

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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**Mandate Days: Britons,
Jews and Arabs**

Guest Editor

Motti Golani



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Front cover:
Unknown designer, The Levant Fair catalogue,
1934, courtesy of David Tartakover

Back cover:
One Palestine Pound from the Mandate period

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English Summaries

Arie M. Dubnov

Jewish Nationalism in the wake of World War I:
A ‘State-in-the-Making’ or The Empire Strikes Back?

A recurring feature of postcolonial historical narratives is their tendency to read the relation between empire and nation as based on a zero-sum competition and to interpret the chronicles of pre-statehood nationalism as leading, inevitably, to the creation of an independent nation-state. Israeli historiography is not different in this respect: traditional narratives of pre-1948 Zionism tend to read it as a national movement invested in the nation-state building project. Reconstructing the interwar period’s political language and reintroducing the somewhat forgotten historical contingency to our narratives, this article offers an alternative reading of the relationship between empire and nation, placing post-WWI Zionism in dialogue with British liberal imperialism and imperial federalism. Jewish national self-rule, it argues, was regarded as compatible with a new vision of a federalist “Third Empire” or British Commonwealth of Nations, anchored in an evolutionary historical imagination, fleshed out in judicial terms and embodied in new colonial institutions. Key Zionist leaders, including Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky and Chaim Arlosoroff, developed their various plans for a future Jewish polity in light of this new vision and in dialogue with British imperial thinkers. Josiah C. Wedgwood’s proposal to terminate the mandate and establish a Jewish Dominion in Palestine in its place is also read in this context.

Eitan Bar-Yosef

Promises, Promises: Representations of Mandatory Palestine
in British Culture after 1948

Following the end of the British Mandate in 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel, Britons have been reluctant to acknowledge the direct role played by their country in the making of the Arab-Israeli conflict. When attempts have been made, in recent years, to address the bloody legacy of Britain’s imperial involvement in Palestine, artistic depictions of the Mandate often serve to critique what many on the British Left see as Israel’s own colonial practices. Building on recent scholarship that examines the impact of decolonization on the British metropole, and moving chronologically from the late 1940s to the present-day, this article considers how British culture has remembered – or, to be more precise, forgotten – Britain’s Mandate in Palestine. Focusing on Peter Kosminsky’s television mini-series, *The Promise* (Channel 4, 2011), and reading it alongside

other theatrical and literary representations, the article suggests how, rather than being read in a broad imperial and postcolonial context, the legacy of the Mandate is often relegated and approached as a specific Anglo-Jewish affair.

Daniel Gutwein

The Politics of the Balfour Declaration:

Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist Movement and British Imperialism

What motivated the British government to publish a pro-Zionist declaration at the end of 1917, and what was Chaim Weizmann's contribution to its publication? The present article proposes an alternative interpretation to the prevailing readings of both questions. I argue that the publication of the Declaration was put on the agenda as part of the struggle taking place in the course of First World War between two rival factions in the British government on the question of the future of the Ottoman Empire: the 'radical' faction that strove to partition the Ottoman Empire and extend the British imperial hold on the Middle East, and the 'reformist' faction that opposed this. The political significance of support for turning Palestine into 'a national home for the Jewish people' was the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the expansion of British imperialism, and as such the Balfour Declaration was a means for the radicals to defeat the reformists in this inter-faction struggle. I argue further that from an early stage in the war, Weizmann identified Zionist interests with radical policy, joined the radical faction's leaders, and acted toward promoting the faction's agenda. This combination of simultaneously being a Zionist leader and a British statesman explains the prominent role he played in the political maneuvers leading up to the publication of the Balfour Declaration.

Sary Mark

The Vision of the Nissen: The Prefabricated Hut Serving the British Army

This essay discusses the transformation of the Nissen hut and its presence on Israeli military bases as a symbol of a century-long historic era. The hut, invented by British engineer Maj. Peter Norman Nissen at the height of World War I, was a prefabricated structure packaged in pieces that could be erected within just a few hours on any flat surface. During World War II, it became the most common structure erected in Mandatory Palestine serving the British army and the RAF. Because of a scarcity of resources, a local model of the Nissen hut was developed: a prefabricated brick structure topped by the familiar curved metal top, like that of the original Nissen. Some of these structures are still standing, concrete evidence of the war effort, the hardships and the sense of urgency characteristic of the land of Israel at that time.

