# An Introduction to Research on Israel's First Decade

The establishment of the State of Israel was widely expected to usher in a new epoch not only in the life of the Jewish community in Palestine, but in the long annals of the Jewish people. This was certainly the expectation of David Ben-Gurion, the pre-eminent leader of the Yishuv who read out the proclamation of Israel's independence on 14 May 1948. He graphically indicated in his diary the specific moment of revolutionary change. In one of the notebooks in which he recorded personal and national events, he prematurely closed with the terse announcement: "At four o'clock in the afternoon, we declared independence." Notations after 4:00 p.m. were made in a fresh diary which begins with an equally dramatic announcement: "At four o'clock in the afternoon the State was established. Our fate is in the hands of the defence forces." For Ben-Gurion, proclaiming independence at once closed a chapter in the history of the Jews and inaugurated a new one.

The expectation of revolutionary change was shared by many of his generation. Employing the language of religious tradition, the Declaration of Independence concluded with a call to Jews throughout the world "to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations—the Redemption of Israel." The excitement of the moment was articulated throughout the document. Ancient and contemporary promises as well as modern antisemitism and the constructive actions of pioneers justified and contributed to the creation of a state for the Jewish people. Viewing their undertaking as an historic event, Israel's founders approached the building of a new society with uncommon energy and great hope.

If it is rare to register with such precision the moment when historical change is inaugurated, it is even more difficult to determine when transformation has run its course. In this volume we propose the first decade as an appropriate framework for exploring a discrete historical period. Although some contributors to this volume maintain the importance of continuities beyond the first decade and others find the framework too constricting either in its beginning or end points, most find the first decade as the formative period to be a useful and valid framework for analyzing a broad range of social, cultural and political phenomena.

The interest in studying this period reflects the availability of new archival materials that have recently become accessible for public scrutiny. There

is also a new generation of historians and social scientists who have begun to reexamine old issues and to raise new questions. In addition, Israeli society is now sufficiently distant from its origins and so rent by conflicting interpretations of its past that previously held "truths" have become "myths" inviting reassessment. The consequence is that the study of these formative years has become a battleground in which "revisionists" who challenge traditional explanations of the origins of Israel are ranged in debate with the holders of established conceptions. Moreover, retrospection has suggested new issues which require systematic scholarly investigation. The first decade, then, is a fertile area inviting focused examination and such a task can be accomplished best by a wide-ranging examination involving the participation of scholars from many disciplines.

Among the debatable issues that have emerged at the center of the traditional as well as the new historiography is the assessment of Ben-Gurion's personal impact on the early development of the state. While no uniform conclusion is to be found among the scholars who have considered this question, it is clear that they concur in regarding Ben-Gurion as a towering figure who has not been surpassed by any of Israel's other leaders of the founding generation. In his conduct of the war of 1948 Ben-Gurion applied his extraordinary vision and will-power to establish the authority of the newly sovereign government and forge the army as a vital organ and symbol of nation-building. The new state—under Ben-Gurion's principle of *mamlachtiyut* or "statism"—also attempted to impose new norms in education, political institutions, the management of the economy, defining the national culture and other vital areas. These measures exerted an incalculable influence on Israel's development, carrying the nation into a realm of political and social experience unknown to the Yishuv. The rapid assimilation of mass immigration and the imposition of order and coherence on an otherwise anarchical upheaval was the immediate result of Ben-Gurion's drive. In his attempts to impose through the doctrine of "statism" a new pattern of politics that would mark a sharp divide with the Yishuv, it can be seen with hindsight that Ben-Gurion was not completely successful. This issue permeates the volume, for in the 1950s it was a vivid feature of the ideologicial and constitutional transition that followed independence. Only later did it become apparent that continuity with the Yishuv, in the ingrained habits of the political culture, perhaps outweighed the measure of radical discontinuity and change expected by the founders.

In this context of academic ferment, the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies hosted at its residential retreat at Yarnton Manor, an extended international seminar devoted to exploring issues central to Israel's development in the 1950s. The Rich Foundation based in Paris furnished the means, enabling us in the summers of 1991 and 1992 to hold three sessions, each with a dozen or more scholars from diverse disciplines, of different generations and of opposing ideological orientations who collaborated in examining the period

anew. We aimed to harness the inputs of original research as well as new interpretations and fresh evaluations of established views. The size and diversity of this volume suggests the breadth of the topic and its fascination to a large community of scholars. We do not pretend to offer the definitive statement on such an intensely active area of inquiry. Rather our intention is to provide a wideranging reconsideration of post-independence Israel that could serve as a benchmark for future study and research.

The participants of the intensive workshops, one of two months' duration and two of one month, came mainly from Israel and the United States, with attendance also by Oxford scholars and one from as far afield as China. Each member of the seminar was invited to present a paper and to respond to criticism. Spirited discussions followed on every topic and colleagues all felt that they learned something new. Papers were individually revised, and it is the collective product brought together by the editors that is now presented in this volume.

History may be a seamless web, but historiography requires units of manageable proportion. We can cut across the field by periodizing it or by imposing disciplinary fences and hedges. In this volume we do both.

We may regard Israel's first decade as a formative stage in Israel's development; as a revolutionary upheaval; or as a transition between one relatively stable state of society and another. The various disciplines of analysis represented in this volume offer different insights as to which of these descriptions may best characterize the period. The decade also allows for refinement and periodization within, according to the standpoint of analysis, whether history or political science, historical geography, economics, law, sociology, anthropology, or literary analysis.

