

**ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION:**  
NATION-BUILDING, STATE-FORMATION, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
THE ISRAELI EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

GAL LEVY

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THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

## **ABSTRACT**

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The dissertation is about the ethnicisation of social relations in Israeli society and its reflection and manifestation in education. My main aim in this study is twofold: first, to offer a critical account of the development of ethnic relations in Israeli society and to examine the role ethnicity has played in the processes of nation-building and state-formation; and, second, to propose a history of the educational system in Israel which accounts for the role of education in creating and perpetuating ethnic identities.

The first part of the dissertation consists of a critical reading of existing analyses of ethnicity in Israel. Its aim is to bring the state into the analysis of ethnic relations and demonstrate that such an approach is vital to the understanding of ethnic relations and identities. In the following part, I trace back the processes of nation-building and state-formation demonstrating how governments and major political actors became involved in the formation and re-production of ethnic boundaries within Israeli society. In these two parts, I am arguing against both functionalist and critical accounts of ethnicity in Israel, which tend to ‘essentialise’ ethnic categories and thus deny the political nature of ethnicity and its power as an organising basis for political action.

In the third and major part of the dissertation, I seek to re-construct the history of the Israeli educational system within an understanding of ethnicity as a structural feature of state-society relations. This re-construction reveals how ‘ethnicity’ became an organising feature of this system since its inception as a Zionist national educational system in the early days of the Jewish colonisation of Palestine. Whereas the ‘national’ educational system was characteristically sectorial, non-European (*mizrahi*) Jews were denied the same autonomy that their European counterparts enjoyed. With the transition to statehood, and the massive influx of Jewish immigrants, the educational system was re-organised under the aegis of the state. Yet, it turned out, this new system retained the ‘old’ lines of division between Arabs and Jews, and between European and non-European Jews, thus imposing upon the latter the stigma of being ‘non-modern’ and ‘non-Zionist’. This re-emphasised ethnic boundaries, and entrenched ethnicity as a powerful basis for political action. In the 1960s, when the state engaged itself in reforming the educational system, making it compatible with the new needs of industrialisation and nationhood, ethnicity again played a critical role in legitimising state policies. ‘Integration’, that is, the de-segregation of the educational system, turned out to be nothing but a political token and, in fact, a means for entrenching ethnic boundaries and identities. The state, I argue, has thus been a crucial factor in perpetuating those ethnic images and realities, and hence a focus of ethnic discontent in the 1980s and 1990s.

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## GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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### A note to the reader

This study is based on many Hebrew resources – from archival documents to scholarly analyses. Unless otherwise stated, the translation to English is mine.

‘Identical references’ in Hebrew and English are respectively distinguished by either ‘e’ or ‘h’ following the year.

### Political parties:

**Agudath yisrael** – the ultra-orthodox roof organisation that represents those Jewish segments that opposed modern Zionist nationalism. This party split from the orthodox Jewish *Mizrahi* Movement (see below) in 1912 following the latter’s acceptance the Zionist Congress’ decision to conduct ‘cultural work’, that is to engage itself in the education of the people (see also Friedman 1971).

**Mapai** – An acronym of the Party of the Workers of *Eretz-yisrael*. From its formation in 1930 to 1977 (by then, as the central party in The Alliance, later the Israeli Labour Party), it was the dominant party in both the *Histadrut* and the national government.

**Mapam** – An acronym of The United Workers Party. Established in 1948 by the merging of the socialist *Ha-Shomer Haza’ir* party (which was also a settlement movement) and *Achdut Ha-avoda* (a fraction of *Mapai*), but since 1954, solely represented the former. In the early 1950s, it adhered to a pro-Soviet policy, and was a fierce rival to *Mapai*. In most times, this party stood at the far left end of the continuum in terms of its socio-economic policy.

**The World Mizrahi Movement** – a Zionist religious organisation formed in Eastern Europe in 1902 in response to the demand of the “Democratic Fraction” to provide national education within the Zionist movement (Don-Yehia 1977). It is the roof organisation for the Zionist religious parties in Palestine/Israel: *Ha-Mizrahi* and *Ha-poel Ha-Mizrahi*. These parties merged in 1956 to form the National Religious Party (NRP), which is still an active political party. Since the differences between these two parties are irrelevant for the purposes of the current analysis, I will refer to these parties as representing the Zionist-religious sector.

