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Source: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Spring, 1987, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Spring, 1987), pp. 68-86

Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the Institute for Palestine Studies

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2536790>

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# The Palestinians Seen through the Israeli Cultural Paradigm

Aziz Haidar and Elia Zureik\*

In 1974 the American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset commented on the paucity of research on the Arabs in Israel by saying:

Almost none of the academic research and policy decisions about the problems of education, or social mobility, ever deal with Arab citizens of the country. . . . Articles about the Israeli situation which break down attainment and statuses by ethnic background are generally headed 'The Israeli \_\_\_\_\_ System,' but have no column for over 400,000 Israeli Arabs who comprise 14 per cent of the population of the state.<sup>1</sup>

Just over a decade later, with the Palestinians in Israel proper numbering more than 600,000 and comprising 16 percent of the total population, the noted American political scientist Karl Deutsch reiterated this charge in his introduction to a volume of essays about Israeli society:

It [the volume] contains not a single chapter by a social scientist of Arab background. Even if all Arabs should refuse any dialogue, their published views should be studied. Among the many references in the volume there is no appreciable number of citations from Arab newspapers, books, or scholarly papers, nor from the speeches and writings of Arab political leaders within

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\*This article is based on a larger forthcoming study by Aziz Haidar, *The Palestinians in Israeli Social Science Writings* (Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation of Canada and the International Center for Research and Public Policy, Washington, D.C., 1987). Aziz Haidar teaches in the Department of Sociology at Birzeit University on the West Bank and Elia Zureik teaches Sociology at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Israel and the occupied territories, nor are even many names of such leaders to be found. So far as Israel's Arab citizens or subjects are concerned, Israeli sociological research still is at a stage where it resembles the work of an honest hardworking veterinarian whose patients do not talk.<sup>2</sup>

While both charges have more than a grain of truth, they do not depict the total picture of the status of Israeli research on the Palestinians. It is true, however, that compared to mainstream studies of the dominant Jewish majority, Israeli academic research on the Palestinians is miniscule; but it is by no means insignificant. In writing for an English-speaking audience and conscious of the image portrayed of their society, Israeli social scientists have carefully avoided detailed analysis or even acknowledgment of the socioeconomic and political conditions in which the Palestinian minority in Israel lives. This is not to say that indigenous research, contributed in part by the Palestinians themselves, is not available in Hebrew, Arabic, and even in English. Both Lipset and Deutsch were hampered by their unfamiliarity with Hebrew and Arabic in which some of this research has been written over the years. For example, shortly after Lipset made the statement quoted above, Zureik uncovered no less than seventy sociological, historical, and anthropological studies by Israeli and Arab writers that focused on the conditions of the Palestinians in Israel.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Khalil Nakhleh, writing two years earlier and focusing exclusively on Israeli writings, analyzed close to fifty such studies.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, an annotated bibliography on the same subject covering the years 1948 to 1976 lists 245 social science sources, the majority of which was published in English.<sup>5</sup>

The shortage of published material is only part of the problem. The other and more significant aspect of the problem is the theoretical frameworks adopted by Israeli researchers in approaching the Palestinians in particular and the Arabs in general. Invariably, such research reflects a culturalist perspective: it explains the economic and political backwardness of the Arab sector in Israel by referring to the value system, religion, and family structure of Arab society. This research generally neglects the politico-economic circumstances in which the Palestinians find themselves as a minority in a settler society such as Israel.

By way of illustration, an article by the Israeli sociologist Sammy Smootha, published originally in Hebrew and translated into English, is entitled "Three Approaches to the Sociology of Ethnic Relations in Israel," but contains only passing reference to the Palestinians in Israel, as if Jewish intraethnic relations, let alone the entire matrix of ethnic relations in Israel, could be understood without situating the Arab-Jewish experience in its proper context.<sup>6</sup>

The task of this paper is three-fold: (1) to provide a summary of the main theoretical approaches used in the study of the Palestinians in Israel; (2) to examine critically and update existing Israeli research dealing with Palestinian economic life in Israel; and (3) to point to new directions in Israeli sociology which, if sustained, may lead to new and fruitful developments within mainstream Israeli social science on the Palestinians. By confining the analysis to mainstream social science output, we will show that little has changed in the way Israeli scholarship has dealt with the Palestinians since the following comment made by Zureik close to a decade ago: "The central explanatory variable of Arab political, economic, and social development appears to be best explained in the psycho-cultural syndrome. Little weight, if any, is accorded to objective conditions and the role of foreign domination, Zionist and otherwise, of the area."<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, there is a remarkable degree of similarity between academic writings and official policy statements regarding the Palestinians. This work reveals that mainstream Israeli social science reflects and even reinforces government policies on the Palestinian minority. Critical assessment of such policies taking into account the political economy of the Palestinians and their confrontation with Zionism is absent from such academic research.