We have organized the great variety of research on the period in ten Parts within a design that not only links relevant research but attempts to place it in a meaningful sequence. We begin, appropriately, given the seminal influence of governmental arrangements on the development of society, with "Politics in the New State," on the constitutional and political adjustments to independence. "Political Thought: Propensities and Alternatives" then explores political thought and its most influential expressions in the first few years of statehood while "Politics of the Holocaust" examines specific episodes that reflect the impact of the Holocaust on national and party politics. There then follow two parts analyzing the concept of transition by historians, social scientists and students of literature. "Social and Economic Transitions" examines transformations in significant political, economic and social institutions while "Literature and Popular Images" focuses on change in the literature and public opinion of a society attempting to shape and chart its identity.

The following five parts then focus closely on the human experiential realm and abstraction may be less in evidence. "Physical Planning and Settlement Policy" and "Immigrants and Immigration," investigate the movement of

people—Arab emigrants in flight and Jewish immigrants in masses—and the plans made for them by the administrators. These are followed by "The Army," in which the unique contribution of the military in Israeli society is explored. This is appropriately followed by a section on "The Arab Minority" which examines the poignantly unhappy situation of the Israeli Arabs for whom independence meant becoming a minority under military rule. Israel's personality has in large measure been affected by the relation between Jews and Arabs within Israel, but also by the relation between Israel and Jews outside the state, which is the subject of the concluding part, "Israel and the Diaspora."

Historians are inclined by training to view the events of a designated period as unique, while social scientists typically seek comparisons by abstracting from reality and generating models. The editors of this volume, an historian and a political scientist, believe that all social science is necessarily historical and that historiography, if it is to be of value, must go beyond mere chronicle to address problems and questions such as are commonly asked by social scientists. The boundary between the two types of scholarship has more to do with the economy of science and the management of material than with conceptual absolutes. Both historians and social scientists need to know *when* and *where*, and want to know *why* and *how*.

The work of the seminar is presented in the way it engaged the participants, without agreed conclusions. The aim was not to impose any uniformity of method or to drive toward a consensus or synthesis, but to expose the experience of Israel's first decade of independence to a broad spectrum of analysis, exploiting new research based on primary materials recently released for scrutiny, and using also the advantages of hindsight. The editors do not personally agree with all the views put forward. There are instances in which there is disagreement and incompatibility between some of the views and those of the editors included. We hope that the diversity of these views fairly represents the excitement of the debate on the frontiers of Israeli historiography and that such a multifaceted examination of Israel's first decade will help students to a sharper understanding of the dynamics of change and the components of continuity in Israeli society.

## PART I: POLITICS IN THE NEW STATE

Sovereignty, the myth of Jewish statehood, became a palpable fact on 15 May 1948. Born in war and in the midst of mass migration, Israel survived its birth pangs with remarkable stamina and vigor. The chaos of its delivery in violence and Arab flight subsided only to be replaced by the virtual anarchy of mass immigration made up of largely destitute Jewish refugees from Europe and the Middle East. These apocalyptic events in the throes of hectic improvisation, were somehow regulated within a coherent framework of order and control.

The establishment of firm government and political discourse in a democratic mold could happen only because of the depth and solidity of the social and political foundations of the state, forged during its long gestation. The accession to sovereignty and its aftermath was a revolutionary drama, and yet there was considerable continuity with the immediate past. The legacy of voluntaristic Jewish society in Palestine determined the contours of the new polity, giving it anchorage during its rapid evolution. The constitution of the revolutionary new state took form quickly despite the enormous upheavals experienced within the population. A stable civic order was established for a new nation within a decade.

Ben-Gurion's political strategy focused on creating unity in place of sectarianism and fragmentation, and he wished to achieve this by democratic means. Alan Dowty considers that Ben-Gurion's drive to generate a culture of civic-mindedness in the inchoate new society succeeded to the extent of establishing the authority of central government and introducing a current of majority rule, but failed to alter many habits of sectarian Jewish political behavior formed in the pre-state period. He takes the view that on balance the consociational forms of accommodation described in the well-known Lijphart model prevailed in the formative new Israeli political culture, albeit somewhat modified by parliamentary sovereignty and executive dominance.

Political scientists have tended to veer in their assessment of the Israeli system between the consociational model based on consensus and accommodation of sectional interests, supported by proportional representation, on the one hand, and majoritarian rule on the other. Dowty argues that the inherited system of proportional representation with its associated multiparty system and distribution of patronage on the basis of the party key, together with the multidimensional structure of issues, remained central to the system. Even the majoritarian, unifying tendencies were not always as effective as they appeared on the surface: cooptation of diverse interests into the distributive system and even into government coalitions reflected the strength of the power-sharing habit underlying the apparent centralizing influence of Mapai. In this light it can be seen that particularistic styles and practices were submerged but not subdued by Ben-Gurion's drive to install statist values.

Menachem Friedman, using newly discovered archival evidence, describes in detail the process by which one large sectarian interest, the orthodox, reached a stable modus vivendi with the secularist majority. Friedman's research suggests that the famous status quo agreement outlined in the exchange of letters in June 1947 between the political leaders and Agudah rabbis contained less substance than is generally assumed. He casts doubt on the importance of the crucial letter of 19 June 1947 from the Executive of the Jewish Agency to the Agudah leadership, and on the supposed circumstance of its origin. He demonstrates instead that the pattern of religious-secular relations which prevailed for more than a generation, was not the product of a brief

encounter between the socialists and the rabbis, but was hammered out in the vicissitudes of war. The battlefields of 1948 were the crucible of the concordat which lies at the heart of the Israeli polity and serves as its virtual constitution.

The accommodation with the religious, and indeed the whole range of institutional adaptations that followed statehood were all reached without benefit of a written constitution. In fact, it may be that avoidance of the political challenge of drafting a formal constitution made possible the successful extension of unity and stability throughout the whole population.

