De-Judaizing the Homeland: Academic Politics in Rewriting the History of Palestine

S. ILAN TROEN

Chaim Weizmann observed in a December 1945 letter to President Truman that ‘Palestine, for its size, is probably the most investigated country in the world’.1 Provoked by the Arab/Jewish conflict over Palestine, international commissions, private groups, and an interested public turned for guidance to scholars and thinkers from a wide variety of disciplines—from biblical scholarship, archaeology, theology, and history to various social sciences. Based on this work, the international community affirmed, through the Mandate, the legal and moral right of the Jews to ‘reconstitute’ themselves as a modern people in Palestine.2 The ‘re’ of ‘re-constitute’ was related to the ‘re’: ‘re-turn’ and ‘re-claim’. The ‘re’—suggests, of course, ‘again’—thereby validating widely held conceptions concerning the Jewish past and how it had significance for the contemporary world. In essence, the widely held assumption—found throughout the literature of the social sciences and humanities—that Jews had a deep and vital historical connection to the land was essential to asserting the right to resettle in it.3 It is with the rejection of this interpretation of the past and its contemporary implications that this paper is concerned.

The roots of this change are to be found at least since the 1930s but have become a far more significant trope over the last generation. The larger part of this essay will be devoted to considering this relatively recent development. First, a few comments will be presented to recapture the former conception that enjoyed support and led to recognition both in the international community and in the academy for a Jewish right to a homeland in Palestine.

‘RECONSTITUTION’ AND CULTURAL ACQUISITION

‘Reconstitute’ had a clear and dramatic meaning in the first part of the twentieth century. It signalled support for the re-emergence of Jews

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as actors in history. It signified recognition that the Jews were a nation like other nations when the nation-state had become the privileged and valued actor in international affairs. Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’, for example, declared the rights of nations to self-determination and to states. The nineteenth century European and twentieth century non-European worlds are replete with movements for ‘national’ liberation. The nation-state, since at least the time of the French Revolution, was understood as the instrument for advancing personal freedoms and rights. They could not be achieved and protected in a vacuum. They could not just happen. They had to be implemented by political communities organized around distinct peoples. Hence nationalism was considered a progressive ideal that would enhance the march of the Enlightenment’s highest political values. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the League of Nations therefore invented the mandate system to nurture national development of large areas of a defunct polity that had ruled a large region for about 500 years. Mandates were intended to nurture the formation of new states until independence and this instrument was to be applied to Jews, even as it was for the Arab peoples of Syria and Iraq. In this view, Jews were a people not only entitled to a state but that polity was naturally located in a part of the world in which they had originated, had been resident since the ancient world, and still constituted a vital presence in many areas of the region, including Palestine. Although defining Jews as a modern people had clear and manifest political consequences, any diminution of such status would deeply injure if not negate the Zionist programme.

Formal recognition by international bodies was not enough. Evidence of reconstitution was required to solidify the argument for legitimacy. It was this, no less than the prevailing consensus, that made possible recognition of Israel in November 1947 by the United Nations. Perhaps the most manifest or visible evidence—for those who would be willing to acknowledge—were found in the revival of Hebrew into a living language; the marking the landscape with a Jewish identity; and the development of an indigenous culture with roots in the ancient past.

RECONSTITUTION OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Zionism created a society unlike other European ‘imagined communities’. Zionists explicitly distanced themselves in crucial ways from the European exile they left behind. They, of course, never imagined their polity tied to a European state, nor did they simply transplant European culture. Rather, they consciously and overtly rejected much in the European past. A prime example is the singular success of restoring Hebrew into a living language with a vibrant popular literature, modern media, scientific scholarship, commerce and politics. No other ancient language, even if maintained
in the recitation of liturgy or in the study of sacred texts, has been so revived in the modern world. Taking into account the Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, the Palestinians in the West Bank and neighbouring states, and Jews in the Diaspora, certainly more than 8 million people are now conversant with Hebrew as a living modern language. This is a larger number than many contemporary languages even spoken in Europe. Moreover, this decision to reconstitute Hebrew was taken in direct opposition to those who insisted that European languages be maintained. Indeed, even Herzl expected that German would be the language of the Jewish state but in a vigorous kulturkampf that possibility was decisively defeated before World War I.

