

*Uri Ram*

## **The Future of the Past in Israel** A Sociology of Knowledge Approach

### **New Historians or New Histories? A Sociological Perspective**

Israel's historical scene has been in turmoil since the late 1980s. Relatively placid in the nation-building period, it has become a stormy arena in the postnational era. Historians passionately disagree on both matters of substance and matters of practice. Some contest, while others defend, accepted truisms about Israel's past. Some champion suppressed narratives, others archival findings, while still others pledge allegiance to a hallowed national history. Since 1988, the debate has been galvanized by the buzzwords *Old Historians* and *New Historians*.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990s, it was fanned by the peace process, which, it was widely believed, signaled a new stage in Israeli history and was thus an appropriate moment to review earlier periods in a new light. But at the same time the diminution of the national ethos and drive toward universal normalization had its opponents, who strove to rejuvenate old myths. The historians' debate soon spilled over from scholarly journals and academic conferences into the public sphere (though some may argue that it was the other way around), radiating onto anything that smacked of history (and what in Israel, after all, does not?). In 1998, the twenty-five part TV documentary series on Israel's history from 1942 until the 1990s, *Tekumah* (Rebirth), which was prepared for Israel's fiftieth anniversary, furnished a platform for broad debate and came under attack for denigrating the nation. Frequent changes of government and education ministers opened up also school curricula to historical controversies, especially as regards textbooks and commemoration ceremonies. The decline of the peace process, the downslide into violence, and the resurgence of the ultranationalist coalition saw, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the emergence of a neonationalist, intellectual backlash (albeit more ideological than scholarly). By this time, however, a genera-

tion of critical intellectuals had already become established in the corridors of academe, as well as in the media (most notably, at the *HaAretz* daily). Israel's current cultural and historiographical landscape is thus marked by a three-way controversy: nationalist, postnationalist, and neonationalist.

On the plain, textual level, the historians' debate appears to be a scholarly dispute; nevertheless, it is a major thesis of this study that on a more profound, contextual level its undercurrents are much deeper and broader. This examination deals with the implicit, present sociological significance of the debate rather than with the explicit, contentious historical events around which it revolves. That knowledge is socially embedded is not news, yet the parameters of that embedment, and its effects, remain a moot issue. The present analysis of collective historical consciousness and its scholarly expression in Israel relies on two axes of controversy from the sociology of knowledge: internalist versus externalist and historical versus ethnographic.<sup>2</sup>

The first controversy is between the Columbia School, led by Robert Merton and others, and the Edinburgh School (known also as the Strong Program), led by David Bloor, Barry Barnes, and others. According to the former, though a social context may determine the conditions for the existence or absence of an autonomous scientific community, once such conditions do prevail and a scientific community exercises autonomy, its discoveries are "objective," that is, open to universal, empirical verification or invalidation. Thus, in this view only the circumstances of "discovery"—not the actual substance of science—are subject to social influences. In other words, science has an internal kernel sealed off from external social influences and governed by the rules of evidence (the demarcation of science issue). The other school, in contrast, maintains that social conditions affect also the modes of justification and the very substance itself. In this view, there is a link between social conditions and the reception of an opinion—scientific or otherwise, true or false (the symmetry argument)—and it is the sociologist's role to explain these conditions (the causality argument). In Thomas Kuhn's terms, the Columbia School takes normal science as the common state of science, whereas the Edinburgh School focuses on the enveloping paradigm and its historicity.

In the second controversy, between the historical and ethnographic approaches, the lines, broadly speaking, are drawn between the old schools in the sociology of knowledge, including in this case Columbia and Edinburgh, and the new schools (since the 1970s). The old schools

sought to understand the embedment of ideas (scientific and otherwise) in society's macro-trends, whether these are called existential conditions, as in Karl Mannheim's classic studies, or social-structural conditions, as in later formulations. That is, ideas and knowledge are said to be associated with large collectivities and their historical dynamics, whether nations, classes, communities, or even social movements. In the new schools, the explanation for ideas and knowledge is sought behind the scenes of the internal practices of knowledge communities (in laboratories, disciplines, etc.) and in the microinteractions of their members. A leading scholar in this school, Knorr-Cetina, has endowed science studies with ethnographic methods and more recently with the term *epistemic communities*.<sup>3</sup> Current post-structuralist and post-colonialist approaches to knowledge alternate between the old schools from which they have inherited the macro-historical view, and the new schools from which they have inherited the micro-societal emphasis (this alternation is reflected by Foucault's move from the "archaeology" to the "genealogies" of knowledge).<sup>4</sup>

On both questions, the external/internal (or circumstantial/substantive) debate and the historical/ethnographic (or macro/micro) debate, the position taken here is that of the Edinburgh School. In the following examination, therefore, elements of the Strong Program in the sociology of knowledge are applied to the analysis of Israel's historians controversy. To put it differently, the internal historical substances implicated in the controversy are viewed as disciplinary articulations of external societal contexts, and I will relate to these contexts in terms of Israeli society's macrohistorical dynamics, the relations between its various groups, and the transformations in its political culture.

Morris's watershed article, which coined the term *New Historians*, declared the Old Historiography a simplistic and one-sided account of the Israeli-Arab conflict, a quasi-official, apologetic, state history, evading issues that might show Israel in a bad light. The New History that emerged in the 1980s was characterized by Morris as skeptical in attitude and objective in method. The Old Historians had taken part in the events they later researched. They were unable in their academic work to distance themselves from their youthful experiences in the saga of national liberation. The New Historians grew up in the self-assured, questioning atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s (and many of them were educated at Western universities, which remain their frame of reference). Moreover, the Old History is largely based on the memoirs and testimonies of

(Jewish) protagonists, whereas the New History is well grounded in newly disclosed archival material.

Despite Morris's historiographical breakthrough, his own thesis seems timid and falls short of capturing the dramatic development that it so lucidly phrased. This limited Columbia perception of the debate is characteristic of many of the historians involved, who keep scuffling over past "facts" without being aware of the present facts that frame their practice. In contrast, according to the Edinburgh point of view on the historical debate, the transformation in Israel's historiographical landscape is situated within a larger picture of social and cultural changes. Morris presents and represents the Columbia trend when he relates to the historians' debate as an internal scholarly affair. He considered the generational change in academe to be the major cause behind it. He considered the opening of state archives on the 1948 war to be an essential condition for it. And he dealt with only a specific aspect of it—the Arab-Israeli conflict. But, apart from incidental allusions, he is oblivious to the vast social and cultural changes that underpin the appearance of the New Historians. In all four respects, his thesis calls for serious modification. In the conceptualization offered here, Morris's position represents a Columbia School approach to historical knowledge, and what is called for, therefore, is a Strong Program corrective to it.

First, although generational change may have been instrumental in the introduction of paradigmatic historiographical adjustments, Israel's current historiographical setup was instigated chiefly by a change in its sense of collective identity, which occurred against the backdrop of global, local, and cultural processes; the new generation was a carrier—not the cause—of the spirit of the age. History is not merely the province of academe; it is a dimension of collective culture and, more specifically, of national cultures. When nationhood changes, so, too, must history. Historical revisions and debates, in Israel as elsewhere, are underpinned by unfolding breakdowns, or at least serious modifications, in the meaning of nationality. To understand the historians' debate, therefore, one needs to analyze the transformations in nationhood, which are not given consideration in the Columbia perspective.

Second, while the Columbia perspective sees archival research as the groundwork for the New Historiography and its revelations, and, indeed, this may have been helpful and even necessary, it, in itself, does not explain the generation's paradigmatic historiographical shift: Israel's

current historiographical zeal was sparked not only by a change in the sense of identity but by a profound change in the definition of historical knowledge. Actually, the facts disclosed by the New Historians had never been secret (albeit not to the degree of detail, precision, or verification of the recent research); on the whole, they had been available to readers in every relevant language. Similarly, these facts could have been discovered by historians long ago by a variety of methods (e.g., systematic interviews or in-depth analyses of available sources) had they only taken the trouble to look for them. The newness of the New History thus does not consist of the exposure of unknown data but rather of the new narrative(s) it conveys. A historical narrative is not an inventory of data or a timetable but rather the rendering of the past in a manner meaningful to the present. Morris's thesis is deaf to the intense discussions on the nature of knowledge in general, and on historical knowledge in particular, that have occupied the discipline of history in the past two decades or so.

