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Israeli Historiography and the Ethnic Problem

Israel's Jewish ethnic problem—like the national conflict with the Arabs and the secular-religious Jewish cultural divide—poses one of its greatest challenges. While Israeli researchers may dispute its causes, they all nevertheless agree that in religious and national terms it is an internal, Jewish problem involving two ethnic groups from different parts of the world: broadly speaking, Europe on the one hand and Asia and Africa on the other.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century, just before the Zionist movement got off the ground, the vast majority of Jews lived in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe. The Jewish minorities in Asia and Africa comprised about 6 percent of world Jewry, a ratio that rose to about 10 to 12 percent after the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust. In the course of the nineteenth century, ties between the various Jewish communities around the world were strengthened just as European Jewry's demographic dominance vis-à-vis the Afro-Asian Jewish communities took on other aspects of Western hegemony. For example, the French Jewish organization Alliance Israélite Universelle was largely responsible for the cultural modernization of Jewry in Islamic countries, providing Jewish youth in the Middle East and North Africa with an elementary-school French education. To understand the development of this organization, one must look to the West's colonial, imperialistic penetration of the East.¹ A different sort of example was the Yishuv, or the Jewish community in the Holy Land, where indigenous Sephardi Jews had traditionally enjoyed political and demographic hegemony; during the nineteenth century, even before the start of Zionist immigration, the scales already began to tip toward European Jewry, the great majority of Jewish immigrants to Palestine hailing from Eastern Europe.

That pre-Zionist Old Yishuv spawned the designations for the two Jewish groups that were later to be ranged on different sides of the ethnic divide: Sephardi and Ashkenazi. Originally, Sephardi referred to Jews

expelled from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain is *Sepharad* in Hebrew), who had settled mainly in the heart of the Ottoman Empire, with a small segment making their way from there to the Land of Israel. Ashkenazi initially referred to Jews from Germany (*Ashkenaz*), who had settled in Eastern Europe and spoke Yiddish. Each of these two nuclei in time fanned out to incorporate Jews of other origins, who, at bottom, identified or were identified with one or the other group. In principle, the mostly Arabic-speaking emigrants from Islamic countries (i.e., from the Jewish minorities of Asia and North Africa) were annexed to the Sephardim of the central Ottoman Empire, whereas those of European origin, and later from the Americas, were annexed to the Ashkenazim (the *im* denotes the Hebrew plural form). Sephardim who had settled in Western Europe and the Balkans did not fit neatly into this schematic classification, but they were few in number and did not affect the overall message of divisiveness that corresponded to the evolving world dichotomy in the colonial era.

The signs of change in the relations of the world's Jewish minorities became more pronounced in the new, mostly Zionist Yishuv after 1882. The vast majority of immigrants to the Land of Israel in the twilight of the Ottoman Empire and through the British Mandate (1917–48) were Ashkenazim. They constituted close to 90 percent of the immigrants during the Mandate. But increased immigration to Palestine from the Islamic countries by the end of the Mandate raised the proportion of the easterners to some 20 percent, which was much greater than their weight in world Jewry. Yet the hierarchical relationships that characterized the colonial era were reflected in the Yishuv as well. As the number of new Jewish settlements grew, and employment opportunities expanded along with educational and political institutions, one basic fact stood out: the immigrants from Asia and Africa, the Sephardim, consistently occupied the lower rungs of the social ladder, while the Ashkenazim increasingly found their place on the middle and upper rungs.

Among the non-Europeans, increased immigration modified the proportion of the veteran Sephardi component in the population, gradually giving way to a more complex ethnic terminology. In the light of the immigration of Jewish minorities from Arab lands, in particular of Yemenite Jewry, the compound designation of Sephardim and Mizrahim (Orientals or easterners) now began to appear alongside the previously uniform category of Sephardim. Later, after the State of Israel was established and Jews from Arab lands made up the greater share of non-Ashkenazim, the term *Mizrahim* began to rival the *Sephardi* denomina-

tion. Since this essay focuses on the period after 1948, it will refer to those hailing from Asia and Africa primarily as Mizrahim.²

In the Shadow of Sociology (1949–84)

Although the inequality between the two broad ethnic groups was highly conspicuous before the state's creation, neither sociological studies of the Yishuv nor Zionist historiography ascribed to it much significance until the mass immigration after the birth of the state. The impetus for research into the subject was provided by the first serious outbreak of ethnic problems in 1949. From the onset of the mass immigration, the Ashkenazi elite and wider public had been rather jittery about the Ashkenazi-Sephardi demographic ratio being upset. Not only were the disparities in the Yishuv plainly visible; there was also a clear perception as to which was the preferred group. The perceived threat—that a large wave of immigrants would radically shift the balance in favor of the Mizrahim—gave rise to what may be defined as the first flare-up of the ethnic problem.³

The history of relations between the two groups commonly regards the ethnic eruptions as emanating from the Mizrahi side. But this view should not to be endorsed uncritically. The Mizrahim felt oppressed and discriminated against, and they showed this in angry demonstrations that occasionally deteriorated into violence. Their feelings were overtly expressed. The Ashkenazim, on the other hand, felt a loss of control, anxiety, and ultimately almost despair. But their feelings, for the most part, remained beneath the surface. Some of the outbreaks began on the Ashkenazi side (such as that of 1949), some, on the Mizrahi side (the first, about ten years later, involving Haifa's poor neighborhood of Wadi Salib). The preliminary eruption, however, was on the Ashkenazi side because of the anxiety about the demographic balance and its possible repercussions for both the Western character and inner strength of young Israeli society. Since the dominant camp obviously had no need to rebel, signs of the changing anxiety levels must be sought behind the social and public scenes. Few were the voices that expressed it openly. One who did was the journalist Arieh Gelblum, who in April 1949 condemned the North African newcomers and suggested that they be dropped from the immigration plans "lest they absorb us."⁴ And he was not alone in this opinion. In fact, not a few of those in power related to the situation with much the same chagrin. As a result, efforts were made to limit Mizrahi

immigration, particularly that of Moroccan Jewry; many of Israel's leaders hoped that the stream of Ashkenazi immigrants, even from areas regarded as less than "choice," would halt the demographic landslide. Though directed at all the Jewish diasporas, the policy of selective immigration is to be understood as the expression of an Ashkenazi anxiety attack. Further study, one may assume, will reveal additional indications of change in the patterns of behavior and attitudes toward Mizrahi immigrants among broad sectors of the public, for example, the demonic stereotyping of "Moroccans," the emergence of a wave of ethnic jokes, and so on.

The anxiety preyed on the elite, whether consciously or otherwise, and gave rise to the first stage of Israel's developing research on the ethnic problem. Both the public and the policymakers found the anxiety itself, and its moral-national significance, deeply disturbing. It was totally inconsistent with the Zionist ethos, which held that all Jews were brothers and equals. What was the meaning of the negative attitude toward the Mizrahim? Was it justified? And, if so, how was the internal problem to be dealt with? Only isolated voices called for the Mizrahim to be left out of the immigration programs because the national ethos and national needs would not countenance this. And so research was summoned to help cope with the emotions, the embarrassment, and the schism.

But it was not history that was called on to introduce the Mizrahim to Israeli society. Historians are not expected to write about the present; at most, they might be expected to illuminate the present from studies of the recent past. However, as far as the history of the Jews in Islamic lands was concerned, there were no studies on the recent past. Consequently, historians received a temporary reprieve from dealing with the ethnic problem.

No such exemption applied to sociologists. Sociology, as the study of society, is meant to supply instant tools to solve any problem that may crop up. While this may put pressure on the profession, it also makes it, a priori, relevant and lends it an immediate impact rarely enjoyed by historiography. Israeli sociology, still in its infancy, rose to the challenge, putting both feet forward to study the ethnic problem. It provided the state with the means to decode the present and, in turn, received state support. Veteran sociologists, educated in the German School, made way during this period for a new generation, the most prominent of whom was S. N. Eisenstadt. Young, energetic, and charismatic, Eisenstadt imposed on the field the functionalist approach that had been developed in the United States—a country of immigrants par excellence. The func-

tionalist school was then gaining ascendancy in the West, and Eisenstadt's own theories of modernization contributed to its development, earning him, as early as the 1950s, an international reputation.

The theory of modernization is clearly germane to the question of ethnic disparities. The general concept of linear development from traditional to modern society shed a bright light on the then young Israel and on the direction of its future evolution. During the mass immigration of the period, Israeli society was comprised of a stratum of immigrants from Europe, who, to one degree or another, had been exposed to modernization in their countries of origin, and another stratum of immigrants from the states of Islam, who, lagging behind in terms of modernization, would nevertheless forge ahead in Israel. Ethnic differences were chiefly the fruit of cultural gaps between the two groups, which explained the place of the Mizrahim in the fledgling Zionist state. Had they been possessed of better cultural attributes from the point of view of modern Western society, they would have occupied better positions. In the future, as the younger immigrants and their children became increasingly exposed to Western education in the Jewish state, the gaps would narrow and eventually vanish altogether.⁵

Here was an obvious balm for the unease felt at the inequality of European and non-European Jews in Israeli society. The theory attributed the disparities to the cultural origins of the different immigrants—not to any malformation of the national idea, special problems of Zionism, or the development of the national society it was establishing. True, the gulf between the two groups—ecological isolationism, a stratified hierarchy, and so on—was worrying and troublesome both morally and publicly socially, but it was not unbridgeable; the exposure of young immigrants from Islamic countries to Western education would create equal opportunities and accelerate the absorption of the Mizrahi by the Ashkenazi component.

Apart from its relevance to the ethnic problem, in general the theory of modernization acted as a tranquilizer for the anxiety attack of 1949, which feared that the “quality” of Mizrahi immigrants did not meet the needs of the economy and society and endangered what Zionism had already accomplished. Eisenstadt's explanation implied that the leaders of the modernization project held the key to “quality control” of the Mizrahi element. If the project were properly handled, this component could be improved fairly quickly, thus removing the lurking threat to the Zionist enterprise as a whole.⁶

But as time passed there appeared to be something wrong with this

analysis. The signs of ecological isolationism, class differences, and so on did not disappear; indeed, they swelled, along with the Mizrahi numbers. Nor could the ethnic arena remain serene in the face of the problem's persistence. In less than a generation, the problem erupted in violence in 1959 and again in 1971. And, unlike the outbreak of 1949, which reflected Ashkenazi anxiety, the latter two outbreaks were characterized by Mizrahi rage. The first began with a demonstration and agitation in a poor quarter of Haifa; the second took place in Jerusalem. And both radiated to disadvantaged neighborhoods in other locations. The time was ripe for a reckoning among the advocates of the cultural school and, even more so, for an onslaught on its basic assumptions by proponents of other sociological schools.

Of the two post-1949 eruptions, that of the "Black Panthers" in 1971 involved, from the start, intellectuals with a professional affiliation with the social sciences. They did not come from the Mizrahi but from the Ashkenazi side. Youngsters from poor Mizrahi neighborhoods, mostly Jerusalemites, had come into contact with Western students studying on Israeli university campuses and had been exposed to their radical social views. The very name chosen for the new organization—Black Panthers—reflected the connection to a Western protest movement. The "pantherization" of the Mizrahi protest lent it not only radical Ashkenazi support but a hitherto missing conceptual framework in which to address the problem and design solutions.⁷ Earlier the modernization theory had come under attack, notably by communists and members of the left-wing Mapam Party, but to no avail. The emergence of the Black Panther movement marked a turning point.

The intellectual face of this social protest preceded the change that was to reach the academic world in the 1970s. The usefulness of modernization theory was challenged in the corridors of scholarship as sociological schools rivaling the functionalists gained momentum and prestige in the West. The fiercest assault came from a school that in principle opposed the liberal, harmony-oriented approach of Eisenstadt and his colleagues—stressing instead the dimension of conflict in society or, to be more precise, the economic class struggle. It was basically a neo-Marxist view, which in Israel was pioneered by Shlomo Swirski and Deborah Bernstein. They lashed out at their predecessors for having ignored the possibility that society's ruling class (the Ashkenazi old-timers) would use their strength to acquire more power at the expense of the weaker class (the Mizrahi immigrants), consigning them to the most inferior slots. It was not culture that explained the roots of ethnic inequal-

ity, Swirski argued, for the Mizrahim were not backward; it was the policy and actions of the Israeli establishment that had pushed them to the bottom of the social ladder and made them backward.⁸ Bernstein added fuel to the fire by analyzing the role of Israel's sociological establishment in abetting the process.⁹

Another sociological school—the pluralists—entered the academic arena at the time and took both the functionalists and the neo-Marxists to task. It objected to the liberal view that sees society developing as a system in which phenomena and institutions dovetail with one another to function as a single, coordinated organism. In the pluralist perspective, society is an aggregate of groups behaving according to a quasi system of give and take; its dynamic equilibrium varies with the shifting power of its groups, and no one principle is either dominant or deterministic. The pluralist school was introduced into Israel's sociological landscape by Sami Smootha, who represented a flexible, interim stance between the cultural school and the school of conflict. While he attached importance to both the cultural origins of society's components and its power struggles, he did not share the necessarily negative estimation of nonmodern cultures nor did he predict their imminent expiration.¹⁰

At this stage, former functionalists also began to reexamine modernization theory. They, along with anthropologists who had started studying and writing about Mizrahim in the 1960s and 1970s, developed an approach of their own, tolerant of and empathetic to the immigrants' original cultures and thus, in this sense, close to the pluralist outlook. Prominent among them were the sociologists Shlomo Dshen and Moshe Shokeid, as well as the anthropologist Harvey Goldberg. To these, one might add Yoram Bilu, a psychologist and anthropologist.¹¹ Their importance was most evident in the growing sensitivity shown in the academic and public discourse toward the dynamics of change and continuity in the popular religious culture of Mizrahi immigrants and the influences of the political and cultural arenas in the evolving State of Israel.¹² Dshen and Goldberg also tried to fill in the gaps in historical knowledge with studies focused on the history of Jews in Islamic countries of origin, in other words, fulfilling the role ostensibly expected of historians.¹³ These approaches corresponded to contemporary fashion in the United States and Europe, which heralded the waning of the modernist narrative in the West. They also embodied the trend to break out of old disciplinary frameworks and make possible a fresh look at the ethnic problem from different angles.¹⁴ In addition, Israel's treatment as a pluralistic society encouraged a comparison of Mizrahim with the country's other minority

groups. Smootha compared the Mizrahi position to that of the Arabs, although he also stressed the differences between them. He coined the term *ethnic democracy* to explain the preference for Mizrahim and Orthodox Jewry over Arabs in Israel. Zionism, after all, is predisposed to members of the ethnic group for whom the State of Israel was established.¹⁵