RECLAIMING BY NAMING

Zionism also set out to ‘re-imagine’ or ‘re-constitute’ the country’s landscape. The process actually began with Christian explorers, archaeologists and bible scholars from Europe and the United States who visited Palestine from the mid-nineteenth century when the country was under Turkish rule. Contemporary Arab names were but adaptations or corruptions of ancient designations found in sacred texts or other historical sources. Zionist settlers continued the process, although for them it was not merely to recapture the Holy Land of Scriptures. Rather it was a deeply personal attempt to re-imagine themselves in the land of their ancestors. As a consequence, in renaming the land they consciously ignored and set aside many of the physical markers as well as the social and cultural ones of both Europe and Arab neighbours. In Israel there is no New Vilna, New Bialystock, New Warsaw, New England, New York, or Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Berlin and so on. Instead, Zionists celebrated the return to history of Biblical Rehovoth and Ashkelon. Jerusalem, of course, did not require a new name. In addition, thousands of names were given to streets, public squares and the landscape, with signs in Hebrew everywhere. The total effect invited observers to appreciate that the settlements were the concrete manifestation of national revival by a people who could legitimately claim to be returning natives.¹

The same was captured in music, art, and literature through the conscious creation of ‘folklore’. This was clearly a paradox. Folk music and folk culture by definition derive from often anonymous creators in the past. In Zionist praxis, this became a large-scale, conscious and well-publicized enterprise with the object of transforming immigrants into natives.² Ironically, the process of reconstitution could extend too far. As early as the 1930s there were signs that the sabra—the ‘re-constituted new Jew’ born and raised in Israel—had become too detached from the European roots of Zionist culture or even from the ancestral heritage
as practised in Eretz Israel. Even some Zionists became convinced that reconstitution had gone too far.

Adaptation, transformation and rejection of Europe reverberated throughout the intellectual and cultural reality of the Yishuv. It was patently clear that Zionism was not engaging in mere imitation or in direct transplantation. Zionists did not see themselves as foreigners or conquerors. For centuries in the Diaspora they had been strangers. In Eretz Israel they expended enormous creative energy to feel at home, as if they were natives. It was this rejuvenation that convinced a large portion of the world community that Jews were entitled to independence within that portion of the country they had so distinctively marked.

COUNTER-PROOFS/COUNTER-THESSES

Even as Jews were engaged in ‘reconstitution’, its validity was denied. That was certainly the contribution of George Antonius, a leading Lebanese/Palestinian Christian intellectual, scholar and public servant who served under the British in Palestine and spent much time in London. His views were systematically set forth in the period’s most influential pro-Arab volume, *The Arab Awakening* (1938). He begins with an historical analysis of how the Arabs emerged in history, and concludes with a survey of their situation after World War I, with an attack on the validity of Zionist claims as the closing statement.

*The Arab Awakening* argues that the Arabs of Palestine have deep roots and an unbroken connection with the land far beyond the Muslim conquests of the seventh century and actually extends to the Canaanite period preceding the invasion of the Hebrews. In sum, Palestine has been Arab since time immemorial, absorbing one conqueror after another. Arabs are the only authentic, long-resident, and indigenous population. Wresting them of their land, Antonius warns, invites active and justified resistance. Importantly, this definition can be applied to Christians as well as Muslims, and is so understood by both. Jews are another matter. It was the Hebrews whose connection to the land was interrupted or lapsed. He would further claim that not only had the ancient Hebrews disappeared as a people, but contemporary Jews are merely members of a religious confessional community. Judaism exists, but the Jewish people do not. The implication is that they have disappeared.

