land acquisition in the Ottoman and British periods to the legal and social aspects of Israel having become the owner of about 94 percent of the land in the state. Michal Oren dealt with the question in her doctoral thesis, which focused on the formation of land settlement policy from the rise of the state to the creation in 1960 of a central administrative mechanism, the Israel Lands Administration.<sup>53</sup>

This mechanism was necessary to put order into the great miscellany of categories of land, landownership, settlement, and organization and to regulate relations between the two chief landholders, the JNF and the State of Israel. Oren also studies the issue of Arab property, the juridical and legal means devised to manage and register it, and the property of German, Italian, and Russian nationals left over from prestate European activity in Eretz-Israel. Her fresh approach goes beyond a presentation and description of the facts based on primary sources; principally, she points out that the "national ethos" of creating Jewish-owned land in Eretz-Israel, which was formed in the sixty years preceding statehood, was so deeply embedded in the consciousness of state leaders that it took some time for a distinction to emerge between national land (Jewish) and state land (Israeli). State leaders and image makers were prisoners of the

national ethos even after the state machinery was in place. One striking example of this is the “million dunams” deal entered into by the state and the JNF in 1948–50. It was meant to ensure that the state’s land would be transferred to the nation and guarded—but from whom? Ben-Gurion had to break free of this mental petrification to stop the “second million” deal from going ahead. Nevertheless, for many more years the state continued to find it difficult to distinguish between the state and national lands in its possession. In fact, to this day efforts continue all over the country to obtain lands and settle ownership issues for Arab-claimed land. Geremy Forman is currently researching the connection between land settlement in the north of the country in early statehood and later settlement policies aimed at increasing the Jewish proportion of Galilee’s population (“the Judaization of Galilee”).<sup>54</sup>

The connection between landownership, policy, and the creation of the settlement map was examined and enlarged on by Oren Yiftachel, principally from a social critical point of view. His first study, on settlement planning in Galilee, dealt with land policy and Jewish–Arab relations. As early as 1992, he pointed both to the problems caused by confusing the concepts of state and national as regards land resources and to the great diversity of Jewish attitudes toward Arabs.<sup>55</sup> He has since developed the critical approach to encompass land-use policy, which in his opinion has exacerbated the disparities not only between Israel’s Jews and Arabs but also among different Jewish sectors. This has been particularly evident in the relations between the “new” (development) towns and their rural surroundings. Yiftachel has taken the critical approach farther than any other Israeli geographer, to the point of presenting Israel as an ethnocracy. He considers the formative processes of the state’s first decade to have deepened and broadened. An atypical historical geographer, he relies on historical tools in constructing his arguments, using the materials of the time and deriving insights from the historical setting. His work is as relevant to today’s Israel as it has been in advancing the research of the period following the rise of the state, particularly as regards Jewish–Jewish and Jewish–Arab social inequality in Galilee and the Negev.<sup>56</sup>

The contribution of geography to the historiography of the state’s beginnings and first two decades (up to 1967) pertains to those aspects of history in which geographers enjoy a natural advantage: borders, land, settlement (in all its forms), population and population distribution, and the physical planning of space. In all of these, the geographic angle relates not only to the state’s changed physical appearance but also to the social

and political processes connected with spatial aspects: intercommunal and ethnic disparities, failures and successes in immigrant absorption, population dispersal, new urban or rural settlement, and landownership. For all that, geographic research into the history of the state's beginnings is still in its infancy. We may expect doctoral research and new studies to be extended and deepened as relevant primary sources come to light, facilitating fuller and more solid historical geographic research.

## 6. The Historiographic Discourse

In a fascinating (and controversial) article on Israeli geography, Yoram Bar-Gal set out the mighty efforts—and puny successes—of Israeli geographers in attempting to create a critical or new approach within the discipline.<sup>57</sup>

Bar-Gal reviewed the development of the profession at the Hebrew University and its spread to other Israeli universities. He found the field to be fairly homogeneous in perspective and not critical enough—certainly as compared with Israeli sociology and history, which have been in upheaval during the past decade. Bar-Gal makes the point that geography is “a branch of science, which supports the national idea, which strengthens the attachment to the local territory.” His interesting interpretation elaborates on the “imperatives” bequeathed by the founding generation of scholars and their successors at the Hebrew University. In essence, he describes geography as a discipline that plays an important role in crystallizing national identity in Israeli society, nation building, shaping collective memory, and “bonding with the homeland.”

He is ruthless in his “self-criticism” of Israeli geography, attacking its alignment with the establishment and state goals, as well as its provincialism. These, he claims, have prevented it from advancing to a new or critical geography, as history and sociology have done. At the same time, he does remark on the emerging buds of a critical approach, mainly in the works of Yiftachel and David Newman of Ben-Gurion University, who have challenged the Zionist ethos and given voice to the “other.” In response to Bar-Gal, Yehuda Gradus and Avinoam Meir listed a number of current geographers who have adopted a variety of approaches, partly postmodern, in order to understand the geographic present.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, it is true that to date few geographers have taken part in the thrust to devise a new or critical geography, or in the historiographic discourse of the past decade, even when the discussion revolved around classic geographic issues such as settlement, borders, and population movement.

