

**Telling The Story of A Politicized National History:
The Field and Habitus making of Israeli Historians**

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Israeli historians have shaped some of the national narratives while establishing Israel's geopolitical and socio-cultural self-determination. A sociological toolkit enables us to detect the social and political features of Israeli historians (as a hermeneutic community) through their interpersonal relations as well as the trajectory of their careers by delineating the fields and structural dispositions they themselves contribute to select, codify, formalize and even institutionalize (i.e. the national ethos as an interiorized habitus)ⁱ. Israeli history as a social construction can be analyzed by delineating a process consisting of both prosopographical categorizationⁱⁱ and the description of the "geographic" contours of the historiographical field; both contain a variety of individual, sometimes incoherent, attitudes and professional experiences. Thus, while critically following the dividing line between the world of academia (with all its institutions and inner dynamics) and the general socio-political space, the generations of Israeli historians and the nature of their intellectual work (the field of ideas) form a solidly social unit to investigate.

Key-concepts: Israeli national history, identity, field, habitus, survival unit

Motivation and Conceptualization

How and what role have Israeli historiography and its makers played in shaping Israel's national identity? Is Israeli identity fruit of meticulous, objective and independent work of local intelligentsia? Is national history all about facts, or is there need to shed further light on the dynamics between ideology, national sentiments and individual stories? In other words, ***how do history and politics "glue" Israeli identity together?*** Most of the existent academic literature dealing with Israel, -and even with its identity-, aims at either describing the trajectory of geopolitical circumstances (e.g. war and peace) or falls into the field of Israeli domestic party-based politics. It thus lacks reference to what and how Israeli history has shaped the state's national identityⁱⁱⁱ before it was "canalized" to the more official spheres of domestic or

international politics. Furthermore, it explains why so many, inside and outside Israel, retain that the successors of the generation of "*Nephilim*" (national personages described in terms of heroism and singularity) were the ones to have aimed at identity-consolidation; by policies based on direct socialisation (i.e. kibbutz, education, mandatory military service) and the continuous use of master narratives in their political discourse^{iv} (i.e. the "Promised Land", or the "Sabra": the strong native Jew in yet independent Palestine). Nonetheless, it would be simplistic to consider politicians alone, as the only "craftsmen" involved in the construction of Israeliness. Scholars and intellectuals did not contribute any less to the Zionist project in terms of their capacity to generate national awareness and common sense of belonging^v. After all they are the first ones to estimate causal connections over time. But still we know relatively little about the *interconnections and ways history itself has nurtured national cohesion in Israel*^{vi}. Seldom do we take into consideration Israeli national history as the generator of Israeli politics^{vii}. Nor is history regarded as a political choice but rather as a product antecedent to institutional politics. That is to say there is much room to uncover and discover the universe of interpretations regarding Israel's so-called national history^{viii}.

As said, the process of elaborating that historical itinerary and the people behind it tend to fall out of importance vis-à-vis the presumably bigger issues (e.g. diplomacy and military strategy). However, local intelligentsia, especially historians, seem to have been key-actors, alongside politics itself, in the endeavor to socialize and familiarize the Israeli 'people'^{ix} with their own history by creating a resilient 'survival unit' (i.e. an established societal system of functions and characteristics), equipped with national ethos and master narratives to be handed down from one generation to the next^x. In other words, historians seem to be the first ones to have the professional skills and cultural capital to select factual events and extract from them "historical coherence" by historicizing and translating them into "general knowledge" on which an 'imagined community'^{xi} of individuals is based. Here enters the key-role of socialization introducing a shared 'habitus' (system of dispositions, practices and eventually sense) to be interiorized to different individuals taking part in the same community of reference (i.e. the Israeli nation-state in our case). This is a valuable point already made by Federico Chabod who wrote that the sense of national belonging (*'nazionalità'*, hence, the idea of nationhood and its chronicles) means providing "sense to historical individuality", while juxtaposing against "generalizing and universalizing tendencies, the principle of the particular, of the singular"^{xii}.

Moreover, he attributed the operation of nation-building to “the will, thus the full conscience, in a people, of what it wants: this is the determinant factor of nationhood^{xiii}. However, if accounted as a product of will, and therefore of choice, the question easily moves to the one raised by R. Brubaker (1996) who disputes not nationhood but rather the way and causal factors which gave it a such enduring existence^{xiv}. This paper seeks to overcome the traditional dichotomies of politics\society and "objective" national history and narration of events, as it aims to delineate the contours of the historiographical field^{xv} in Israel from its' socio-genesis. It introduces concepts such as '*survival unit*', '*habitus*' and '*field*'^{xvi} which enable to be contemporaneously aware of macro\micro levels of investigation in a particular set of dispositions. It thus places history and its makers\producers at the heart of what has influenced Israeli society and Israeli politics without underestimating the relevance of international events\interactions and the role of politics in taking possession of Israeli historians' intellectual production (a part of their intellectual capital) and\or attributing public accolades in return (i.e. prizes as official form of acknowledgment). Moreover, it exemplifies the legitimizing “primordial relationship”^{xvii} that historians, as all social agents, seek to foster with power, in order to render their intellectual capital into social,- and sometimes political-recognition justifying their activities. In order to do so, the paper is divided to two sections: a) key-moments in Zionist, later Israeli, historians' generational biography; b) the material geography of the historiographical field.