### *Theoretical Orientations*

A cursory examination of political legitimacy in Israel reveals a complex picture: while we expect to find the usual Arab-Jewish political cleavage, the problem which faces students of Israeli society is how to interpret Arab political behavior and assess its significance for the overall legitimacy of the Israeli political system.

On the one hand, the pluralists cite voting turnout, a key indicator of political participation, and the absence of violent opposition movements as indicating that the Arab citizens have reconciled themselves to the state and accorded the regime a sense of political legitimacy. In Shipler's words:

It is no exaggeration to say that at least 99 per cent of Israel's Arab citizens have never been involved in a terrorist act. Their reported rate of crime is also low—thirty criminal files opened per thousand Arabs annually compared with sixty-two per thousand nationwide. They participate extensively in elections, about half of them voting for Zionist parties. The vast majority have adopted a malleable political posture of loyalty to Israel and affinity for the larger Arab people, an emotional ambivalence that represents much less hardship for the Israeli government than for the Israeli Arabs themselves.<sup>8</sup>

What strengthens the presence of seemingly supportive attitudes to the political system, it is argued, is a cluster of other indicators which show that over a period of forty years or so, since the state was established, the Arabs have experienced improvements in their standard of living, income, education, health care, and the like. Moreover, it is asserted that these positive changes are attributable to official government policies. Although the data is available, rarely do Israeli academics carry out their analyses by comparing Arabs to Jews according to the same indicators.

Presentation of Arab-Jewish comparative data from the early 1980s reveals a more disquieting picture: 1) family income of Arab urban families is two-thirds that of Jewish urban families and is likely to be substantially lower if rural Arabs are included; 2) close to one-third of the Arabs live 3 people or more to a room, compared with 1.1 to a room in Jewish homes; and 3) in terms of ownership of telephones, cars, television sets, and other durable goods, the Arabs are substantially behind their Jewish counterparts. As far as representation in major Israeli economic, industrial, and legal institutions, Shipler stated:

The proportion of the Arabs in the population as a whole is about 1 in 6, but it is only 1 in 60 in senior government posts, 1 in 300 in university academic positions, and 1 in 16 on the executive committee of the Histadrut federation of labor unions. As of the early 1980s, there was not a single Arab among the 625 senior officials of the prime minister's office, the Bank of Israel, the state comptroller's office, or the Ministries of Finance, Housing, Health, Industry and Communications. There were 2 Arabs among the 109 senior officials in the Education Ministry, 1 in 104 of the Agriculture Ministry, 1 in 114 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and 1 in 133 of the national police.<sup>9</sup>

Added to the above is the fact that there has never been an Arab Supreme Court justice nor has any large economic institution in Israel—no bank, industrial enterprise, or agricultural undertaking—ever been headed by an Arab.<sup>10</sup>

A clear expression of the cultural-cum-pluralist thesis was provided by Smooha in his analysis of Palestinian orientations bearing upon, among other things, political legitimacy:

To conclude, the dilemma that Israeli Arabs are facing as a non-Western minority in a Western state is far from being resolved. Not having chosen either acculturation or cultural retention, the Arabs are rather ambivalent toward Westernization and toward Israeli Jews as a Westernizing model. It seems that ambivalence stems, *inter alia*, from countervailing Arab nationalism and insufficient benefits accorded to Westernized Arabs. Israel's dominant

Western culture, therefore, is apparently experienced by Arabs as cultural hegemony, which in turn constitutes a source of alienation and divisiveness.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, an attempt was made to explain the weak sense of political legitimacy toward the state by invoking cultural contradiction manifested in a clash between “Western,” i.e. Jewish, and “traditional,” i.e. Arab, cultures. In summary form, Smoocha’s findings show nearly two-thirds of the Arabs in Israel to be in favor of repealing the “Law of Return,” which is the cornerstone of Israel’s ideological *raison d’être*. According to Smoocha, “most Arabs experience Zionism as an exclusionary and discriminatory movement,” and from “the Arab viewpoint, this law, which is the legal embodiment of Israel’s Jewish identity, confers on Jews a favored status and denies Palestinian aspirations.”<sup>12</sup>

By far, the most significant finding to emerge from Smoocha’s study concerns Arab perception of their inferior status in Israeli society: “A large majority (70 percent) feel that Arabs cannot be equal citizens in Israel as a Jewish Zionist state. The validity of this point is strengthened by the 51 percent of Jews who share this judgment.”<sup>13</sup> What is interesting about this finding is that it holds true irrespective of major demographic and other attitudinal variables, so much so that one-half of the Palestinians who unreservedly accept Israel’s right to exist feel that they cannot be accorded equal citizenship status in the state.