Philippa Strum does not take this view. She argues strenuously that "the road not taken," the failure to write a formal constitution, reflected a lack of interest in civil liberties on the part of Israel's founders. Strum maintains that the nonenactment of a formal constitution undermined civic virtue and retarded the nurture of a regard for liberty within the population. She explores by means of interviews with surviving participants the dynamics of the discussions during 1949–50, and confirms the conventional understanding that the decision not to adopt a formal constitution was primarily due to the complexity of secular-religious relations. However, Strum draws a different conclusion, namely, that the interest in creating a strong centralized state submerged the impulse to protect individual rights. And she goes further, to conclude that Israel's early failure to grapple with these issues led directly to their continued neglect to this day.

Tamar Hermann breaks new ground in demonstrating that in the 1950s there was a rich life of politics outside the mainstream institutions operated by the establishment. She suggests that far from being rare or insignificant, as is generally supposed, grassroots protest, extraparliamentary group action and underground terrorist activity were all thriving on the fringes of the system. Using a sophisticated methodology, Hermann measures the effectiveness of grassroots politics and finds that the degree of success correlated with the proximity of the participants to the socioeconomic center, the extent of political party involvement, the level of violence whether exerted by the authorities or the activists, the continuity and degree of organization, and the calibre of the issue at the heart of grassroots concern. As with new states generally, so in Israel, the novelty and fragility of independence rendered grassroots protest unpopular. Hermann argues that the state perceived grassroots action as a real challenge to its authority, and was able as a rule to delegitimize the particularist interests involved. Her conclusion suggests that the failure of grassroots action in the 1950s had an enduring impact on the operation of the political system, in effect, reinforcing the dominance of established modes.

## PART II: POLITICAL THOUGHT: PROPENSITIES AND ALTERNATIVES

In the first years of Israel's independence the leaders of the country, and especially Ben-Gurion and his colleagues, exerted an extraordinary influence over the political consciousness of the population. The prime minister in his own

person focused the unity, the will, the hopes of the new nation. Ben-Gurion led by means of constant harangue from the center, seeking to mobilize the energies of the people to the daunting tasks of construction and reconstruction. His political thought engaged the needs of the hour, which he saw in terms of historic opportunity and fateful choice.

Yosef Gorny shows that Ben-Gurion's political thought had followed a coherent pattern of response to circumstances since the early days of his leadership as founding secretary of the Histadrut in 1920. Gorny observes that Ben-Gurion had always harbored utopian propensities, and considers that an appreciation of this dimension of his personality may enhance the understanding of Ben-Gurion as a national leader. He goes on to suggest that the Zionist movement at large was host to a similar utopian tendency of thought.

Moshe Sharett's biographer, Gabriel Sheffer, offers an original assessment, demonstrating that Sharett elaborated a substantial alternative to Ben-Gurion's concepts of national destiny and strategy, rather than merely a pale variation of the leader's approach. Sheffer avers that Ben-Gurion and his close followers, for ideological and political reasons, conducted a successful campaign to humiliate and belittle Sharett, and to diminish Sharett's reputation for posterity. As a result of this deliberate campaign Sharett's memory has been greatly dimmed. Sheffer's monumental biography, whose gist is captured in this essay, retrieves for future generations an incisive appraisal of Sharett's major national role and the significance of his accomplishments.

Sheffer points out that from the mid-1940s until his death in 1965, Sharett was hardly less familiar to the Israeli public than Ben-Gurion himself, and that he was widely regarded as a politician and statesman second only to the "old man." The rift between the two men had its roots in the 1930s, and widened from decade to decade thereafter. The political elite wrapped a veil of secrecy around the extensive disagreements of the two, and only some of the deeper controversies became known.

This essay demonstrates that the disagreements between Ben-Gurion and Sharett intensified to the point where cooperation between the two and their respective camps was often impossible to sustain and that their differences reverberated throughout Mapai, extended to the fragile government coalitions, and rippled through the entire polity. Their deep antagonism centered on issues of defense and foreign policy, reflecting divergent conceptual approaches to politics. The breaking-point came in the spring of 1956, when Sharett was unceremoniously dumped from the government on account of his opposition to the Israeli buildup that preceded the Sinai-Suez war.

Sheffer places the debates between Ben-Gurion and Sharett in their specific historical settings and examines the political arrangements within which the leaders functioned and confronted each other. The essay details the main areas of Sharett's varied activities which were the foci of their dispute, analyzes Sharett's ideological orientations and their implications, describes the

ramifications of their struggle and outlines the contours of Sharett's political legacy.

In contradistinction to the dominant view, held by leading Israeli writers and historians such as Anita Shapira, Shabtai Teveth, Benny Morris, Itamar Rabinovich, and Zaki Shalom, that there was no significant gap between Sharett's and Ben-Gurion's foreign and defense policies, Sheffer argues that in the 1940s and early 1950s a clear, moderate, "dovish" alternative line had crystallized within Mapai, and that the moderates, Sharett foremost among them, frequently succeeded in withstanding the activists' line and constraining their freedom of action. Sheffer also points out that it was Sharett's associates in the centrist camp of Mapai who finally, in the early 1960s, forced Ben-Gurion's resignation from the premiership and his withdrawal from the party. Thus, although Sharett lacked charisma and was not regarded as a strong leader, his legacy introduced a durable moral, nonprovincial, ameliorative, alternative approach to some of Israel's perennial dilemmas in regional, world, and Jewish politics. The alternative line of conflict-management sponsored by Sharett has become an established stream of Israeli political thinking, both within and outside the Labor circle.

Eliezer Don-Yehiya offers yet another perspective on the centrality and uniqueness of Ben-Gurion's politics and political philosophy by examining the idea of *mamlachtiyut*—approximately equivalent to "statism"—which has become a key word in the Israeli political vocabulary. It refers to a campaign conducted by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in the 1950s to generate national rather than sectarian political consciousness. By placing the state at the center of the national myth Ben-Gurion hoped to counter the feudalistic habits of mind and political practices carried over from the voluntaristic society of the Yishuv. Don-Yehiya focuses on the main characteristics of Ben-Gurion's version of statism, demonstrates how it can be compared with belief-systems in other new states of the time, and seeks to explain its rise in the 1950s as well as its later decline.