A call for periodization

The (hi)stories of men and institutions related to Israeli historiography must be orderly periodized. We adopt the following diachronic subdivision which enables us not only to surpass the mere narration and organization of facts but also to provide sociopolitical validity, in processual terms to the historiographical field. However, we do not pretend this division to be exhaustive of all factual occurrences. Yet it seems highly indicative as it places Israeli historians in a context of real circumstances and content.

1. 1918-1948: Starting from the first end of WWI as a turn in geopolitics and the partition of the Ottoman Empire, through Mandatory Palestine and WWII to Israel's independence. This period is important because it comprises the major waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine (the so-called III-V “*Aliyot*”) and the intensification of the Zionist enterprise *in loco*^{xviii}, namely the formation of an increasingly autonomous political field with the

complete identification of the territory as the only “national home” for Jews^{xix}. This is the phase of “*Komemyiut*” (Israel’s acquisition of independence) in Israel’s identity-building. It was characterized by the generation of nationally acclaimed heroes whose social role was to forge the ‘Sabra model’ as an ideal type Jew and to thrive for independence.

2. 1949-1976: from the nascent Jewish state through the second generation of historians, with the foundation of Tel-Aviv University in 1956, to the Eichmann Trial (1961) and the first accounts on the Shoah. The period of “*Mamlakhtiyut*”^{xx} (conceived as bi-partisan dignity of the nation-state). With fully gained sovereignty, the triumphant Zionist synthesis of the “Sabra” (the metaphor of native Israelis as able fighters and hardworking people) faced the years of economic austerity (1949-1959) and the hardships of the melting-pot policies (i.e. refugee absorption camps in the 1950s and the creation of so-called “development towns” in periphery). This period eternalizes the pioneering centrality of labor-Zionism, celebrates Israel’s military strength vis-à-vis its Arab neighbors (at least till the 1973 Kippur War).
3. 1977-nowadays: The decline of Mapai’s hegemony (i.e. Ben-Gurion’s labor Zionism) characterizing the Israeli 'age of innocence' came to its end as a result of the Israeli wars (which started to divide public opinion over the military territorial occupation) and those which brought the so-called "Ma'apah" (lit. radical change) about. Menachem Begin's victory in the 9th legislative elections framed the ethnically-based social cleavage issue between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Israelis (already surfaced in 1971 with the foundation of the Israeli Black Panthers movement). Thus, domestic contingencies began showing the political and cultural sectorialization of Israeli society. The latter were politically translated into policies of deregulation according to the economic paradigms of liberalization and privatization. Since then, Israeli society has been undergoing a gradual, yet tangible, process of multipolar fragmentation. Along with the geopolitical context, starting from the 1982 Lebanon War and the First Intifada (1987-1993) through the political hardship of peace processes and the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin (1995), Israeli society shows a high degree of unrest.

Key-moments in Israeli Historians lives as a methodological premise

This rapid periodization contextualizes the lives of Israeli historians within more general sociopolitical phenomena. It places them in time and space and links them to circumstances and structural constraints. This does not mean to reduce the irreducible, namely personal individual experience, to a normative system but rather to offer a mid-range scale of analysis where the use of certain collected biographical data can allow the collocation and categorization of biographies in wider, ever changing- not always coherent or linear-, social relations and interconnections of different fields of action: the so-called “social surface”^{xxi} which surpasses the traditional distortions of the anachronist rationality-led model of social behavior^{xxii}, thus tracing different social trajectories and demonstrating typical forms of social attitudes and status. Of course, any biographical emphasis has its limitations. Nonetheless, although contextual integrity cannot be reconstructed in a “one-to-one” detail, the margins this prosopographical approach outlines are a tool to “circumscribe the latent possibilities” (Levi, 1989, p.1332) as a sequence of relevant moments and movements in social agency (i.e. Israeli historians in our case) and, therefore, deduce an abstractive synthesis of some ideal-type proprieties (M. Weber) and configurations (N. Elias) through which new hypotheses may be elaborated^{xxiii}.