The removal of Jews as actors in history as an anti-Zionist formula was not merely a technique of Arab writers. It may have reached its largest audience through the work of Arnold Toynbee, another former British official and intellectual familiar with Antonius. Toynbee, in a particularly offensive if stunning phrase, described Jews as ‘fossils’, thereby vitiating the Zionist claim for restoration—his term for reconstitution. It was this charge that occasioned well-publicized debates in the 1950s and 1960s.
between Toynbee and Abba Eban, Jacob Talmon, Ya‘akov Herzog, and
Isaiah Friedman.\textsuperscript{10}

Ironically, at the moment Antonius was writing, Nazi Germany was
carrying nationalism to such a brutal extreme that subsequent generations
have sought to limit abuses of the modern nation-state through appeals
to ‘human rights’. Many now hold that national rights are necessarily
secondary to human rights. However, the concept of human rights was not
yet defined in the period when the crucial debates were taking place over
the future of Palestine. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was
approved by the United Nations only in December 1948, about a year after
the UN approved the Jewish state. In 1947, the nation-state was still the
privileged polity in the absence of any other instrument to effectively
extend and protect rights. To denationalize Jews therefore emasculated
their claim to statehood and rendered them, at their peril, to the will of the
Gentile majority.

The view championed by Antonius has become a staple in Arab public
documents and debates over the future of Palestine. It is still part of the anti-
Israel discourse found throughout the Arab world. The PLO’s National
Charter of 1968 echoes Antonius in the often cited paragraph 20: ‘The claim
of historical or spiritual links between the Jews and Palestine is neither in
conformity with historical fact nor does it satisfy the requirements for
statehood. Judaism is a revealed religion; it is not a separate nationality.’ That
is, Judaism as a religion exists, but Jews as a people do not.

With Jews stripped of their national identity, the way was cleared to
claim Zionism was merely an extension of European imperialism and Jews
become colonialist oppressors to be opposed in a just war by an indigenous
people. In the Hamas Charter of 1988 this view is wrapped in Islamic
theology so that the anti-colonial war becomes jihad. Whatever the
discourse, secular or religious, detaching Jews from their nationality has
become integral to justifying violence and the destruction of a Jewish state.

EXAMPLES OF CONTEMPORARY THINKING

Probably the most significant contemporary impact of Palestine’s
de-Judaization is found in Edward Said, another Christian intellectual
who identified himself as Arab—in this case a Palestinian—despite the vast
preponderance of varieties of Islam as the dominant faith among Arabs.
Clearly, being ‘Arab’ connotated identification with a historic people located
in the Middle East who share a common culture that includes both
Muslims and Christians but not Jews. Jews could thereby not be Arabs
despite residence that long pre-dates both Christianity and Islam. Lurking
behind such an interpretation of exclusion is a consciously constructed
definition inevitably prejudicial to Jews.
Said also identifies with Antonius’s complaint that Western scholarship is biased against Arabs, charging that it serves colonialism. Like Antonius, he sets out to provide a corrective to the idea of ‘reconstitution’. For example, in Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestine Question, he holds that Palestine has been home to a remarkable civilization ‘centuries before the first Hebrew tribes migrated to the area’. Moving far beyond his acknowledged expertise in literary criticism, he assesses conventional biblical and archaeological scholarship as merely ‘retrojective imperialism’ complicit in the dispossession of Arabs or, again in Said’s phrase, ‘passive collaboration’ in that injustice. Allowing with the recent scholarship of biblical ‘minimalists’ and revisionist archaeologists, Said offers a ‘retrojective’ identification of the ancestors of contemporary Muslim and Christian Palestinians. They are the long-resident, indigenous inhabitants; Jews are usurpers. The use of politically motivated biblical research will be commented on below.