It is important that the name *Mizrahi*, to which I refer using a capital ‘M’, which refers to the educational stream that was formed and run by this movement, should not be confused with the term *mizrahi* Jews.

**Meretz** – a Zionist political party that encompasses various political parties that represented segments of the liberal- and socialist-Zionist ‘left’ in Israel. Its definition as a ‘leftist’ party stems from its position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; in economic policy terms, this party is considered liberal, and/or even neo-liberal in contemporary terminology.

**Shas** – an ultra-orthodox *sephardi* religious party that was formed prior to the general elections of 1984. The precursor to this party was the success of three local lists that succeeded in the local elections in 1983 in winning seats in three municipal councils. This encouraged other *mizrahi* ultra-orthodox activists to form a list that might challenge the discrimination against *mizrahi* yeshiva students and political activists within *Agudath-yisrael*. In the first years, the party was jointly led by an *ashkenazi* and a *sephardi* rabbi. Currently, it is led by a committee of *sephardi* rabbis, headed by Rabbi Yossef Ovadia/Ovadia Yoffef?. Its prime audience, at first, were *haredi mizrahi* students, however, soon it spread nationally and directed its appeal to all *mizrahi* Jews. Ever since its ‘sudden’ emergence, this party’s electoral and political success has astonished both scholarly and lay observers. In 1984 it won four seats in the 120-seat *Knesset* and became a member of the ruling coalition government (contrary to ultra-orthodox politics hitherto). Since then, its electorate has steadily

grown, and in 1999 it won 17 *Knesset* seats. For analyses of *Shas*'s performance in the various elections, see Greilsammer (1986), Heilman (1990), Herzog (1990), Willis (1995), and Doron and Kook (1999). On its history and politics see, Herzog (1986b), Willis (1995), Peled (1998), Lion (1999), and Peled's recent collection (Peled 2001).

### **Political Institutions:**

**WZO** – The World Zionist Organisation

**PO** – The (Zionist) Palestine Office. Established 1908 by the WZO to act as its annex in Palestine.

**JA** – The Jewish Agency – the representative body of the Jewish community of Palestine vis-à-vis the Mandatory government. De facto this was the most powerful political executive body of the *yishuv*, and its representative function was derived from the powers of the WZO.

**NC** – The National Committee (*ha-va'ad ha-leumi*). In practice, the executive of the Zionist polity (*yishuv*) in Mandatory Palestine.

**Histadrut** – The General Federation of the Hebrew/Jewish Workers in Israel (est. 1920). The roof organisation of the Zionist workers' parties. The *Histadrut* was in control of the largest trade unions, and also of *Hevrat Ha-ovdim* (The Workers' Society), which was the holding company of its industrial and financial organisations.

**Knesset yisrael** – The authority of *Knesset yisrael* was derived from the power of the mandate and it was, in this sense, a framework for political participation for all Jewish communities in Palestine, Zionist and non-Zionist alike. Its main body was the Representatives' Assembly, and its executive body was the National Committee (*Va'ad Leumi*), which was de-facto responsible for all 'internal' matters of the Jewish community. In contrast, the Jewish Agency, whose power was also derived from the mandate, represented the *yishuv* vis-à-vis the British Government.

**Knesset** – the Israeli Parliament.

### **Terms and concepts:**

**mizrahi (or sephardic) Jews** – This term, which literally means Oriental, refers to Jewish immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries, i.e., non-European Jews, and it has recently been adopted as a signifier for this Jewry, which had little in common prior to its emigration to Israel. Therefore, the sociological and political meanings of this term are the subject matter of this study. More specifically, it is my aim to explore the ways in which these Jews 'became' *mizrahi*, and turned into a distinctive social group. I shall, therefore, use this term interchangeably with the term 'non-European Jews'; however, when I reach the historical point in which I suggest that non-European immigrants turned into a *mizrahi* social group, I shall prefer the latter. Terminology has ever been suggestive in regard to this population. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Palestine, the term *Edot Ha-mizrah* distinguished Jews of Oriental origin from the *sephardic* population of Palestine, that is, from those Jews whose religious practice was based on the *sephardic* tradition and who, in themselves, formed a distinctive community separated from the *ashkenazi* one. This term has been incorporated into the political discourse of the *yishuv*, but when the ethnic discourse was 'sociologised', it soon became equally applicable to all non-European communities. The term *Edot*, plural of *Edah*, which is best translated as 'congregation', refers to the cultural-religious *gemeinschaft*-type organisation of these various communities in pre-modern times. In this sense, by employing this term to designate non-European Jews (and rarely European Jews, although they constituted similar congregations), this term re-defines this Jewry as non-modern.