1st Generation Historians

The opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (founded in 1918\1925) symbolized the revival of Jewish thought and intellectual life in Palestine which followed the scientific paradigms of nation-building which were being imported from 19th century central Europe, where the majority of scholars immigrated from. The first chairs of Jewish History were established in 1926-8. Certainly the peculiarity of establishing two separated departments of history: one general (Eurocentric) and Jewish (dedicated to national studies)^{xxiv} had something to do with Ahad Ha'am^{xxv}'s spiritual, better known as cultural, Zionism that saw in the land of Israel and the Hebrew language integral parts of the Jewish national heritage, while seeking to revitalize the spiritual connection between Jews and Judaism but did not necessarily translated the latter into religious significance. Neither did this Zionist faction sought political autonomy in

Palestine^{xxvi}. Nonetheless, the spiritual conception of the “Promised Land” soon fell out of grace with the definitive victory of the fusion between Herzlian “diplomatic” political Zionism and its more actionist variation^{xxvii}.

As scholars, professionally trained in *Mitteleuropa* between the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and German Empires, the first generation of “Israeli” historians^{xxviii}: Ben-Zion Dinur (1884-1973), Yizhak Baer (1888-1980), Joseph Klausner (1874-1958) ending with Shmuel Ettinger (1919-1988) opted for a deterministic communitarian modernity, historicist and nationalist in its vision entailing individuals to be identified by ethnic, linguistic and other cultural criteria^{xxix}. In their endeavor to reconstruct the History of ancient *Eretz Yisrael*, they began what can be called creation of a new ‘survival unit’, separated from Jewish diaspora in time and space. To paraphrase Elias’s words, they initiated a developmental process structuring a new frame of societal reference and “conscience-formation”, different from “the traditional ethos of attachment” (N. Elias, p.178), “a protection unit on which depends their physical and social security in the conflicts of human groups [...] (idem, p.208)^{xxx}. For the roots of the Jewish people to be rediscovered they started a philological operation concerning ancient Palestine and the sociopolitical relationships of Jewish communities in Diaspora (e.g. culture, religion and political organization; studies which they had already done in Europe). Hence, they put the grounds to justify Jewish statehood in Mandatory Palestine by establishing the academic field of Jewish History in pre-independent Israeli academia. The latter came to support Israel’s unity and uniqueness vis-à-vis other nation-states (the narrative of “light to the gentiles”) as well as to endorse the country’s role in being the cultural center of Judaism.

Public offices and acknowledgment were soon to follow. One figure deserves special attention: the case of prof. Ben-Zion Dinur. His is a success story in terms of “inter-fields crossing” (e.g. the shift from academia to politics)^{xxxi}. Born in 1884 in Khorol, Russian Empire, Dinur (born Dinaburg) received a religious (also Hasidic) education in different *yeshivot* (rabbinical schools) and even became a certified Rabbi (1902). However, he was equally interested in Haskalah (Jewish enlightenment movement) and espoused Zionism. He studied Roman history in Berlin (under the guidance of Michael Rostovtzeff and Eugen Täubler), Bern and Saint Petersburg. He immigrated to Palestine in 1921 and served as a teacher (1923- 1948) and as head of the Jewish Teachers' Training College, Jerusalem. In 1936 he was appointed lecturer in modern Jewish

history at the Hebrew University and became a full professor in 1948. He was mainly inspired by Herzlian thought and works by Jewish historian Simon Dubnow (1860-1941). His social and intellectual abilities soon placed him within local intelligentsia where he got close to David Ben-Gurion. The latter endorsed Dinur's candidacy to the first Knesset on the Mapai list. After being elected, he served as Minister of Education and Culture in the third to sixth governments (1951-1955). Among his political achievements: the 1953 State Education Law, which neutralized factionist and competing education networks (the formalization of *Mamlakhtiyut*), the initiation of the Israel Prize in 1953 (he himself was awarded twice, in 1958 and in 1973) and the establishment and headship of Yad Vashem (1953-1959). He became professor emeritus in 1952 and died in 1973. Dinur's exceptional political career may be considered the first 'ideal-type' of a politically engaged academic who invested his intellectual capital in active and formal politics, while gaining full public acknowledgment through the institutionalization of different channels of prestige. Though his outstanding career is by no means representative, it delineates the highest trajectory of academics at that time.

2nd Generation Historians

As Israel was establishing its autonomous identity from diasporic Judaism, it slowly began addressing the years of "*Komemyiut*". The Hebrew University lost its absolute academic monopoly with the opening of Tel-Aviv University (1956)^{xxxii} but succeeded in "exporting" the academic division between general and Jewish history to the nascent university. Though the solidity of the "Hebrew University historiographical school" remained strong, historian Yisrael Kolatt (1927-2007) formalized a new academic interest for the founding fathers of Israel, especially connected to the ideological world of labor Zionism (e.g. Berl Katznelson and Ben-Gurion). He was later followed by historians Yosef Gorny (1933): a Hebrew University graduate, and Anita Shapira (1940): Tel-Aviv University graduate. The two were born in Warsaw Poland and lived the dramatic events of WWII. Moreover, both were officially trained in general History studies in Israeli academia, and combined their studies with Jewish studies. They were the first ones to establish "Israel Studies" within the historiographic, until then prevalent, field of ancient *Eretz Yisrael* studies^{xxxiii}. Their interest was later shared by "Sabra" historians Zeev Zahor (1941), Yoav Gelber (1943), Yaacov Shavit (1944), and partially Israel Bartal (1946). With the numeric increase in historians specializing in (mostly pre-Independence)