Third, from a Columbia perspective, the new history is delimited by a topic, most commonly the Israeli-Arab conflict. Although historians of the conflict are certainly the spearhead of the New History, it is no particular topic as such that is at stake here but something more fundamental and less obvious: a complete political, cultural ethos or a national identity. The historians' debate thus becomes increasingly comprehensive; it encompasses the history of the conflict but also Jewish history, the history of Zionism, and the history of the region, as well as social and cultural history. History should be understood in its broadest sense as collective memory rather than in its strict academic sense. Morris's thesis does not recognize the social functions of historiography (apart from considering social influences as external obstructions to scientific research in the spirit of the Columbia School) or, for that matter, the close association between collective memory and historical research.

Fourth and last, given this discussion, from a Columbia perspective the New Historians are akin to a Unicorn: this model takes no note even of the fierce disputes that have characterized the neighboring sociological discipline since the late 1970s. The sociological debate preceded that of the historians, though with a different focus—on structural processes rather than events and in a different style—theoretical rather than ideographic formulations. But this is not all; wide-ranging debate of identity issues has, in fact, invaded academic disciplines (such as archaeology) and

the arts—literature, theater, cinema, plastic arts, and more—showing the phenomenon to be much broader than just a historical debate.

All in all, while Morris is credited with heralding a historiographical breakthrough, his thesis is too narrow for the larger occurrences. Several interrelated sets of issues that are absent from the Columbia thesis need to be elaborated from the point of view of the Strong Program of the sociology of knowledge: the issue of national identity, the politics of knowledge, and finally the connection between historiography and collective memory.

From the point of view of the Strong Program, the historians' debate in Israel is considered a political-cultural development in its own right. The crucial question is not what it is *about* (i.e., rival versions of the past) but what it is *for* (i.e., what it signifies in the present). In other words, the object of inquiry is the present politics of Israeli historiography rather than the history of the Israeli polity. This cannot be overstated: the historians' debate manifests a general sociocultural contest over Israeli collective identity. Far from being just an internal academic affair, related to distinct scholarly controversies, it is seen here as a rostrum on which Israel's national ethos, namely, Zionism, is taken to task. Its crux is the core narrative of Jewish national revival, integration, and independence.

Specifically, this essay argues that the debate exhibits the waning of the national Zionist ethos in Israel and the emergence of two mutually antagonistic alternatives: a universalistic post-Zionist ethos and a particularistic neo-Zionist ethos. In addition, the debate's eruption in Israel in the 1990s is to be understood against the background of both local social changes and global political ones, as well as the recent endorsement in some Israeli academic circles of postmodern sensibilities and poststructuralist methodologies. A combination of local, global, and cultural influences thus account for the new postpositivist scholarly critique and the new politics of difference with regard to Israel's collective identity in general and to Israel's historiographical narrative in particular, as well as to both positivist and nationalist backlashes (not necessarily in overlap). It is thus proposed that the sociology of knowledge perspectives on the historical debate be changed from the Columbia to the Edinburgh School, and the term *New Historians* be replaced with the term *New Histories*. For we are dealing with new narratives of social groups, not merely with novel discoveries of individual New Historians.

The following summarizes the two sociology of knowledge approaches to the histories debate.

**The sociology of knowledge perspective**

Columbia School: the New Historians model

Edinburgh School (the Strong Program): the New Histories model

**Causes of the historical debates**

The debate is perceived as affecting the context of discovery but not the content discovered (see next column). In addition, the debate is related to the microsocial level: generational change, opening of archives, studies abroad, etc.

The debate is conceived as affecting the very substance of the historical account, not just its discovery (see next column). In addition, the debate is related to the macrosocietal level: the transformation of Israeli political culture and the split into national, neonational, and postnational identities.

**The essence of the New History**

The New History is perceived as scientific. It offers more objective and accurate accounts of Israel's past compared with the more ideological view of the older generation.

The novelty of the New History is in the narrative. It offers new narratives of nondominant and marginalized groups whose experiences and perspectives were unrecognized in the hegemonic narrative.

**The Three Arenas of Debate: Israelis/Palestinians, Israelis/Jews, Israelis/Israelis**

An outline of the histories debate is now in order. For the sake of brevity, the multiple issues raised in the debate are condensed into three major arenas representing the encounters between the major identity groups: Israeli/Arab, Israeli/Jewish (homeland/diaspora), and Israeli/Israeli (East/West). Each of the arenas provides a sketch of the three major historical perspectives or, in a wider sense, narratives: the national Zionist, postnational (post-Zionist), and neonational (neo-Zionist). It must be stressed, however, that, unlike the first two, the neo-Zionist narrative has not yet matured into an academic approach and in general finds expression in ideological essays and pamphlets.<sup>5</sup>

*The Israeli/Arab Arena.* The national conflict is the specialization

of the core group of New Historians. These historians have challenged the conventional view of Israel's foreign and security policy, especially (so far) as regards the 1940s (particularly the 1948 war) and 1950s (particularly, the Suez war, 1956), though some works have already raised questions about later wars. They have argued, among other things, that the State of Israel spurned opportunities to negotiate with Arab states and, on the other hand, concluded an unwritten pact with the Jordanian kingdom to divide Palestine between the two of them, thus preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state. This view contradicts Israel's widely held self-image as a peace-loving nation drawn reluctantly into the agony of war only as a last resort and in an enforced situation of "no choice."

Furthermore, these historians argue that Israel bears a large (in certain versions, a major) responsibility for "the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem," which is the title of Morris's definitive book on the topic.<sup>6</sup> They contend that during Israel's 1948 War of Independence, senior military commanders, with implicit encouragement from Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, evicted and expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinian villagers and townspeople. An even stronger thesis holds that a policy of population transfer had been forged by Zionist leaders years before the 1948 war. The question of massacres perpetrated by Israeli soldiers resurfaced recently with regard to the Tantura case.<sup>7</sup> On top of everything else, Israel exercised (and still does) a tough policy of "no return" toward the refugees. Until these revelations scandalized academe and public opinion, professional historians simply glossed over the unpleasant aspects of the war, while popular histories and school textbooks made brief reference to an Arab mass flight, sometimes airing the theory that it was at the behest of Arab leaders.

Critical sociologists who have researched the early stages of Jewish settlement in Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries applied analogous analyses, though in more structural terms. They depicted Zionist settlement as a colonial project, entailing land acquisition, the closure of labor markets, and displacement of native Arab peasants. This new sociology contrasts with mainstream Israeli sociology, which presented a dualistic concept of Israeli-Arab relations whereby the two societies developed side by side, each according to its own inherent modernizing thrust. Critical sociologists also determined that a military culture emerged in Israeli society, contributing significantly to the prolongation of the national conflict. These accounts tarnish the glittering perception most Israelis have of their society as civic and benevolent.



The classic Zionist narrative attempted to square the circle of Israeli-Arab relations. In this spirit, the militarization of Israeli society was interpreted as a defensive measure (the Israeli army is called the Israel Defense Forces), and the constitutional discourse of the 1990s adopted the concept of a “Jewish and democratic state.” According to the neo-Zionists, secular Zionism, especially the labor version, has tended to be weak on nationalism. It never understood the impossibility of Jews and gentiles living together in peace. The Arab attitude to Israel is an extension of a long anti-Semitic history, as evinced by Arab support of Nazism during World War II (special allusion is made to the mufti’s relations with the Nazis). Zionist illusions of living in harmony with the Arabs have always led to an ultradovish position of wholesale compromise, which the other side interpreted as weakness and exploited. The only way to achieve peace is by deterrence and retaliation—an idea not new to classic right-wing ideology, namely, Ze’ev Jabotinsky’s Iron Wall.<sup>8</sup> The Arabs in Israel are a fifth column and pose a demographic threat. They can be tolerated only as a foreign minority, although “transfer by agreement” is seen as the preferred solution.