There is an additional observation relevant here. As Ivan Kalmar and Derek Penslar have shown in their recent book, Orientalism and the Jews, Jews were, in fact, ‘Orientalized’ or marginalized in Christian Europe. The key phrase is Christian Europe, for to speak of European Orientalism without its Christian tradition is a serious omission. Said identifies Jews only with the Christian European establishment, and its Orientalist framework. To have suggested that Jews were considered outsiders in Christian Europe, indeed often identified as Asiatics, would have destroyed something very useful to the Saidian argument. It would have made Jews simultaneously Orientalists as well as targets of Orientalism. Said simplifies matters by removing Jews from the Orient while maintaining their European identity intact. Thus Jews are only perpetrators, rather than victims. They are again intruders in Arab Palestine.

The removal of Jews as actors in history is, of course, a familiar theme in Christian successionist theology and it has been cast within Saidian discourse. Liberation Theology, for example, whose principles were first articulated by Third World clerics committed to anti-colonialism and Marxism, has conflated theology with history and politics in the hands of Palestinian apologists. For example, Naim Ateek, a leading Christian clergyman living in Israel who claims ancestry to pre-Islamic Palestine—indeed to the time of the Saviour—maintains that Christianity supports the Palestinian cause since Jesus not only heralded a successor religion but dispensed with the divine promises made to the ancient Hebrews. That is, Jesus does not reiterate the promise of national Return or national Redemption for the Jews. Rather, he speaks in a universal language thereby indicating that special promises to the Jews have been abrogated. Jewish claims based on the Old Testament have lapsed. Not surprisingly, he employs Toynbee’s historical judgement of the Jews as having exited as actors in history to buttress his arguments. The same sacred text, however,
has vitality and validity in regard to other peoples. Thus he applies the Old Testament narrative of the Exodus to illuminate the current position of Palestinians who, in the name of historical justice, seek to return to their Promised Land. Like Antonius, who opposed the Peel plan of 1937 for partition, and Said, who opposed Arafat for his recognition of Israel through the Oslo Accords, Ateek claims that full justice would be achieved in the dissolution of a Jewish state but, deferring to pragmatism, proposes a temporary federation between a Jewish and an Arab state—a federation he anticipates will dissolve when Jews leave the country.14

The academic support for Said and Ateek did not exist when Antonius wrote The Arab Awakening. New interpretative frameworks have developed to endorse the de-Judaization of the Holy Land. They are ‘minimalist’ biblical scholarship and revisionist archaeology. Although they do not provide corroboration for the Palestinian as the eternal native either in texts or archaeological evidence, it is sufficient for Zionism’s critics to bring into question the historic Jewish presence. Since the mid-nineteenth century, a sophisticated scholarly tradition has demonstrated that it is possible to be critical of the Bible as history without compromising the notion that Hebrews once existed and played an important role in the history of humankind. The validity of criticism is not the issue. What is at stake is how it is employed in the Arab/Israeli dispute.

This anti-Israel approach is endemic in the minimalist school of biblical criticism that originated in Copenhagen (hence, the title ‘Danish School’) around 1970 and spread to England, centring in Sheffield, and has flared out from there. The common thread is that the Old Testament is an intricate and complex deception invented by Hebrew scribes some two and a half millennia ago during the period of Persian and Hellenistic influence over Judea. Out of scattered echoes of a distant past, an ancient and manipulative clerical establishment created foundation myths and historic narratives to lend credence to their theology and to serve their immediate political purposes. This required fabricating details and exalting the Davidic line and its connection to Jerusalem. In sum, from the patriarchs through the exodus and the Davidic dynasty the Bible is replete with purposeful and calculated fantasy.15 Even though the number of scholars involved in this approach is relatively small, their claims have reached a wide audience in popular and scholarly journals, and have been enthusiastically endorsed by Palestinian supporters in the Arab/Israeli dispute.