Israeli history, variations in themes of research became part of the discipline (e.g. military history, Jewish immigration, ideological movements etc.). Nonetheless, most of them dedicated their studies to Mandatory Palestine and labor Zionism. Key ideologues such as Brenner, Katznelson and David Ben-Gurion were gradually “historicized” into their biographies, a genre still appreciated and practiced in Israel. That is to say that the majority of them embraced the state-centric melting-pot ethos and joined the elaboration of Israel’s master narratives. This generation of historians could also be professionally distributed between different academic institutions, since Haifa University (planned to become a humanist studies center vis-à-vis the scientific Technion) was founded in 1963, and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 1969; both aiming to facilitate and improve the conditions in Israel’s periphery by providing higher education.

Therefore, the second generation of Israeli historians seems to be more easily categorized as an established academic field, since their ‘academic pioneering activities’ followed the steps of the first generation. However, this stratification does not necessarily mean automatism or intellectual one-sidedness. Certain difficulties in classification must be mentioned. Israeli society (as mentioned above) has undergone major changes and different issues began to require academic attention, namely the Jewish holocaust; chiefly studied by historian Yehuda Bauer (1926), and the history of oriental Jewry; embarked by historian Yehuda Nini (1930). Neither the first impression of a monolithic interest in left-wing Zionism seems to be a sure thing. The seemingly symbiotic relationship between the academic and political fields had already begun changing in the 1960s^{xxxiv}. Nonetheless, some general ideal-type proprieties can indeed be summarized, inasmuch as biographical profiles share or differ in commonalties: place of birth (consequently leading to differences in social capital deriving from the Aliya (immigration) experience: either voluntary or forced), educational background, political activism and university of affiliation for instance. Most historians heretofore mentioned are socially and politically identified with the liberal Israeli left, though they rarely participate in political activities *par excellence*. They are considered to represent the so-called “Ivory Tower” but still have much to do with public engagement and are often characterized as “public intellectuals”^{xxxv}. The profile of prof. Anita Shapira might exemplify the abovementioned.

Born in Warsaw in 1940, Anita Shapira immigrated to Palestine in 1947 and grew up in Tel Aviv in precarious economic conditions. She studied general and Jewish history at Tel Aviv University. After obtaining her master's degree (1968), her professor, Shlomo Na'aman (1912-1993), recommended her to pursue doctoral research abroad, but she was unable to do so, due to family and economic constraints. She thus began working (only for few years) as a high school teacher. She later returned to Tel-Aviv University and completed her PhD in 1974 under the supervision of prof. Daniel Carpi. Her dissertation entitled: "The Struggle for Hebrew Labor, 1929-1939" became a book in 1977. She was appointed full professor at Tel Aviv University in 1985, became a member of the Planning and Budgeting Commission of the Council for Higher Education in Israel (1985-1989), served as dean of the Faculty of Humanities (1990-1995) and was the first woman ever to be nominated to that position). She held the Ruben Merinfeld Chair for the Study of Zionism (1995-2009), and headed the Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism at the university (2000-2012). Outside the academic field, she chaired the board of Am Oved publishing house (1987-90, where her books are still being published) and directed the Israel Democracy Institute (2008-2013). Since 1988 she has been a board member of the Zalman Shazar Institute. She founded the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies and was the center's first director (1996-99). Between the years 2002-2008 she was president of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. She received the Israel Prize for History in 2008.

This biography serves as an example of some of the structural changes in Israeli society and scholarly activities. Firstly, it is about a female historian. The latter differentiates this generation of historians from pre-Israeli historians; we were all men (though Israeli academia, and society, still reveals a clear cleavage regarding gender). Secondly, it shows the densely institutionalized university system as well as that of institutes engaged in specific research sectors (e.g. the Shazar Institute which is linked to the Israeli History Society and named after Israel's third president; another historian, though with no true academic career; the Israel Democracy Institute, and the Rabin Center). It also exposes, to some extent, the subtle, rather seemingly indirect, connection between academia and politics. The Council for Higher Education in Israel is headed by the Israeli minister of education and its members are nominated by the president via recommendation of the Israeli prime minister. Such institutions provide public visibility to politicians and scholars alike and may be forums for accumulation of social\political capital (the selection itself is of course a direct result of someone's reputation). This remains the general

frame in which Israeli historians operate. Nonetheless, and despite structural robustness, the third generation of historians cracked old paradigms and revealed the fragilities of what had seemed to be a hermetically sealed field.