The ethnic problem nourished Israeli sociology and anthropology from early statehood until the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period of thirty to thirty-five years. More than merely furnishing a large number of studies, it ultimately produced, from within, a variety of analytical schools and different explanations for its causes and history. The process peaked in the mid-1980s with the debut of Shas, the Sephardi religious-Orthodox political party, which produced a new bout of ethnic anxiety among Ashkenazim. The old pattern of 1949 repeated itself—anxiety spurred scholarly interest and a search for desirable solutions. As a result, the various schools had an opportunity to demonstrate their research achievements in a series of publications, some of which became milestones in Israeli sociology's study of the ethnic problem.¹⁶

Historical Research in the First Decades

In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, while sociology dominated the study of the ethnic problem, historical research appeared to be almost impervious to it. Such inactivity was not altogether surprising since, as said, historiography does not deal with the present. The quiescence, however, was relative, merely as measured against the turbulent sociological arena. In practice, historians could not altogether avoid dealing with the subject, even if indirectly. Both the questions that came up for public discussion, and those that did not, garnered widespread attention because of the national ethos, and they became increasingly acute along with the ethnic problem itself. What caused the disparities to continue? Were they due to deeply embedded racial and cultural differences among different Jewish groups? What could the history of the Mizrahim, prior to their emigration from Islamic lands, tell us about their compatibility or lack thereof with the desirable norms of Zionist society? Historians were called on to speak out on the urgent question of the day, if not on the actual events themselves and interethnic relations in the present, then, at least by providing a portrait of Mizrahi Jewry in both the distant and recent past. But the demand to develop a historiography was not motivated solely by the ethnic problem. History, and thus historiography, play a vital part in na-

tional agendas, particularly in genealogical nationalisms such as Zionism; they furnish essential elements of identity and self-awareness for the national collective as a whole and for its various components.

The development of a Mizrahi historical narrative was severely impeded by the paucity of reliable knowledge on Jewry in the lands of Islam in modern times. This dearth, itself, was a sign of the inequity between the two groups and the hierarchical structure of the ethnic problem. Ashkenazim had a historiography there for the taking; Mizrahim did not. And, whereas sociology could fill the vacuum of knowledge by resting on fixed models of social relations and dispensing with the examination of individual cases, this is not true of historiography.

Even the initial steps toward filling the vacuum followed the ethnic problem's basic outline. At the end of the Ottoman period and the start of the British Mandate, scholarly interest in the history of Mizrahim had been pioneered by Mizrahi autodidacts, the most prominent of whom was Abraham Elmaleh.¹⁷ They were joined by an Ashkenazi autodidact, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, then a leader of the labor movement and in time Israel's second president.¹⁸ But as Ashkenazi immigration increased it brought with it professional scholars who overshadowed and displaced the various autodidacts, especially the Mizrahim. In early statehood, it was the Ashkenazi academics who were esteemed as talented experts. It is they who turned out a generation of historians, including several Mizrahim, and they who devised the first methodological and conceptual frameworks for Israeli historiography on Mizrahi Jewry. The two main figures in the 1950s and 1960s were Shlomo Dov Goitein, who specialized in Yemenite Jewry, and H. Z. Hirschberg, who spearheaded the research on North African Jewry.¹⁹

Furthermore, as in sociology, confronting the pioneer historians and their students was the question of the compatibility of their findings with the hegemonic Zionist ethos and the needs, tastes, tendencies, and requirements of Israel's elitist establishment. In early statehood, Israel's elite adopted two opposing stances with regard to the Mizrahim: integrationist and skeptical. Partisans of both believed in European cultural superiority and looked down on Jews who had no or little Western education. But they differed as to the ability of Mizrahim to contribute immediately to the Zionist enterprise and adapt quickly to its demands and national values. The integrationists trusted in Mizrahi adaptability. The others were not convinced. Both groups, of course, sought to corroborate and justify their impressions and opinions: the former in order to underscore the positive qualities of Asian and African Jewry; the latter,

if not to disqualify the immigrants outright, then at least for purposes of adopting a special policy toward them, different from the policy toward European Jewish immigrants.²⁰ Space does not permit elaboration of the overt and latent nature of the ethnic problem as treated in the works of Goitein and Hirschberg. Suffice it to say that in the classification of integrationists and skeptics, both scholars belonged to the first camp. They were thus interested in associating the objects of their research with the Israeli public, endearing Yemenite and North African Jews to their readers and encouraging the belief that these two groups were a promising element in the building of Israeli society and a national culture. As far as Yemenite Jewry was concerned, Goitein's task posed little hardship; it was in any case consistent with the stereotype of the Yemenite diaspora that had taken root in the Zionist Yishuv. Yemenite Jews were considered the custodians of traditions vital to Zionist rebirth, solid Jews steeped in heritage, hardworking and biddable. The fact that Yemen had remained outside the Western sphere of influence reinforced their inferior status in the emerging social hierarchy of the Jewish state, but it also had certain advantages. Among other things, Yemenite Jews were seen as the guardians of an ancient historical layer that sustained the justification for the return of all Jews to their Asian homeland. In contrast, North African Jewry, especially from Morocco, became the symbol of the ethnic problem. A whole slew of negative traits was imputed to them and virtually no redeeming characteristics. In public opinion, under the impact of the skeptics the Moroccans embodied the latent disaster of the Mizrahi takeover of the young Zionist society; they were to be treated with extreme caution. Hirschberg had his work cut out for him.

The discord over the ethnic problem had need of a historiography of the Jews in Islamic lands in recent generations. But neither Goitein nor Hirschberg found the topic absorbing. Their orientalist training and grounding in the Central European classic school of Jewish studies (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) very likely predisposed them to the appeal of the distant past. This, however, only partially explains their preferences. There were scant historical sources on contemporary Yemenite Jewry, and Goitein soon abandoned the subject in favor of the far more riveting Cairo Geniza (a documentary repository or archive of Cairene Jewry dating back to the Middle Ages). What's more, for anyone inclined toward a positive view of Mizrahi Jewry, the classic Muslim period was immeasurably more attractive than the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²¹ Similar considerations may also have motivated Hirschberg, although he did not turn his back on contemporary history. Literally

combining professional interests with social and Zionist concerns, he rushed off to North Africa shortly before the French pullout, collected manuscripts, and kept a travel journal, which he published soon after his return to Israel. The book, *Mi-Eretz Mevo ha-Shemesh* (Inside the Maghreb: The Jews in North Africa), provided a good deal of information on North African Jewry: social conditions, education, culture, organization, religious life, and so on. While it depicted a social and cultural diversity that in part undermined the rigid negative stereotype, it also described widespread poverty, disease, and deprivation. This picture was inconvenient and unpleasant for an integrationist historian, and he obviously struggled with the question of how to present it.²² True, poverty, disease, and prostitution had once been the lot of Eastern European Jewry as well. But the image that had developed under the impact of Israel's ethnic problem associated these characteristics with Mizrahi Jewry. Anyone wishing to avoid these unpleasant aspects, so as not to serve the skeptics, would do well to steer clear of the present. Hirschberg, in any case, devoted most of his academic career to the medieval and early modern history of North African Jewry, encouraging his students to follow suit, so much so that his comprehensive work on North African Jewry, the apex of his professional writing, included very little of the rich data collected in his small travel book. Only a few pages were devoted to the most recent generation.²³

It was symptomatic that professional history shunned the topic of contemporary Mizrahi Jewry; in the light of the ethnic problem, the recent past of the Mizrahim, like other sensitive histories that evolved in early Israel, posed a special problem. It was not simply a question of morals, health, and compatibility with Western culture but extended to the Mizrahi bond with Arabic culture and Muslim society. Zionism's basic concept of the pattern of Jewish relations with a non-Jewish milieu had ripened in Christian Europe. It was convenient for Zionism, the nationalist movement of the whole diaspora, and certainly for the Ashkenazi element in Zionism, to adopt a single model rather than develop an additional, possibly different one based on the experience of Jewish minorities who had lived in another part of the world among Muslims. The European pattern had been molded according to the cumulative experience of the crises of modern Jewry in non-Jewish surroundings, culminating in the Holocaust. The national conflict with the Palestinians and the Arab states, which also represented a crisis within a non-Jewish environment, thus appeared to be a natural progression of the Jewish experience. The regional histories of the Jews of Asia and Africa, however,

if probed, could have undermined the uniformity and integrity of this pattern of relations, a model vital to the national metanarrative. This difficulty, if not overt, certainly lay beneath the surface and may well have deterred scholars from actively investigating contemporary Jewry in the lands of Islam.

As a result, during the developmental stage of Israeli historiography regional histories in modern times were largely unexplored. One subtopic, however, was eminently irreproachable: the history of Zionism in the lands of Islam. Under the impact of stereotyping and prejudice, it was commonly thought that the Jews of Asia and North Africa had played no real part in the modern national awakening and that the history of Zionism had started and ended with Europe. Mizrahi Jewry's nationalist activity and sentiments were subsumed under the rubric of traditional "messianic Zionism." This was part of the overall image perpetuated in Israeli public opinion, textbooks, and so on.²⁴ And yet, had anyone wished to breach the wall of disinterest in the modern history of Mizrahi Jewry and to allay the subconscious fear of Orientals, this was the very place to do so. At the Jewish state's formative national stage, there could be no opposition to this field of study. On the contrary, even those who doubted that the subject would unearth anything new or interesting encouraged and called for its examination. And so the first area of historical inquiry into contemporary Jewry in Islamic lands was Zionist activity in Asia and North Africa.²⁵

On the face of it, the findings of the first study, on the Jews of Iraq, should already have pointed to the need to revise the image of Zionism in Islamic lands.²⁶ On the whole, however, these studies did not shake up the historiographical arena, did not penetrate public consciousness, and did not have any great effect on the public debate on the ethnic issue. Their importance to the developing research on the ethnic question was otherwise: they heralded the emergence of Mizrahi scholars in the attempt to fill the historiographic void. Following the first generation of Mizrahi autodidacts and Ashkenazi academics who had inaugurated the field, a new, young, largely Mizrahi generation of researchers now appeared. The study of Zionism opened the door to an examination of a sensitive historiographical area and for Mizrahi intellectuals into the professional community.

The big question now was whether the course they were to choose would be new or radically different from that of their forerunners, the Ashkenazi historians. In this connection—the ethnic origins of the researchers—it is worth noting that in sociology the Mizrahi scholar Sami

Smootha had made a name for himself as having introduced an alternative interpretation of the ethnic problem distinct from that of the Ashkenazi heads of the other schools. It is also worth asking whether the path that Smootha chose represented a quasi middle ground between the two other schools, the one painting a rosy (or white) picture of reality, the other painting it black. The one saw no real problem in Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations, though it legitimized Ashkenazi hegemony and patronage; the other saw no solution to the problem apart from insurgency, rebellion, and withdrawal from the interclass, interethnic conglomerate endorsed by a spurious national ideology.

En route to taking their place in what had been uncharted territory for Mizrahi intellectuals, the key strategy of the new generation of historians was neither self-exclusion nor collective separatism but integration. In contrast to sociology, where professional excellence was synonymous with scholastic innovation and potentially conflictual with the presiding school, as happened in Smootha's case, Israeli historiography at the time was subjected to other conditions and demands. Special departments were opened for Jewish history as distinct from general history, reflecting the dominance of the national agenda and filling in the necessary gaps for the building of Israel's immigrant society. Research and teaching concentrated on the histories of specific populations (the scattered Jewish communities) and on the history of a single land (the Land of Israel), that is, the communities of origin of the immigrants and the land that was the object of their return. The key goal of this professional activity was not an innovative historiography but the rounding out of pictures that were vital to the public and individual identity campaigns then animated by nationalism. The revolution taking place in Western history during this period, led by the French *Annales* school, called on historians to turn away from the political histories of their nations toward more general topics: climate, oceans, forces of nature, the effect of all these on various populations, and so on. To a large extent, the school was born in reaction to European nationalisms that had driven the continent into world wars. But Israel in those years was at a different historical stage entirely subordinate to Zionism. The *Annales* school influenced the general history departments but failed to penetrate the Jewish history departments.

The flag of national historiography was raised by the Jerusalem School, the department of Jewish history at the Hebrew University, the country's oldest academic institution.²⁷ It trained young historians who later made their way to newly opened departments at other universities,

rarely deviating from the ideological and methodological principles inculcated by their teachers. This held true for most of the first generation of Mizrahi scholars as well. They stood in awe of their Ashkenazi teachers, sharing a profound respect for their achievements and research paths, which rested on the academic tradition of Central Europe, core concepts and scientific methods that were an example to emulate. Socially, this tiny group, like the Mizrahi elite in general, tended toward integration in the Ashkenazi elite. Those at the top of the Mizrahi tree who had not yet been “westernized”—or “Ashkenized,” as it might be termed in Zionist society—were either well advanced in the process or near “graduation.” Furthermore, all generations of the Mizrahi elite were steeped in national sentiment. Thus, the demand that the national narrative correspond to the Zionist ethos was fully consistent with their own inclinations. In addition, their teachers’ clear integrationist stance ultimately countered any motives for intergenerational conflict or rebellion. In sociology as well, most researchers did not revolt against the doyen of the discipline, Eisenstadt, or his research path, although there was a minority position and a quasi-generational clash. This did not happen in historiography. The biography of the first generation of Mizrahi historians who penetrated the corridors of Israeli academe may have shown signs of ethnic awareness or bitterness, but this never translated into a subversive voice against the basic assumptions of Zionist historiography as conceived by its Ashkenazi founding fathers. The peculiar Eastern voice of the generation spoke in terms of a career researching the origins of a specific Mizrahi community in order to weave its history into the overall national fabric.