In the language of statistics, the *mizrahi* group is composed of Jews who were born, or whose ancestors were born, in Asia and Africa, against those whose origin is in

Europe or America. This division is of course also telling, and reflects the same rationale that underlies the ‘ethnic division’. I also make a similarly essentialist distinction by using the terms ‘European’ Jews and ‘non-European’ Jews, although I believe this is justifiable not only for the sake of clarity, but also mainly because it does reflect the historical condition of the encounter between various Jewish congregations in Palestine/Israel.

**ashkenazi Jews** – Jews who immigrated mostly from Eastern- and Central-Europe. In common parlance, this term designates the dominant Jewish group in Israeli society, and it is an antonym to *mizrahi* Jews. Statistically speaking, it consists of Jews whose origin is in Europe or America. On the reluctance of *ashkenazi* Jews to consider themselves in ‘ethnic’ terms, see Shohat (1988, 30-31).

**Mamlakhiyut** – this term (lit. Kingdomship) was developed against the notion of sectorialism that was attributed to the political and social structure of the pre-1948 Jewish polity, which was predominately based on the affiliation to a specific social movement. With the transition to statehood, this term designated the supremacy of the state and many of the state’s struggles at the time were aimed at the *mamlakhtisation* (meaning, nationalisation) of various social functions. In the context of Jewish history, this term also makes reference to the separation between ‘state’ and prophecy in ancient times, and thus its contemporary significance was even greater. In this respect, *Mamlakhiyut* implied that matters of the state ought to be separated from all other ideological concerns and this meant the formation of an apparatus, a state apparatus, that would be the executive arm of the Jewish nation (on *Mamlakhiyut* as a ‘political religion’, see also Don-Yehia 1995).

**Haredi** – *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox Jews who are mainly represented by the *Agudath yisrael* party. This term currently refers also to *sephardic* Jews, mainly affiliated with the *Shas* party, who imitate the life style of their *ashkenazi* counterparts.

**Palestine/Eretz-yisrael/Israel** – I use these terms (which refer to approximately the same territorial space) throughout the work in their respective context. However, the different usage of these terms is politically significant. Thus, whereas the term **Eretz-yisrael** was used to designate Mandatory Palestine, right- and left-wing speakers actually differed in regard to its exact territoriality (the former considered this term to include Trans-Jordan). On more current implications of the usage of the terms **Eretz-yisrael** and the state of Israel, see Kimmerling (1985).

**Yishuv** – This term, which literally means, settlement, is not ‘neutral’; a prominent historian of Zionism, Prof. B. Z. Dinur, coined it. In his own words, this is “a special term for the Jewish population and for it alone, and it is short for the term *yishuv Eretz-Yisrael* (the settlement of Palestine). It refers to the Jewish population in the Land of Palestine, at times when the Jews do not govern it.” (cited in Bernstein 2000, 3). Bearing this in mind, I shall use this term as short for the Jewish/Zionist polity in Mandatory Palestine.

### **Education:**

**1949 CEA** – the 1949 Compulsory Free Education Act (*Khok Khinukh Khova*). For an English translation of the law see, Stanner (1963, 150-167).

**1953 SEA** – the 1953 State Education Act (*Khok Khinukh Mamlakhty*).

**The Independent Education** – (*Ha-khinukh ha-atz’may*) the *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox educational network, which retained its educational autonomy after statehood. According to the 1953 SEA, which determined this network’s autonomy, the curriculum in its schools was supposed to be directed and controlled by the state. However, the political clout of *Agudath yisrael* ensured the curricular autonomy of the network and its sole adherence to the dictates of this party.

**The Stream System** – this term designates the Zionist educational system of the *yishuv*, which was based on the autonomy of three educational streams – the Labour, the General and the *Mizrahi*. On the structure of this system, see Chapter 5.

***Khinukh mamlakhti*** (National Education) – given the segregated character of state education, this term designates the non-religious, general stream in the state educational system.