Superimposed upon this picture, which shows the Palestinians in Israel to be alienated from the political system and to lack a sense of identification with its major institutions, is the presence of a hostile attitude among the Jewish majority toward them, as revealed in readiness on their part to deny civil and political rights to co-citizens of the state. According to Shipler, who cited data from the early 1980s: (1) close to two-thirds of the Israelis surveyed indicated that they could not trust Palestinians; (2) 70 percent of the Jewish sample indicated that they should be given preferential treatment when it comes to jobs, education, and welfare benefits; (3) 77 percent blamed the government for doing more than enough for the Arabs; and (4) 84 percent endorsed discrimination against Arabs seeking high government positions.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a study by Tzemah showed that 64 percent of the Jewish sample endorsed increased surveillance over the Palestinians, 42 percent supported “preventive arrests” of the Palestinians, and 77 percent rationalized the need for all this on the basis of national security.<sup>15</sup>

Shipler grasped the essence of institutionalized discrimination in Israel by noting that “much of the discrimination is built into law. More generous child welfare payments, subsidized government loans for housing and other benefits are available to those who had at least one family member in the army, thereby excluding all Arabs, who are exempt from the draft.”<sup>16</sup>

Another crucial element which poses problems for state legitimacy in Israel is the noticeable surge in Palestinianism among the so-called Israeli Arabs:

No doubt, since the Six Day War, a Palestinian factor has struck root [sic] in the Arab attitude. Palestinianization has had two major expressions. First, Palestinian national identity is spreading quickly. In the 1976 survey, 46 percent of all Arabs identified themselves as Palestinian. . . . This trend is certainly continuing. Second, the overwhelming majority of Arabs in Israel favors a Palestinian solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict. This implies recognition of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, acceptance of the PLO as the legitimate representative body of the Palestinians, complete Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the granting to Palestinian refugees of 1948 the right of repatriation.<sup>17</sup>

A central ingredient in the cultural-pluralist thesis is that modernization will bring about rapid integration of minorities in the main institutions of society. When applied to the situation of the Palestinians in Israel, the above data seem to cast serious doubt on the efficacy of this thesis and its ability to reconcile modernity with the lack of political integration in a society such as Israel's. The fault is not so much with the integration thesis as such but with the attempt to apply it to situations, like Israel for example, where development does not follow the unilinear path postulated for advanced industrial societies.

A more realistic way to interpret these data is to view the Arabs in Israel from the perspective of social control; that is, in the context of concrete social formations which shape the mode of interaction between the subordinate and superordinate groups in society. Indeed one can argue that the only way to understand a society like Israel's, which has deep social and ethnic cleavages embedded in its major institutions, is to appreciate the intricate methods of social control used by the state in dealing with its Palestinian minority. In addition to Zureik's and Jiryis' work, Ian Lustick and Stanley Greenberg have provided useful correctives to the pluralist-integrative approach.<sup>18</sup>

While Lustick fell back on the "consociationary or pluralist society" model as a way for ultimately resolving social conflict in Israel, his analysis of patterns of inequalities relies on a system of social control which consists of segmentation, dependence, and cooptation:

Segmentation refers to the isolation of the Arab minority from the Jewish population and the Arab minority's internal fragmentation. Dependence refers to the enforced reliance of Arabs on the Jewish majority for important economic and political resources. Cooptation refers to the use of side payments to Arab elites or potential elites for the purposes of surveillance and resource extraction.<sup>19</sup>

Each of the above control components is in turn examined on three analytical levels: (1) the structural (i.e., basic historical, cultural, ecological, and economic circumstances); 2) the institutional (i.e., exclusionary operation of Israel's major Zionist institutions); and 3) the programmatic (i.e., specific policies and laws designed and implemented to curtail Palestinian movement and ensure seizure of Arab land).