Accepting the conventions of the ruling school did not add much to the historiographical void. On the contrary, in Israel the field of the history of contemporary Jewry in the lands of Islam remained stunted until the 1970s, with hardly any scholars, whether Ashkenazi or Mizrahi, specializing in it. The handful of trailblazing works in the field were written abroad, and not in Hebrew, by Zionist scholars who were not part of Israel’s historiographic community: André Chouraqui in France, Joseph Schechtman in the United States, and Doris Bensimon Dunat, also in France. Chouraqui, a jurist by training, was Algerian born; Bensimon Dunat, a sociologist, was Moroccan born. Both attempted to amass knowledge on North African Jewry, particularly Moroccan Jewry.²⁸ Chouraqui immigrated to Israel in the 1960s, and only his book was translated into Hebrew, joining the paltry corpus of overused works available on the subject.²⁹ The demographer, Schechtman, a Revisionist

who lived in the United States, wrote about immigration to Israel from all the Islamic countries.³⁰ His book included a revealing chapter on Israel's ethnic problem that was at variance with the soothing view of "harmony" and spoke openly of hierarchy and discrimination.³¹ Written in English, it was not translated into Hebrew and was rarely used as a reference work in Israel even though it might have supplied important missing information. The same thing, interestingly enough, happened with another relatively elaborate English work first published in 1953. Also written by an emigrant from Israel, the sociologist Raphael Patai, it, too, focused on the ethnic problem and knocked holes in the common wisdom.³²

In Israel, attempts to furnish comprehensive data on the contemporary history of Mizrahi Jewry were pioneered by Hayyim J. Cohen. Rather daringly, he switched course from the history of Zionism in Iraq to Middle Eastern Jewry as a whole. His book provides political, demographic, economic, social, educational, and cultural data on the Jews of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, and Yemen.³³ Soon after its writing, however, he quit the research field and he, too, emigrated to the United States. Cohen, the senior Mizrahi historian of the first generation, perhaps represented the doubts and difficulties that plagued both the generation and the field. The chronic dearth of reliable historical knowledge was oppressive, nor could the gulf be bridged in the space of a few years, especially as the field drew few researchers. Its attraction stood in direct relationship to the ethnic problem: just as the entire Mizrahi wing of Israeli society suffered from a negative image, so, too, did its history—detering scholars. Ashkenazi dominance—with regard to content, methodology, and personnel—was stifling, even when defied. It is telling that Cohen, who was at the Hebrew University until his emigration, never taught in the Jewish History Department, the bastion of the regnant Jerusalem School. A member of the Institute for Contemporary Jewry, his departure from the country was influenced by the frustration of his professional advancement.

Nor were Goitein and Hirschberg, the teachers of the first generation of young scholars, typical members of the Jerusalem School. Goitein did teach at the Hebrew University but not in the Jewish History Department; he, too, soon emigrated to the United States, where, as noted earlier, he developed the field of Geniza studies. His connection to Zionist historiography during his American phase still needs to be studied. Hirschberg was one of the first scholars at the national-religious Bar-Ilan University, and there can be no doubt about his affiliation with

Zionist historiography, although one may wonder whether the course he chose, which was atypical of the Jerusalem School, was dictated by a strong religious orientation. One should note, for example, that he focused on the study of North African Jewry, the most problematic diaspora in terms of the ethnic problem. In the process, he also helped turn Bar-Ilan's Jewish History Department into a hothouse for research into Mizrahi Jewry.

The Jewish History Department at the Hebrew University did not produce a solid core of researchers on the subject. It trained some of the young historians who later became leading figures in the field at other, younger universities. Apart from this, the Ben-Zvi Institute, operating under the auspices of the Hebrew University, occupied a major place in the field. The institute resulted from the happy union of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi's autodidactic interests and his rising political career, which peaked in his presidency. This position enabled him to inaugurate the Institute for the Study of Oriental Jewish Communities in the Middle East (which became the Ben-Zvi Institute), a development that probably would not have come about under different circumstances.³⁴ The very establishment of the institute and its attachment to the parent institution of Israeli academe lent the subject prestige and over the years gradually advanced the field, even if it made no immediate waves.³⁵

The Jerusalem School

As in sociology, so in historiography 1977 marked a turning point. The dramatic political change that for the first time brought a right-wing party to power in Israel was, to a certain extent, understood as a "rebellion" against Ashkenazi hegemony, which had been associated with the ruling socialist Left. In Mizrahi terms, the transition to a right-wing government was seen as "liberating," allowing for different conduct and new voices. Within a few years, the new political establishment began to encourage the study of Mizrahi Jewry and the Centre for Incorporating the Heritage of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewry was created for that purpose at the Ministry of Education.³⁶ Unprecedented research funds were made available to encourage the study of Eastern Jewry. The breakthrough, however, was not merely a matter of funds but was contingent on structural changes that attracted researchers, students, and public attention to the field. Conversely, internal changes within the historiographical arena may well have stirred the research pot, may have made

the public debate more relevant, and thereby may have resulted in the attention that till then had been enjoyed exclusively by sociology.

The Hebrew University soon jumped on the bandwagon in order to assure itself of seniority in this new field. Its flagship, the quarterly *Pe'amim*, still published by the Ben-Zvi Institute, provided a platform for a variety of new studies and devoted entire issues to specific topics. Its importance in filling the empty reservoir of knowledge and consequently overcoming the field's major deficiency can hardly be overestimated.

Another significant step was taken by Shmuel Ettinger, the senior figure in the Jerusalem School at the time. At the start of the 1980s, Ettinger initiated an authoritative summation of the then current knowledge of the history of Mizrahi Jewry. Of this three-volume work, one was devoted to recent generations. The undertaking was not dissimilar to that of Hayyim Cohen's a decade earlier. Now, however, it was no longer dependent on a single scholar but involved a number of researchers and extended the scope beyond the Middle East to include an extensive chapter on North African Jewry.³⁷

In his prefaces to two of the volumes, Ettinger expounded on the Jerusalem School's conception of the field. These prefaces have played a key role in the historiography of Mizrahi Jewry, including the historiography of Israel's ethnic problem; they reveal in brief the attitude of Zionist historiography toward the subject, as it developed under the emerging threat to the hegemony of the historiographic elite.³⁸

Ettinger began by discussing Zionism's basic question as to the unity and continuity of the Jewish people. Both Zionist ideology and the immigrant society that it had established made it crucial to posit Jewish unity and continuity. Cultural and other diversities among the scattered Jewish minorities obviously detracted from such unity, and Ettinger did intimate that Asian and North African immigrants in the State of Israel posed a serious problem. Had divergent historical development "created two separate paths of Jewish history . . . in the lands of Islam and the lands of Christianity?" He listed three factors that, to his mind, had influenced "the Jewish way of life in Islamic lands in modern times, its social arrangements and cultural character" and, in at least one respect, drew a clear distinction between Mizrahi and European Jewry. The economic, social, and cultural conditions in the various lands of Islam in different periods, he claimed, had affected the character of Jewish society there more than had non-Jewish surroundings in several European countries at the start of modern times "because of greater contact and closer sociocultural relations between Jews and non-Jews in the lands of Islam."³⁹

This, according to my analysis, was one of the chief causes for the special sensitivity toward the history of Asian and African Jewry, both because the closer ties had been maintained with an environment now considered to be the nation's enemies and because the experience of European Jewry had dictated the Zionist narrative's basic model of relations with a non-Jewish milieu; a different model might have proved incompatible. Ettinger did not refrain from pointing out this important difference.⁴⁰ At this stage, it was also difficult to evade other sensitive issues such as the unequal status of Jewry's two branches within the Jewish state. Historiography had to explain the causes of the blatant differences in Israeli society, and Ettinger offered a strategic answer with a nod to the relatively distant past, the golden age of Spanish Jewry, the Spanish Expulsion, and subsequent generations, an era that had favored, if any, the Sephardi-Mizrahi branch. Moreover, even afterward Eastern Jewry had not rested on its laurels, although intellectually, it was made explicit, the twentieth century had fallen short of the past.

Jewish communities in the lands of Islam in modern times clearly have not come near to the diverse creative force in religious and social thought, or the literary accomplishments that marked Jews in the lands of Islam in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, also in the Sixteenth to Nineteenth centuries, intellectual activity in these communities was highly intensive.⁴¹

While in general the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries scored high in Ettinger's evaluation, a closer look shows that he was speaking of centuries of dusk and decline—a common conception at the time not only as regards Jews but for the entire Islamic region.

Following the decline of Safad's Kabbalah center in the Sixteenth century, and particularly the failure of the Sabbatean movement, and apparently to no small degree because of it, the Jews of Islamic lands exerted a waning influence on the intellectual and social developments of world Jewry as a whole. The weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the political and economic ascendancy of the states of Europe in these centuries also increased the relative weight and influence of their Jewish populations, even where legally and socially Jews occupied the bottom of the ladder. This was compounded by the rapid demographic development of the Jews in European lands: in the

mid-Seventeenth century they still comprised about half of world Jewry, whereas at the start of World War I, their share had grown to 80%.

As the East declined, the pendulum swung clearly toward European Jewry. Here Ettinger stressed the gap in modernization between the two wings, a gap expressed also in the demographic balance.⁴² At this point, the historical picture of the Jerusalem School coalesced with the main interpretation of the ethnic problem by the sociological functionalist school, also headquartered at the Hebrew University. Disparate modernization was the chief factor in the profound diversification of Israel's Jewish social landscape. No special differences, racial or otherwise, underlay this gap, for, after all, in the past oriental Jewry had been the superior branch. Like sociology's dominant school, here, too, the word of science proffered a reassuring message for the present and hope for a solution in the future within the framework of Zionism's own project of modernization.

After pointing out the developmental differences of recent generations, Ettinger bolstered the basic harmony-oriented assumption of national unity, not, however, with its face to the future, as in sociology, but in view of the past. European and Asian Jewry shared a common background in the relatively recent past in a number of important respects: (1) a heritage of internal organization (autonomy), (2) intellectual (religious) creativity, and (3) a constant, unbroken bond to the Land of Israel (national territory).

Had all these led to two separate roads of Jewish history in the development of Jewish communities: that in the lands of Islam, and that in the lands of Christianity? . . . Historical research, which is free of ideological arguments, must answer this question in the negative. . . . [D]espite the great influence of the local conditions and culture of the dwelling lands of Jews on their way of life and livelihood, an influence that only grew stronger in modern times, the weight of the Jewish People's historical heritage, as regards both internal organization and intellectual creativity, was nevertheless considerable. These elements strengthen the connections between the Jewish communities and collectives in different countries; among these, the bond to the Land of Israel as a focus of future hopes was especially strong even during calm periods of messianic aspirations.

The longing for the Holy Land, the support for the Yishuv in the Land of Israel and *Aliya* (immigration) to it are a crucial component of the bond between the Jewish collectives in the various countries and the people's uniform historical development in modern times, especially in the Nineteenth century.⁴³

These were the topics slated for special attention in the historiographic endeavor that would yield the school's initial version of Jewish history in the Islamic lands. It was the blueprint for the entire three-volume project.⁴⁴

In the preface to the second volume, which dealt with antecedent generations (from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries), Ettinger clarified some of the cornerstones of the historiographic conception laid out in the general preface and developed further topics. First, he pointed to the nineteenth century, or rather its second half, as a turning point followed by the exposure of Mizrahi Jewry to the influence of modernization. Second, he asserted that "all the changes in Jewish life in the lands of Islam in that period stemmed from the penetration of Western European influences that had reached the area either directly or indirectly." Direct influences were due to the spread of colonialism, which saw a complete takeover of many countries; indirect influences were due to reforms instituted under Western pressure (e.g., in the Ottoman Empire). Third, he depicted the Jews as more susceptible than their Muslim environment to Western influence. Nonetheless, early in the preface he noted: "This does not mean that in the past century and more, the lifestyle of most of the Jews in Islamic lands changed. On the contrary; the hallmark of the Jewish collectives was that most still pursued the social arrangements and way of life that had crystallized over generations."⁴⁵ The delay in embarking on modernization and only partial exposure to it subsequently were, as we have seen, the chief elements of the historiographic picture drawn by the head of the Jerusalem School.

Limited as it may have been, the adaptation to a new order increased the friction between Jews and their surroundings, Ettinger stated. It made little difference whether the environment was Muslim, local Christian, or that of new European settlers. In other words, the pattern of modern crisis vis-à-vis the milieu held true not only for European Jewry but also for the Jews of Islam. Its roots lay in the premodern period (in both locations), as well as in developments peculiar to the modern age and Jewish reliance on a colonial or Western regime, that is, on

the foreign conquerors. In addition, the ties between the European Jewish center and the oriental Jewish periphery grew stronger. The former sought to reform their apparently backward, oppressed Mizrahi brethren by means of modern education, and the local elite, including the rabbinic, acknowledged the superiority of European culture. The result was increasing alienation of the Jews from their surroundings.⁴⁶

In depicting Islam's Jews as influenced by modern patterns of crisis vis-à-vis the environment, Ettinger had to restate his earlier basic diagnosis of the vast difference between their integration in the Muslim world and Jewish integration in Christian Europe. He now pinned this on the changes that had taken place in modern Western culture, changes that had not occurred in the Muslim world.

Ostensibly, there should have been a great correspondence between the two [Muslims and Jews], for, as opposed to a large portion of European Jewry, most of the Jews of the East were deeply rooted in the way of life, language, artistic creativity, and even beliefs and opinions of their Muslim neighbors. Among the latter, modern trends emerged, related to the influence of Western culture. The power of theocracy in Muslim society, however, and the stability of conservative elements in family arrangements and lifestyle precluded the possibility of numerous Jews being modernized within Muslim society.⁴⁷

In other words, obstacles intrinsic to Muslim society made integration more difficult than did the barriers in Christian Europe. And thus the balance of integration, easier in premodern times in the Muslim world, now shifted in favor of Europe.