3rd Generation Historians

Neither does this generation can be easily categorized. While the first generation can enter under the label of “founders of Israeli academia”, and the second under that of the “builders of Israeli pre-Independence history”, the third generation has no precise classificatory position. It comprises those who contribute to the continuous edification of Israel’s sense of belonging and who validate Israeli national identity with no special regard to master narratives. Furthermore, it includes those who work on Israeli history critically and wish to preserve the existing but sensitize the *Zionist acquis* to broader narratives concerning the social and economic spheres, or those who import new paradigms (e.g. area studies, gender studies, cultural history etc.) to Israeli historiography. The latter confront their works with other academic disciplines (mainly sociology and law). With sociology some Israeli historians seem to have a complex relationship over the place of theory. This can be explained by the increase of historians’ interest for addressing social matters, as well as by the interest of sociologists to use archival materials and add different empiric evidence to sociological research^{xxxvi}. It thus demonstrates the broadening of interdisciplinary research, although the traditional separation between “general” history, Jewish history and middle-east and Africa history has yet to be overcome. Yet, Haifa University opened a specific department of Israeli Studies, while Ben-Gurion University presents the only case of incorporation of Humanities and Social Sciences into the same faculty. But these changes did not occur in a calm academic environment. Tensions concerning the historiographic “truths” of the Israeli-Arab conflict exploded when journalist and historian, Benny Morris (1948) published an article entitled “The new historiography: Israel confronts its past”, on the pages of the American progressist Jewish magazine *Tikkun* 3/6 (1988) which soon became a book “The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949” (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988). In the article Morris coined the label of Israeli “new historians”^{xxxvii} attributing to some critical scholars an objective historiographic endeavor in studying the origins of the Israeli-Arab conflict vis-à-vis the ideologically engaged and established historians. Many of the second generation historians took immediate issue with the formers’ postmodernist and post-Zionist stances^{xxxviii}.

Consequently, waves of (self-) critique began challenging the old academic establishment and the traditional statehood-based historiography. Since the initiation of the Israeli “new historians”^{xxxix} as a part of recognized (and maybe even partially accepted) historiography, the pertinacious debate over political agendas (whether overt or covert), infiltrating the delicate process of Israeli nation-building and the works of historians linked to certain history departments has never ceased. As argued by “general historian”, Zeev Sternhell (1935): “The view that Jewish history is a separate area of study has already had many negative results, but in twentieth-century history and especially the history of Zionism, its consequences have been truly appalling. Very often this approach has paralyzed any real critical sense and any effort at comparative analysis, has perpetuated myths flattering to Israel's collective identity, and has led many historians of Zionism to lock themselves up in an intellectual ghetto where there are no means of comparison or criteria of universal validity. Such exclusiveness can lead to ignorance. When the subject of the labor movement is touched on, emotional blindness is added to other weaknesses”^{xl}. Hence, not only did the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian issue require revision but also labor Zionism as well as the political usage of the Holocaust to justify Israel’s independence. Assertions about politicised historicism have recently been made by another Israeli historian who belongs neither to the category of Jewish\Israeli history specialists nor to the “new historians: prof. Shlomo Sand (born in 1946). His works entitled “*The Invention of the Jewish People*” (London, Verso, 2009), and “*The Invention of the Land of Israel*” (idem, 2012) addresses the mystification of Jewish and Zionist identities, stating that Jewish history provides no more a self-evident motivation for geopolitical claims. Controversies aside, such debates as well as the public space to contain them (e.g. the Israeli newspaper *Haartz* covered the new historians’ debate), have portrayed a fundamental change of attitude toward the Zionist enterprise, as a whole, and have started cracking former “innocent” and “romantic” master narratives surrounding the Jewish nation-state model.

The above mentioned can thus be interpreted in terms of resistance of the established historiographical field (which probably reflects a consistent part of Israeli society) to external paradigms (e.g. post-modernist and post-colonial approaches) as well as to “outsiders” from within; those who do not share the established unwritten rules of Israeli historiography. This tumultuous fragmentation in academia seems to represent the broader Israeli ‘survival unit’. Although the Israeli common national creed resists, it does not escape societal and political

polarization (i.e. the Left\Right dichotomy) and sectorialization (i.e. political ethnicization) deriving from unresolved social cleavages. As many other contemporary statehood-based survival units, Israel is in constant relations with “other outsider strata or survival units which, on their part, are pressing from below, from their position as oppressed outsiders, against the current establishment”^{xli}.