*The Israeli/Jewish Arena.* The line of dispute here is drawn between homeland—territorial or native—Zionists, on the one hand, and diaspora Jewry, on the other, with Zionist-Hebrew culture being the main area of confrontation. A key concept in this connection is the “new person” that Zionism strove to create, not unlike other modernist movements, especially nationalism and socialism (but also fascism). This new, positive identity in Eretz-Israel was offset by a contrived negative identity of diaspora Jewry, and the new Hebrew creed demanded the “negation of the diaspora.” The pioneers who settled Palestine and their sabra (native-born) descendants were depicted as physical, daring, biblical peasant-warriors, the antithesis of diaspora Jewry, which was the non-Zionist other. The Jewish past was condensed into a single, linear metanarrative—“from dispersal to redemption”—in which Zionism emerged as the telos of all Jewish history. Another, not unrelated argument concerns the ratio of nationalism and socialism within the labor movement, alleging that the latter served as mere camouflage for the former.

This question is highlighted in the Holocaust disputes in Israeli historiography. It has been charged that the cultural hiatus between Zionist settlers and diaspora Jewry was responsible for the scant efforts of Yishuv leaders during the Holocaust to rescue Jews from Nazism. This charge is rejected by mainstream historians, who point to the par-

alyzing weakness, helplessness, and shock of the leaders in the (still) inconceivable events of that time. It is also argued that, regardless of what was or might have been done to rescue Jews, the memory of the Holocaust has been nationalized in Israel and used for political purposes, while universal lessons have been ignored and basic sympathy withheld from the survivors.

In the neo-Zionist view, the inherent weakness of Israeli nationalism derives from its alienation from Jewish sources and culture. Secular Zionism, especially its labor version, had made a futile attempt to deny the traditional, religious-Jewish core of Jewish identity. This self-estrangement had made labor Zionism unable to empathize with the victims of the Holocaust, resulting in the grave moral default of its leaders in the face of Jewish disaster. The Six Day War (1967) united Israel with the heart of the Jewish Holy Land, the home of its ancestors, and the War of Atonement (Yom Kippur, 1973) symbolized the deep religious roots of the Israeli-Arab wars. Zionism's spiritual crisis leads it to yearn for normalization or Americanization. Only a new national-religious and orthodox coalition can cure Zionism of this moral bankruptcy.

*The Israeli/Israeli Arena.* This arena, the encounter in Israel of Ashkenazim (Jews of European descent) and Mizrahim (Jews from Muslim lands), is sometimes described as "the ethnic problem" or the "social gap." It revolves around the social policies of the Israeli elite, especially as manifested by the labor movement, which was dominant in Israeli society from the 1930s to the 1970s. Mainstream sociology and history depicted the movement's founders as idealistic pioneers and admired their particular blend of national development and social(ist) construction, encapsulated by the phrase "socialist constructivism" or "utopian realism." In sharp distinction, today it is argued that the Jewish labor movement was conspicuously nationalist, modeled after the most integrative (ethnic) contemporary Eastern European nationalism, that its egalitarian ideology was no more than a mobilization ruse, and that nothing was farther from its mind than the building of a model socialist society.

Since the 1970s, numerous critical sociologists have expressed coinciding views. They underscore the power-driven, organizational manipulation of the labor elite; they expose the discriminatory policies of labor and its governments toward Israel's Arab citizens in such spheres as housing, education, employment, and welfare; and they disclose the methods of domination and control that, de facto, make Arabs second-class citizens in an ethnically ruled democratic system.

With respect to Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries, the pattern of integration of the 1950s and early 1960s has come in for particularly harsh criticism. This immigration wave almost doubled the young state's population and radically transformed its ethnic complexion. Mainstream sociology had analyzed the issue in terms of absorption and nation building, a process in which newcomers were desocialized of former traditional identities and resocialized into modern Israeli culture. Critical sociology, again in contradistinction, analyzed the same process in terms of a class system and a capitalist division of labor. It argued that the labor movement, and more specifically the leading party, Mapai, had initiated labor-intensive industrialization, channeled the immigrants to dependent, peripheral locations, and relegated them to proletarian, marginal positions.

A new, emerging critical sociology school presents a different frame of reference for the "ethnic problem." This school argues that the dominant culture essentializes identity categories, that it sees Mizrahim, women, and Arabs, for example, as fixed, objectified categories formed and positioned through the establishment prism and the dominant cultural hierarchies. The postcolonial discourse posits alternative options of multiple voices and fluid identities, which transcend the traditional boundaries between men and women, Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, Israelis and Palestinians, rich and poor, and also Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. Mizrahiyut, or Mizrahi identity, is thus seen as a consequence of the differentiation between Jews and Arabs into two distinct, dichotomous, and hierarchical categories. Such distinction is a modern project that constructs the "appropriate" Jewish identity as essentially Western so that to be included in the Zionist project Mizrahi Jews have to deny their Arabic culture.

In parenthesis, one may note the emergence of yet another critical historical perspective—a bourgeois-liberal account of Israeli history. This version depreciates the role of the labor movement in the nation-building process and celebrates the role of the private sector. The entrepreneurial class is presented as the true builder of the Jewish community's economic infrastructure and collectivist ideology as a hindrance. Thus, the first and fourth waves of Jewish immigrants, petit-bourgeois farmers and urban merchants, take their place in a narrative that had hitherto considered them a failure, a narrative that crowned the second and third waves of Jewish immigration, those who formulated the collectivist ethos and established the labor movement's collectivist institutions.

Interestingly, while neo-Zionists reject the idea of a consumer society, they nevertheless adopt the entrepreneurial business ethos, imagining a culture that is both more Orthodox and more capitalist. This is especially true of the new Right's American branch in Israel, as exemplified by the politics of Benjamin Netanyahu and the group centered on the *Azure* journal. As regards the ethnic problem, because the neo-Zionist perspective takes its cue from ethno-nationalist Jewish identity, focusing on Jewish-Arab hostility, it lacks an articulate position on the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi issue. If anything, it endorses the narrative of integration, of all Jews being a single, indivisible entity.

Table 1 summarizes the major controversial issues and narratives in the historical debate. In every respect, whether on the issue of Palestinian Arabs, European Jewry, or Mizrahi immigrants, the conventional Zionist "story" has come under attack, its "truths" severely challenged by both left-wing post-Zionism and right-wing neo-Zionism. Mainstream Zionist maxims, such as "a land without a people for a people without a land" (in reference to the early Jewish settlement in Palestine), "there is no one to talk to" (in reference to the absence of Arab peace partners), or "all Jews are responsible for one another" (in reference to a saying on Jewish solidarity), have been rebuffed, questioned, or, alternatively, defended. Beyond the specifics, the post-Zionist critique thwarts the Zionist aspiration to be seen as the exclusive, genuine representative of Jewish interests at all times and in all places and of Jewish culture in all its varieties, as well as the necessary culmination of the entire continuum of Jewish history. Neo-Zionists, on the other hand, revive and reinvigorate precisely these views (though cleansed of mainstream Zionism's universalistic, liberal, and socialist components). More generally, claims such as those made by New Historians and critical sociologists deconstruct the Zionist national metanarrative, exposing its contradictions, weaknesses, omissions, and the marginalization and repression of others, while the claims of Zionism's new defenders reassert the unity and unanimity of the Jewish nation-cum-religion identity.

By now, our argument should be patently clear: the histories debate in Israel is not to be seen as an internal, academic dispute but as a milestone in Israel's political-cultural history. The new, postnational history and critical sociology challenge Israel's most cherished myths and fundamental ethos, one by one, while the new, neo-Zionist cultural discourse bolsters them by ridding them of modern, foreign influences.