Greenberg transcended Lustick's antipathy towards class analysis by examining Israeli society in the context of class developments in other settler regimes such as Northern Ireland and South Africa. His comment on the inadequacy of the pluralist model is worth quoting here:

. . . where do political changes come from? How does a cultural minority lose control of the bureaucracy, the military, and the politicians? Why does a cultural minority whose position has been built on pluralistic societies provide almost no clues to understanding political change.<sup>20</sup>

To address the issue of change, Greenberg focused on the centrality of class transformation in the context of racial domination. For Greenberg, capitalist growth in settler regimes, which is treated as a form of modernization by pluralist writers, does not eliminate exploitation and racial domination; rather, it intensifies it through the introduction of various legal measures in the economic, military, and political spheres to ensure domination.

The discussion in the following section demonstrates the extent to which mainstream Israeli researchers invoke cultural factors to account for the underdeveloped nature of the Palestinian economic sector in Israel.

### *The Israeli Paradigm of Palestinian Economy*

Israeli research on the Israeli Arabs rarely fails to emphasize the economic developments from which the Arab sector has benefited. Landau described these developments in terms of leaps, and defined the prime cause of such a development as the effort exerted by the authorities to attain "material equality between the Arab and Jewish sectors."<sup>21</sup> As Landau saw it, the issue of economic development in the Arab sector is a matter of "employment opportunities," not one of inequitable distribution of economic resources—particularly government subsidies and allocations for development—or the siphoning of such resources from the Arab to the Jewish sector. Therefore, when he turned his attention to the violent Arab protests during the Land Day of 1976, he went to great lengths to show that land confiscation affected both Arabs and Jews. Moreover, he relied upon the declarations of none other than a director of the Israel Lands



Administration, who pointed out that compensation was offered to the affected individuals. However, since the land is of little economic value, he was unconcerned with either the size of the compensation or the difference between these offers and the real market value of the confiscated land.<sup>22</sup>

Landau handled the issue of employment opportunities, particularly as it applies to Arab university graduates, by pointing out that the chief cause of high levels of unemployment among this group is their unwillingness to alter their career paths or to seek new occupational qualifications based on market demands, changes which the Jews make.<sup>23</sup>

Far from being exceptional, these theses form the core of the writings of Israeli social scientists on the Arab sector. In researching the economic circumstances of the village of Taybah in the Triangle, Avitzor defined the distinguishing factor in the village's economy as the transformation of its work force from agricultural work performed inside the village to wage labor engaged in outside it. At least 50 percent of the labor force working outside the village is employed in agriculture.<sup>24</sup> What Avitzor did not mention is that these villagers work as paid laborers on land that used to be their own. Until 1948, Taybah used to be one of the wealthiest villages in Palestine—if not the wealthiest—owing to the large land holdings of its residents, the fertile nature of the soil, and the abundance of its water resources. In researching the economy of Taybah, Haidar discovered that two-thirds of the land once owned by village residents has been confiscated.<sup>25</sup> In another study which involved six Arab villages in the Shagour (Biqat Bit Hakerem), Amihoud Yisraeli counted eight reasons why the Arab labor force was transformed from agricultural to nonagricultural wage work.<sup>26</sup> One reason—the confiscation of Arab land—is not explored. In the village of Majd al-Krum, the largest Arab village in the Shagour, two-thirds of the land owned by the inhabitants was confiscated by the Israel Land Authority.<sup>27</sup>

Bar-Gal and Soffir did not deviate from this mode of explanation in discussing the economic conditions of the Arab villages in the Galilee. Decline in the value of agricultural work “is due to the nature [of agriculture] in the villages of the [Arab] minority: the small size of fertile land; parceling of the land; confusion in land ownership; and competition with developed Jewish agriculture.”<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the decline of Arab agriculture is attributed to the nature of the Arab, who does not identify with the land or agricultural work: “compared to Jewish farmers, Arab villagers tend very quickly to desert agriculture.”<sup>29</sup> This supplements the claim that the nature of land utilization in the Jewish sector is different from that in the Arab sector. According to Bar-Gal and Soffir,

A result of the low priority given to irrigation is the Arab sector, differences in agricultural practices, and the varied emphases which typify the growing patterns within each sector, [is that] land use in the Arab sector is different from that shown in the Jewish sector.<sup>30</sup>

Bar-Gal and Soffir ignored the issue of who is responsible for the distribution of water resources in Israel; they therefore attributed the low frequency of irrigation to the Arab “mentality.” Moreover, this mentality dictates which branch of agriculture to concentrate on, which is why Arabs specialize in growing vegetables while Jewish farmers shift to more profitable types of agriculture.<sup>31</sup> It is legitimate, they reasoned, to contemplate the factors which produce this specialization on the part of the Arab farmer: “What contributes to this change and specialization [in agriculture production] is water and training.”<sup>32</sup> The fact that water distribution, resources, and training are entrusted to the government was not taken into account by the authors. Ironically, however, when explaining positive developments that have taken place in Arab villages, they attributed this change to the policies of the government and to the relationship between the Arab and Jewish sectors.