Don-Yehiya concentrates on the symbolic dimension of Ben-Gurion's doctrine, as manifested in the perception of the state as a focus of loyalty and identification for its citizens, and as the ultimate source of values providing coherent national consciousness for a public comprised of disparate immigrants. He shows that there is much in common in the symbolic realm between Israeli statism and the "political religions" of new states in Asia and Africa. The perceived need for a politically directed "cultural revolution" aimed at nation-building played a major role in the rise of statism in Israel and of the political religions observed elsewhere.

In common with other forms of secular political religion, Don-Yehiya asserts, Israel's statism contained at its core a weakness due to the absence of any sacred source of authority such as a supernatural being or an ancient tradition. A major characteristic of Ben-Gurion's statism was its totalistic value

system supporting a democratic form of government. Don-Yehiya argues that the fragility and inconsistencies of this combination gave rise to tensions which, together with other factors, hastened the decline of statism as an influence in Israel. He also provides a subtle analysis of the unique relation of Ben-Gurion's statist philosophy to other belief-systems such as traditional Judaism and Zionism.

## PART III: POLITICS OF THE HOLOCAUST

In a society with so many Holocaust survivors, the scars of the Jewish tragedy in Europe were never far below the surface in Israeli consciousness. They erupted at times in social and political violence. Two essays explore both the phenomena of apparent quiescence and of aggravated and visible upheaval. These analyses reflect approaches of a new generation of Israeli historians to the impact of the Holocaust on Israeli society and the way different sectors attempted to come to grips with it.

The first study is by Yechiam Weitz who focuses on the Kastner trial within the context of Mapai. The trial took place in 1954–1955, under the glare of public scrutiny of a sensational libel suit fought in the courtroom and in the press, and also behind closed doors in the private and confidential meetings of the Mapai leadership. Israel Kastner, whose behavior in Hungary during the German occupation was the subject of the trial, was a leader of the "World Union" of Mapai in Hungary and a Mapai functionary in Israel. The accusations against Kastner, therefore, endangered the reputation of Mapai and its leaders concerning their behavior during and after the Holocaust.

This essay examines Mapai's ambivalent attitude towards both the man and the trial. One group within Mapai made every effort to blur the connections between the party and Kastner so that the trial would not injure Mapai, whose fortunes were at a low ebb due to other issues. Another group within the party, particularly those who were connected to its pioneering underground in Hungary, staunchly defended Kastner. The essay also shows that this ambivalence was not created during the trial but evidenced itself immediately after the Second World War. Thus, Mapai's attitude towards Kastner reveals deep-rooted self-doubts about its own behavior during the Holocaust.

Hanna Yablonka's essay examines the relationship between Herut, the party that would emerge as Mapai's opposition, to the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors. The essay is especially significant since it represents one of a growing number of fresh, scholarly explorations of a long-neglected topic—the development of this new party. Established almost simultaneously with the State of Israel, Herut was founded by the members of the Etzel (Irgun Zvai Leumi—the military arm of the Revisionist movement). As Etzel struggled with this fundamental transformation from a clandestine military organization to a political party, it expected to receive significant support from Holocaust survivors. Begin, the most powerful personality in Herut, cast his public rhet-

oric in an attempt to shape public discourse, to achieve political popularity and to influence the emerging national identity. Yablonka also examines Herut's performance in the parliamentary arena on such Holocaust-related issues as German Reparations, legislation dealing with Nazi war crimes, compensation for those injured during the Second World War, the establishment of a memorial day for the Holocaust as well the national research center and Holocaust memorial center, Yad Vashem.

Yablonka seeks to explain why Herut, despite its direct appeals and the often inflammatory and sensational rhetoric, failed to make more inroads within a sector of the Israeli population it assumed would become its natural constituency. Her explanation that Mapai was more astute in judging that people wished to get along with the business of leading normal lives rather than confronting their difficult and painful recent past is as suggestive as her concluding speculation that the harpings on the trauma of the Holocaust by Herut ultimately elicited a tide of public support some decades later, ironically, among Jews of Northern African and Asian origin.

## PART IV: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS

The following five essays deal with understanding and assessing the impact of statehood. Prior to the establishment of Israel, Jews had enjoyed a measure of autonomy under the Mandate. Within that structure, institutions and organizations related particularly to Labor Zionism played a central role in shaping the Yishuv and enjoyed considerable status and power in return for assuming major responsibilities in the struggle for political independence. These essays examine how this vital socialist sector was transformed after independence. The first essay, written by an economist, focuses on the fundamental policy choices as understood by the country's founders. In the next two essays, transformations in the kibbutz are examined first by an historian and then by a sociologist. They are followed by an economic historian who explores transformations in the central areas of Histradrut activity. Concluding this section is an overview and a theoretical essay on the changing relationships between socialism and nationalism before and after independence.

This part begins with a subtle profile by Nachum Gross, the doyen of Israeli economic historians, on the Israeli economy in the throes of change resulting from Israel's accession to sovereignty. Independence was a political fact, but the economy, in paying for a costly war and then absorbing a mass immigration of destitute refugees, was not independent, nor could it be.

Certain habits of mind and assumptions transmitted along with the socialist heritage of the Yishuv remained influential in government. Economic statism prevailed in parallel with political statism. The widespread idealism among the public made a regime of severe austerity acceptable for a time, but morale was inevitably eroded by the pressure of inflation.