Sigal Davidi

The 'New Architecture' of the 1934 Levant Fair: Constructing Identity for the Jewish Yishuv

The sixth Levant Fair, which opened in Tel-Aviv on the 26 of April 1934, was an international exhibition the official purpose of which was to generate commercial ties between countries of the Middle East – in particular the Yishuv – and the rest of the world. Thirty countries exhibited in pavilions planned and built in a rapid and well-organized operation. Much knowledge and thought were put into the buildings' design, and there was a great desire to achieve innovative engineering and architecture. It was an important event, the first of its kind and scale in the region. In this article I will discuss the planning of the site and the pavilions as well as the various visual imagery used at the 1934 Levant Fair. I shall examine how modern architecture served as a new and significant component of the fair's attempt to promote a Western and modern cultural perspective in the service of the Zionist vision.

Gaby Admon-Rick

Would such a plan be suitable for Palestine? The Workmen's Compensation Committee of the British Mandate Government

In 1944, Richard M. Graves, the Director of the Department of Labour in the British Palestine Government, established a special committee that included Mandatory, Jewish and Arab representatives, for examining necessary changes in the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. One of the issues the committee discussed was the possibility of introducing a system of state-run insurance covering work accidents. The paper contextualizes the history of welfare and disability within the activities of the Department of Labour to advance labor legislation and regulate work conditions in Britain, as well as within imperial and international processes. Based on the documents of one of the Arab committee members, the article describes relationships and interest groups formed between representatives of workers, employers and insurance companies, regardless of their national identity.

Estie Yankelevitch

Twins Separated at Birth: The British Mandate government and the Kadoorie Agricultural Schools

During the British Mandate over Palestine, two educational systems were set up: one by the government, the other, private, under the auspices of the Jewish community. The Mandatory authorities recognized the importance of agricultural

education and encouraged it. Resources were meager, and Sir Ellis Kadoorie's bequest enabled the establishment of two agricultural schools: one for the Arabs at Tulkarm and one for the Jews at Mount Tabor. Within a short period, both schools had gained a good reputation. The Mandatory Government, as well as the two communities, saw in them a source of pride and achievement. The main aim of the Arab school was to promote agriculture in the Arab villages, their main source of income. Graduates were expected to return upon graduation to their villages as teachers and instructors. Within a few years, the Arab students developed a sense of national identity and demanded *inter alia* the replacement of the British staff. The Jewish school was run by a Jewish staff, and its students' attitude to their studies was characterized by a sense of mission, training towards establishing agricultural settlements. This paper examines the Mandate Government's attitude toward the two schools and the different path each one of these schools took.

Mustafa Abbasi and Amir Goldstein

Leadership in Stormy Times: Kamal Hussein of Khalsa and the Struggle for Hegemony in the Huleh Valley During the Mandate Period, 1918-1948

The article focuses on Kamal Hussein al-Yousef and his eventful life as a local Arab leader in the Huleh Valley during the Mandate Period. Relying on Arab, British and Zionist sources, it describes Hussein's approach in the face of the changing reality in the northern region of Mandatory Palestine. Hussein made his historical debut during the 1920 Tel-Hai events, and was active in the organizations comprising the Palestinian national movement, but later he changed his strategy to ensure the interests of his clan, Ghawarina. In view of the difficulties faced by the Palestinian national movement in consolidating its strength and organization – especially in this remote region – Hussein chose to reinforce cooperation with the British and to improve relations with the Zionists, in the midst of the Arab Revolt. He was then accused by Arabs of acting against his people's interests, and also encountered suspicions voiced by some Jewish Yishuv elements concerning his motives. His connections with the Zionist institutions and his kibbutz neighbors did not help him in the 1948 war, and he was forced into exile, along with the rest of his clan. He was assassinated in Lebanon in May, 1949, after failed attempts to return to Israel, and his death ended years of struggle in the stormy waters of the national conflict that developed in the Huleh Valley and the northern border regions of Palestine.