This assessment distinguished between the ability and readiness of Jews, as opposed to Muslims, to absorb Western influences and prepared the ground for two further delicate topics: (1) the part played by Jews in the nationalist movements in the Islamic countries and (2) the development of the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine. Ettinger determined that Jews, unlike local Christians, did not play much of a role in the anticolonial national movements due to the special Jewish link to European parties, which, up front, made them suspect in the eyes of the Muslim majority. The appearance of Zionism reinforced this long-term process, which had begun without any connection to the Jewish national movement.⁴⁸ This historiographic picture enabled Ettinger to develop his conclusions by stressing the message vital to Zionism: the unity of the

various Jewish minorities and the development of Jewish solidarity in view of external crises in all the diasporas that made it impossible for them to continue living there.

The nature and progression of these changes once more point to the Jewish people's uniform historical development at all the sites of their dispersal, and this was true of the past century as well. Processes that characterized European Jewry at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth began to be felt by Jewry in the lands of Islam in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They, too, began to show rapid numerical increase and accelerated urbanization; among them, too, a modern intelligentsia emerged, along with a broadening economic and business base. A Jewish press and Hebrew literature brought new ideas to the more remote Jewish groupings, even where Western influence was hardly felt. The involvement of European Jewry in endeavors on behalf of Mizrahi Jewry reinforced the sense of Jewish solidarity and of a common fate shared by all Jewish collectivities. . . . [T]he horrors of World War II, which struck at the Jews of Greece and North Africa, reawakened the sense of Jewish solidarity that had weakened among several groups as a result of citizenship and Westernization. The hopes that most of the Muslim-Arab world pinned on a German victory also exacerbated the feelings of hostility toward the Jews in its midst. Added to all these were anti-Jewish riots by the rabble in several Muslim countries (Iraq, Libya). It became more and more clear that Jews had no future in Muslim society and that if the Eastern lands would gain independence the fate of the Jews would be like that of the European settlers and other groups associated with colonial rule.⁴⁹

The historical argument that had opened with a demonstration of nineteenth-century processes common to Jewry as a whole, albeit with profound differences, closed with the accent on a common crisis that impelled Jews to uproot themselves from their respective countries, a necessity that spread also to the lands of Islam in the middle of the twentieth century: "The departure of the Jews from the lands of Islam, borne partially on the wings of traditional messianic faith, was literally a migration of rescue, as the departure of the great majority of Algerian Jewry

will illustrate.” Not by chance did Ettinger mention Algerian Jewry. He wished to counter the implicit claim that it was the Ashkenazi-dominated Zionist movement that lay solely behind the mass emigrations of Jews from the lands of Islam and that, had Zionism not entered the picture, the Jews would have been able to go on living in their countries, integrating into modern Muslim states with no undue friction. The Algerian example supposedly showed that even in the absence of the Zionist hand, mass exodus had still taken place: “The Jewish–Arab conflict in the Land of Israel and the establishment of the State of Israel, as said, only made these trends of anti-Jewish troubles to the point of pogroms more severe.”⁵⁰

In the final three pages, Ettinger took his historical construction one step farther. He did not merely exonerate Zionism in the crisis of Jewish/non-Jewish relations in the lands of Islam but endowed it with the capacity to transform the forced “rescue emigrations” into an enterprise of rehabilitation and rebirth. Apart from externally induced crises, he suggested that the Jewish communities in the lands of Islam suffered also from internal leadership crises.

These processes of Westernization exacerbated social and cultural differentiation among the Jews in Eastern lands, widening the gulf between the economically established echelons—not a few of whom possessed vast wealth and belonged to the westward-looking intelligentsia—and the dwindling popular classes. It was not simply a gulf in lifestyle but in cultural values, beliefs, and opinions. Not only European Jews regarded Mizrahi Jewry as inferior and in urgent need of the rudiments of Western culture; their own Westernized groups related to the bulk of the Jews in these lands in like terms.⁵¹

Against the background of the sociocultural crisis, Zionism stood out as the modern movement that resonated with the popular classes.

Even when word of the new ideological and political streams, or the Zionist emissaries, reached the Jews of Islamic lands . . . they met with little response among the established, educated class, whereas the masses saw the Zionist ideas as an extension of traditional messianic longings and an expression of the deep bond with the Holy Land and its Jewish community, which had existed for generations.⁵²

Here, as elsewhere, Ettinger chose his words carefully, lending historiographic support to one of the harshest claims made by Ashkenazim against the charges of discrimination, namely, that the Mizrahi Jewish elites in the lands of Islam, especially in North Africa, had alienated themselves from and ignored the poorer classes, and when the time had come for mass emigration the elites had headed for the West, primarily France, while packing off the impoverished non-Westernized masses to Israel. The Zionist Ashkenazi elite had thus served as an alternative elite, which, in fact, rescued a flock abandoned by its shepherds. Moreover, with reference to the original, traditional culture of Mizrahi immigrant communities, Ettinger noted the noxious effect of modernization and suggested that Jewish national territory would serve as a haven of rehabilitation and rebirth not just for the immigrant masses themselves but for their traditions and culture, if only in part.⁵³

Thus, the historiographic endeavor that could no longer be deferred in the new circumstances spawned a summation that helped to fill the vacuum of knowledge and, equally important, of interpretation, which was not only lean but dim and blurred, partly at least because of the inherent delicacy of the ethnic problem. In these two concise prefaces, Ettinger synopsised the Jerusalem School's chief historiographic approaches to the awkward question.

These prefaces, or at least Ettinger's ideas, served as guidelines for the authors of the various chapters in *Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Artzot ha-Islam*.⁵⁴ The extent to which they were read by or influenced researchers, lecturers, students, teachers, and pupils is less clear. There can be no doubt, however, that the ideological leanings, the intellectual and research orientations, and the conclusions presented in the prefaces were shared at all universities by most scholars who were in any way connected with the Jerusalem School, and these ideas came to the fore in their own works.⁵⁵ In addition, they filtered into other Israeli cultural arenas, such as education and the media, not merely because of the school's dominance but because the Zionist metanarrative was accepted by virtually everyone concerned with Jewish history in the State of Israel and the root cadre did not sprout any other clearly defined nucleus with a different historiographic perspective.

The Jerusalem School's word on the Jews of Islam was clearly formulated only in the early 1980s, and by Ettinger, in the peculiar circumstances elaborated earlier. Although Ettinger specialized in Eastern European Jewry, he nevertheless presided over the historiographic project and even took the trouble to write the prefaces. He chose not to leave

the job to any of the historians who contributed the various chapters and did specialize in the field, most of whom, incidentally, were of Mizrahi origin. It was apparently important to him to keep utter control of the prickly task that set out the position of the hegemonic school in this highly sensitive area.

Historiography in a Period of Crisis

Signs of crisis were already evident even as members of the Jerusalem School were writing *Toldot Ha-Yehudim be-Artzot ha-Islam*. The old socialist-Zionist intellectual elite, represented by the important, arresting Ettinger, was losing its unconditional supremacy, as was the Zionist ethos in Israeli society. The change was indicated by the debut in 1984 of the Shas political party. For the first time, the Mizrahi Orthodox—senior rabbis and young yeshiva graduates—had sufficient strength to garner wide electoral support for a platform that wedded the old Sephardi religious heritage to the Orthodox Ashkenazi socioeconomic and political model. In the initial stages, Shas, of course, did not develop an alternative historiography to that of secular Zionism, but the power of the new Mizrahi Orthodox elite was not confined to politics. It found expression in the elite's extension to the composers of rabbinic literature and, among other things, in the historically important texts written as offshoots of this literature, which over time could be seen as the cornerstones of a rival historiography.⁵⁶ This is certainly not what Ettinger had expected when he spoke of Israel being fertile ground for the restoration of the Mizrahi heritage. Indirectly, however, and contrary to his convictions, both the emergence of Shas and the burgeoning of Mizrahi rabbinic literature bore out his prediction.

Even in advance of Shas's appearance on the political map, other Mizrahi secular voices had begun to take exception to the core assumptions and conventions of Zionist historiography as it had developed till then. These critics, who began to speak out right after the crisis of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, well before the change of the political guard in 1977, were not motivated by anti-Zionism but rather the reverse. They did, however, object to the role that Zionist historiography had allotted to Mizrahi Jewry in general, particularly in the evolution of the new Jewish Yishuv in the Land of Israel. In 1979, a TV documentary series, *'Amud ha-Esh* (Pillar of Fire) brought matters to a head. The series, then in preparation, presented a history of Zionism up to 1948 and hardly

mentioned the role of the Mizrahim, whether in Zionist activity abroad or in the new Yishuv. A handful of Mizrahi intellectuals met with the television authorities, and the initial contacts led to an understanding that there was room to feature the Mizrahim more prominently in the Zionist epic. At a certain point, however, the Mizrahim sensed that the overall framework of the series, dictated by the history of European Ashkenazi Zionism, was not suitable to the history of oriental Jewry and its road to Zionism, and they demanded that the work be halted and the series restructured. The ensuing conflict reached all the way to the Knesset and the Supreme Court.⁵⁷

The importance of the episode, for our purposes, lies in the change and crisis that it demonstrated on a number of levels. First, the intellectuals who had made an issue of it signaled the presence of a new generation in terms of the thinking and writing about Mizrahim. This generation, born more or less simultaneously with the Jewish state, had to contend above all with the fact that historical knowledge on Mizrahi Jewry was still virtually nonexistent by the time they came of age and were at the formative identity stage. They were hard put to furnish the TV writers with reliable, well-rounded studies on Mizrahim for a revision of the scripts. Neutral, professional norms played against them; had the circumstances in this domain been different, had material been available, their cause would have been much easier to defend.

But the management of the affair could not be separated from the balance of forces in the ethnic arena; the European Jewish side had the upper hand and was able to relegate the Mizrahim to the sidelines. In other words, given the inequality, one could well wonder whether a different situation in the historiographical arena would have led to different results or whether the historiographic void itself was not due to ongoing discrimination, serving simultaneously as justification for the inferior Mizrahi status in public opinion. Whereas the former reaction of Mizrahi intellectuals, based as it was on assumptions of professionalism, was not antiestablishment and did not necessarily regard the powers that be as hostile to Mizrahim, the latter considerations had the potential to fuel distrust of the ruling Ashkenazi elite. They might have kindled rebellious action divergent from the integrationist patterns that had thus far characterized Mizrahi members of the secular elite in both the previous and present generations.

This period, at the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s, was propitious for radical change in Mizrahi behavioral and cognitive modes not only because of Israeli society's internal crises, the Yom Kippur War, and

the political upheaval and transformation of 1977 but because of changes outside the Jewish state. The 1980s and 1990s marked a crossroads in the intellectual currents predominant in the West, and new conditions encouraged anti-Ashkenazi, anti-Zionist trends. This pivotal juncture has become synonymous with the materialization in Israel of scholars known as the New Historians. Their writing talent and impressive ability to meet the classic criteria of historical research made it difficult for opponents to dismiss them and obliged detractors to address, and indeed adopt, their factual findings even when they disagreed with their historiographic interpretations. Apart from their professional capabilities, however, the New Historians benefited also from the trends in Western academic discourse, imbued with a postmodernist, postcolonial spirit and, as such, compatible with messages critical of Israel and Zionism. They could thus present an immeasurably strong professional front, with global backing, against the force and power of Israel's academic establishment, which, among other factors, explains their success and durability on the local level as well.

Postcolonialism

Developments in the first areas of interest shown by the New Historians, namely, the Israeli-Arab conflict and the Holocaust, affected (albeit later) the study of Mizrahim and the ethnic problem and resulted in a fresh current with a totally different interpretation from those of the schools that had reigned supreme until the early 1980s.

In 1978, a year after Israel's political revolution, Edward Said's *Orientalism* sent shock waves through the research field on relations between the West and Islam.⁵⁸ Chipping away at accepted opinion, he lifted the veil from the Western narrative of the Orient, exposing what he described as a discourse of power, a narrative of control, even on the part of those considered preeminent experts on the region. In his view, Europeans see the Islamic East as the negative "other," embracing sweeping, essentialist generalizations about the nature of Islam and its peoples in order to define themselves in positive terms. Speaking ostensibly in the name of enlightenment and progress, they used the generalizations only to justify their dominance over the peoples of the Middle East. An analysis of their writings, stripped of conventions about European superiority and its enlightened culture, unveils a discourse that is not merely essentialist and Eurocentric but imperialist and racist.

Said, a Palestinian who makes no bones about the personal, political context of his scholarly progression in cultural studies, tags Zionism as a European national movement that made exemplary use of the orientalist discourse. In the world of postmodern ideas, which, in any case, takes a critical view of nationalism as a modern invention, Zionism was seen a priori as illegitimate, lacking valid foundations. Second, while postmodernism attacks the basic assumptions of diverse modernist schools (national and others), Zionism, as a national movement penetrating the Orient and the Muslim world, came under fire also from postcolonialism. It was thus subjected to a double onslaught, as both a national and a colonial movement that had exploited orientalism's oppressive force to the full. Furthermore, the history of the ties between the Jewish national movement of return and the Orient had an internal aspect as well: Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations. This made room for the possibility that the guiding national ideological axiom—which accorded precedence to internal Jewish solidarity over Jewish relations with Christian and/or Muslim surroundings—would be replaced by a contrary assumption that made the Orient–West dichotomy paramount; both Muslims and Mizrahi Jews were victims of European enlightenment, colonialism, and imperialism, and the underdog status, shared by Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian Arabs, was more significant than the religious or national divide. Indeed, the revolutionary potential of this axiomatic understanding of the ethnic problem has come to fruition.

The antithetical starting points of Zionist historiography and Said's thesis in the analysis of the ethnic problem derive, in part, from their structural similarity as theoretical paradigms. While the former is committed to the unity and kinship demands of ethnic-based nationalisms, and accordingly tends to ignore the built-in hierarchy between European and non-European in the colonial era, the latter overlooks the possibility that the dichotomy, a child of the Enlightenment and European imperialism, might be obliged to deal with conflicting influences of identity that could also be a bridge between Europeans and non-Europeans or a barrier between different "oriental" groups.⁵⁹ The first paradigm ultimately stresses unity and kinship, the second the unbridgeable divide, because of the essentialist disqualification of the Orient by the imperialist West. Said makes the very dichotomy principle essentialist, and just as Zionist historians, who may now be termed *orientalists*, omitted many aspects of historical reality because they did not fit into the ideological metanarrative, the same can be said of Said's devotees.