It took considerable political argument and a general election to produce the outlines of a new economic policy, based on devaluation in 1952 of the Israeli lira. With hindsight change proved to be tactical rather than strategic since the government remained *dirigiste*. The mass immigration ensured that the old Zionist values, in which housing and agriculture were paramount, continued to dominate priorities. At the same time it was clear that not only massive capital investment in infrastructure, but also entrepreneurial skills and private initiative would be needed to develop industries to establish a foundation for achieving economic independence in the long run. In the nature of their calling, foreign entrepreneurs could not but doubt the merits of investing in an economy permeated by bureaucratic controls. A modus vivendi was devised that reconciled the conflicting capitalistic and socialistic ideologies, in the form of a development policy that provided incentives and protection to the private sector in return for its acceptance of a government-imposed calculus of priorities. In sum, during this first decade a slight shift to the disadvantage of the long-pampered Labor-owned sector may be discerned, but probably only to the benefit of the powerful large firms and at the expense of the smaller entrepreneurs.

Curiously, while the kibbutz is one of the most-studied topics in Israeli history and a key institution in the Labor sector, there is little beyond descriptive studies on the first years after independence. Henry Near, a leading contemporary historian of the kibbutz movement, suggests in his fresh, analytical study that the kibbutz entered into a period of profound "crisis" in several areas: the difficulty in recruiting new members; the ideological problem of accommodating improved living standards; and the need to address the diminished role of the kibbutz in settlement, defense, and political leadership. Near contends that the impossibility of large-scale selective recruitment, partially as a result of the Holocaust, was at the root of many of these problems, and he alleges that a lack of government support for the kibbutz exacerbated them. Some of these dilemmas were at least partially resolved by the increased productivity of the kibbutzim—a development that was aided by the incorporation of land previously farmed by Arabs and through the employment of hired labor; by the absorption of new members from Youth Aliyah; and by the expansion of the youth movements, particularly the Nahal. These changes, first in the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and then in the kibbutz movement as a whole, led to a change in political style. Nevertheless, the end result was a relative decline of the kibbutz movement in relation to other sectors of Israeli society. Coping with the new situation was difficult and Near sketches the role the Ihud played in adjusting to a new reality and in defining a new role for the kibbutz movement during the 1950s.

Eliezer Ben-Rafael, a sociologist, uses somewhat different language and different techniques in an analysis that largely complements Near's historical essay. Ben-Rafael is continually attracted by the unanticipated irony of the sit-

uation in which the kibbutz found itself. He explores the unforesen consequences of a new reality which the kibbutz itself helped create, perhaps more than any other sector of the pre-state society.

The kibbutz enjoyed the status and prestige of a pioneering elite prior to independence. It understood itself as being in the vanguard of a noble and historically necessary movement. Like Near, Ben-Rafael finds that this preferred status was eroded during the first decade. The kibbutz became but another pressure-group and as such was "compensated" by state allocation of immense resources despite its unwillingness or inability to contribute to one of the greatest challenges facing the new state—the absorption of immigrants. Not only did the kibbutz no longer play a leading role in meeting defined social challenges, its energies were absorbed in accommodating itself to the emerging new norms established in the society beyond. In sum, the kibbutz began to follow rather than lead. This dramatically changed the kibbutz economy as it developed the entrepreneurial characteristics prevalent in an increasingly capitalist society. The kibbutz now moved from being an agent of national service to being an accumulator of wealth. Economic success enabled it to sustain the degradation of its status, although it scarcely muted the sharp inner debates as it accommodated itself to its post-independence role as but another actor in bourgeois-oriented society. Ben-Rafael illuminates this historic transformation in identity through his skills as a perceptive social scientist.

Yitzhak Greenberg's analysis naturally follows from these essays. Trained as an economist and an historian, Greenberg explores transformations in the Histadrut sector of the pre-state labor economy. Here, too, there was an attempt to continue the role of national service and responsibility. After independence, the state defined those roles as immigrant absorption, population dispersal, and the development of the Israeli economy. The Histadrut's readiness to assume these functions was foreshadowed in the ideology that molded the Histadrut during its early years in the 1920s. Whereas at that period, the Histadrut and many of its agencies verged on economic disaster, state support contributed in the 1950s to the rapid expansion of Histadrut enterprises and to the accumulation of wealth.

Particularly impressive are the functioning of the Histadrut enterprises and projects in frontier areas where the Histadrut played a crucial role in population dispersal and immigrant absorption and where, Greenberg argues, private capital neither had the capacity nor the wish to become involved. Moreover, he claims Histadrut behavior was divorced from rational economic considerations due to its managers' adherence to long-held ideological commitments. Important, too, in shaping Histadrut policy were connections with the government and associated political elites.

Although many enterprises defined as nationally necessary were undertaken with an initial loss, the Histadrut as a whole prospered. Prosperity, in turn, encouraged the development of new structures. However, economic suc-

cess also engendered a new ethos which led workers to feel alienated from the firms in which they were employed. In this cycle of unexpected consequences, worker dissatisfaction brought about economic difficulties which in turn helped undermine the economic foundations of the corporations.

This section concludes with a suggestive original analysis by Noah Lucas, a political scientist who has researched the history of the labour movement and its important role in state-making and nation-making before and after independence. Lucas considers that the uniqueness of Israel's history and prehistory have been greatly emphasized in the literature, perhaps to the neglect of comparison with other societies with which it does share common features at a high level of generalization.

Lucas places Israeli nationalism and socialism in a perspective in which they can be seen to have counterparts elsewhere in history. He suggests that the Zionism of the settlers of the First, Second and Third Aliyah had much in common with and was indeed a variant of the nineteenth-century type of nationalism that was rampant in Eastern Europe. At the same time, their influential socialist ideologies, although derived from the socialisms of Europe, were applied in Palestine in an original manner which generated a host of creative new institutions, and which can be seen as perhaps the first instance of a type of twentieth-century socialism, not predicated on capitalism, but pursuing workers' power by building an alternative society to the capitalist.