Yaron Balslev

Hebrew City with Hebrew Waste: Waste Treatment in Tel Aviv during the British Mandate

During the British Mandate of Palestine, Tel Aviv grew rapidly, and the amounts of waste it produced grew accordingly. The article examines the different methods and approaches to waste treatment in Tel Aviv in 1918-1948. During these years, the environmental perception of Tel Aviv's leadership was based on the Sanitary Idea, of removing the waste away from the city. After it was cleared from the streets, the main consideration for waste treatment was the cost thereof. Therefore, the waste was piled in the fields in a municipal dump-site. The results of this method were that during the 1930s, accumulation of urban waste became a regional environmental hazard. As a result, British officials as well as private entrepreneurs started to look for alternatives such as composting, incineration, and paper recycling.

Matan Boord

Professionals and Politicians: Labor Zionist Urban Men and the 'New Jew' in Mandate Palestine

The article deals with two men who held senior positions and high authority in the Labor movement and Zionism in the 1930s and who lived and worked mainly in the cities – Yosef Weitz and Shmu'el Yavni'eli. It examines, through their private writings, the ways in which both of them engaged in defining their selves vis-a-vis other men – mostly those from the communal settlements and the farmers of the settlements of the First Aliya – and in front of their wives and children. The main methodological innovations here are the placing of the family and everyday life as the central arena for the study of masculinity, and applying the category of hegemonic masculinity on the two case studies in question. The main argument of the article is that the understanding of the different ways through which such men dealt with the challenge posed to them by the ideal of the communal, rural pioneer allows scholars to better understand the formation of the ruling class in the Jewish community during Mandate Palestine and in the first decades of the existence of the State of Israel.

Ouzi Elyada

Yellow Press and Journalistic Crusades: The Ruppin Affair and *Do'ar Hayom*

In this article, I study the political crusade launched by the daily Jerusalem right wing popular newspaper *Do'ar Hayom* against the local Zionist leadership in Palestine, and, more precisely, against Dr. Arthur Ruppin, the head of the Settlement Department in the Zionist Organization. The campaign started in November 1923 and lasted for more than two and a half years, ending in April 1926. During this campaign, *Do'ar Hayom* was confronted by all the Hebrew newspapers in Palestine, including the dailies *Ha'aretz* and *Davar*, and by the weekly *Hapo'el Hatza'ir*. This significant public media dispute, which spread from the urban public sphere (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa) to the countryside (villages and Kibbutzim) wasn't only political, but also social and cultural, pitting 'natives' and 'new immigrants,' Left and right ideologies, 'Oriental-Levantine' and 'European' cultures, and also popular and elite journalism against each other. In this article, I examine the origins of this media confrontation, its evolution and dynamics, and its effects and consequences.

Raquel Stepak

Writers in Uniform: The Enlistment of Hebrew Writers in the British Army during World War II

During the Second World War, the Jewish population in the Land of Israel (the Yishuv) was in great fear for its survival, in light of the imminent threat of the invasion of the region by Axis Powers troops. The Yishuv was also in a constant state of anxiety regarding the fate of the Jews of Europe. The *Writers in Uniform* were a group of Hebrew writers from the Yishuv that had enlisted in the British Army during the War. Upon their arrival at army bases, they established and edited newspapers and bulletins for soldiers, in which they published some of their work. From the onset of their military service, the themes of the war and the Holocaust became central to their literature. Their writings documented the experiences and impressions of the Jewish soldier from the Land of Israel in the British Army. One may credit these soldier-writers with the debut of war literature as a phenomenon in the history of Hebrew literature. This article discusses the work of the Writers in Uniform in its historical context.

Aviva Halamish

The History and the Historiography of the Yishuv (Jewish Community) in Mandatory Palestine: The Particular and the General

The article ponders the history and the historiography of Palestine and of the Yishuv during the Mandate period by employing a distinction between three approaches, analyzing them, and examining their reciprocal relations. First, it presents the method conceiving Mandatory Palestine as a particular case, *Sui generis*; second, the method that assesses it by general, universal yardsticks, deriving from the research of other cases; lastly, it puts forth the comparative method as a kind of synthesis of the two. Against the prevailing claim that ignoring the comparative approach means reinforcing the particular aspects of the case, the article asserts that the results of comparative research underscore the unique dimensions of the history of the Yishuv and of Palestine as a whole. Nevertheless, comprehending and assessing the unique character of Mandatory Palestine requires a comparison with similar phenomena in other places and times, certainly in matters such as immigration, settlement and nation building.