Exactly as the Western sociological schools eventually reached Israel

and profoundly affected the study of the ethnic problem, so, too, did the new school of cultural studies. Ella Shohat described Mizrahim as victims of Zionism and devoted a book to investigating the orientalist discourse in Israeli cinema. Others followed suit.⁶⁰ In time, a number of other scholars began to hold sway in the postcolonial school, especially Homi Bhabha, whose intricate thinking helped overcome the limitations of Said's paradigm.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the binary principle still dominates the postcolonialist view of Zionism, which is depicted as a purely Ashkenazi creation in which Mizrahim played no autonomous part, being used as mere pawns by the Ashkenazi socialist elite, which presided over the mandatory Yishuv and the fledgling state in its formative years. If in the so-called old Israeli research the Mizrahim were presented as the problem, in this new research Ashkenazi Zionism has become the problem.⁶²

The postcolonialist strategy on the ethnic problem mirrors that of the previous dominant school, though in the opposite direction. Sociology's functionalists and adherents of the Jerusalem School had adopted a harmony-oriented strategy, masking both the very nature of the ethnic problem as immanent in and basic to the Jewish national project and the project's negative repercussions. Postcolonialists have an obverse agenda: to show up the Jewish national project as flawed from the start and to highlight its faults, including in intraethnic relations. Just as in the past ideological compliance sprang from a clear social background, so, too, does this new development. After more than half a century of Jewish statehood, it is the up-to-date, postcolonial stance, rather than Zionist national commitment, that enjoys prestige both in Israel's academic community and, especially, in the world at large. Now the road to social advancement for Israel's Mizrahi intellectuals does not necessarily pass through the state's hegemonic corridors. On the contrary; the bon ton in Western academic circles encourages—even demands—a denunciation of the Jewish state. In this development, one can find, ironically and paradoxically, confirmation of Said's important insight (following Foucault) into both the power of those who are able to tag the other as inferior and limited in the light of their own cultural, intellectual, and moral "superiority" and the interrelationship between the ascendant modern center in the West and the provinces of the "backward" and "barbaric" in other parts of the globe. As "Semites," European Jews, most of world Jewry, had an a priori suspect standing in the dichotomized worldview of enlightened Christianity,⁶³ and in recent times Zionism deteriorated (or reverted perhaps) to the oriental side of the picture. In earlier stages of Zionist history, the underlying attitude of the enlightened Christian West toward

Jews promoted recognition of their right to a national territory of their own in their mythological homeland in the Levant. The reasons were complex and contradictory: philo-Semitism, anti-Semitism, imperialist-colonialist motifs (which turned out to be unstable), feelings lodged in guilt over the destruction of European Jewry, and so forth. Now, confronted with the outcomes of the Zionist project, the same underlying attitude of the enlightened Christian West toward Jews facilitates, perhaps, a change of mind and withdrawal of support for the Jews' right to a state of their own in Asia.

Most Israeli postcolonialists have not come to the ethnic problem after years of in-depth investigation of the history of Mizrahim in Israel or their countries of origin in Asia and Africa. Most began their careers in entirely different fields and started to focus on Israel's Mizrahim only in recent years. For the moment, their input on the ongoing problem of Mizrahi studies in recent generations—the vacuum of knowledge—remains modest. Their other influences on the research are similar to those of the schools that preceded them and were committed to a metanarrative. On the one hand, their influence, as I see it, distorts and blurs historical reality; on the other, it is welcome. Postcolonialists of the 1990s extended, expanded, and greatly diversified the voices critical of conceptions that did, and sometimes still do, rule Israeli sociology and historiography. Nourished by a rich, evolving, international, theoretical hinterland, the directions of thinking and research they propose have injected new life into a field suffering from a lack of appreciation and talent. Like their predecessors, they have offered important new insights and shed light on previously dark areas.

Historiography in Search of a Conceptual Framework

The change in establishment policy and the impact of the worldwide ethnic trend on the field in Israel saw the blossoming of Mizrahi historical research in the 1980s. By and large, it was still controlled by the Zionist narrative and the demands of the educational and academic establishment. Thus, for instance, as the Holocaust became a key factor in Israeli Jewish identity and Holocaust studies entered the curricula, there was a growing need to fill this void, too, in the history of Mizrahi Jewry. The orientation was to stress similar rather than different experiences so as not to subvert the message of a common Jewish fate in both Christian

Europe and the lands of Islam. Nevertheless, the end result was a significant addition to the literature on Mizrahi Jews, enabling enhanced discussion from more angles.⁶⁴

After several years of relative flowering—and notwithstanding the constant growth of studies in terms of both quantity and quality—the field as a whole did not attract many new talents. Establishment support is apparently not enough to alter the status of Israeli society's Mizrahi component in the public mind and imagination. The ethnic problem is not an illusion. It is real and ingrained, and though it may don different forms, its basic contours remain firm: the preferential position enjoyed by Europeans over non-European, Mizrahi elements in the immigrant society. Even positive changes in the status of the field are tied to the favored agenda of Western intellectual milieus, as we have just seen.

Accordingly, there has been no deviation from the pattern of alienation from the recent past of the twentieth century—which characterized the previous generation of historians—and only a handful of scholars have chosen to investigate the ethnic problem. Nevertheless, the 1980s addressed the field's greatest problem, the lack of historical data. Israeli archives were opened to researchers and, as happened with the topic of the Israeli-Arab conflict, presented fresh opportunities. Researchers unearthed new details and arrived at new conclusions inconsistent with the basic assumptions of the old historiography and not entirely welcome to the establishment. Notable among these were studies on the Jews of Iraq and Morocco.⁶⁵

Other studies, which did not rely heavily on the fresh material, also began to reveal new horizons. Nissim Kazzaz, for example, showed that key Jewish figures, at least in Iraq, had shared Arab nationalist aspirations and, like dominant elites in the West, had advocated complete integration into local society. Although he also attempted to explain the Iraqi elite's failure with a thesis that fitted neatly into the Zionist narrative, his disclosures warranted a reappraisal of twentieth-century Jewish history in Iraq and other Arab and Muslim states. The question of a local nationalist orientation on the part of Jews in Arab countries now seemed worthy of exploration. It appears that messianic Zionism did not immediately succeed "traditionalism," nor did the pro-Western leadership necessarily play a mere minor role prior to the advent of and "redemption" by Zionist emissaries. In the interim, the Mizrahi Jewish world seems to have been exposed to alternative, modern, ideological and organizational trends.

A whole series of studies aimed (if subconsciously or implicitly) at revamping the image of Mizrahim in Israel uncovered an entire unknown

layer of Hebrew Haskala (Enlightenment) in North Africa that makes it easier to understand the roots of modern Zionist leanings in the region.⁶⁶ Finally, significant strides, including those by scholars not necessarily researching Mizrahim, have been made through the study of different waves of immigrants to Israel, their absorption, and the state policies adopted toward Mizrahi immigrants. The picture that emerges differs radically from the harmonious portrait painted by Israel's Old Historiography.⁶⁷

Although the Jerusalem School's historical interpretation has not been completely overturned, a considerable portion of its basic assumptions cannot be easily reconciled with later findings. Chiefly, the harmonious-ideal thesis, which rests on orientalist stereotypes, has lost much of its credibility. Yet none of the historians who have undertaken documented research on Mizrahi Jewry in recent generations has totally rejected the Jerusalem School's basic assumptions and conceptions. Its main premise—that modernization precipitated heightened friction between Jews and Muslims in the Arab countries prior to the advent of the Zionist movement—has not been refuted. On the other hand, the modest role that Ettinger assigned to Zionism as aggravating Jewish relations with the Arab milieu requires revision. Studies show that the rise of Zionism played a key role in the deteriorating relations with the Arab environment. Although the tensions predated Zionism and were due to Western influence, whether or not Jewish attempts to win European patronage or accelerated Jewish Westernization far beyond the acceptable in a Muslim environment, it is difficult to exaggerate Zionism's far-reaching, alienating role in the era of nationalism.⁶⁸ Ettinger's other major thesis—that of uneven modernization among the Mizrahi elite and masses—is clearly valid, although most current studies show that the extent and nature of the imbalance could also benefit from serious review.

With regard to the history of Israel's ethnic problem, as a partisan camp in this social development Ettinger and his school could hardly have been detached observers. The latest studies demonstrate that in the formative years of the Yishuv and the state Ashkenazim exploited the very real inequities to consolidate their own status in the nascent society being built of European and non-European Jews. The arguments of sociology's school of conflict are not unfounded; on the contrary, its insights hold the key to understanding the development of a brand new society and the distribution of national resources.⁶⁹ But national ideology and sentiments of solidarity also played a role. Thus, historical research has found, among other things, a balance of interests between the Jewish state and Jewish minorities outside, leading to a corresponding

“interplay” so long as there was no existential threat to either side. At times, for instance, Moroccan Jews courted the State of Israel; at other times, the state courted them. Moments of crisis, as mentioned, spawned dependency, bringing the “game” to an end.⁷⁰ The many unique features in the lot of Iraqi Jewry leaves considerable room for postcolonial reflections, and it is little wonder that Iraqi intellectuals were among the first to ponder the circumstances of their uprooting to the Jewish state. In any case, their experience as immigrants in Israel also indicates a complex interplay between the East-West dichotomy and national ideology and sentiments. The national ideology and sentiments served to counter tendencies of exploitation, prejudice, and discrimination, equipping Mizrahim with moral and legal resources that under the right circumstances could be translated into real political and economic power.⁷¹

Historical research, as noted, has of course not really reached as far as recent decades, and once more sociology has been called on to furnish data on and insights into latter-day events in the ethnic realm. While different schools have again come up with different presentations, the most prominent development has been the disappointment in the modernist functionalist camp.⁷² As it predicted, the gaps between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim have narrowed and the two groups have drawn closer to one another; nonetheless, in extensive social areas the gulf persists and is even widening.⁷³ Furthermore, inequality helped preserve traditional ethnic elites and cultures; these cultures, after initial suppression, were rehabilitated and transformed under the new national conditions, resulting in a united Mizrahi realignment and a young new leadership that offered an alternative to the dominant Ashkenazi culture in both its secular and Orthodox-religious facets. Ettinger, despite himself, was right when he stated that the preservation of Mizrahi Jewry’s long-standing traditions would find the national soil hospitable. The melting pot policy, aimed at instilling the Western, secular culture preferred by the ruling Ashkenazim, ran into serious contradictions. The rise and stability of the Shas political movement in the past generation obviously reflect this failure.⁷⁴ The main trend in sociological research is to view Shas as a primarily Israeli phenomenon, but from the perspective of historical processes the discussion should properly begin back in the countries of origin of Mizrahi Jewry, where the native traditionalist Jewish elites had already been suppressed. On national land, however, after a period of adaptation, they were able to begin to change their situation.

In contrast to other sensitive fields of Israeli historiography in the past generation, which saw a mostly post-Zionist radical periphery

attacking the academic center, the shift in the history of Mizrahi Jewry came from within the universities themselves, seemingly untouched by the clash of generations or schools of thought. Still, the works of the isolated historians who have investigated the ethnic problem harbor considerable explosive material. Yehuda Nini, a veteran historian in this field, devoted a late study to the episode of the Yemenite settlement at Kinneret, on the Sea of Galilee, arriving at conclusions incompatible with his early position on interethnic relations.⁷⁵ At the start of the period of crisis, he had defended the core assumptions of the historiography in which he had been bred, refraining from supporting the young intellectuals who would halt the TV production of *'Amud ha-Esh* and attacking, on professional grounds, the trailblazing critics of the official Zionist-Ashkenazi narrative.⁷⁶ Now, at any rate, his conclusions correspond to Israeli sociology's critical school, inspiring even postcolonialists.⁷⁷ Although Nini refused to see the case he researched as representative of the ethnic relations within Zionism as a whole, his change of orientation is nevertheless telling and points to serious glitches in the old Zionist historiography. Among the younger generation of historians, the later works of Esther Meir and Bat-Zion Klorman-Iraqi also punch holes in this historiography.⁷⁸ Finally, my own work suggests analyzing the ethnic problem's development as the product of the encounter between an ethnic-based nationalism and the colonialist dichotomy. This encounter occurs only in Zionist society and is due to the nature of the Jewish dispersion in Europe, Asia, and North Africa.⁷⁹ Since pan-Jewish contacts expanded in the modern period prior to the rise of Zionism, intercommunal identity tensions between European and non-European Jews did not first spring up in the Zionist Yishuv or the State of Israel. Rather, they can be traced back to the end of the eighteenth century (under the impact of the Western Enlightenment and imperialism), outside of the Zionist context and the boundaries of the Land of Israel.⁸⁰ I therefore suggest that the problem be viewed as a special—internal—case of orientalism in which the orientalist dichotomy must square up to contradictory influences.⁸¹ In this view, Israel's ethnic problem is merely the latest, most intensive form of the basic problem of Jewish dispersion.⁸²

During the crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I, too, was conscious of the unsuitability of the general Eurocentric scaffolding that the old Zionist historiography had forced on all the immigrant groups that had gathered in the young State of Israel. The tendency may have been comprehensible prior to 1948, when seen against the global demo-

graphic balance of Jewish minorities and the dominant role of the Eastern European minorities in creating the Zionist Yishuv. But it no longer held water after the state was established and Mizrahim came to comprise half, if not more, of Israeli society. The situation called for conceptual adaptations, and my own generation of researchers, each in her or his own way, displayed evident discomfort in writing the history of Mizrahi Jewry within a framework tailored to Jewish minorities in Christian lands. The same applies to the new postcolonial current, which, because of its paramount anti-Zionist drift, has been equally blinded to the Mizrahim's natural introduction into the behavioral and conceptual theaters common to the nationalist era, as well as to the nationalist tendencies of Jewish minorities in the lands of Islam. Both approaches, the old Ashkenazi-Zionist ideological metahistory and the new postcolonialism, have imposed imported frameworks of meaning on the investigation of Mizrahim and the ethnic problem. The new current may stem from the desire of the Third World's Westernized (or even Western) elite to tell its story, but all the same its basic general assumptions must be modified for specific populations. Such individual modifications are history's natural hunting grounds; unlike the social sciences, it does not lend itself to universal models.