While many ignore the issue of land confiscation, there are other Israeli researchers who declare that no land confiscation has taken place. In his research on four Arab villages in the Triangle, Ginat wrote:

The inhabitants of the four villages did not lose one single dunum of their land. Those who owned land west of the Emek and in whose place [Jewish] settlements were established were compensated. . . .<sup>33</sup>

In attempting to verify these claims, we searched for documents which would show the size of the land area owned by Arabs before the establishment of the state of Israel and which was subsequently confiscated. Data found on the four Arab villages under consideration are included in the table below.

These data illustrate that land holdings in the four Arab villages in fact shrank by 60 percent. Ginat did not explain where these losses went.

Change in the Size of Land Holdings in Ginat’s Research for 1945 and 1962 in Dunums

Village	1945*	1962**
Yamma	3,650	1,319
Beir Sakeh	3,990	1,270
Marjah	1,270	770
Ibtan	1,340	926
Total Area	10,250	4,280

\*Palestine Village Statistics, 1945

\*\*Israel Ministry of Agriculture, 1963

Another source stated: "With the passage of time, the size of land holdings has shrunk through 'strokes of pen' and through the continuing segmentation of the land which accrues from inheritance practices."<sup>34</sup>

In this way it appears that land shrinks through the passage of time and the inheritance system; there is no mention of confiscation. When Israeli researchers do discuss the intervention of the authorities in Arab economic development, they usually argue that the government intervenes in order to achieve equality between the Arab standard of living and that of the Jews.<sup>35</sup> For example, the government trained Arab farmers to improve the yield of their lands<sup>36</sup> and provided them with irrigation:

In essence Arab villages benefit from expanding irrigated areas in the Triangle where the pipeline of Mekorot goes through . . . The digging of wells had begun after the establishment of the state in order to utilize water accumulating in underground reservoirs.<sup>37</sup>

While the author did not mention their work, earlier Israeli researchers pointed out that the digging of wells in the Triangle began in the 1930s; by the end of the British Mandate, the village of Taybah had already utilized modern methods of obtaining water; finally, these wells are privately owned and do not belong to Mekorot.<sup>38</sup>

Bar-Gal and Soffir argued that the changes in the employment profile of the Arab labor force resulted from the abolition of the military government and from the improvement which occurred in the Israeli economy after 1967.<sup>39</sup> For these authors and others, history begins after the abolition of the military government: the impact of the restrictions, which lasted for seventeen years, is not covered in their work.<sup>40</sup>

The official explanation for the economic retardation of the Arab sector is located in personal, social, and cultural considerations: "These are personalistic factors which are related to the social structure of the Arab minority and its general orientations and approaches."<sup>41</sup> They observed that "the orientation of members of the Arab minority toward investment stands in the way of effecting deep changes."<sup>42</sup> A similar view was expressed by Gideon Kressel, this time regarding investment in cultural programs:

. . . The consumption of public services is minimal and public interests are conspicuously absent in comparison with increasing personal consumption [of goods]. In addition, the consumption of cultural services is very small in contrast to the huge and exaggerated investment in housing.<sup>43</sup>

Israeli researchers seem not to have investigated why Arabs invest in the construction of housing facilities instead of other projects. They have not

taken into account the correlation between investment in housing and the bad living conditions in which the Palestinians find themselves; and they do not seem to recognize the relationship between government housing policies and the high population density in the Arab sector. Housing in the Jewish sector is built mainly with government funding;<sup>44</sup> Arabs are able to secure only a small amount of public funding, in comparison. This is due to two factors: first, Arab villages do not fall within what the government calls “development areas”; second, Jewish citizens can capitalize upon their military service and qualify for financial assistance. Studies such as those done by Kressel, Bar-Gal, Soffir and others suggest that the Arab sector is not lacking financial means; rather, its reluctance to invest in its own economic development is due to “traditional [Arab] mores.”<sup>45</sup> The same logic is applied to explain the economic situation of the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>46</sup>