Final annotations

This paper presents the world of Israeli historians working on Jewish\Israeli history as central contributors to Israel’s national ethos. Their supposedly “apolitical” scholarly-based scientific production, and even more importantly, the intellectual and social capitals they accumulate are interpreted through a cross-field analysis attempting to exemplify the latter’s’ main trajectories between academia and politics, without any social determinism. This partial prosopographical analysis can leave aside neither their personal biographical background, nor their professional training and variations in thematic expertise. Nor such an enquiry can take for granted the general social and political fabric, either domestic or transnational, which they mutually live in and shape in terms of resistant habitus (which they formalize as academics, while keeping being a part of it). Both periodization and contextualization must be taken into account in order to provide a generalizable processual frame to their concurrent (and consequential) social and political dynamics overtime. Not only does it enable us to surpass the mere narration and organisation of facts, but it delineates different junctures in the establishment of Israel’s ‘survival unit’ without forgetting its relevance to the individually interiorized ‘habitus’. The aim is not to assert that all Israeli historians have been equally politicized, but rather to trace back the different ‘ideal-typical’ profiles that have been stratified and that are still present, to some extent, in the field of Israeli historiography.

First generation historians set the rules, not only of scholarly work but also of the structural academic model to follow; academia and politics seem to have been much intertwined. Their social role of being Zionist entrepreneurs and founders of the Israeli identity-based sociopolitical ‘habitus’ was later “inherited” as legacy by the second generation of Israeli historians who still reflects some of the former’s attachment to the uniqueness of Jewish, and consequently Israeli, history. Nonetheless, the direct shift between the academic field to that of active politics seems to be much less “practiced” by second generation historians. This does not mean that such

dynamics are any less contingent. The full edification of the academic system (e.g. the establishment of different universities and the inauguration of pre-Israel history as a legitimate subject for historiographic work) as well as the maturation of public systems of acknowledgement (i.e. prizes and extra-academic positions) have attributed, to some historians, the label of 'public intellectuals' with no need to enter politics in terms of career choice; though most of them are identified as supporters of left-wing Zionism. This strongly identifiable category cannot be so easily applied to third generation Israeli historians because of the fragmentation of Israeli historiography as a monolithic field. Changes regarding methodology and paradigms brought intra-academic tensions, later transported onto the public sphere. However, what may be called an intellectual revolution by Israel's 'new historians' did not demolish the structures set by the second generation historians. Yet it refracted the once one-sided approach and revealed multiple possible directions for Israeli historians to take. It seems there is no more 'ideal-type' to fully model Israeli historiography. Nowadays' Israeli historiography is characterized, on the one hand, by the echoes of post-and even post-post-Zionism, with practical "lessons" learnt mostly in Haifa and Ben-Gurion universities; and on the other, by the attempts to combine greater self-critique with the maintenance of Zionist-anchored academic work. Of course, that is not to say that the historiographic field can be so dichotomized, considering that each position offers a wide range of possibilities (including personal backgrounds and scientific approaches). This multitude reflects the wider universe of Israeli politics and society. Though no specific categorization is possible, the fact that different debates take place, thus implying some degree of mutual recognition (at least within academia), further strengthen the initial assertion on the importance of content-context analysis.

In conclusion, Israel's national history-national identity dialectics, in which historians are situated, call for major contextualization. Only by combining the macro-level of the political\societal occurrences with the more micro-level of a specific group (in this case the social agency of Israeli historians as identity-builders), can we reconstruct the role politics plays in academia (and probably vice versa). This trajectory-led analysis is a valuable tool and is highly interdisciplinary as it entails the wholeness on politics and society. Moreover, it enables us to trace the ever-changing conditions of intellectual freedom, politicization and public recognition overtime and help us to assess the complex mechanisms and forces of socialization

that continually instantiate "Israeliness" as an interiorized habitus on which the Israeli 'survival unit' depends on.

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ⁱ See P. Bourdieu (1998), N. Elias (1991).

ⁱⁱ The attempt is to overcome social homologation and banalization of different elements influencing changing sociopolitical contexts.

ⁱⁱⁱ The sociopolitical concept of "national identity" comprises an oceanic value-system which includes all factors considered to be traditionally "permanent" (e.g. land, language, ethnic origins etc.). However, despite identity may seem a once and for all property, it does vary in time and space according to both individual and social trajectories. While adopting a less binding concept in politics, one could replace the former concept with the lesser usual one of "state of mind": a corpus, a substructure of intangible, but nonetheless indispensable, mental pictures through which reality is perceived and constructed. See Charles E. Lindblom, 1982: *Another State of Mind*, The American Political Science Review, 76(1), 9–21; John E. Rielly, 1987: *America's State of Mind*, Foreign Policy, (66), 39–56; Roger Morgan, 2000: *A European 'Society of States'-but only States of Mind?*, International Affairs (royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), 76(3), 559–574.

^{iv} See Vivien A. Schmidt (2008) "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse", Annual Review of Political Science, Vol. 11: 303-326. The basic precondition for such an investigation is that the verity and value of a narrative are no greater than those of another, since all of them stem from the subjective vision of an interest group at a certain moment.