Lucas suggests that, in a transitional period from 1937 to 1948, the nationalism of the Yishuv was transformed to resemble those of anticolonial native movements of twentieth-century Asia and Africa, and that it continued in this manner in its internal political development after the establishment of the state, when, in the aftermath of the destruction of European Jewry, the state forged a new nation, the Israelis, out of its diverse human material. During the same transition period the innovative socialist movement, subordinating itself to national imperatives, slipped into a defensive posture, and thereby came to resemble the labor movements within the capitalist societies of nineteenth-century Europe. After statehood, this process was reinforced, when the state upstaged the labor movement as the nation-making dynamo.

## PART V: LITERATURE AND POPULAR IMAGES

In this section we are concerned with what the citizens of Israel thought about their new state as evidenced by what its writers wrote, what was expressed in the popular press and what can be found in survey literature. The voices are those of writers who are creating the new national literary canon, journalists in the popular press as well as writers of letters to the editor, and the responses of individuals responding to questions of social scientists. In this latter category, the population interviewed also include Jews who live in the United States.

Ezra Spicehandler, an established student of Hebrew literature, begins this part by creating a sociological and intellectual portrait of the generation of

writers who, whether born or educated in Eastern Europe or Palestine, were commited to shared values largely associated with Labor Zionism, and who anticipated the state in almost utopian terms. Towards realizing this vision they invested their personal and intellectual energies in the struggle to create Israel. Spicehandler singles out for detailed analysis Moshe Shamir, S. Yizhar, Hanoch Bar Tov and Aharon Megged. In refining this portrait of *dor ba'aretz* (the generation in the land), he pays special attention to the growing disparity between their hopes and the realities of the new state.

Spicehandler describes the disillusionment with the heroic myths of the War of Independence, the meeting between European and Oriental Jewry, the declension of utopianism as expressed in the kibbutz and collective rural life, and the dissatisfactions with bourgeois urban life. The confrontation with the realities of a struggling, modern Jewish state in formation proved to be a difficult, painful and often disappointing adjustment for those who hoped for so much more.

Beyond literary analysis, Spicehandler also examines the emerging literary forms, such as the invention and use of the historical novel and the experimentation with language as spoken in Israel. He also identifies and analyzes the journals and the official and unofficial organs through which the generation of post-independence writers found their audience. Spicehandler brings to this volume through literary analysis what the social scientists and historians have done with their own methodologies in illuminating significant transformations in post-independence society.

Glenda Abramson, also a scholar of modern Hebrew literature, uses many of the same materials for addressing other issues. In a highly original essay, Abramson tries to locate the development of an Israeli national literature in a comparative framework that views the Jewish state as one of a number of new nations in the modern period whose struggle for national identity is reflected in the development of a national literature. Her idea has been to look at Israeli literature not as an entity separated or perhaps even abstracted from other literatures but as part of a singular and distinctive literary body, that is, the literature of young or emergent cultures.

Abramson explores the nature of the term "emergence" in relation to literatures generally and to Israeli literature specifically. She attempts to formulate an identity for Israeli literature of the decade of the 1950s in the context of similar problems in non-European literatures including post-independence United States, Canada, Australia, West Africa, and Latin America. By locating Israeli literature in its emergent stage within an already established international ideological framework, she makes possible a comparison between Israeli literature of that time and other literatures.

She concludes that Israeli literature of the 1950s shares important characteristics with that of other cultures. Perhaps most provocatively, she also suggests that Hebrew literature may not be related exclusively to Jewish and

Israeli historical processes as generally believed, but may be also related to certain patterns of *literary* formation that are common to many other cultures. In effect, Abramson employs in literary analysis the kind of strategy often used by social scientists in social analysis. That is, she attempts to apply and test models developed for apparently similar societies without preconceived cultural biases or value judgments. In so doing, she challenges us to reconsider what may be universal and generally shared about post-independence Israeli culture and what is unique and exceptional.

Yonah Hadari-Ramage, a student of history and an established journalist and literary critic, blends her skills in utilizing a novel methodology for analyzing another aspect of Israel's emerging national culture. Her essay is devoted to examining "public thought" which reflects popular ideas and values rather than those of the intellectuals and writers that are the subjects of conventional literary analysis.

The sources employed in exploring and defining public thought are popular songs, reportage, letters to the editor, diaries, semiphilosophical meditations, poems and memoirs written by readers or minor writers for the public press, and political advertisements paid for by groups or individuals. Without reference to the literary value of these materials, Hadari-Ramage tries to understand what it is that people outside the literary canon think. In this imaginative and innovative exercise she has chosen to explore public thought in relation to a major event of the post-independence decade—the Suez Campaign of 1956.

Hadari-Ramage discovers that the fusion of war and religiosity, which is usually attributed to the Six Day War in 1967 and to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, existed as early as the Sinai Campaign. In this analysis, the fusion of war and religiosity is not the exclusive province of right or left nor of the religious. It reflects some deep chord in Israeli society and politics in general. Of particular interest is the fusion of these values in the labor movement which is usually considered secular, rational, and socialist. Indeed, Ben-Gurion himself is found to give unexpected expression to messianic concepts as he systematically defines the characteristics of Israel's new national heroes, the victorious soldiers of the Sinai Campaign, who replace for him the historic pioneer (*halutz*) as the preferred ideal type deserving national adulation and emulation. Moreover, the essay demonstrates that this religiously based rhetoric resonates throughout the diverse materials that constitute "public thought." Hadari-Ramage suggests that the kind of religiosity that characterizes public thought may be deeply embedded in Israeli culture and shared by most branches of Zionist/Jewish thought in Israel.