The politicization of biblical scholarship is readily apparent in the work of Keith Whitlam, a recognized leader of the minimalist approach. Significantly, his claim for scholarly authority derives not only from his own textual analysis but from invoking Said. Employing Saidian terminology, Whitlam terms conventional biblical scholarship as mere ‘Orientalist discourse’ designed to erase the Palestinians from history.
He asserts, ‘Biblical studies has formed part of the complex arrangement of scholarly, economic, and military power by which Palestinians have been denied a contemporary presence or history.’ To use a favourite phrase, reminiscent of both Said and Antonius, there is a conspiracy to ‘silence’ Palestinian history.\textsuperscript{16}

An examination of the website of Al-Quds University, the Palestinian parallel to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, indicates the extent to which this new scholarship has entered the public domain.\textsuperscript{17} Here, too, there is the familiar mantra of having to struggle against established wisdom. This site proclaims that the real founders of Jerusalem are Canaanite Jebusites who were successively conquered, but repeatedly absorbed the invaders into the host society. The list of conquerors includes numerous ancient peoples except for the Hebrews. They are absent because, we are told, there is ‘no trace at all of a person called ‘King David’.

Significantly, the removal of Jews from history draws on minimalists as well as on established scholars with strong connections to Zionism, including Marc Brettler, the distinguished Bible scholar and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University. Although Brettler has expressed doubts about aspects of the Joshua story, he supports the historicity of the Biblical text as a whole. However, the technique of exploiting the insights of one scholar over one issue is repeated, and aggregated, with the cumulative effect of questioning the accepted wisdom of all aspects of the Jewish role in the ancient world. In effect, a rhetoric based on polemical techniques supplants the caution of responsible scholarship.

Sari Nusseibe— a graduate of Oxford and Harvard, the president of Al-Quds, and perhaps the most important Palestinian leader publicly seeking accommodation with the Jewish state—has circulated the same claims in his own publications as found on his university’s website. For example, just prior to Oslo, Nusseibe offered the same history found later on the Al-Quds website in a personal statement of his beliefs in a book arguing for a two-state solution co-authored with Mark Heller, a respected Israeli scholar with unquestioned Zionist credentials.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, even pragmatists and moderates committed to peace and accommodation are party to advancing the scholarship of denial. In the hands of less responsible individuals, the implications of this ‘scholarship’ lead to demands for de-legitimation of the Jewish state and its termination.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE: MODELS OF SETTLER SOCIETIES

There is yet another part of the academy that contributes to distancing Jews from the land. This is to be found in the regnant, if not hegemonic, analysis found among sociologists, historical geographers, and political
scientists who identify Zionism as built out of the injustices of a ‘settler society’. Although Jewish settlement of Palestine had once been supported, even celebrated, by an earlier generation of social scientists, it is now viewed as a negative and destructive phenomenon whose consequences require correction. This is, in large measure, a product of choosing a radically different historical paradigm.

The best known analysis is found in Gershon Shafir’s Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914.\(^\text{19}\) His analysis is comparative and begins by identifying multiple types of settler societies in the 400 years of colonialism that began with Columbus and ended with Zionism. Relying on the insights of historians of Western imperialism, he and his colleagues review Jewish settlement to determine which of the various colonial models fits Zionism best. In using a comparative framework based on European colonialism as the sole explanatory instrument, he inevitably faults Zionism by definition. To use a phrase: one cannot be a little pregnant. Either one is, or is not. Thus, by comparing Jews to the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, and the English is to view them exclusively in the European historical framework. Zionist settlement may be more or less benign, but it remains colonialist. He posits no additional or alternative model to fit the Jewish anomaly.

Comparison is, of course, a basic tool and obligation of serious scholarly research. Yet it is puzzling that the universal reference point for all of such critical or revisionist scholarship is the seminal work of D.K. Fieldhouse, a British scholar whose writing continues to influence generations of researchers after the appearance in 1966 of The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century.\(^\text{20}\) Written during the heyday of de-colonization, with which he identifies, and on the eve of one of the great flash-points of the Arab/Israeli conflict, the June 1967 Six Day War, it is remarkable that Fieldhouse’s magisterial and comprehensive work contains no mention of Zionism. Except for a passing reference to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Jews and Zionists are totally absent from his work. Nevertheless, Fieldhouse provides the essential comparative framework for revisionist and critical scholarship.