Concluding Remarks

Given the disintegration of the old Zionist hegemony and the changes in the intellectual and academic worlds in the West and Israel, the study of Israel's ethnic problem has advanced greatly under the present generation of researchers. Sociology had already offered a variety of explanations back in the late 1970s and early 1980s; in the past decade, new explications were offered also by other disciplines, by the cultural school under the impact of postcolonialism and by a new critical current in Israeli historiography. The few historians who were attracted to the field, and have stayed, had several avenues open to them to investigate the ethnic problem. First, they could continue along the path marked out by the previous generation prior to the crisis. This was not a particularly promising route both because it looked to the relatively distant past rather than recent decades and because the Old Historiography's basic assumptions aimed at a harmonious, Eurocentric interpretation and rested on, among other things, orientalist preconceptions. A diametrically opposite avenue accepted the basic methodological assumptions of postcolonialism. It, unlike the first,

had the potential to enrich the field considerably; however, apart from a new methodology, it posits strong, ideological, anti-Zionist tendencies that greatly obstruct a neutral view of the national fabric being woven by European/non-European relations. Be that as it may, the new current's core general assumptions obliged history, as a scientific discipline, to reexamine the recent past and make adjustments for specific populations. The attempts to make the necessary adjustments signaled the third avenue.

This, in fact, was the avenue chosen by myself and several of my colleagues, if not deliberately. The choice owed less to the basic assumptions and methods of postcolonialism than to Israel's autonomous historical research under the impact of sociological schools. Nevertheless, apart from a differing approach to nationalism as a generative force that did not necessarily wreak havoc on the Asian and African Jewish minorities, the recent historical research does seem to be drawing closer to the post-colonial outlook. Not only is the research more alert to the colonial influence on European/non-European interaction within the Zionist encounter, but there is greater sensitivity to the multiple facets and identities of Mizrahim as regards topics, methodology, and so on. With respect to Zionism, the historical conclusions on the ethnic problem approach the basic model of sociology's pluralist school: there is heightened awareness of discrimination against Mizrahim, but also of the sway of nationalism, which distinguishes between the Jewish state's Mizrahi and Arab citizens as a forced by-product of Zionism. Diaspora nationalism translated into a Jewish migration and settlement movement from Europe, Asia, and Africa to a mythological homeland that was already occupied by a local population; this movement gave birth to an ostensibly democratic national state but a democracy that preferred Jews to non-Jews. Concomitantly, diaspora nationalism, with its uniform, egalitarian ethos for all conationals, has been unable to escape the colonial influences concurrent with the age of nationalism.⁸³

The present generation of scholars investigating the ethnic problem all grew up during the crisis of the old Zionist hegemony and its conceptions. The social, intellectual, and emotional dimensions of the hegemonic period made it very difficult for intellectuals in general to pursue an independent path, and for Mizrahi intellectuals all the more so, because of the essentially hierarchical and oppressive nature of the ethnic problem. The waning of the old Zionist dominance enabled other voices to come to the fore and other intellectuals to choose their own course. Apart from new intellectual currents and options, however, there were also other factors at work, such as personal, family and ethnic back-

grounds, which continue to play a role. The overwhelming majority of scholars inquiring into the ethnic problem in the present generation are themselves Mizrahim or the offspring of Mizrahi-Ashkenazi marriages. There can be little doubt that their ethnic background had a direct bearing on their choice of research. They work from a shared sensitivity to the ethnic question but also under the impact of the divergent histories of separate Jewish minorities and the different biographies of individual families in Israel. Yehuda Shenhav, a key postcolonial scholar, speaks of contradictory influences for and against Zionism within his own family, exhibiting an evident identification with his grandmother, who took an unfavorable view of the mass immigration of Iraqi Jewry and the hand taken by the local Zionist movement in promoting emigration to the Land of Israel.⁸⁴ On a similar personal note, my Yemenite grandparents' home, in which I was raised, presented a united front imbued with emotional and conscious gratitude for the national enterprise. The enthusiastic Zionism of my "Ashkenized" grandfather had a lasting effect on me, likely no less potent than the traces left by Shenhav's grandmother on him. Moreover, as said, some of this generation's scholars were born to Mizrahi parents on both sides, while others are typical of the growing trend of interethnic marriages in Israeli Jewish society. A colleague of mine, the historian Esther Meir, who, like myself, is the product of such a "mixed marriage," once commented: "We owe answers to both our parents." The different backgrounds certainly play an important part. As regards individual and collective identity, we all embarked on a voyage of discovery, but our biographies throughout, at both the interim stations and the final destination, depend, too, on what our families placed in our baggage before we set out and on the unanswered questions sown in our minds by the milieu into which we were born.

NOTES

1. Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition, 1860–1939: The Teachers of Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Seattle, 1993), 12; Yaron Tsur, *Yehudim bein Muslemim: Mavo le-Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Artzot ha-Islam ba-Tkufa ha-Modernit, 1750–1914* [Jews among Muslims: Introduction to the History of the Jews in Islamic Lands in the Modern Period, 1750–1914], provisional ed. (Tel Aviv 2003), units 7–8, "Reformistim ve-Yehudim 'Hadashim' aharei milhemet Krim" [Reformers and "New" Jews after the Crimean War], 142–49.

2. *Mizrahi* (meaning "easterner" or "Oriental") is not to be confused with the Ashkenazi religious Zionist party of the same name. For a discussion of the internal terminology on the easterner side of the ethnic divide, see, for example, Uzi Schmelz,

“Ha-‘aliya ha-hamonit mi-Asia u-mi-Tzfon-Africa: Hebeitim demographiim” [Mass Aliya from Asia and North Africa: Demographic Aspects], *Pe‘amim* 39 (1989): 16–17; and Yaron Tsur, “Ha-be‘aya ha-‘adatit bi-shnot ha-shishim” [The Ethnic Problem in the 1960s], in *He-‘Assor ha-Sheni, 5718–5728* [The Second Decade, 1948–1958], ed. Z. Zameret and H. Yablonka (Jerusalem, 2000), 114.

3. Yaron Tsur, “Carnival Fears—Moroccan Immigrants and the Ethnic Problem in the Young State of Israel,” *Journal of Israeli History* 18, no. 1 (1997): 73–103. *Kehila Kru‘a: Yehudei Marocco ve-ha-Le‘umiyut, 1943–1954* [Torn Community: Moroccan Jewry and Nationalism, 1943–1954] (Tel Aviv, 2001), 264–72.

4. *HaAretz*, 22 April 1949.

5. For Eisenstadt’s key work of the period, see *The Absorption of Immigrants* (London, 1954). It was preceded by a study on Yishuv oriental Jews prior to the large immigration: *Mavo le-Heker ha-Mivne ha-Sotziologi shel ‘Edot ha-Mizrah* [Introduction to the Sociological Structure of Oriental Jewry] (Jerusalem, 1948).

6. Valuable evidence of the scholarly thinking on the ethnic problem in early statehood can be found in a discussion in the sociology journal *Megamot*, 1951–52. It was moderated not by a sociologist but by a well-known psychologist and educator, Carl Frankenstein, and the participants included other important psychologists, philosophers, and sociologists, who did not necessarily share the same basic position on the nature of the problem or the way to deal with it. See Carl Frankenstein, “Li-ve‘ayat ha-hevdelim ha-etniim” [On the Problem of Ethnic Differences], *Megamot*, 2, no. 3 (April 1951): 261–76; E. Simon, “Al mashma‘uto ha-kefula shel ha-musag ‘primitiviyut’” [On the Double Meaning of the Concept of “Primitivity”], *Megamot*, 2, no. 3 (April 1951): 277–84; Nathan Rotenstreich, “‘Amat mida absolutit’ [Ethnic Differences and the Value Problem], *Megamot*, 2, no. 4 (July 1951): 327–38; Carl Frankenstein, “Le-musag ha-primitiviyut” [On the Concept of Primitivity], *Megamot*, 2, no. 4 (July 1951): 339–60; Meshulam Groll, “‘Al kvod ha-adam” [Individual and Society: Dialectical Materialism versus a Psychological Approach], *Megamot*, 3, no. 1 (October 1951): 50–64; Carl Frankenstein, “Ha-gisha ha-psycho-logit li-ve‘ayat ha-hevdelim ha-etniim” [The Psychological Approach to the Problem of Ethnic Differences], *Megamot*, 3, no. 2 (January 1952): 158–70; Yosef Ben-David, “Hevdelim etniim o shinui hevratit?” [Ethnic Differences or Social Change?], *Megamot*, 3, no. 2 (January 1952): 171–83; and “Sikum ha-vikuah ‘al be‘ayat ha-hevdelim ha-etniim” [On the Problem of Ethnic Differences: Summary of Discussion], *Megamot*, 3, no. 4 (July 1952): 319–29.

The functionalist position was presented not by Eisenstadt but by Yosef Ben-David. Eisenstadt’s “Ha-Mashma‘ut Ha-Hevratit Shel Ha-Hinuch Le-Or Be‘ayot Klitit Ha-‘Aliya” [The Social Significance of Education in Light of the Problem of Immigrant Absorption], *Megamot*, 3, no. 4 (July 1952): 330–41, appeared right after the summary and seemed to introduce what is defined as the “discussion stage of problems of implementation.” For a retrospective look at the *Megamot* discussion, see Moshe Lissak, “Ha-mehkar be-nosseh ha-be‘aya ha-‘adatit: Tmunat matzav” [The Research on the Ethnic Problem: Situation Report], in *Kivunim Hadashim be-Heker ha-Be‘aya ha-‘Adatit* [New Directions in Research on the Ethnic Problem] (Jerusalem, 1984), ed. Naama Cohen and Ora Ahimeir, 13–16.

7. Deborah Bernstein, “Ha-panterim ha-shhorim: Konflikt u-mehaa ba-hevra ha-Yisre‘elit” [Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society: The Case of the Black Panthers], *Megamot*, 25, no. 1 (1979): 65–79.

8. Shlomo Swirski, *Lo Nehshalim ela Menuhshalim: Mizrahim ve-Ashkenazim be-Yisrael—Nituah Sotziologi ve-Sihot 'im Pe' ilim u-Fe'ilot* [Orientals and Ashkenazim in Israel: The Ethnic Division of Labor] (Haifa, 1981).

9. Deborah Bernstein, "Ha-sotziologiya koletet et ha-'aliya" [Sociology Absorbs Immigration], *Mahbarot LeMehkar U'LeVikoret* 1 (October 1978): 5–21.

10. Smootha's main work in this period, *Pluralism and Conflict* (London, 1978), was based on his doctoral dissertation of 1973. Swirsky seems to have been the first to attempt to suggest a schematic distinction between the three approaches (*Orientalism*, 1–11), after which Smootha suggested his own distinctions, in "Shalosh gishot be-sotziologiya shel yahasei 'eidot be-Yisrael" [Three Perspectives in the Sociology of Ethnic Relations in Israel], *Megamot*, 28 (March 1984): 169–206, and they were followed by others. Clearly, the tendencies of the different schools of the authors were reflected in the way in which the different sociological camps were presented. Their brief schematic presentation here does not purport to faithfully or accurately represent the schools as seen by their adherents but to provide a general idea focused on their differences.

11. See Shlomo Deshen, "Ha-anthropologim ve-heker ha-tarbuyot shel 'adot ha-Mizrah" [Anthropologists and Cultural Research of Oriental Communities] *Pe'amim* 1 (1979): 79–84. This development had a positive effect on the subsequent historiography. See Yaron Tsur, "Hirhurim shel hoker zar 'al sifrutam shel Yehudei Tunisia" [Reflections of a Foreign Scholar on the Literature of Tunisian Jewry], *Shorashim BaMizrah* 5 (2002): 222–23.

12. Moshe Shokeid, *The Dual Heritage: Immigrants from the Atlas Mountains in an Israeli Village* (Manchester, 1971); Harvey E. Goldberg, *Cave Dwellers and Citrus Growers: A Jewish Community in Libya and Israel* (Cambridge, 1972); Shlomo Deshen and Moshe Shokeid, *Yehudei ha-Mizrah: 'Iyunim Anthropologiim 'al he-'Avar ve-ha-Hoveh* [Jews of the Middle East: Anthropological Perspectives on the Past and the Present] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1984); Yoram Bilu, "Psychiatria masortit be-Yisrael" [Traditional Psychiatry in Israel], PhD diss., HU, 1979; Yoram Bilu, *Lelo Metzarim: Hayav u-Moto shel Rabbi Yaacov Vazana* [Without Bounds: The Life and Death of Rabbi Yaacov Vazana] (Jerusalem, 1993). At the same time, Issachar Ben-Ami, who initially concentrated on folklore, began to publish studies on saints, which are summarized in his *Ha'aratat ha-Kdoshim bekerev Yehudei Marocco* [Saint Veneration among the Jews in Morocco] (Jerusalem, 1987).

13. Shlomo Deshen, *Tzibur ve-Yehidim be-Marocco: Sidrei Hevra ba-Kehilot ha-Yehudiyot ba-Meot ha-18–19* (Tel Aviv, 1983), English: *The Mellah Society: Jewish Community Life in Sherifan Morocco* (Chicago, 1989); Harvey E. Goldberg, ed., *Higgid Mordekhai: Korot Luv ve-Yehudeha, Yishuweiheim u-Minhageiheim* [Mordekhai's Word: The History of Libya and Its Jews, Their Colonies and Customs] (Jerusalem, 1979); Harvey E. Goldberg, *Jewish Life in Muslim Libya: Rivals and Relatives* (Chicago and London, 1990).

14. See, for example, the influence of Deshen's approach on a prominent representative of the young generation of sociologists studying the ethnic problem in Hanna Herzog, *'Adatiut Politit, Dimui mul Metziut: Nituah Sotziologi-histori shel ha-Reshimot ha-"Adatiyot" le-Asefat ha-Nivharim ve-la-Knesset (1920–1984)* [Political Ethnicity, the Image and the Reality: Socio-historical Analysis of the "Ethnic" Lists to the Delegates Assembly and the Knesset (1920–1984)] (Tel Aviv, 1986), 20.