The claim is advanced that patterns of employment for Arab university graduates are determined by a preference for white-collar occupations instead of technical or agricultural jobs.<sup>47</sup> This claim ignores the fact that Arab graduates cannot enter engineering professions because “they have not served in the army.” Kressel in particular did not ask either why Arab instruction in the natural and applied sciences is weak or who is responsible for devising educational planning policies and implementing them. Similarly, he did not ask why there are no vocational and technical schools in the Arab sector.<sup>48</sup> Instead, Israeli authors such as Bar-Gal and Soffir attributed the lack of economic development in the Arab sector to “the suspicion harbored by the Arab population toward the government.” Furthermore, they claimed that the Arabs are basically opposed to modernization:

. . . the concepts of planning, supervision and direction are foreign to them. For this reason, plans that aim at providing a clear framework or those that are intended for development usually face too many difficulties, something which affects the entire village.<sup>49</sup>

In light of the accusation that the Arabs refuse to accept comprehensive development plans, it is worth pointing out that the local authority in one of the villages examined by Bar-Gal and Soffir did submit proposals to the regional planning commission in 1972 and failed to secure approval.<sup>50</sup> The same local authority submitted another master plan in 1982. To this date, no response has come from the government planning authorities.<sup>51</sup> Yet it is Arab culture that is held responsible for both the failure of previous “development plans” and for the failure of efforts by the authorities to

improve the status of the Arab village. The development plan's "accomplishments were few and far between, due to the continued fragmentation of land parcels, lack of local initiative and innovation, and absence of the right approach to absorbing new methods."<sup>52</sup>

Stendel noted that the mistakes committed during the first development plan were avoided during the second and that during the latter a total of 115 million Israeli pounds was spent on the Arab sector. He offered this illustration without mentioning the proportion of the total budget for development plans in Israel that this sum represents or whether this sum is sufficient to enable the Arab sector to implement the plans already on the books.

In fact, Geraisy and Abu-Kishq estimated that the actual implementation of both plans did not exceed 20 percent of the planned projects.<sup>53</sup> Other sources have corroborated this finding:

According to the five-year plan for the development of the Arab sector, a total of 65 Arab villages should have been linked to the national electric grid during 1963–67, and 25 additional villages during 1968–72. In reality only 14 villages were connected to the grid during each of the above two periods. In other words, the plan covered only 26 percent of the total. By July 1972, electricity reached 32 local communities in the Arab sector and 8 were in the planning phase.<sup>54</sup>

A similar analysis of Stendel's claims about the budget for implementing the first development plan yields comparable results. For example, Zarhi and Achiezra remarked that it was essential to invest a total of 130 million Israeli pounds every year to enable 60 percent of the Arabs to remain employed in their communities,<sup>55</sup> as was foreseen during the two plans.<sup>56</sup> But the sum that was raised over a ten-year period amounted to 2.9 million Israeli pounds, and most of it was raised from local and not government sources. This means that a total of 20 million Israeli pounds was invested each year, which is equivalent to less than 3 percent of the total development budget for 1963–64 and less than 1.3 percent of the year 1969–70.<sup>57</sup>

Israeli researchers tend to ignore the negative effects of governmental policies, not only on economic matters but on socioeconomic development in general. In particular, they fail to establish a link between approval for the establishment of local councils and economic development of the Arab sector. The provision of essential services for economic development in Arab villages is contingent upon the presence of local authorities. Yet, official census data show that by the end of the 1970s, there were a total of 46 Arab local councils (i.e., extending to less than 50 percent of the total Arab villages): only 17 local

councils were allowed to be set up in the 1950s, 21 more were set up during the 1960s, and an additional 8 were established in the 1970s.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the problems of a development budget for the Arab sector cannot be solved solely through the establishment of local councils.<sup>59</sup> This form of differentiation extends not only to economic development projects but also to budget allocations and inhibits abilities to address the basic educational, health, and cultural needs of the Arab sector. This means that the general services offered to the Arabs are inferior to those provided for the Jews.<sup>60</sup> Also, the painfully slow process by which the authorities approve zoning regulations in the Arab sector deeply affects the economic development of the village: without official approval it is risky to embark upon building and developing the Arab sector, because the homes may be demolished or the owner subjected to a stiff fine. Indeed, most industrial and economic establishments set up by the Arabs do not receive official blessing, which means a precarious future for most of them. By the end of the 1970s, a total of four master plans had been approved in the Arab region. This is quite apart from the fact that Arab investors, to the extent that they exist, are not allowed to invest in the industrial zones of Jewish settlements.<sup>61</sup>

Obstacles to the development of the Arab sector which are not “cultural” have not attracted the interest of Israeli researchers. According to Kressel, cultural impediments in the Arab sector are the reason for the failure of Arab cooperatives. They are also the cause of waste in the disposition of Islamic Waqf funds and the conspicuous consumption in the Arab sector.<sup>62</sup> The problem with Kressel’s argument—which tends to put the entire blame on Arab administrators—is that it ignores the fact that the government of Israel is ultimately responsible for regulating and overseeing the administration of the Waqf property.