^v Alongside professional scholars one must not forget the meaningful role teachers and educators have played in disseminating Zionism (or in different words, their role in unifying the national habitus in the Eliasian sense). However, we can comfortably believe that the means and contents of formal education (i.e. the formulation of textbooks as well as the professional formation of teachers) begins with academic research and then spreads and crosses the entire hierarchy of knowledge, according to public policies of the institutional education system. This is unlike during the early phase of Zionist education when many personalities carried out their activities with a clear intellectual background, without necessarily pursuing academic careers (an emblematic case is of the founders and faculty members of the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium (founded in 1905\1909): Ben Zion Mosinzon, Haim Boger (Bograshov), Menahem Sheinkin, Yosef Haim Brenner, David Shimoni etc.).

^{vi} A classic text in this regard is Baruch Kimmerling (2001), *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Culture and Military in Israel*, Los Angeles and Berkeley, University of California Press.

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- vii History may be a powerful resource in building trust-based relations (A.M. Hoffman 2006: *Building Trust: Overcoming suspicion in international conflict*, Albany, State University of New York Press/ Suny Press) or a means by which politics identify, frame, justify, popularize and decide its agenda (Erik Neveu 2015: *Sociologie des problèmes publics*, Paris, Armand Colin).
- viii Two relatively new works reveal a shift towards a less traditional, more reflexive and socially-inspired national history of Israel: Jacqueline Rose (2005): *The Question of Zion*, Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press; Yossi Klein Halevi (2013): *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation*, HarperCollins. Both accentuate that the study of identity, Israeli in particular, cannot but stem from the analysis of the master narratives on which society is constructed.
- ix The conceptual ambiguity of the 'people' was raised by Margaret Canovan 2005: *The People*, Cambridge: Malden, Polity Press.
- x The cultural daily relevance of master narratives building the Israeli self-image is discussed by Rakefet Sela Shefy 2009: *Between solidarity and alienation: Strategies of copying with a negative collective identity in everyday stories of "Israeliness"*, *Israel Studies in Language and Society*, Vol. 2, No.2, 2009.
- xi Benedict Anderson, 2006: *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London; New York: Verso.
- xii Federico Chabod 2002, *L'idea di Nazione*, Bari, Editori Laterza, page 17.
- xiii Idem, page 75.
- xiv "[N]ations are understood as real entities, as communities, as substantial, enduring collectivities. That they exist is taken for granted, although how they exist- and how they came to exist - is much disputed" (R. Brubaker, 1996: *Nationalism Reframed; Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge [etc.], Cambridge University Press, p. 13). All this further emphasizes that national history is socially constructed and can thus be deconstructed through thorough prosopographical enquiry.
- xv Here we adopt Bourdieu's definition of the concept: "[...] a field of forces, whose necessity is imposed on agents, who are engaged in it, and as a field of struggles within which agents confront each other, with differentiated means and ends according to their position in the structure of the field of forces, thus contributing to conserving or transforming its structure." Pierre Bourdieu, 1998: *Practical Reason; On the Theory of Action*, Stanford (California, USA): Stanford University Press, page 32.
- xvi The analytical conceptualization and contextual adaptation of these three key-notions are inspired by the works of Norbert Elias (1991) and Pierre Bourdieu (1988). Moreover, we adopt 'the two-way relationship' between what are socially considered to be the objective structures (the abstraction of social fields in terms of autonomy and power) and the incorporated structures (those of the 'habitus') in order to trace the space of socially-relevant dispositions, together with the political power that has created them (Bourdieu, 1998). The goal is to combine the overlapping interpretations (both reflexive) by the two scholars of the concept 'habitus' as principles of distinct and distinctive practices by individuals (Bourdieu) and as the widely accepted behavioural norms which derive from the national political culture (Elias), while applying it to the construction of Israel's national identity.
- xvii See Olivier Dumoulin, 2003: *Le rôle social d l'historien-De la chaire au prétoire*, Paris, Éditions Albin Michel, p.17.
- xviii The 10th World Zionist Congress (Basel, 1911) put a definitive end to inner disputes regarding the ideological lines of Zionism.
- xix The national claim followed the 1917 Balfour Declaration.
- xx The term usually refers to Ben-Gurion's dogmatic approach to guarantee political unity between different Zionist factions (Left\Right or religious\secular) in name of the Israeli-and Jewish-people. Not only did that approach mean the *cōnūbium* between socialist-oriented universalism and the centrality of religion in Israeli public ritual but it also meant the transition from a movement-based public system (e.g. welfare, health and education) to a state-based one (including party-related research institutions to be incorporated into universities).
- xxi See Pierre Bourdieu, 1986: *L'illusion biographique*, in "Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, 62-63, June 1986, pp. 69-72.
- xxii See Giovanni Levi, 1989: *Les Usages de la Biographie*, in "Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations, 44th year, N.6, 1989, pp. 1325-1336.