15. Sami Smooha, "Minority Status in Ethnic Democracy: The Status of the Arab Minority in Israel," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13 (1990): 389–413.

16. See especially the various articles in *Megamot*, vols. 28 and 29; the studies of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies; Cohen and Ahimeir, *Directions*; Herzog, *Political Ethnicity*; and Yaacov Nahon, *Dfusei Hitrahavut ha-Haskala u-Mivne Hizdamnuyyot ha-Ta'asuka: Ha-Meimid ha-'Adati* [Patterns of Educational Expansion and the Structure of Occupational Opportunities: The Ethnic Dimension] (Jerusalem, 1987).

17. For a list of Elmaleh's works, see A. R. Malachi, "Be-sdei ha-yetzira: Pirumei ba'al ha-yovel—bibliography" [In the Field of Creation—Publications of the Honored Author—a Bibliography], in *Minha le-Avraham: Sefer ha-Yovel le-Avraham Elmaleh bi-Mlot Lo Shiv'im Shana* [Homage to Avraham: Jubilee Book in Honor of Avraham Elmaleh on His Seventieth Birthday] (Jerusalem, 1959).

18. For a list of Ben-Zvi's works, see Meir Benayahu, ed., "Pirumei Yitzhak Ben-Zvi she-be-t'hum Eretz Yisrael ve-kehilot ha-Mizrah" [Yitzhak Ben-Zvi's Publications on the Land of Israel and Eastern Jewish Communities], in *Sefer ha-Zikaron le-Yitzhak Ben-Zvi* [Yitzhak Ben-Zvi's Memorial Book] (Jerusalem, 1964); see also Yitzhak Bezalel, "Kitvei Yitzhak Ben-Zvi 'al Yahadut ha-Mizrah: Ha-shlavim, ha-t'humim, ha-me'afyeniim" (Yitzhak Ben-Zvi's Writings on Eastern Jewry: Stages, Fields, Characteristics), *Pe'amim* 25 (1985): 123–45.

19. For a list of Goitein's works, see Robert Attal, *Bibliographya shel Kitvei Prof. Shlomo Dov Goitein* [A Bibliography of the Writings of Prof. Shlomo Dov Goitein] (Jerusalem, 2000). See also Miriam Frenkel, "Ktivat ha-historya shel Yehudei artzot ha-Islam bi-yemei ha-beinayim: Tzionei derekh ve-sikuim" [The Historiography of Jews in Muslim Countries in the Middle Ages: Landmarks and Prospects], *Pe'amim* 92 (summer 2002): 23–61. For Hirschberg's writings, see H. Z. Hirschberg "Kitvei H. Z. Hirschberg za'l: Reshima bibliographit" [Professor H. Z. Hirschberg: A Bibliography], in Eliezer Bashan and Robert Attal, eds., *Bar-Ilan: Annual of Bar-Ilan University Studies in Judaica and the Humanities* 14–15 (1977): xv–xxxiii.

20. In certain spheres, such as the desirable immigration quotas and the criteria for individual immigration, there could have been a wide gulf between the integrationists and the skeptics. In other spheres, the differences could be blurred since exacting national demands, such as population dispersal and productivization, for example, could merge unrecognizably with demands that discriminated against certain groups. The egalitarian, uniform national ethos encouraged the integrationist stance. In practice, however, the skeptics wielded wide influence both in the corridors of power and among the general public. For an analysis of the basic attitudes, see Tsur, "Carnival"; for their influence on attitudes toward Moroccan Jewry, potentially the largest reservoir of Jewish immigrants from the Islamic countries, see Tsur, *Torn Community*, chap. 4.

21. For an analysis of the changes in Goitein's position from a broader perspective, see Frenkel, "Historiography," 51–55.

22. H. Z. Hirschberg, *Mi-Eretz Mevo ha-Shemesh: 'Im Yehudei Africa ha-Tzfonit be-Artzoteihem* [Inside Maghreb: The Jews in North Africa] (Jerusalem, 1957).

23. H. Z. Hirschberg, *Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Africa ha-Tzfonit*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1965). English: *A History of the Jews in North Africa* (Leiden, 1981).

24. Ruth Firer, "Ha-dimui shel 'adot ha-Mizrah: Sifrei ha-limud le-historia shel 'Am Yisrael" [The Image of Oriental Jews in Jewish History Textbooks in Israel],

Tyunim BeHinukh 45 (1986): 23–33; Avner Ben-Amos, “An Impossible Pluralism? European Jews and Oriental Jews in the Israeli History Curriculum,” *History of European Ideas* 18, no. 1 (January 1994): 41–51.

25. Michael Abitbol, “Le-heker ha-Tziyonut ve-ha-’aliya mikerev Yehudei ha-Mizrah: Hebeitim metodiiim” [Research on Zionism and the ‘Aliya of Oriental Jewry: Methodological Aspects], *Pe’amim* 39 (1989): 1.

26. Hayyim Cohen, *Ha-Pe’ilut ha-Tziyonit be-Iraq* [Zionist Activity in Iraq], (Jerusalem, 1969).

27. On the Jerusalem School, see David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (Oxford, 1995); and Jacob Barnai, “Yehudei artzot ha-Islam ba-et ha-hadasha ve-ha-askola ha-Yerushalmit” [The Jews of Muslim Countries in Modern Times and the Jerusalem School of History] *Pe’amim* 92 (summer 2002): 83–115.

28. For a list of their many writings, see Robert Attal, *Yahadut Tzfon Africa: Bibliographya* [The Jews of North Africa: A Bibliography], rev. and enlarged ed. (Jerusalem, 1993).

29. André Chouraqui, *Korot ha-Yehudim bi-Tzfon Africa* [The Story of the Jews in North Africa] (Tel Aviv, 1975).

30. Joseph B. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles: The Plight, Exodus, and Homecoming of Oriental Jewry* (New York, 1961).

31. *Ibid.*, 337–98.

32. Raphael Patai, *Israel between East and West: A Study in Human Relations* (Philadelphia, 1953).

33. Hayyim Cohen, *Ha-Yehudim be-Artzot ha-Mizrah ha-Tikhon be-Yameinu* [The Jews in the Lands of the Middle East in Our Times] (Tel Aviv, 1973).

34. On the history of the Ben-Zvi Institute, see Shimon Rubinstein, “‘Al yisudo ve-reishito shel ha-makhon le-heker kehilot Yisrael ba-Mizrah” [On the Founding and Start of the Research Institute on Eastern Jewish Communities], *Pe’amim* 23 (1985): 127–44.

35. The history of the institute and its cumulative influence on the field’s development during its incubation period are noteworthy. Hirschberg was connected with it for a number of years, as was the prolific Meir Benayahu. Its international reputation and standing were greatly enhanced by its first librarian, Robert Attal, who painstakingly compiled bibliographic and documentary material that had been waiting to be discovered. In the early 1970s, he published the first volume of his bibliographic work on North African Jewry, *Yahadut Tzfon Africa*.

36. The initiative to establish the center preceded the political change and perhaps presaged the shift in the ethnic balance. See the 1976 decisive Knesset deliberations on the subject described in Barnai, “Jews,” 85–87.

37. Shmuel Ettinger, ed., *Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Artzot ha-Islam* [History of the Jews in the Islamic Countries], 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1981–86). Shalom Bar-Asher and Michael Abitbol were responsible for the chapters on North Africa (including Egypt), Yaacov Barnai for the Ottoman Empire, and Yosef Tobi for Asia.

38. For other analyses of this basic text, whether concurring or differing, see Gabriel Piterberg, “Ha-uma u-mesapreiha: Historiographya le’umit ve-orientalism” [The Nation and Its Narrators: Orientalism and National Historiography] *TuV* 6 (1995): 99–101; and Barnai, “Jews,” 89–90.

39. Ettinger, *History*, vol. 1: *Ha-‘Et ha-Hadasha: ‘Ad Emtz‘a ha-Me’ah ha-Tesha-‘Esrei* [Modern Times: To the Middle of the Nineteenth Century], ix.

40. In the covert and overt historiographic controversy over the status of Jews in Islamic countries, the admission of such a possibility is obvious ammunition in the hands of Zionism’s Arab foes. Indeed, as I learned from Barnai’s article, this message made so great an impression on the Arab translators of the second volume of Ettinger’s historiographic project (Kuwait 1995) that other, less pleasant aspects of Arabs were obscured. In any case, this point especially was elaborated in the introduction to the Arabic edition of the Jerusalem School’s endeavor. See Barnai, “Jews,” 91–92.

41. Ettinger, *History*, 1: x.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, xi.

44. *Ibid.*: “A key aspect of each of the sections is the internal Jewish organization, both as an intermediary between the rulers and the Jews on matters of taxation and representation and as an authoritative body that steered and organized all the evident arrangements of Jewish society—synagogues, rabbinical courts, internal discipline, education, charity, liaison with other communities within and without the state, and support for the Jewish community in the land of Israel. Special discussion has been devoted to Jewry’s spiritual streams, to Jewish thought and thinkers—Torah scholars, rabbis, and sages—as well as to the influence of Kabbalah and Sabbateanism. This parallel discussion highlights both the common and the unique in the histories of each of the communities,” (ix). Ettinger related to other topics as well: “The authors [will describe] the state framework in which Jewish communities lived and acted, the legal status of the Jews, and their economic activity.” It is, however, instructive to see how much space he allotted in his preface to internal topics of national significance as opposed to the question of integration within the general environment. I did not compare the degree of correspondence between the substance of the preface and the actual chapters.

45. Ettinger, *History*, vol. 2: *Mi-Emtz‘a ha-Me’ah ha-Tesha-‘Esrei ‘ad Emtz‘a ha-Me’ah ha-‘Esrin* [From the Middle of the Nineteenth to the Middle of the Twentieth Century], 7

46. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

47. *Ibid.*, 9.

48. *Ibid.*: “The Jewish–Arab [conflict], which stemmed from Zionist political activity and the movement’s reliance on support from Britain and the Western powers, only accentuated a trend whose seeds had been sown long before the emergence of political Zionism and before its aspirations became plain to Muslim Arab public opinion.”

49. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

50. *Ibid.*, 10.

51. *Ibid.*, 9–11.

52. *Ibid.*, 10.

53. *Ibid.*, 10–11: “In none of the Eastern communities did traditional frameworks fully endure. The abandonment of tradition, along with secularization, more or less left their mark on almost every single one. Their religious creativity lost more and more of its importance and, in some instances, was reduced to keeping various pop-

ular customs, including such that were rooted not in Judaism but in Muslim folk traditions. Most of the Jewish communities in the East, even prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, had already faced the very severe problems of change and adaptation to a new order. New forms of social and religious arrangements had not yet developed, and most had been influenced by streams and organizations active among European Jewry. Only in the State of Israel did sociocultural patterns begin to form whereby Jews from Islamic countries could preserve and restore part of their sociocultural heritage.”

54. On this, see Barnai’s personal testimony in “Jews,” 90–91.

55. This held true for my own treatment several years earlier of the Jews of Islam in the premodern period in part 1 of an introductory course in modern Jewish history at the Open University: Yaron Tsur, *Yehudim be-‘Eidan shel Tmurot* [Jews in Times of Change] (Tel Aviv, 1978), units 1–4. Ettinger lent the course his overall patronage and put me in touch with members of the Hebrew University’s Jewish History Department—Israel Bartal, Yosef Tobi, and Menahem Ben-Sasson—who were a great help to me in writing the course. Nevertheless, the basic unease at the state of Israeli historiography on Jews of Islamic countries is evident in part 2 of the course, which deals with the modern period. I chose not to teach it using existing historical books but rather through literature, namely, Albert Memmi’s *La statue de sel* (The Salt Statue), which was free of the Zionist metanarrative (unit 11). The choice, however, was not motivated by conscious ideology. I fell upon Memmi’s book as if I had found a treasure because its wealth of detail and events compensated for the historiographical dearth and portrayed a vital, deeply interesting world of the type available to readers interested in the history of European Jews at the time. For more on this choice, see Yaron Tsur, “Le rôle de *La statue de sel* dans l’historiographie sur les juifs des pays musulmans” [The Role of *The Salt Statue* in the Historiography of Jews in Islam Lands], in *La Culture francophone en Israël* [Francophone Culture in Israel], ed. David Mendelson (Paris, 2002), 119–32.

56. A fine example is Benjamin Cohen’s *Malkhei Tarshish: Toldot Rabbanei Tunisia ve-Hibureihem me-Yemei ha-Talmud ‘ad Yameinu* [Kings of Tarsus: The History of the Tunisian Rabbis and Their Essays from Talmudic Times to the Present] (Netivot, 1986).

57. The affair’s unfolding is depicted by one of the activists in Nahum Menahem, *Metahim ve-Aflaya ‘Adatit be-Yisrael (He‘arot Sotziohistoryot)* [Ethnic Tensions and Discrimination in Israel (Sociohistorical annotations)] (Haifa, 1983), 123–33. I owe a debt of thanks for information on the episode to Vicki Shiran, who was also a key actor in the affair. In any case, the brief account given here still awaits proper study.

58. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

59. The potential for such contradictory developments relates not only to Jews but to other scattered populations, whose different wings are subdivided hierarchically and who may exploit the oppressive cultural tools created by the modern West. On the Muslims, for example, see Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 768–96; at the start of the article, there are references to further literature on the subject.

60. Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text* 19/20 (fall 1988); Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin, 1989); Piterberg, “Nation and Narrators”; Amnon

Raz-Krakotzkin, "Orientalism, mada'ei ha-Yahadut ve-ha-hevra ha-Yisre'elit: Mispar he'arot" [A Few Comments on Orientalism, Jewish Studies, and Israeli Society], *Jama'a* 3 (1999).

61. Indeed, Bhabha, who attacks Said's binary approach, was featured prominently in the Israeli journal supportive of this current, which is published by the Van Leer Institute, *Theory and Criticism* (TuV). See Homi Bhabha, "She'eilat ha-aher: Hevdeil, aflaya ve-siah post-colonial" [The "Other" Question: Difference, Discrimination, and Postcolonial Discourse], TuV 5 (autumn 1994): 144–57; and Hanan Hever and Adi Ophir, "Homi Bhabha: Teorya 'al hevel dak" [Homi Bhabha: Theory between the Lines], in the same issue (141–43). The institute group studying Mizrahim, which recently published its findings, seems to show a clear preference for his theories. See Hever et al., eds., *Mizrahim be-Yisrael: 'Iyun Bikorti Mehudash* [Mizrahim in Israel: A Critical Observation into Israel's Ethnicity] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 2002), 10.