It is worth noting that one piece of Waqf property in the city of Acre was eventually released from government jurisdiction and handed over to a committee after the termination of “an extended lease [48 years] to a corporation that was looking into the development of Acre.” However, the role of this corporation was to empty Acre of its Arab residents; as Layish admitted. “[The corporation] spent large sums of money to empty houses in the residential district, renovate the historic sites, and rent them . . . to attract tourists.”<sup>63</sup>

### *New Directions in Israeli Sociology?*

Studies reviewed up to this point present the prevailing orientations of social science research in Israel. Although Smooha’s 1980 article detailed

the nature of Israeli policies towards its Arab citizens, he remains committed to the mainstream approach developed in his earlier writings. His analysis of Israeli society based on the concept of cultural pluralism puts him in the same camp as other Israeli researchers: to them, the Middle East conflict arises from cultural contradictions rather than the political issues of national rights and self-determination.

In contrast to Smooha and others who conform to the mainstream approaches in Israeli social science, there is a minority of researchers who, despite their Zionist orientation, view the conflict as arising from two nationalisms rather than from a legitimate nationalism embodied in the Zionist movement colliding with an illegitimate one reflected in fragmented and disorganized Arab factions.<sup>64</sup> Baruch Kimmerling made a similar claim in the introduction to his 1974 Ph.D. thesis: the conflict is essentially between two nationalist movements. He also demonstrated how the policies of the British Mandatory government facilitated the transfer of land from native Arab inhabitants to Jewish settlers.<sup>65</sup> In a subsequent writing, he defined the conflict in Palestine as a

permanent conflict around national resources (such as territory and land) which are perceived as being scarce, as well as a confrontation over the future content and definition of the collectivity and its physical and social boundaries.<sup>66</sup>

Kimmerling revealed in his thesis that Israeli policies toward the Arab population stem from the premise that the conflict revolves around land. Yet, at the same time, Israeli policies (like the majority of the social science investigations) portray the Palestinians as marginal to the conflict.

A genuine alternative to the current literature on Israeli Arabs reviewed in this study is the periodical *Mahbarot Lamekhar Velebekoret [Essays in Research and Criticism]*, which is put out by a group of researchers in the social sciences and the humanities. As stated by the editors in the first issue (1978), the objectives of the journal are:

- (1) to analyze relations of exploitation, discrimination, oppression, isolation, and backwardness, which are considered to be central expressions of a stratified society, and to understand the causes of these phenomena;
- (2) to provide a platform for critical examination of the dominant positivist and "neutral" concepts which prevail in the social sciences. Such orientations, in our view, constitute an obstacle to a realistic social understanding, and to suggestion for problem-resolution.

Based on these premises, a number of the articles focused on relations between Oriental and Western Jews to reveal exploitation and oppression

of the former by the latter. Other articles focused on the processes by which women are exploited in society, while others examined the role played by the educational system in sustaining class gradations in society.

Concerning the topic examined in this review, the magazine published in its third issue a translation of Henry Rosenfeld's article on the class structure of the Arabs in Israel which was originally published in English in 1978. Rosenfeld clarified both the ideological premises of Zionism as manifested in its policy toward the Arabs, as well as the political and economic means to ensure their continued subordination in Israeli society. He also explained the progressive development that has taken place in Arab villages, despite the nature of official policy toward the Arab population. His main focus was the impact of economic transformations on the politicization of Arabs in their struggle against policies of discrimination. He concluded that "the regime has created the present policy to meet its needs and defends itself in the face of its consequences and the changes taking place."<sup>67</sup>