**TABLE I. Major Controversial Issues and Narratives in the Historical Debate**

<b>Major Controversial Issues</b>	<b>The Zionist Narrative</b>	<b>The Post-Zionist Narrative</b>	<b>The Neo-Zionist Narrative</b>
Israeli/Arab: Is Israel a settler-colonial society? Which side is responsible for the wars and the refugee problem?	Israel is the state of the Jewish nation that returned to its homeland after being expelled from it two millennia ago. In the War of Independence, the Palestinians fled, assuming that they would soon return after Israel lost the war. Israel constantly seeks peace, but the Arab states refuse to recognize it. They periodically launch aggression and wars against it, and it must defend itself. Regarding the areas occupied in 1967, Israel would be ready to negotiate a territorial compromise should it have a responsible, non-terrorist Palestinian partner. As for Israel's Arab citizens, they have been granted full citizenship rights and equality.	Israel is a settler-colonial society on a par with other white European societies such as Australia or South Africa. Whether or not the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 was premeditated (the transfer issue), or an unintentional consequence of the war, Israel is largely responsible for the refugee problem. The conquest of land and labor was an avowed principle of labor Zionism, and its logical derivative is dislocation of, and discrimination against, Palestinians. Israel often rejected Arab initiatives for peace negotiations and developed a militaristic culture. Israel must change from the state of the Jews to a state of all its citizens.	Secular Zionism, especially in its labor version, has tended to be weak on nationalism. It never understood the impossibility of Jews and gentiles living together in peace. The Arab attitude toward Israel is the extension of a long anti-Semitic history. Zionist illusions of living in harmony with the Arabs have always led to an ultradovish position of wholesale compromise, which the other side interpreted as weakness and exploited. The only way to achieve peace is by deterrence and retaliation. The Arabs in Israel are a fifth column and can be tolerated only as a foreign minority.
Israeli/Jewish (homeland/diaspora): Does Israeli identity reject Jewish diaspora culture? Was/is the Holocaust memory abused?	A new, secular Jewish identity was crafted in Israel, transforming Jewish identity from religious to national while preserving and adjusting ancient symbols to modern realities. The biblical culture of ancient Jewry, including the Hebrew language, was revived. Zionism is the obvious response to the Holocaust, and Israeli memory cherishes the Jewish victims and the heroes who could	Zionists and Israelis internalized some anti-Semitic images. They despise Jewish culture and history, deeming them pathetic. Against this background, the Yishuv leadership during the Holocaust gave priority to the national cause over rescuing Jews from Nazi persecution. After the Holocaust, its memory was nationalized and used as a pretext in the confrontation with the Arabs.	Israeli nationalism is essentially weak due to its alienation from Jewish cultural sources. Secular Zionism, especially in its labor version, made a futile attempt to deny the traditional, religious-Jewish core of Jewish identity. This alienation is also at the root of the Yishuv leaders' mishandling of the Holocaust. The Six Day War (1967) united Israel with the heart of the Jewish Holy Land, the

Major Controversial Issues	The Zionist Narrative	The Post-Zionist Narrative	The Neo-Zionist Narrative
Israeli/Israeli (Ashkenazi/Mizrahi): Was/is there discrimination against Mizrahi immigrants, resulting in their occupying inferior social and cultural positions?	<p>not be saved by the prestate community.</p> <p>Jews from all seats of exile gathered in Israel to create a new Jewish-Israeli identity. Newcomers, especially those from traditional backgrounds, shed their diasporic identities (desocialization) and were reintegrated (resocialization) into a melting pot. The Mizrahim were latecomers of a non-modern background; their egalitarian integration required special fostering and time. Since the late 1970s, this view has been supplemented with a "salad bowl" concept, a plurality of ethnic cultures on the symbolic level.</p>	<p>There are two versions here.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The earlier Marxist version: The Ashkenazi/Mizrahi encounter was not a clash between modernism and traditionalism but between a state-made bourgeoisie and a state-made proletariat. The ethnic problem is not about unequal distribution but unequal production (i.e., class relations).</li> <li>2. The later postcolonialist version: The issue is not (only) socioeconomic but involves the marginalization of Mizrahi identity in Israel, deriving from an orientalist attitude toward the East in combination with an anti-Arab identity.</li> </ol>	<p>home of its biblical ancestors, and the War of Atonement (1973) symbolized the deep religious roots of the Israeli-Arab wars. The new national-religious and orthodox coalition will heal Zionism.</p> <p>Taking its cue from the primacy of ethno-nationalist Jewish identity, and focusing on the hostility between Jews and Arabs, this perspective does not have an articulate position on the Ashkenazi/Mizrahi issue.</p>

### The Knowledge of History: After Objectivism

Two interrelated issues are involved in the histories debate in Israel: the status of academic research and the makeup of collective memory. By and large, academics in Israel, as elsewhere, tend to treat the two as utterly separate (once more in the spirit of the Columbia School). They surmise that research is a scientific endeavor abiding by objective procedures and

careful documentation while memory belongs to the popular realm and is susceptible to whim and bias. Historical research, accordingly, gradually approximates history as it really was, while historical memory usually produces distorted images of the past.

Interestingly enough, Benny Morris, who heralded the New History, subscribes contentiously to the positivist approach in historiography. He frequently declares that “there is truth,” that “objectivity is possible,” and that “the historian of the Israeli-Arab conflict should make an effort to write about the conflict as if he were writing about the war between Carthage and Rome, or had just landed from Mars and is observing the situation without any connections or commitments.” He appeals to the Leopold von Ranke ethos, maintaining that “the task of the historian is to try to get to historical ‘truth,’” to study and report “what really happened.”<sup>9</sup> In terms of the rhetoric of history, this view is termed *archivist*: “the tendency of the historian to think that the most important relation is not with the readers, the times or the questions, but with the archives—with what the historian misleadingly calls ‘the sources’ of history.”<sup>10</sup> Morris’s most acrimonious antagonist, Efraim Karsh, also declares allegiance to the “bare facts” and thus rejects the distinction between the Old and New history in the name of the only appropriate distinction—that between proper and improper scientific research.<sup>11</sup> His critique scrutinizes the footnotes of the New Historians, whom he accuses of simply falsifying their archival sources, and he dubs the New Historiography “*falsiography*.”<sup>12</sup> Although he abhors the overall perspective offered by the New Historians, he—just like his opponent—speaks the language of unbiased science.

The many reservations about objectivism may be amalgamated under the banner of *relativism*.<sup>13</sup> Historical objectivists consider written history to be a textual retrieval of historical reality. Relativists maintain that the same piece of historical reality can be rendered in more than one way. Objectivists consider written history to be a report of past events; relativists consider written history to be a narration of past events. The language of report is ostensibly analytical; the language of narrative is literary. Objectivists aim at an ideal of ultimate history; relativists expose the horizonlike elusiveness of this ideal. For objectivists, a historical text is either true or false; for relativists, a historical text must always have a context. Objectivists regard the “logic of discovery” as an unfortunate hindrance to be pared down as much as possible; relativists regard it as an unavoidable constituent of the “logic of explanation.” In a word, objectivists wish to separate history and memory; relativists argue that the two are inseparable.

The objectivist-relativist dispute is as old as the concept of truth.

For our purposes, however, what is of interest is the upheaval that has taken place in the social sciences and humanities in the past two decades. From the 1930s to the late 1960s, academe was dominated by the objectivist view—though not objectivist practice. In the philosophy of science, it was known as the “received view,”<sup>14</sup> appearing under such rubrics as empiricism, operationalism, logical positivism, or nomothetic deductivism. The Columbia School provided the sociological version.