62. See most of the various articles in Hever et al., *Mizrahim*. See also the essays that touch on this question in the special TuV issue published in honor of Israel's fiftieth anniversary: Adi Ophir, ed., *Hamishim le-Arba'im u-Shmoneh: Momentim Bikortim be-Toldot Medinat Yisrael* [Fifty since '48: Critical Moments in the History of the State of Israel] TuV (summer 1999). See also Henriette Dahan-Kalev, "Adatiyut be-Yisrael: Nekudat mabat post-modernit" [Mizrahim in Israel: A Postmodern Point of View], in *Moderniyut, Post-Moderniyut, ve-Hinukh* [Modernity, Postmodernity, and Education], ed. Ilan Gur-Arieh (Tel Aviv, 1999); Ella Shohat, "Rupture and Return: The Shaping of a Mizrahi Epistemology," *Hagar* 2, no. 1 (2001): 61–92. It might not be valid to include Shohat in a discussion of Israeli researchers, however, as she has been teaching in the United States for years.

63. Raz-Krakotzkin, "Orientalism."

64. See, for example, *Pe'amim* 27–29 (1986), which was devoted to the topic; Michael Abitbol, *Yehudei Tzfon Africa be-Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Shniya* [The Jews of North Africa during World War II] (Jerusalem, 1986); Michael M. Laskier, *Yehudei ha-Maghreb be-Tzel Vichy ve-Tzlav ha-Keres* [Maghreb Jewry in the Shadow of Vichy and the Swastika] (Tel Aviv, 1992); Irit Abramski-Bligh, ed., *Pinkas ha-Kehilot, Luv-Tunisia: Entzyclopedia shel ha-Yishuvim ha-Yehudim lemin Hivasdam ve'ad le'ahar Sho'at Milhemet ha-Olam ha-Shniya* [Community Records, Libya-Tunisia: Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities from Their Foundation to after the Holocaust] (Jerusalem, 1997).

65. Gat Moshe, *Kehila Yehudit be-Mashber: Yetziyat Iraq, 1948–1951* [Jewish Community in Crisis: The Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951] (Jerusalem, 1989). See also Dafna Zimhoni, "Memshelet Iraq ve-ha-'aliya ha-gdola shel ha-Yehudim le-Yisrael" [The Government of Iraq and the Mass Aliya of Jews to Israel], *Pe'amim* 29 (1989): 64–102; Dafna Zimhoni, "Madu'a 'alu rov Yehudei Iraq le-Yisrael be-mivtza Ezra u-Nehemia" [Why the Majority of the Jews of Iraq Immigrated to Israel in Operation Ezra and Nehemia] *IbTY* (1991): 379–404; Esther Meir, *Ha-Tnu'a ha-Tziyonit vi-Yehudei Iraq* [Zionism and the Jews of Iraq, 1941–1950] (Tel Aviv, 1993); Esther Meir, "From Eastern Europe to the Middle East: The Reversal in Zionist Policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic Countries," *JIH* 20, no. 1 (spring 2001): 24–48; Avi Picard, "Reishita shel ha-'aliya ha-selektivit bi-shnot ha-hamishim" [The Beginning of the Selective Immigration in the 1950s], *IbTY* 9 (1999): 338–94; Tsur, *Torn Community*.

66. Tsur, "Reflections," 223, including the references there to studies by Joseph Chetrit, who played a major role in unearthing this layer. See especially his "Moderniyut le'umit 'Ivrit mul moderniyut Tzarfatit: Ha-Haskalah ha-'Ivrit bi-Zfon Africa ba-me'ah ha-tsha-'esrei" [Hebrew National Modernity versus French Modernity: The Hebrew *Haskalah* in North Africa at the End of the Nineteenth Century] *MiKedem U'MiYam* 3 (1990): 11–66; and works by others, for example, Yosef Tobi, one of the more energetic scholars of the generation, who devoted many studies to the history of his own community of origin, Yemen. For a comprehensive list of his works, see Yehudah Amir ed., *Kitvei Prof. Yosef Tobi: Reshima Bibliographit* [The Works of Prof. Yosef Tobi: Bibliography] (Jerusalem, 2002). In recent years Tobi has extended his interests to other communities, primarily that of Tunisia. In his contribution to the documentation of Yemenite Jewry, Tobi continues the pioneering work of his predecessor, Yehuda Ratzabi.

67. See Tom Segev, 1949: *The First Israelis* (New York, 1986); Dvora Hacohen, 'Olim be-Se'ara: ha-'Aliya ha-Gdola ve-Klitata be-Yisrael, 1948–1953 [Immigrants in Turmoil: The Great Wave of Immigration to Israel and Its Absorption, 1948–1953] (Jerusalem, 1994); Dvora Hacohen, *Ha-Gar'in ve-ha-Reiha'im: Hityashvut ha-'Olim ba-Negev ba-'Assor ha-Rishon la-Medina* [The Grain and the Millstone: The Settlement of Immigrants in the Negev in the First Decade of the State] (Tel Aviv 2000); Zvi Zameret, 'Ale'i Geshet Tzar: Ha-Hinukh be-Yisrael bi-Shnot ha-Medina ha-Rishonot [Across a Narrow Bridge: Shaping the Education System during the Great Aliya] (Sede Boqer, 1997); Picard, "Selective Immigration"; Meir, *Zionist Movement*; Esther Meir, "'Olei Iraq ve-ha-mimsad ha-Yisre'eli be-reishit shnot ha-hamishim: Ha-maavak le-hityashvut" [The Encounter between Iraqi Immigrants and the Israeli Establishment in the Early 1950s], in *Idan ha-Tziyonut* [The Age of Zionism], ed. Anita Shapira, Jehuda Reinharz, and Jay Harris (Jerusalem, 2002); and Tsur, *Torn Community*.

68. This can be seen also in the works of scholars who do not question the basic assumptions of classic Zionist historiography but have done serious work in uncovering the historical facts. See, for example, Shmuel Moreh and Zvi Yehuda, *Sinat Yehudim u-Fra'ot be-Iraq* [Anti-Semitism and Rampages in Iraq] (Or Yehuda, 1992); Michael M. Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century* (New York and London, 1994); Michael M. Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920–1970* (New York and London, 1992); and Haim Saadon, "'Ha-markiv ha-Falastini' be-hitpartzuyot alimot bein Yehudim le-Muslemim be-artzot ha-Islam" [The Palestinian Element in Violent Eruptions between Jews and Muslims in Muslim Countries], *Pe'amim* 63 (spring 1995): 86–131.

69. As mentioned earlier, the recent history of Mizrahim in the Yishuv and the state attracts even fewer historians than do the previous periods of their history. The number of scholars devoting full or even partial energy to the field is thus highly curtailed. The field is also plagued by a "visitors" syndrome—newcomers enter only to depart again for the more distant past. In any case, historians in the field often unveil facts about economic discrimination and generally corroborate the Mizrahi claim of unfair treatment. On this subject, pioneering work was done by researchers of the Yemenites in the Yishuv period. See Nitza Druyan, *Be-Ein Marvad Ksamim: Ha-Hityashvut ha-Teimanit be-Eretz Yisrael, 5642–5674* [Without a Magic Carpet: Yemenite Settlement in Eretz Israel, 1882–1914] (Jerusalem, 1981); Yosef Meir, *Ha-Tnu'a ha-Tziyonit ve-Yehudei Teiman (Shlithuto shel Yavne'eli be-Or Hadash)* [The Zion-

ist Movement and Yemenite Jewry (Yavne'eli's Mission in a New Light)] (Tel Aviv, 1983); and Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Cambridge, 1989). Recently they have been joined by scholars of immigrations from Iraq and Morocco.

70. Tsur, *Torn Community*.

71. See especially Esther Meir's rich, detailed studies, which reveal the complex history of Iraqi immigrants in the young State of Israel. Her findings and analyses furnish the historiographical layer missing in previous works in the field. See also Tikva Darvish, *Yehudei Iraq ba-Kalkala terem 'Aliyatam le-Yisrael ve-Ahareha* [The Jews in the Economy of Iraq before and after Their Immigration to Israel] (Ramat Gan, 1987); and Tova Bensky et al., *Yehudei Iraq be-Yisrael: Ba-Hevra u-va-Kalkala* [Iraqi Jews in Israel: Social and Economic Integration] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1991).

72. Moshe Lissak, *Ha-'Aliya ha-Gdola bi-Shnot ha-Hamishim: Kishlono shel Kur ha-Hitukh* [The Mass Immigration of the 1950s: The Failure of the Melting Pot Policy] (Jerusalem, 1999).

73. Interestingly, an important role in measuring these processes and persuading scholars of their truth and significance was played by a team under Eisenstadt in which Yaacov Nahon had a key part. See his publication by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, *Patterns*. Eisenstadt and his students partially revised their theories over the years. See, for example, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Ha-Hevra ha-Yisre'elit: Rek'a, Hitpathut, u-Ve'ayot* [Israeli Society: Background, Development, and Problems] (Jerusalem, 1967); and Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Metzuket be-Utopia: Yisrael, Hevra be-'Omess Yeter* (Tel Aviv, 1990), English: *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Albany, 1989). Culturalist scholars, not only at Hebrew University, also continued to contribute to the field. See, for example, Eliezer Ben-Raphael, *Language, Identity, and Social Division: The Case of Israel* (Oxford, 1994). Swirski, who was ousted from academe, pursued his research and follow-ups of the indices of social hardship and rifts, lately as head of the Adva Institute. Sami Smootha turned most of his attention to other minorities in Israeli society, particularly the Arabs.

74. For the results of the initial discussion of this question, see, for example, the various articles in Y. Peled, ed., *Shas: Etgar ha-Yisre'eliyut* [Shas: The Challenge of Israeliness] (Tel Aviv, 2001.)

75. Yehuda Nini, *He-Hayit o Halamti Halom: Teimanei Kinneret, Parashat Hityashvutam ve-'Akiratam, 1912–1930* [Kinneret's Yemenites: Their Settlement and Removal from the Land, 1912–1930] (Tel Aviv, 1996).

76. Yehuda Nini, "Ba-derekh mi-Teiman le-Tzion, 5641–5642" [The Road from Yemen to Zion, 1881–1882], *Pe'amim* 10 (1982): 5–20, sharply (and justifiably on the facts alone) attacks Yosef Meir, whose basic stance he adopted years later. Yosef Meir, who immigrated from Iraq, had a complete change of heart from an innocent faith in Zionsim to keen criticism of the attitude of the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionist elite toward the Jews from Islamic countries. His first book on the subject dealt with Yemenite immigration to Palestine during the second Aliya period at the initiative of the Zionist movement (Meir, *Zionist Movement*). Meir was a critical, peripheral intellectual outside of academe, whose contribution and research have not been duly recognized. See especially his *Hitpathut Hevratit-Tarbutit shel Yehudei Iraq mei 'az 1830 ve'ad Yameinu* [Sociocultural Development of Iraqi Jewry since 1830] (Tel Aviv, 1989). He urged that a distinction be made between the typical modern histories of

Jews in Islamic lands and of European Jewry at the very start of the period of crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s. His precursors were such personalities as Eliahu Elyashar, chiefly a fascinating political figure. Space does not permit further elaboration, but suffice it to say that such intellectuals quite naturally formed special ties with adherents of the neo-Marxist school, the school most critical of the Ashkenazi establishment, although in overall ideology they were not necessarily of one mind.

77. For a relatively updated anthology on this current, see Uri Ram, ed., *Ha-Hevra ha-Yisre'elit: Hebeitim Bikortim* [Israeli Society: Critical Perspectives] (Tel Aviv, 1993); and Hever et al., *Mizrahim*, 299.

78. Meir-Glitzstein, "From Eastern Europe," 24–48; Bat-Zion Iraqi-Klorman, "Hityashvut po'alim Teimaniim ve-Ashkenaziim: Mi-Rishon LeZion le-Nahalat Yehuda u-ve-hazara" [Settlement of Yemenite and Ashkenazi Workers: From Rishon LeZion to Nahalat Yehuda and Back], *Cathedra* 84 (1997): 85–106.

79. Tsur, "Carnival."

80. Daniel J. Schroeter, "Orientalism and the Jews of the Mediterranean," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 4, no. 2 (1994): 183–96; Tsur, *Jews among Moslems*, units 5–6, "Parashat Damesek be-Mabat mi-Mizrah" [A Look from the East at the Damascus Affair], 119–46.

81. Tsur, "Reformers," 80–87, 148, 168–99. See also pages 142–49 and note 59. For a different, postcolonial binary model of explanation, see 'Aziza Khazzoom, "Tarbut Maaravit, Tiyug Etni Ve-Sgirut Hevratit-Ha-Reka Le-i-Hashivyon Ha-Etni be-Yisrael" [Western Culture, Stigma, and Social Closure: The Origins of Ethnic Inequality among Jews in Israel]. *Israeli Sociology* 1, no. 2 (spring 1999): 385–428.

82. The influence of the specific national environment, as well as the repercussions of the Holocaust on this long-term Jewish problem, are discussed at length in my book on Moroccan Jewry, *Torn Community*.

83. Oren Yiftachel suggests "ethnocracy" as an alternative to Smooha's interpretation of Israel as an ethnic democracy: Oren Yiftachel, "'Ethnocrata,' geographya, ve-demokratia: He-'arot 'al ha-politika shel Yehud ha-aretz ["Ethnocracy," Geography, and Democracy: Observations on the Politics of Judaizing the Land], *Alpayim* 19 (2000): 78–105.

84. See Yehuda Shenhav, "Yehudim yotzei artzot 'Arav be-Yisrael: Ha-zehut hamefutzelet shel Mizrahim ba-mehozot ha-zikaron ha-le'umi" [Jews from Arab Lands in Israel: The Split Personality of Mizrahim in the Recesses of National Memory], in Hever et al., *Mizrahim*, 148.