Fieldhouse concentrates on an economic and materialistic approach to colonialism that derives from the early twentieth century work of J.A. Hobson and V.I. Lenin, even though his conclusions are markedly different.\(^\text{21}\) In the world described by Fieldhouse, where empires establish colonies, Zionism plays no role in his comprehensive account of European colonial expansion. Nevertheless, contemporary critics of Zionism, who claim it is an outrageous and vexing form of colonialism, consistently base their analysis on Fieldhouse. In so doing they distort his definition of ‘settler society’ when applying it to the Zionist case.

Why did Fieldhouse not apply ‘settler society’ or colonialism to Jewish settlement? Jews did not fit the rubric he established for the Dutch, British,
French, Spaniards, Portuguese, Germans, and Italians. Jewish colonization during its first forty years took place in the Ottoman Empire and was not part of the process of imperial expansion in search of power and markets. It was not a consequence of industrialization and financial interests. Indeed, as numerous scholars have noted, Jewish settlement was so unprofitable that it has been judged to be economically irrational.22 In sum, revisionist scholars have wrenched out of context Fieldhouse’s analysis, exactly developed to describe a distinct and different historical experience, for their own ideological purposes.

Zionism did not establish plantations or other large units of capitalist agriculture. Instead, Jews created small truck farms or modest-sized collective colonies. These were more naturally suited for homogeneous communities rather unlike the large plantation with a significant force of native labour. Small landholders or collective communities had little need for large-scale use of native labour. Ideologically and practically, Jews worked the land themselves.

Ironically, self-reliance has become a source of complaint against the Zionist enterprise in its entirety. Critics view the economic and cultural separation between Jews and Arabs as the sole responsibility of Zionist ideology and praxis. The contemporary accusation of Israel as an ‘apartheid state’ is a natural outgrowth of this charge. The reality is that it is Muslims who had for centuries separated themselves from Jews by defining them as ‘dhimmis’, or tolerated but second-class members of the community. Separation between Jews and Muslims was the norm throughout the Arab Muslim world and imposed by the Moslem Turks and their predecessors since the rise of Islam in the seventh century. To expect that a handful of Jews living in remote agricultural colonies under Turkish rule would be able to overturn such deeply engrained and accepted practices with a model of an egalitarian, integrated civil society that had yet to be actualized even in the United States requires an exercise of imagination that borders on fantasy. Yet that has become this generation’s operative paradigm.

The misuse of Fieldhouse’s ‘settler society’ distorts in another crucial way. He viewed British ‘settler societies’ as intended ‘replicas’ of the home society and ‘true reproductions of European society’.23 The same was true of French colonies: ‘The French imperial mission was to mould their colonies into replicas of France and eventually to incorporate them into the metropolis.’ In the case of Algeria, the French even tried to incorporate the colony into the home country.24 On the other hand, Zionist settlements were at once distinct from Europe and different from Arab society. Although European and American technology, political ideas and other aspects of modern culture were transferred to Palestine, Zionist society was consciously recast into a unique mould consciously dedicated to creating
a ‘new Jew’. This was, as we have seen, at the core of the idea of ‘reconstitution’.

Ultimately, casting Zionists as colonizers serves to present them as occupiers in a land to which, by definition, they do not belong. Palestine becomes the home to only one indigenous people, not two. In what must be an extreme anomaly in the history of colonialism, this new scholarship views Palestine as occupied by two imperial powers—the British and the Jews. For the multitudes who desperately sought entry into Palestine prior to independence, this characterization of Jewish power would have appeared as a cruel joke.

The postcolonial analysis rejects or ignores the perspective in which earlier generations of humanists and social scientists worked. During the pre-state period when the ‘economic absorptive capacity’ of Palestine was central to the agenda of public and scholarly discourse, Jewish settlement was measured internally and longitudinally, with reference to the country’s long history and the Jewish association with it. In this discourse, making the desert bloom was an achievement to be admired, rather than a wrong. Instead, there is now a misappropriation of a comparative framework that views the Jewish presence in Eretz Israel horizontally, or exclusively within a relatively modern frame.