- ^{xxiii} On the multiple definitions and the methodological value of the 'ideal-type', see Daniel Gaxie, 2013: *Le type idéal sous ses deux espèces*, in "Mélanges en l'honneur du professeur Jacques Chevallier-Penser la science administrative dans la post-modernité", L.G.D.J, Lextenso Editions.
- ^{xxiv} The only other case of such a division is the Japanese case.
- ^{xxv} Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg (1856-1927), better known by his Hebrew name and pen name, Ahad Ha'am (Hebrew, lit. "One of the people"), was a Hebrew essayist, born in the Imperial Russian province of Kiev, who immigrated to Palestine in 1922.
- ^{xxvi} See Ahad Ha'am, 1897: *The Jewish State and Jewish Problem*, in "Essential Texts of Zionism", Jewish Publication Society of America – via Jewish Virtual Library (translated by Leon Simon, 1912).
- ^{xxvii} However, some more cultural nucleus of thought kept going. The Brith Shalom association is an example of alternative political vision of mainstream Zionism (i.e. the support for a bi-national state). See Shalom Ratzabi, 2002: *Between Zionism and Judaism. The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom 1925-1933*, Leiden, Brill.
- ^{xxviii} Of course Jewish history was firstly written by Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891): "*Geschichte der Juden*" (11 volumes published in the 1853-1876), followed by the works of Simon Dubnow (1860-1941).
- ^{xxix} See Zeev Sternhell, 2010: *Les anti-Lumières: Une tradition du XVIIe siècle à la guerre froide*, Paris: Fayard and Paris: Gallimard, « Folio Histoire » (revised edition from 2006).
- ^{xxx} Norbert Elias, 2001: *The Society of Individuals*, edited by Michael Schroter and translated by Edmund Jephcott, New York: London, Continuum.
- ^{xxxi} While the story of prof. Klausner's candidacy to become Israel's first president (1949) failed vis-à-vis Chaim Weizmann's overwhelming political consensus. Different was the story of historian Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (1884-1963) who was elected Israel's second president (1952-1963).
- ^{xxxii} On the struggle to open an autonomous university in Tel-Aviv, see Uri Cohen, 2014: *Academia in Tel-Aviv: the growth of a university*, Jerusalem, Magnes Publishing (in Hebrew).
- ^{xxxiii} The statement is based on face-to-face\story-telling interviews with prof. Shapira (26/05/2016) and prof. Gorny (05/06/2016).
- ^{xxxiv} Zeev Tzahor, 2001: *The History of the State of Israel: Academe and Politics* in "Cathedra: For the History of Eretz Israel and Its Yishuv" (100 / 2001), pp. 377-394 (in Hebrew).
- ^{xxxv} On this category, see Norberto Bobbio, 1955: *Politica e Cultura*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore; Richard A. Posner, 2001: *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*, Cambridge [MA]: London [GB], Harvard University Press; and Andrea Lippi, 2012: *La Politica degli Intellettuali*, Catania, Bonanno Editore.
- ^{xxxvi} This point was raised several times in different interviews made with Israeli historians (14 interviewees in total) in spring 2016.
- ^{xxxvii} The label refers to the group of scholars who have re-elaborated Zionist/Israeli history -once new archival materials became accessible in the 1980s. In addition to Benny Morris, we must mention, not exhaustively, historians Ilan Pappé, Simha Flapan, Avi Shlaim as well as sociologist Baruch Kimmerling.
- ^{xxxviii} A poignant critique regarding their works and their catchy label is to be found in Anita Shapira. The 2008 Israel Prize recipient called them "self-righteous tribunal" (p. 27) dealing with far-fetched conjectures, whose "works are in the domain of classical diplomatic history, on the border between history and political science" (p. 29) thus not deserving a new specific label. See Anita Shapira (1995), "Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate over the "New Historians" in Israel" (translated from the Hebrew by Ora Wiskind-Elper), *History and Memory*, Vol. 7, No. 1, *Israeli Historiography Revisited* (Spring -Summer, 1995), pp. 9-40.
- ^{xxxix} Benny Morris later denounced the anti-Zionist approach of the group and identified himself as Zionist. He especially criticized Ilan Pappé's inaccurate and ideologised analysis of events in the latter's 2004 book "A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples Cambridge", UK, Cambridge University Press.
- ^{xl} See Zeev Sternhell, 1997: *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism and The Making of the Jewish State* (translated by David Maisel), Princeton [NJ], Princeton University Press, preface p. X.
- ^{xli} Norbert Elias, 2000: *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (translated by Edmund Jephcott, revised Edition), Malden [MA]: Oxford (UK), Wiley-Blackwell, p. 382.