In the same issue Jonathan Oppenheimer published an article entitled "The Druze in Israel as Arabs and non-Arabs." In it he criticized the prevailing orientations of Israeli research on the Arabs, particularly the attempt to tear the Druze away from the rest of the Arab community and to consider them as a separate national entity. He showed that the position of the Druze is a direct result of the peculiar nature of the Israeli state. Oppenheimer asserted that the Arabs in Israel, including the Druze, "belong to the same society which is comprised of many religious elements, and is connected by means of a multiplicity of villages." In examining the effect of socioeconomic change on the Druze, he demonstrated that this change was not significantly different from that which affected the other Arab villages. According to socioeconomic and cultural criteria, the Druze are an integral part of the Arabs in Israel; yet from a political-legal perspective, they are treated by the state under a different set of bureaucratic measures. This is intended to sever them from the rest of the Arabs in Israel and to confuse their status and identity.<sup>68</sup>

In the fifth issue, the magazine published a translation of an article by Palestinian sociologist Salim Tamari concerning Israeli government policies which aim at economic annexation of Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>69</sup> The tenth issue (1984) was devoted to a study by Charles Kamen entitled "After the Disaster: The Arabs in Israel 1948–1950." Kamen's research was prompted by the academic neglect in Israel of the social transformation experienced by the Palestinians in the aftermath of the 1948 war and the



establishment of the state of Israel. He expressed his bewilderment at how this crucial period was neglected:

During one year a national community was destroyed, the majority of its members were dispersed, and those who remained within what became Israel were pushed to the margins of society, which forged ahead and developed after the establishment of the state [of Israel]. In spite of all this, researchers did not treat the change which had taken place in a systematic manner, although it had far-reaching consequences not only for those who ended up outside the boundaries of the state, but for those who remained within it.<sup>70</sup>

Kamen demonstrated that the Arabs in Israel were forced to build a new society from scratch. Their history has been, to a large extent, the history of constructing a new Arab society.

The social and national structure of the Palestinian Arabs which existed at the end of the Mandate period was totally destroyed. The human basis of the society was badly damaged as a result of the departure of some and the expulsion of the majority of the Arabs of the area allocated to Israel, and the wrong perpetrated by the Israeli government in not allowing any, except a small minority, to return.<sup>71</sup>

Eventually, a group of young writers began to coalesce around the magazine in an attempt to develop a critical alternative to the mainstream of social science investigations in Israel. Some members of the group conducted a series of studies on the situation of the Arabs in Israel, while others undertook to revise the interpretation of the country's political-economic history. Lev Louis Grinberg researched the truck drivers' strike of 1931 and showed the attempts of the Zionist movement through the Histadrut to stifle the strike, forestall any Arab-Jewish cooperation during the strike, and ultimately prevent any long-term cooperation between the two groups following its termination.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Girshon Shefer studied the socioeconomic changes arising from the Palestinian-Zionist conflict—particularly the role of the employment marketplace and the economy of land purchases—and how these factors have transformed Palestine into a settler society for the Jews. In assessing the role of the conflict in the context of economic relations, Shefer explored how these relations have determined the nature of Jewish settler society since the final days of the Ottoman empire. He concluded that “the unity of Jewish society is not the outcome of relations among Jews, but is the result of relations between Jews and Arabs.”<sup>73</sup> Shefer examined three Zionist institutions established in the Jewish sector in Mandatory Palestine and revealed their crucial role in dominating the economy and land of the country: (1) political parties,

which strove to exclude Arabs from the labor market; (2) in the areas of property protection and surveillance, Hashomer and the Haganah, which dominated the labor market and competed with Arabs for the same jobs; (3) the kibbutz, which acted as an exclusivist Jewish establishment in the areas of land acquisition and labor.

Finally, Michael Shalev examined the connection between the Arabs and the Histadrut since its establishment in the British Mandate period, as well as the role of this institution in the political conflict between Palestinians and Jewish settlers. The author showed how the silencing of those who demanded class struggle shortly after the establishment of the state of Israel was essential to the subsequent development of society. His research demonstrated that the Histadrut was used to co-opt Arabs, thereby avoiding the direct state intervention to achieve control over the Arab population. According to the author, this explains why the Histadrut maintained two separate structures (one for Arab and the other for Jewish workers) and why it refrained from establishing labor councils in the Arab sector.<sup>74</sup>

The objective of this article has been to review the writings of Israeli social scientists as they pertain to the economic life of the Palestinians in Israel. A large portion of mainstream research not only justifies Israeli actions, but also aids the state in furthering the policies of differentiation adopted toward the Arabs. Much of this research reflects the Zionist attitude of superiority toward the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular, and denies that the latter are a people committed to the struggle for national self-determination. Recently, however, a group of young researchers has started to examine critically the current trends in research. They have begun to suggest new theoretical perspectives from which to study Israeli society and the relations between Arabs and Jews which may bode for more balanced research in the future.



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