It is not surprising that some fuse the insights of post-colonial studies with various combinations of liberation theology, minimalist scholarship, and the findings—or their absence—of revisionist archaeology. Typical of this fusion is the work of Nadia Abu El-Haj. Her work on Zionist archaeology begins with appreciation for the settler society paradigm of Shafir, and inexorably moves to the foregone conclusion that Zionist Palestine has endured as an intrusive settler society in which immigrants have manufactured, distorted and ignored the presence of the natives in order to justify their colonialist enterprise.

I would conclude that it is instructive that scholars whose early academic work locates Zionist settlement solely within the settler society model often go on to question whether Israel ought to continue to exist as a Jewish state. Their central issue is whether a Jewish state can also be democratic, and they uniformly arrive at a negative conclusion because, by definition, no settler society can be democratic. In sum, the original sin of colonialism has inevitable consequences that only the most radical procedure can cleanse.

This charge and the endorsement of radical solutions have no disciplinary boundaries. The challenges to Jewish national rights and territorial claims are unlikely to be a passing phase. They have proliferated in learned monographs and journal articles which seek to supplant an earlier scholarship that had different points of origins and arrived at contrary conclusions. Why this has occurred is not our subject here. What seems clear is that the twentieth century has witnessed a paradigm shift
in the scholarship concerned with Palestine. In all the models employed to explicate the Arab/Israeli conflict, historical evidence—or its absence—are crucial. So, too, is the choice of which society in the ancient and modern worlds Palestine and Israel are to be compared with. The stakes involved in making this selection are large and deeply felt. Discriminating between conflicting appeals to histories real and imagined, and even contrived, will likely continue to challenge and aggravate the scholarly world, the public at large, and well as this participant/observer.

NOTES


2. The idea of ‘reconstitution’ became a frequent and prominent trope leading up to the decision for partition and creation of a Jewish state. A typical example of the position is to be found in the remarks of Ben-Gurion before the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine on 4 July 1947: ‘On July the 24th 1925, the Mandate for Palestine was confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations. The Mandate embodied the Balfour Declaration and it added a meaningful amplification. After citing in a preamble the text of the declaration it added, “recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting [not constituting—emphasis original] their national home in that country”.’ Evidence of Mr. David Ben-Gurion before U.N.S.C.O.P., 4th July 1947, Ben-Gurion Archives, Sede Boker.


5. The historical background for changing the names into Hebrew as well as a criticism of the practice may be found in Meron Benvenisti, Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948, Berkeley, CA, 2000. A more favourable appreciation as well as additional information may be found in Emanouel Hacouveni, The Settlements of Israel and Their Archaeological Sites (Hebrew), Givatayim-Ramat Gan, 1979, and Ze’ev Vilny, The Settlements in Israel (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1951.


11. Edward W. Said, Culture and Imperialism, New York, 1993. This trope was first espoused to enthusiastic acclaim in his Orientalism, New York, 1978, and is reiterated in his many writings.


14. Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY, 1989, pp. 7ff. Ateek not only removes Jews from the ancient past and dispenses with their claims in the Christian era, he erases them from much of Palestine. See his description of his birthplace, Beit Shean, where the presence of Jews in that town and, most importantly, in the proximate region is ignored. For him, Palestine is a land in which there are but Christians and Muslims.


26. This 'insight' informs the progression of the work of Baruch Kimmerling, Gershon Shafir and Oren Yiftachel, who have all moved from studying the pattern of Jewish settlement to assessment of the democratic nature of contemporary Israel. All would support the supplanting of a Jewish state with a 'state of all its citizens'. Critical Israeli scholars have no monopoly on this conclusion. It is a common theme from at least Max Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* New York, 1973, which originally appeared in French in 1967.