Russell Stone, a sociologist and political scientist, and Ilan Troen, a social historian, conclude this part with an essay based on newly found materials that are more conventionally employed in defining what people think. They examine survey research which, at the time it was generated, was an innovation.

Indeed, Israel, at its founding, was one of the first societies in which the government systematically used survey techniques to determine popular attitudes. Moreover, the new Jewish state supported the use of survey research among American Jews and used the results of these studies to determine how it should organize its relationship with this important segment of Diaspora Jewry.

Stone and Troen focus on the work of two internationally recognized American social scientists who utilized their skills in the service of Israel. They describe the work of Louis Guttman, a sociologist and statistician, who settled in Palestine and founded during the War of Independence the Institute for Public Opinion Research which evolved into the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research. Then they examine the work of Robert Nathan, a former New Deal economist, who was active as a consultant to the Israeli government and the American Jewish leadership.

Guttman conducted survey research on behalf of the Israeli army, various government ministries and the Histadrut. Through his surveys we can discover the attitudes on a host of issues relating, among others, to the problems of forging a national army, popular attitudes towards the new government and central issues like immigrant absorption. In reviewing these issues, we have an important index of what officials believed to be important as well as indications of popular attitudes towards those issues. We thereby learn much concerning the hopes, apprehensions and behavior of Israel's new citizens.

Nathan's research focuses on American Jewish leaders and charts their attitudes towards a problem which was of growing importance to a government seeking funds to develop the country. Nathan used the same techniques outside Israel to investigate the philanthropic and investment attitudes of American Jews towards Israel. His work directly contributed to Israel's decision to establish Israel Bonds and how to shape their structure. The work of Guttman and Nathan provide a unique and hitherto unexplored window through which to view the attitudes of Israeli and American Jewry during the period of the state's founding.

### PART VI: PHYSICAL PLANNING AND SETTLEMENT POLICY

Beginning in the decade before the First World War, Zionist planning had been conceived and implemented in accordance with principles that addressed the problems of settling Jews in an environment which they did not control and which became increasingly hostile. Throughout the pre-state period, Zionist planners lacked title to sufficient land as well as the legal authority, the financial resources and the power a state could provide. With statehood, for the first time Jewish settlement could proceed in an orderly and controlled fashion. The four essays in this part deal with different aspects in what was a revolutionary situation in the Zionist settlement experience.

The first essay is within the rich Israeli tradition of historical geography. Arnon Golan, a recent graduate of the Hebrew University, has done extremely

detailed work on the transfer of lands from Arab to Jewish control during the War of Independence. In this extended essay, we can follow step by step the decision-making process within the leadership of the Yishuv by which abandoned agricultural lands were transferred to Jewish farmers in the months prior to independence. Golan then analyses the often changing considerations after independence of Israel's leadership. He describes how the formulation of a land control and settlement policy responded to changes in a fluid territorial situation that was shaped by the fortunes of war, by pressures from competing sectors within the new state and from without, in particular the United Nations and Western powers. His essay terminates with the fixing of policy in December 1948, when the UN passed Resolution 194 calling for the return of Arab refugees to their homes. Only then did the new government choose a policy that was explicitly designed to prevent the massive return of refugees by permanently transferring abandoned Arab lands to Jews.

Recently, primarily through the work of Benny Morris, the creation of the refugee problem has been the subject of serious scholarly and public debate. Golan arrives at his own interpretation through a close reading of documents and a detailed reconstruction of population movements and government decisions. The significance of the topic and the nature of the documentation justify presenting an essay larger than the standard in this volume.

Ilan Troen, a social historian interested in comparative issues, also discusses the new opportunities in Zionist planning after independence. He shifts the focus from rural settlement to the establishment of development towns. His discussion is framed by an attempt to recreate the perspective of the first generation of Israel's planners. In so doing, he necessarily establishes the international context in which much Zionist planning took place. He shows how Zionist planners, who were often transplanted Europeans, generally attempted to adapt European concepts to the particular problems they confronted in settling a new and underdeveloped country in a hostile environment.

Troen traces the origins of the idea of the development town, particularly in British thought, and explains how it came to be incorporated as a central innovation in Israel's first national plan—the Sharon Plan of 1950. He then analyzes the difficulties in translating into practice the concept of the new town and the concomitant policy of population dispersal. He points out that the groundwork for new town policy was prepared in the half-decade prior to the state when the leadership of the Jewish agency came to recognize that in order to accommodate a multitude of immigrants they would have to begin invest in developing a modern, urban, and industrial society. In attempting to recapitulate the experience of new town development which was an integral part of post–Second World War reconstruction throughout Europe, Israeli planners were selectively attracted to those elements they believed could answer local needs. The difficulties and failures of their plans derived in large part from a lack of appreciation of the relatively underdeveloped nature of the new state, particularly in areas

in which development towns were situated. The conditions in the new state were unlike those of Europe, which required the dispersal of population and industries. This episode suggests the shortcomings of imitation and the need to creatively adapt transplanted concepts to fit local conditions.

Ruth Kark, an experienced historical geographer, provides a wealth of new information and insight on another crucial topic in post-independence planning. She describes and discusses the development of concepts and the establishment of governmental frameworks in national physical planning, housing and national ownership of land and land use in the years 1948–1952. During this period, Israel formulated basic concepts, comprehensive plans, and attempted to shape short- and long-term statist policies for the dispersal and housing of new immigrants.

Kark shows how the implementation of these policies was beset by institutional and political problems. She outlines with great clarity and detail the constant reorganization of responsibility in a multitude of governmental and extragovernmental bodies that often dealt with the same or similar issues and she describes how party considerations and party nominations contributed to rampant confusion and inefficiency. In brief, through the window of organizing planning and housing policy we are witness to the often chaotic manner in which the Israeli government was established. The events and processes she describes have had lasting importance for they helped shape not only the state in its early years but have left a legacy which continues to influence national development through the present.