The relativist view gained currency in academe in the last quarter of a century or so. In the philosophy of science, there has been growing consensus about the inadequacy of the received view.<sup>15</sup> Its presumed givenness, the accessibility of observational facts, and their determination of scientific concepts and theories have all come in for a good deal of criticism. As Frederick Suppe put it, “theoretical terms must be constructed as being antecedently meaningful”; their meaning “may incorporate, or be modified by recourse to, analogies and iconic models,”<sup>16</sup> and “the last vestiges of positivistic philosophy of science are disappearing from the philosophical landscape.”<sup>17</sup> The new, postpositivist view is animated by a number of interrelated trends.

The first trend is the sociological and historical approach to science summarized earlier under the Edinburgh School. It originated mainly in Britain and the United States, reviving a legacy from Marx to Mannheim. It maintains that the substance of knowledge cannot be divorced from the social and cultural conditions of its production, transmission, and reception. It found support in a line of philosophers from (the older) Ludwig Wittgenstein to Richard Rorty, each of whom, in his own way, strongly criticized the dogma of positivism and the notion that cognition is a kind of “mirror of nature.”<sup>18</sup> The most effective formulation of this conviction is found in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, especially in the “scientific paradigm” of “conventional science.”<sup>19</sup>

A second trend contributing to the upheaval in the concept of knowledge stems from Europe and offers a more radical-skeptical, post-structuralist critique of the culture of modernity. It deconstructs fundamental binaries such as subject-object, knowledge-power, culture-politics, signifier-signified, true-false, self-other and so forth. Particularly influential are Michel Foucault’s studies of “regimes of truth” and his notions of the archaeology and genealogy of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> The poststructuralist approach in general, and Foucault’s in particular, have helped liberate a new kind of historical study, which aims to redeem the suppressed data and submerged memories of “hostile encounters . . . confined to the margins of knowledge.”<sup>21</sup>



A third critique of the objectivist concept emerged from the multicultural and postcolonialist scholarship that has been institutionalized (and is flourishing) in cultural studies. The major advocates of this view are minority or third-world scholars situated at international crossroads such as Partha Chatterjee, Homi Bhabha, Cornel West, Edward Said, and Stuart Hall, to mention but a few. They have exposed a deep-set corpus of knowledge within power structures and espouse a new cultural politics of location and difference. Said's *Orientalism* has had a great impact in this respect, notably his contention that "the general liberal consensus that 'true' knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not 'true' knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced."<sup>22</sup>

A fourth highly influential "minority" voice in social and human studies in recent decades has been that of feminist scholarship; it has invigorated the traditional sociology of science, the poststructuralist critique of culture and multiculturalist education.<sup>23</sup>

Fifth, and finally, in the discipline of history itself the new relativism is expressed in a restored interest in the rhetorical, discursive, and narrative aspects of historical representation.<sup>24</sup> In 1973, Hayden White broached the idea that history is constituted through its literary genre, style, and tropes and that form constitutes content.<sup>25</sup> White goes so far as to say that historical narratives "most manifestly are . . . verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences." He argues that histories gain part of their explanatory effect "by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles; and stories in turn are made out of chronicles by operation . . . [of] 'emplotment,' [i.e.,] the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures."<sup>26</sup> In a somewhat different vein, Peter Novick has convincingly demonstrated that due to the entry of new groups into academe and the sciences, "the idea of historical objectivity is perceived as problematic more than in any time in the past."<sup>27</sup>

In summary, all these different trends denounce the notion of objectivity and bring out the politics, rhetoric, discourse, and narrativity of science and knowledge and of culture and representation. They demonstrate the working of politics through the social relations of power between classes, nations, races, and genders. F. R. Ankersmith concluded that philosophies of history have to choose today either the old (Carte-

sian) “epistemological” history and becoming “an odd positivist fossil” or “narrativist” history and contributing to a better understanding of the historical craft and its present state.<sup>28</sup>

The more radical New Historians in Israel have absorbed the narrativist philosophy of history, the new sociology of knowledge, the post-structuralist cultural critique, and the multicultural positions described here. These trends have found a major platform for their criticism of mainstream social sciences and humanities in the journal *Theory and Criticism* [TuV], published by the Van Leer Institute and HaKibbutz HaMe’uhad and edited, in turn, by Adi Ophir and Yehuda Shenhav, both outspoken postmodern, postcolonial, and post-Zionist intellectuals. (The journal *Notebooks for Research and Critique*, published by a group of sociologists in Haifa in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was a modest, more Marxist predecessor.) Ilan Pappé, a prominent New Historian, pointedly expressed this fresh perspective on history: “Historians today do not profess objectivity. They display cynicism toward the historical narrative woven by past and present political elites, and endeavour to shed light on all those who were relegated to the shadows by nationalism, religiosity, racism and male chauvinism.”<sup>29</sup> As mentioned, this approach does not represent all the works associated with the New Historians, but it certainly adds a dimension to the controversy.

While most academic historians in Israel reject the idea of relativism with respect to their work, Mordecai Bar-On, a senior scholar, takes a more moderate view of the historians’ debate. He concedes that some measure of relativity in history is unavoidable but distinguishes between deliberate bias, which is exercised instrumentally in the service of ideology, and existential bias, which is inadvertent and the result of unconscious cultural conditioning. To his mind, the national bias of which the Old Historians are accused is existential and unavoidable and at least as legitimate as any of the new perspectives adopted by the New Historians.<sup>30</sup> Anita Shapira, a leading mainstream historian of labor Zionism, also aims for a middle of the road approach between New and Old Historians and between post-Zionist, left-wing historians and neo-Zionist, right-wing historians. She considers the two sides to be mirror images and calls for the crafting of “a more subtle, intricate view of history, with intermediate hues and shadings” and for finding “a middle ground . . . which [embraces] justified criticism from both sides.”<sup>31</sup>

One way or another, the New Historians have radically transformed the historical consciousness and historiographic map in Israel: first, long-term implicit methodological and theoretical assumptions have been

subjected to explicit reflection; second, the long-lasting national historical perspective has split into competing narratives; third, major issues in Israeli history have received fresh attention and been researched anew; fourth, the cohort of veteran historians at core establishment institutions has given way to clusters of younger New Historians; and, fifth, the controversy between Old and New, or Zionist and post-Zionist, Historians has propelled the emergence of historians with a different narrative to relate: the neo-Zionist historians.

Having expounded the thesis that the text of history is to be historically contextualized, let us now look at the context in order to elucidate the shape that the histories debate has taken.

### **The History of Knowledge: After Nationalism**

As stated, history texts have been challenged and changed in Israel within the context of Zionism's decline and the rise of neo-Zionism and post-Zionism. The old historiography drew on the national ideology of Eastern European Zionism from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As a national movement lacking both a state and a territory, it had naturally adopted the ethnic, or integrative, type of nationalism of the region rather than the territorial, or civic, nationalism associated with Western constitutional states.<sup>32</sup> Since 1948, the State of Israel has retained this character while professing a simultaneous commitment to the liberal equality of its citizenry. This tension since the 1970s has swelled into a culture war, verging, at times, on civil war between neo-Zionism and post-Zionism.

The basic idea behind Israel's establishment was that it was to be a state for the Jews. This was underpinned by the assumption that once the conditions for a Jewish majority were created there would be no contradiction between nationalist and democratic principles. This model, according to a 1980s formulation, was called an ethnic democracy.<sup>33</sup> But in the final decades of the twentieth century the ethos was challenged from both Left and Right. The left spawned the concept of post-Zionism, which promotes a civic national identity based on the commonality of its residents. The Right produced the concept of neo-Zionism, which promotes the reverse—the replacement of the pragmatic concept of a state for the Jews with the fundamentalist concept of a Jewish state, that is, a state committed to ethnic cultural symbols and a historic mission.<sup>34</sup> Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled thus propose an analytical model whereby the structure of membership in Israeli society is to be defined

by the ethos of three different, partially overlapping regimes: ethno-national, republican-communal, and liberal. The ethno-national ethos regulates the privileges of Jews over Palestinians inside Israel; the republican-communal ethos (referring here to a hierarchy based on service for the common good) regulates the privileges of Ashkenazi Jews over oriental (Mizrahi) Jews, secular over Orthodox Jews, and men over women; and the liberal ethos posits a constitutional individual equality (inside Israel but not within the occupied territories) that partly conceals and partly legitimates the other principles.<sup>35</sup> These principles, accentuated and separated, crystallized in the 1990s into a Zionist ethos at the center (republican), flanked by the post-Zionist ethos (liberal) on one side and the neo-Zionist ethos (ethnic) on the other.

