The Journal of Israeli History

Volume 28, Number 1, March 2009

CONTENTS

Articles
“A huge national assemblage”: Tel Aviv as a pilgrimage site in Purim celebrations (1920–1935)
Hizky Shoham

1

Accented memory: Russian immigrants reimagine the Israeli past
Olga Gershenson

21

A methodological critique of the concept of ethnic democracy
Adam D. Danel

37

The model of ethnic democracy: Response to Danel
Sammy Smooha

55

Review Essay
The Jewish-people deniers
Anita Shapira

63

Book Reviews
Jews and Muslims in the Arab World: Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined
by Jacob Lassner and S. Ilan Troen
Asher Susser

73

Jewish Property Claims against Arab Countries
by Michael R. Fischbach
Moshe Gat

76

A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel
by Gudrun Krämer
Colin Shindler

79

Israel and Its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion
by Stuart A. Cohen
Uri Ben-Eliezer

83

Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel:
Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual
by Aziza Khazzoom
Pnina Motzafi-Haller

86

Response to Amnon Sella
Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez

91
Abstracts

28.1/2009

Shoham:
The Tel Aviv Purim carnival was the largest public event in Mandatory Palestine. However, due to its
capitalistic character, the carnival has been ignored in the scholarship on the Zionist civil religion, which
was regarded as having been created by the Zionist socialist/agricultural ethos alone. This article employs
an anthropological methodology, analyzing the carnival as a pilgrimage event and revealing its
ideological nationalist contents, which positioned Tel Aviv as a symbolic center of the Yishuv and thus
powerfully presented the emerging nation in a visible manner. By exploring some common values shared
by capitalism and nationalism, the analysis uncovers the ideological world of urban Zionism, which had
far more impact on the sociocultural than on the political-institutional level.

Gershenson:
This article seeks to understand the place of the Russian immigrant community in the larger Israeli culture
and to explore how immigrants themselves negotiate their position. One site of such negotiation is the
film Paper Snow (2003) created predominantly by Russian-Israeli filmmakers. Their distinct vantage
point emerges through the film’s casting, genre, style, and language. Paper Snow features such iconic
figures of Israeli culture-in-the-making as actress Hanna Rovina and poets Alexander Penn and Avraham
Shlonsky, but represents them as part of the Russian intelligentsia. In this way, the film adheres to the
familiar story of nation building, but tells it with an accent: by emphasizing the Russianness of the Israeli
national past, the film inscribes contemporary Russian immigrants onto the grand narrative of the nation.
By revising the official collective memory, Paper Snow produces accented memory.

Danel:
This article inquires into the reasons why the ideal type of ethnic democracy proposed by Smooha has no
viable manifestation other than Israel. Ethnic democracy exists in the tensions between the two
contradictory principles of inclusive and egalitarian democracy, on the one hand, and a preference for a
majority ethnic group on the other. The archetype of the ideal type of ethnic democracy is Israel. Yet
since the conceptual tool of ideal type was developed by Weber for the purpose of overcoming
idiosyncrasies and discovering similarities, other manifestations of the ideal type must be found.
Although Smooha presupposes that ethnic democracy is essentially “non-Western,” he finds its
manifestations mainly in “Western” democracies. He tries to overcome this difficulty by characterizing
Israel as the sole embodiment of the ideal type of ethnic democracy. However, a comparison with West
European democracies renders the ethnic attributes of Israeli democracy empirically dubious and
logically circular.

Smooha
This is a response to Adam Danel’s critique of my model of ethnic democracy. Danel argues that the
model fails as an ideal type and as a comparative tool because ethnic democracy does not exist anywhere.
I show, however, that there are indeed quite a few cases of ethnic democracy, although some are partial
and some historical, including Estonia, Latvia, Northern Ireland from 1921 to 1972, Macedonia from
1991 to 2001, interwar Poland, Slovakia and Malaysia. Danel does not address the real functions of the
model as a theory of the emergence and stability of ethnic democracy and as a conceptual scheme for the
comparative study of ethnic democracies. The theory accounts for the developments of ethnic democracy
in these states and for the conditions for its success and failure. Danel also tries to show that Israel is a
Western liberal democracy by overstressing its liberal traits and the non-liberal characteristics of Western
democracies. I argue that Israel’s ideology, design, policies and practices as the homeland of the Jewish
people, most of whom are not its citizens, and as the “property” of the Israeli-Jewish majority, means that
it has a second-rate ethnic democracy and as a state and society does not qualify as Western.