David Newman, a political scientist and geographer, concludes this part with an essay on the origin and development of regional councils which became the instruments through which much of Israel was organized. In so doing, he analyzes for the local level the mix of politics and organizational concepts that Kark has discussed at the national level.

Rural settlement in Israel is divided into fifty-four regional councils for administrative purposes. This level of local government was formulated during the 1950s, according to the existing and planned distribution of rural settlements—mostly kibbutzim and moshavim. While criteria of efficiency and functionalism played a role in the demarcation of the regional councils, these were only of secondary importance to a variety of deological and political factors which were brought forward by the settlement planning agencies. Regional councils were perceived as constituting the municipal arm of the rural cooperatives, rather than encompassing all rural communities. As such, many of the rural villages based on private enterprise and Arab villages were excluded from the regional councils. Moreover, the ideological tensions which existed between kibbutzim and moshavim on the one hand, and between different settlement movement factions on the other, resulted in attempts to create homogeneous regional councils, wherein all the settlements were of a similar type and were affiliated to a single settlement movement. This resulted in a

great deal of gerrymandered boundaries as well as enabling the creation of too many small councils. This impress of ideological factors brought about inefficient administration in many cases, much of which has left its mark on the municipal functioning of rural regions today. Regional councils are now required to reassess their intrasettlement composition and bring them more into line with the functional needs of a nonideological period of planning. Throughout, Newman stresses the clash between ideological and pragmatic factors in the implementation of settlement policy.

It may be that the general processes of suburbanization and industrialization which have taken over the rural settlements during the past two decades will lead to a "post-Zionist" phase of settlement planning, within which the ideological pressures of the settlement movements and agencies will play an ever decreasing role.

### PART VII: IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION

Research on immigration in all its manifold aspects may be the topic which has generated the largest scientific literature in Israel. This would be entirely understandable since it has been Zionism's prime goal and central experience for over a century. *Aliyah* or waves of immigration is one of the accepted keys to the periodization of the history of Zionism from the beginning of the First Aliyah at the end of the nineteenth century, through the Mass immigration that doubled Israel's population within its first four years. It is therefore inevitable that considering the centrality of immigration to Zionist and Israeli history, the subject constantly reappears throughout the essays in all the sections of this volume. It is for that reason, despite the overwhelming significance of immigration, that we have chosen to devote but three essays to this topic here.

Our intention is to explore in this chapter three issues of significance. We begin with a reassessment by one of the most important and established scholars of the immigration experience during the first decade. Alex Weingrod, an anthropologist, who wrote his early work on the Lakhish experience, was one a significant group of young social scientists who were employed or "mobilized" by the state, its institutions or by the Jewish Agency to assist in analyzing the immigrant experience. Their task was to contribute to realizing the integration, absorption, and settlement of the immigrants. This research was the spawning ground of many Israeli social scientists and their work.

In the section's opening section, Weingrod reexamines a constant and central theme in the literature of immigration research—the question of why some groups succeeded or failed more than others. Here, Weingrod contrasts the different paths taken by immigrants from Morocco and Iraq as they entered Israeli society during the mass immigration of the 1950s. Members of both groups were major components in the post-1948 waves of immigration, and they arrived in Israel at more or less the same time. However, their subsequent paths have been strikingly different—Moroccan Jews became organized as an

ethnic group and emphasized political mobilization, while Jews from Iraq have not become organized into a formal collectivity but made use of commercial as well as other skills. In seeking to interpret and explain these different paths, Weingrod places emphasis on contrasting "conditions of existence" that faced members of these groups during the 1950s. In particular, many Iraqi Jews were able to concentrate in the center of the country where economic and other resources were considerable, whereas Moroccan Jews were mainly concentrated in more peripheral regions where they became a dominant although outsider group. In addition to these structural or ecological features, the different cultural orientations, attitudes and skills brought by the immigrants also opened avenues of opportunity and subsequent mobility.

Weingrod's analysis makes several distinctive contributions to studies of Israeli society, as well as to more general theoretical issues. First, it joins some other research now underway in reexamining what actually took place in the interplay between immigrants and veterans during the 1950s. This is a significant issue, since the patterns that developed during this formative stage have had continuing effects upon the shape of Israeli society. Second, in contrast with the usual practice of comparing "Ashkenazi" with "Middle Eastern" immigrants, this research focuses upon the experience of two large-sized Middle Eastern immigrant groups. This is also significant, since it raises a series of issues that have not until now been systematically studied (for example, the cultural styles adopted by particular groups of immigrants). Third, it also poses some testable hypothesis regarding the relative importance of "structural" and "cultural" factors in explaining group and individual behavior.

Eli Tzur, an historian whose work focuses on the politics of the Zionist left and particularly that of Mapam (United Workers Party), also writes in a comparative mode. His interest is in exploring the different attitudes of Mapam toward European and Oriental immigrants. He observes that the process of absorption involved new, state-oriented institutions alongside the established instruments and methods of the pre-state period. Mapam, the second largest political party in Israel during the decade following independence, was founded in 1948 out of elements that were active in the pre-state period. The party also attempted to continue a pattern of immigration of absorption that characterized the earlier period. Tzur describes and analyzes the problems of Mapam in maintaining the former pattern after 1948.

Mapam's social base was in two major kibbutz movements. The party traditionally had a large following, in the form of affiliated parties and youth movements in Eastern Europe that were closely linked to its kibbutz movements. Mapam's leadership believed that the immigration of this group to Israel would dramatically change the structure of the Israeli political arena. In order to promote this goal Mapam employed traditional methods of absorption and institutions that had been developed in the past to answer the kibbutz movements' requirements. It soon became obvious that Mapam's style of