The turbulence in the historical sphere registers and articulates the struggle among these orientations. The Old [Zionist] History was naturally the first historiographic paradigm. The newly established nation imagined itself, invented its tradition, and narrated its historical identity. The social and political project of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the latter's settlement and colonization, and the construction of a Jewish community and state were culturally rendered in terms of national revival, territorial repatriation, and historical redemption.

Historians, along with other intellectuals (writers, poets, journalists, teachers, artists, etc.) and at a later stage social scientists, took an active, even leading, role in composing and propagating the national narrative. Academe, far from being a detached arbiter, has been part and parcel of the national endeavor. Disciplines such as history and sociology were molded under the spell of national ideology. Until quite recently, the dominant historical paradigm was built on premises furnished by the national-revival school, led by Benzion Dinur and others,<sup>36</sup> and the dominant sociological paradigm on premises furnished by the nation-building modernization school led by S. N. Eisenstadt and others.<sup>37</sup> Up until the last twenty years, the history and sociology written in Israel conferred an ostensibly scientific, academic legitimacy on the collective memory and ideology required for the crystallization of a national identity. The kinship between power and knowledge has indeed been close in Israel. It would not be a gross exaggeration to suggest that until recently nationality has been more of a snug cover for historical and sociological studies than a subject of inquiry.

As an ideology, neo-Zionism burst onto the scene in the mid-1970s, in the wake of the 1967 and 1973 wars, creating a new national and historical ethos of "back to one's roots" and worship of "holy places."

Academic support came from Bar Ilan University, even though its historiographical output was to manifest itself only in the 1990s. The Shalem Centre in Jerusalem and its journal, *Azure*, is a hotbed of neo-Zionist studies. Yoram Hazony's recent historical treatise, *The Jewish State*, in which only strict adherence to ethno-nationalistic principles is considered truly Zionist, is to date the pinnacle of this "struggle for Israel's soul."<sup>38</sup>

Neo-Zionism followed the occupation of the West Bank and other territories in the 1967 war, which reanimated the old (predominantly right-wing) creed of Greater Israel; this rightward turn was facilitated by the trauma of the 1973 October War, in which Israel was on the brink of destruction. The latter circumstance resulted in the ousting of Labor from power in 1977—for the first time since the 1920s. A new social stratum of national-religious Yeshiva graduates, hitherto marginalized and since mobilized by the Bloc of the Faithful (Gush Emunim), seized the opportunity to appropriate and renew the pioneering ethos of the early twentieth century and "create facts on the ground."

The Jewish Orthodox community is another actor in the rise of neo-Zionism. Throughout the nation-building era, Orthodox Judaism had been quite insignificant on Israel's political-cultural map, a marginal minority tolerated by the secular Zionist majority. But in the past three decades both the political status and the allegiances of Orthodox Jews have been radically transformed. They gained enormous political weight due to the decline of the national ethos, their rate of natural increase, their internal cohesiveness and discipline, and the fact that they became the parliamentary fulcrum between Left and Right. The strong appeal of neo-Zionist rhetoric, wherein Jewish identity was explicitly anchored in religion, drew them to the Right. As they became more nationalistic, their national-religious counterparts became more Orthodox, resulting in a union that earned the appellation of *hardal*, the acronym of *haredim-le'umiim* (national ultra-Orthodox).

In the mid-1980s, the Orthodox split into Ashkenazi and Mizrahi sectors. The Mizrahi sector coalesced in the Shas movement to create the third-largest political party in Israel. A seemingly nonhawkish, traditional Jewish-ethnic (Mizrahi) movement, Shas's underlying ethos reinforces the neo-Zionist creed and its focus on Israel's Jewish identity.<sup>39</sup> In the 1990s, neo-Zionist nationalism found fresh support in Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. This brand of neo-Zionism is staunchly secular, largely anti-Arab, and pro-occupation. In fact, the much touted clash between religious Mizrahi and secular Russian Jews simply led the

two sides to concentrate on what they considered their only common denominator—ethnic-Jewish nationalism.

The rise of neo-Zionism since the mid-1970s was paralleled by the rise of post-Zionism, especially since the 1980s. The historians' debate erupted in public as the intellectual, even spiritual, response to the post-Zionist spirit. This spirit facilitated the decline of the unifying collectivist ethos, the unraveling of national myths, and the emergence of conflicting narratives of marginalized new groups: Mizrahi Jews, Palestinian Arabs, women, the business class, and even the repressed memories of Eastern European diaspora Jewry. The catalysts were three different wars: the Lebanon War of 1982; the first Palestinian Intifada, which broke out in 1987; and the Gulf War of 1991. The first two brought home to Israelis the "Vietnam effect," and, just as in that instance, television played a significant role. Both wars were considered by many to be unjustifiable and involve an amoral engagement against civilians. With respect to both, a civil protest movement sprang up composed of a kernel of draft objectors and many other supporters who accorded precedence to human dignity and human rights over collective historical myths. The Gulf War demonstrated the vulnerability of Israel's home front to ballistic missiles and hence the futility of territorial occupation.<sup>40</sup>

The effects of the wars of the 1980s and 1990s were accompanied by a revamping of the Israeli ethos as a result of extensive socioeconomic changes. The Likud-led coalition that emerged in 1977 contained, in addition to national-religious partners, a liberal component. Though its initial attempts at economic liberalization failed, and brought the country in the early 1980s to its worst economic crisis, Israel has been moving toward intensive neoliberalism ever since the stabilization program of 1985. The new economic orientation was to become the accepted wisdom of the large political parties. Israel witnessed its first bourgeois revolution, so to speak: the collective institutions founded by the labor movement collapsed like a house of cards and were replaced by the privatization ethos led by a now robust bourgeois class. This process peaked symbolically in 1994, when the labor movement lost its historic control over the Histadrut, the national federation of labor unions. Hi-tech became the leading sector in Israel's economic growth and exports and turned Israel into a premier global society. These cultural and social changes underlay the peace process led by the Rabin-Peres government from 1992 to 1995. Peace and privatization complemented each other in the vision of a new Middle East.<sup>41</sup> The peace process itself made possible a fresh look—and,

more significant, general acceptance of such a look—at Arab-Israeli, as well as Israeli/Jewish and Israeli/Israeli relations.

The clash between neo-Zionism and post-Zionism reached a climax in 1995, when Yitzhak Rabin, the leader of the peace process, was assassinated by a Mizrahi national-religious terrorist. The remainder of the 1990s saw the deterioration of the peace process and the return to the “old Middle East” and more bloodshed. Whereas the 1990s began with the rise of post-Zionism and a New History, the 2000s have begun with a return to neo-Zionism; the Old History is being revived in the more extreme, more overtly ethno-nationalist, fundamentalist garb of neo-Zionism.

From a broader perspective, the decline of classic nationalism in Israel and the rise of the two antagonistic, alternative agendas of neo-Zionism and post-Zionism mark the Israeli version of a worldwide phenomenon: the ascendancy of globalization and with it the emergence of a market society and liberal culture, on the one hand, and a local backlash on the other. Since the 1990s, Israel has witnessed what Barber termed “Jihad vs. McWorld” and Huntington called the “clash of civilizations.” The real arena of the historians’ debate is the clash between a globalized, individualized, hi-tech worldview and a localized, fundamentalist approach to holy places with a moderate nationalist tendency in the middle; this is where the future of Israel’s past will be determined.<sup>42</sup>

The ground is rumbling beneath the dominant nationalist ideology, Zionism, and this is what sustains the historical revision and debate in Israel. The fissures in the national metanarrative have given rise to alternative narratives: supranarratives (post-Zionist cosmopolitanism), subnarratives (empowered marginalized or excluded groups), backlash narratives (neo-Zionist ethnicity), and subsidiary narratives (bourgeois-liberal). Diverse social categories whose voices have not been heard in the past have now staked a claim in the public arena, where they report on their own historical experiences and articulate their own versions of history. Their truths naturally, or rather historically, diverge from the old hegemonic truth. Just as the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century saw Zionism inventing a tradition and composing a narrative for itself, so today, in the global-local era, post-Zionism and neo-Zionism are busy deconstructing that particular account of history and constructing their own historical versions.