Among those who have participated, it is worth mentioning Aaronsohn, Yiftachel, Golan, and Ben-Artzi.

Aaronsohn has compared Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel with colonialism, which is one of the main criticisms leveled at Zionism by critical historians and sociologists, who have drawn analogies with South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and so on.<sup>59</sup> Aaronsohn distinguishes between *colonization* and *colonialism*, both of which derive from the word *colony* and, to his mind, have been confused. He analyzes the nature of Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel in light of the findings of historical geography and submits to scholarly scrutiny various colonial characteristics (exploitation, occupation, taking over the foci of power, etc.). In this manner, he distinguishes Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel from the model of European colonialism, which was supported by political and economic interests. He argues that historians and sociologists who describe the start of Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel as colonialism rely on a flawed methodology; using simplistic generalizations, they apply models and theories that are not checked against historical data and accordingly lack systematic or even basic knowledge of the material itself. Most, he believes, are not scholars of the period; they are ignorant of many facts, of the conditions of the times, and above all of the spirit of the age, which is a fundamental criterion of historical work.

Golan has a different view as to the motives of those who have recently criticized Israel's "colonial" past. He believes that such criticism originated with Marxist writers, who were motivated more by their political outlook than by substantial research into the roots of Zionism.<sup>60</sup>

I have argued similarly in articles on the War of Independence. One such article attempts to offer an insight into the current status of the historiography and history of the war by presenting a model of a five-layered historiographic framework.<sup>61</sup>

(1) History written at the time of the events described by participants.

(2) Historiography nourished by the literature comprising memoirs, diaries, official compilations, and articles by contemporary participants.

(3) The output of researchers and historians utilizing materials of the preceding layers, as well as initial syntheses, occasionally accompanied by original material. At this stage a critical or somewhat revisionist approach emerges.

(4) This layer stems from the opening of the archives, which gives rise to historiographic comparisons of the newly revealed material with that of preceding layers. This is professional history: the crystallization of concepts and approaches based on primary information.

(5) This layer emerges only a generation later, when other material is discovered or different interpretations are given to known materials. This, in fact, is the layer of true historiographic revisionism.

I suggest that the New Historians are situated at the fourth historiographic layer, with the research on the War of Independence still in its infancy. Only a few aspects (mostly political and military) of the course and period of the war have been subjected to research based on primary sources and juxtaposition with the historical literature of the preceding layers.

Many other aspects of the war have not yet been properly studied, notably, daily life, civil society, contemporary social facets, landscapes, and so on. All of these await proficient, well-founded investigation and professional histories. The time is not yet ripe for Bar-On's revisionist stage.<sup>62</sup>

Yiftachel takes a different approach to the historiographic discourse on the rise and development of the State of Israel. True, his interest lies in the political configuration that, in his view, the State of Israel designed. He defines this configuration as an "ethnocracy," bolstering his position with topics related to the historiographic discourse on the start of settlement and the beginning of statehood.

He proposes a model of Jewish majority rule that, despite the formal democratic structure, perpetuates itself and restricts the rights of the non-Jewish minority to state resources such as land, economic opportunity, infrastructure development, budgetary allocations, and so on. As a geographer, Yiftachel makes abundant use of geographic data and concepts that enable him to substantiate his approach: physical planning, land seizure, regional inequality, social inequality, "Judaization" of the state and its various regions, and so on.<sup>63</sup>

He lends his arguments depth by going back to the 1950s, when large land assets passed into state hands and, according to him, were exploited in order to install an ethnocracy: allocations restricted to certain sectors, discrimination against and marginalization of immigrants, particularly oriental Jews, the Judaization of Galilee, and so on.

## Summary

I have attempted in this essay to set forth the contribution of Israeli historical geography to the historiography of the establishment and early development of the State of Israel. Many geographers have touched on key questions of the historiographic discourse, offering viewpoints on the settlement landscape, the physical space, and the processes of change undergone by the country as a result of Jewish settlement and the Jewish–Arab conflict. The dozen Israeli geographers who have discussed major historiographic issues belong mostly to the subdiscipline of historical geography and research fields such as planning, urban geography, and political geography.

The points of contact between geographic studies and the historiography of statehood concern population origin, dispersal, and resources; land and Jewish settlement prior to the rise of the state; the War of Independence and its aftermath; borders; immigrant absorption and its spatial significance; and Israel's historiographic discourse and the "wars of the historians" in the past decade.

In all these fields, geographers have enhanced knowledge by contributing the distinctive approach of their discipline.

A wealth of details arising from research that is inductive and cumulative in nature

The reconstruction of the actual historical and geographic setting

An understanding of the process of change in the settlement and cultural landscape

Spatial insights into distribution, planning, and resource allocation

Mapping and imaging of the past by various means

It has been said that without a geographic background, historians are like people floating on air. Indeed, both world and Israeli geography have progressed from mere props for historical processes to becoming full participants in the historiographic discourse, adding distinct insights and viewpoints and lending depth and richness to historical, military, political, and social analyses.

These reciprocal relations have enriched both disciplines, as borne

out by the examples presented here. After all, the historical processes connected to the rise of the State of Israel, the War of Independence, and its results are clearly reflected in the geographic landscape and features of settlement. Accordingly, the discipline of geography has played an essential role in the recent historical research of the State of Israel.

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