Contemporary historical revisions and debates should be interpreted, then, against the backdrop of specific crises in national identities and as an indication of crisis in national identity in the global era. When

this happens, the past is transformed from a unifying fold into contested terrain in which new social and cultural agendas gain a voice and launch a struggle to have their own narratives accepted, thereby achieving legitimacy and status in society. Historians, sometimes consciously, sometimes inadvertently, serve as carriers of such historical narratives. The science of history cannot escape the history of science.

### **Concluding Remarks**

We have argued here that there are two basic perspectives in the sociology of knowledge from which to understand Israel's historians' debate: the Columbia School and the Edinburgh School. According to the former, once academic research is free of old biases it can proceed along objective lines to ascertain what really happened in the past. This perspective is endorsed by most mainstream historians, as well as by some (leading) New Historians. But the idea that historians who profess objectivity also practice it is foreign to the Edinburgh School. According to it, the sociology of knowledge addresses the social conditions of the emergence and circulation of scientific truths. These conditions are the macrohistorical relations of social groups.

Impinging on the specifics of the Israeli case are general tendencies of globalization and localization. The historical revisions and debates express the relative decline of the Zionist nation-state ethos and the emergence of two diametrically opposed alternatives: an ethno-national neo-Zionism and a civic-liberal post-Zionism. The three leading schools writing Israeli history reflect and articulate these political-cultural divisions. Traditional mainstream history is national, mostly the labor movement version. On its fringes, a critical school of history emerged in the 1980s associated with post-Zionism (even if some of its protagonists identify as Zionists). Finally, in the 1990s efforts have been made to create a counterschool of neo-Zionist history (which has not yet moved much beyond a propagandist stance).<sup>43</sup>

The future of the past in Israel thus depends on the future of its politics. An eventual return to the peace process and settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict will release Israeli political culture from its nationalist commitments and result in a more open, pluralistic, and critical historical discourse. The other option, Israel's ongoing refusal to grant the Palestinians independence, and the recurrent resort to violent hostilities, will result in a more closed, consensual, and nationalistic historical discourse.



History writing was, and will continue to be, a servant of history making. And it is history makers, not history writers, who in the future will craft Israel's past.

### **SUPPLEMENT: CONCISE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO THE HISTORIES DEBATE IN ISRAEL**

*Historiography and sociography.* An early critical account of the metanarrative of Zionist historiography and a post-Zionist alternative can be found in Evron 1988. On Jewish-Zionist historiography and nationalism see Barnai 1995 and Frankel 1994. Silberstein 1999 provides an overview of the post-Zionist debate; for a post-Zionist discussion see Kimmerling 1995; for a Zionist discussion see Gutwein 1997 and Shapira 1997. For a collection of post-Zionist papers and a left-inspired critique see Nimni 2003. There are two comprehensive collections about the debates: Weitz 1997 (*From Vision to Revision*) and Ginossar and Bareli 1996. For the neo-Zionist perspective see Hazony 1996 and Hazony 1997. For Zionist critiques see Myers 2001. An archeological debate was begun by Herzog 2001; on the debate see Levine and Mazar 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001; and Lissak, Rosenthal, Schwartz, and Yassif 2001. On parallel debates in sociology see Kimmerling 1992 and Ram 1993. Ram 1995 ("Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood") gives a post-Zionist perspective and Lissak 1996 a Zionist response, answered by Shalev 1996 and Shafir 1996.

*Journals.* Special issues of several scholarly journals are dedicated to the debate: *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995); *TuV* 8 (1996); and *Journal of Israeli History* 20, nos. 2–3 (2001) (edited by Anita Shapira and Derek Penslar). Numerous resources may be found in Ophir 1999. *Cathedra*, no. 100, gives an overview. *TuV* (published by Hakibutz Hameuhad and Van Leer) is at the post-Zionist end of the spectrum and *Tkhelet* (published by Merkaz Shalem in Jerusalem) at the neo-Zionist end. *Alpayim* (published by Am Oved) is a national-mainstream journal. *Mikarov* (published by Am Oved) presents the national social-democratic perspective; so does *Mifne: Forum for Social Issues* (published by the research centers of Yad Yaary and Yad Tabenkin). Conservative mainstream Zionism finds a voice in *Kivunim Hadashim: Journal of Zionism and Judaism* (published by the World Zionist Organization) and *Gesher: Journal of Jewish Affairs* (published by the Institute of the World Jewish Congress). The neo-Zionist perspective can be found in *Ha'umma (Nation)* (published by Misdar Jabotinsky), *Nativ: A Journal of Politics and the Arts* (published by the Ariel Centre for Policy Research), and *Nekuda* (a weekly bulletin of the Jewish settlers). *Sefarim*, the literary supplement of *Haaretz*, is an important source for the debates. A very rich resource on the historical, sociological, and cultural debates is the English language journal *Israel Studies* (sponsored by the Ben Gurion Research Centre and the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Judaic Studies).

*Social and political context.* A wide-ranging sociographical perspective on the political-cultural conditions underpinning the histories debate is to be found in

Barzilai 1996; Horowitz and Lissak 1989; Levi-Faur, Shaffer, and Vogel 1999; Lissak 1996; Shafir and Peled 2000; Shafir and Peled 2002; and Kimmerling 2002 and in a special issue of the journal *Constellations* edited by Uri Ram: 6, no. 3 (1999). A useful source on changes in Israeli politics and political culture is the series of books on the elections in Israel edited by Asher Arian, various years.

*Identity, collective memory and nationalism.* Discussions of aspects of Israeli national identity and collective memory that form the background of the historiographical changes are to be found in Ben Ari and Bilu 1997; Bar-Gal 1999; Ben Rafael 2002; Ben-Yehuda 1995; Calderon 2000; Gertz 1995; Gorny 1994; Grinberg 2000; Handelman 1990; Liebman and Don-Yehiva 1983; Liebman and Katz 1997; Lustick 1980; Ohana and Wistrich 1996; Ophir 1999, 2001; Katriel 1997; Reinhartz 1996; Rosental 2002; Shapira 2000; Slyomovics 1998; and Zerubavel 1995. For the debates on the television series *Tekuma* see Fisher 2000.

*Arts and literature.* Azoulay 1993 gives a post-Zionist perspective on the arts, as does Chinski 1993, 2002. For a neo-Zionist perspective see Dor-Shav 1998 and Levitt 1998. In literature, for the Zionist perspective see Shaked 2000; for post-Zionist perspectives see Balaban 1995; Hever 1999; and Schwartz 1994, 1995; for the neo-Zionist perspective see Weiss 1992. On cinematographic aspects see Gertz, Lubin, and Neeman 1998.

*Curricula and textbooks.* On school curricula and history textbooks see Firer 1985, 1989; Hoffman and Shnell 2002; Keren 1998; Naveh and Yogev 2002; Podeh 2000; and Raz-Krakotzkin 2001.

*The Israelis/Palestinians arena.* For Zionist interpretations of Israeli/Arab relations see Gorny, 1987 and Shapira 1992. An early challenge to official Israeli historiography of the conflict was presented by Flapan (1987). Morris's inauguration of the "New Historians" is in Morris (*Tikkun*) 1988; Morris 1994 ("The New Historiography" in *1948 and After*) gives an updated overview of the debate. The major figures enumerated by Benny Morris as New Historians are himself, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé. A partial list of their books includes Morris 1987, 1993, 1994 (*1948 and After*); Shlaim 1988; and Pappé 1992, 1999. See also Bar-On 2001 (*The Beginning of Israeli Historiography of the 1948 War*); Golani 2002; and Kimmerling 1997. On the recent Tantura case see Pappé 2001 ("The Tantura Case in Israel"). For critical sociological accounts of Israeli/Palestinian relations and the militaristic dimension see Ben-Eliezer 1995; Levy 1997; Rosenhak 1995; Kimmerling (TuV) 1993; Yiftachel 1995, 2000; and Shapira 1992; also see Peri 1996. A particular controversy within the Israeli/Palestinian arena is about the colonialist characteristics of Israel. For the post-Zionist perspective see Ram 1993 and Pappé 1997 ("Zionism as Colonialism" in *From Vision to Revision*); for a Zionist perspective see Aaronsohn 1996 and Bareli 2001. See also Penslar 2001.

*Reading documents.* One dimension of the historical debate was a controversy over the correct reading of historical documents. Morris published an article arguing that major Zionist documents, mostly regarding the "transfer" (of Palestinians) issue,

were “laundered.” His reading was attacked by Moshe Tzahar, Efraim Karsh, and Shabtai Tevet. See: Morris 1996, 1997; Tzahar 1996; Karsh 1996; and Teveth 1996 (“Clean Hands and Reconstructing Documents”).

*Israelis/Jews (Israel/diaspora) arena.* Debates about the Holocaust, the policy of the Yishuv toward it, its memory in Israel, and its historiography abound. For the Zionist perspective see Gutman and Greif 1987; Eshkoli-Wagman 1994; Gorny, 1998; Gutwein 1998; Michman 1997 (*Post-Zionism and the Holocaust*), 1998; Porat 1986, 1990 (“Israeli Historiography of the Yishuv in View of the Holocaust”); and Teveth 1996. For the post-Zionist perspective see Grodzinsky 1998, 2000; Segev 1993; Peled 2002; Raz-Krakotzkin 1994; Zertal 2002; and Zukerman 1993. For a neo-Zionist perspective see Beit Zvi 1977; Don-Yehiya 1993; and Fisch 1978. Anita Shapira takes a middle-of-the-road position (Shapira 1999 [“History of Mythology”]); responses to her: Don-Yehiya 2000; Grodzinsky 2000; and Teveth 2000.

*Israelis/Israelis (Ashkenazim/Mizrahim) arena.* For a Zionist perspective on Jewish integration see Eisenstadt 1967; Bar Yosef 1980; and Lissak 1999. For the Marxist narrative on Mizrahim in Israel see Bernstein and Swirski 1982; Bernstein 1984; and Swirski 1981, 1990, 1995. See also Sternhell 1995, 1996. For a mainstream Zionist response to Sternhell see Gorny 1996 and Shapira 1997. For the post-Zionist/post-colonialist narrative on Mizrahim and Mizrahiyut in Israel see Alcalay 1993; Hever, Shenhav, and Motzafi-Haller 2002; Ratzabi 1998; Piterberg 1996; Shohat 1989, 2001 (*Forbidden Reminiscences*); and Khazzoom 1999. For an analysis of Shas as an expression of class/culture divisions see Peled 1998.

## NOTES

The author is grateful to the United States Institute for Peace, Washington, DC, for a grant that made possible the research and writing of this essay, as a part of a larger study of contemporary Israel. The Institute is in no way responsible for the analysis and evaluations expressed, which are solely those of the author.

1. Benny Morris, “The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past,” *Tikkun* (November–December 1988).

2. For an overview of these perspectives and references see David J. Hess, *Science Studies: An Advanced Introduction* (New York, 1997).

3. Karin D. Knorr-Cetina and Michael Mulkay (eds.), *Science Observed: New Perspectives on the Social Study of Science* (Beverly Hills, 1983). Karin D. Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

4. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, 1970); *Archeology of Knowledge* (New York, 1972).

5. In lieu of references to specific works a supplement to this essay gives a short bibliographic guide.

6. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge, 1988).

7. In 1998, Israeli student Teddy Katz submitted a master’s thesis (University of Haifa) alleging that there had been a massacre by Israeli troops in the Arab village

of Tantura in 1948. Veterans of the unit involved took him to court, where in the end he recanted. He has since withdrawn his recantation, and there is an ongoing controversy about what happened in Tantura.

8. Jabotinsky, the founder of the revisionist (Likud) right-wing Zionist movement, published articles in the 1920s saying that the Zionist movement could advance toward statehood only behind an "iron wall," by which he meant superior British or Zionist military force.

9. Benny Morris, "Historiya Obyektivit" [Objective History], *HaAretz* supplement, 1 July 1994.

10. J. Nelson, A. Megill, and D. McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs* (Madison, 1987).

11. Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History: The "New Historians"* (London, [1997] 1998), 31.

12. *Ibid.*, 28.

13. The philosopher Richard Bernstein posits the essential contrast between the two as follows: "By 'objectivism' I mean the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality. . . . [R]elativism is the basic conviction that . . . in the final analysis all such concepts must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture. . . . For the relativist, there is no substantive overarching framework or single metalanguage by which we can rationally adjudicate or unequivocally evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms." Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia, 1983), 8.

14. Frederick Suppe, *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana, 1977), 6–56.

15. *Ibid.*, 115.

16. *Ibid.*, 117; cf. 57–118.

17. *Ibid.*, 619.

18. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, 1979).

19. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962).

20. Foucault, *The Order; Archeology*.

21. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writing*, ed. C. Gordon, 78–108 (New York, 1980).

22. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978), 10.

23. For example, Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Epistemologies* (Bloomington, 1998).

24. Donald Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany, 1988).

25. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973).

26. *Ibid.*, 82, 83.

27. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity" Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), 17.

28. F. R. Ankersmith, *History and Topology* (Berkeley, 1993), 27.

29. Ilan Pappé, "Hashpa'at ha-Idiologiya ha-Ziyonit 'al ha-Historiographia ha-Israelit" [The Impact of Zionist Ideology on Israeli Historiography], *Davar*, 15 May 1994.

30. Mordechai Bar On, "Lo larutz el ha-Katze ha-Sheni" [Not to Rush to the Other Extreme], *Haaretz*, 6 January 1995.
31. Anita Shapira, "The Strategies of Historical Revisionism," *Journal of Israeli History* 20 (2001).
32. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).
33. Sami Smooha, "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State," *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 475–504.
34. Uri Ram, "The State of the Nation: Contemporary Challenges to Zionism in Israel," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 6 (1999): 325–38.
35. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli* (Cambridge, 2002).
36. Uri Ram, "Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur," *History and Memory* 7 (1995): 91–124.
37. Uri Ram, *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology: Theory, Ideology, and Identity* (New York, 1995).
38. Yoram Hazon, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (Albany, 2000).
39. Ami Pedahzur, *Miflagot ha-Yemin ha-Kitzoni Be-Yisrael* [Radical Right Parties in Israel] (Tel Aviv, 2000); "Towards a Redefinition of Jewish Nationalism in Israel? The Enigma of Shas," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (1998).
40. Gad Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflict, and Political Order* (Albany, 1996).
41. Shimon Peres, *Ha-Mizrah ha-Tikhon he-Hadash* [The New Middle East] (Bnei Brak, 1993).
42. Uri Ram, "'The Promised Land of Business Opportunities': Liberal Post-Zionism in the Global Age," in *The New Israel: Peacemaking and Liberalization*, ed. G. Shafir and Y. Peled, 217–40 (Boulder, 2000).
43. For further articulation of metahistoric assumptions of the three schools in Israeli history see Uri Ram, "Historiographical Foundations of the Historical Strife in Israel," *Journal of Israeli History* 20 (2001): 43–61.