***Khinukh mamlakhti-dati*** (National Religious Education) – the religious parallel of the former. This educational stream is formally a department in the Ministry of Education, but practically speaking it is run and controlled by the Zionist-religious National Religious Party, which controls its pedagogical council (that determines its curriculum) and is autonomously responsible for the hiring and firing of teachers in this system.

***Kedma*** – (lit. a synonym for East) A schooling network that was established in 1994 on the premise that the Israeli educational system consistently and systematically disadvantages children of *mizrahi* origin. The initial idea was to establish some 15 post-elementary schools in poor *mizrahi* neighbourhoods, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, whose main goals would be to make these children eligible for a matriculation certificate, as well as to instil in them a sense of pride in their own “*mizrahi*” history. Eventually, only two schools were founded under the management of the *Kedma Association* (NGO) in Jerusalem and in Tel-Aviv. The latter was shut down a few years later, whereas the Jerusalem school is succeeding in raising the scholastic and educational achievements of its pupils (see, Levy and Barkay 1998; Dahan and Levy 2000; Ayalon 1998).

***Ma'ayan ha-khniukh ha-Torani*** – (lit. The Torah Educational Fountain) *Shas'* school network (established 1987) which is used as a tool for penetrating the growing (mainly *mizrahi*) constituency of this party. The justification for such a network was the existence of the ultra-orthodox Independent Education (see above). On this network see, Horkin (1993), Chen (1995), Dahan and Levy (2000).

**Distinctive Schools** – magnet schools that specialise in specific areas (which allows them to act separately from the ‘regular’ school system). These schools began to emerge in the 1980s in the more affluent vicinities of the large cities. Their two main characteristics are the use of psychometric exams as a mechanism for selection, and the existence of tuition fees. One main criticism against these schools is that they were designed as a way to bypass the Ministry of Education’s integration policy (see below, Chapter 8). The opening of these schools was accompanied by the enactment of a policy of parental choice in Tel-Aviv, which eventually rendered ‘registration zones’ obsolete. For a critique of these schools and this policy see, for example, Dahan and Yonah (1995; 1999).

# INTRODUCTION

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This dissertation is about ethnicity and, more precisely, about the ethnicisation of social relations in Israeli society. Its main argument is that ethnicity is not a residual effect of an incomplete process of modernisation, but rather an indispensable feature of this very process, and particularly, of Zionist nation-building and state-formation. They made Israel an ‘ethnicised society’, a term that denotes the ethno-national character of the state’s ‘external’ boundaries, as well as the tendency to create ‘internal’ ethnic boundaries. This conception suggests, first, that ‘ethnicity’ has been here from the beginning, and that ‘ethnic relations’ were inscribed in the very structure of Israel as a ‘Jewish’ nation-state. Second, the more contemporary implications of this conception lie in the way ‘ethnicity’ shapes current trends of liberalisation and democratisation in Israeli society. In light of these trends, that allegedly contradict the persistence of ‘ethnic relations’, my main goal is to explain why ‘ethnicity’ has not simply withered away, and hence how it still matters. While most recent accounts agree, in answer to the former question, that ‘ethnic relations’ are not just a feature of Israel’s past, they still fail, in regard to the latter question, to explain its currency for the future of social relations, and specifically, for their further democratisation. Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom that views the persistence of ‘ethnic relations’ as attesting to the ‘non-democratic’ nature of a specified ‘ethnicised’ group, I argue that the failure to democratise social relations is inscribed in the nature of ‘ethnic relations’. More specifically, this failure is a derivative of ‘ethnic thinking’, which identifies social inequalities and disparities as being ‘ethnic’, and thus reinforces a conception of the state (and those social sectors that are identified with it) as being essentially modern, while relegating those who are identified as ‘ethnic’ to the ‘non-democratic’ margins of society. De-constructing this dichotomy, which stands at the core of ‘ethnic relations’ in Israel, is the main goal of the following study, in which I wish to unravel, by exploring the history of education, the complexity of intra-Jewish ethnicity and its relationship to the state.

## EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY: CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATIONS

In the last two decades, the Israeli educational system has been undergoing structural and substantive changes that seem to undermine its centralised, purportedly unified, logic (see Dahan and Yonah 1999). These changes were related to broader social and political transformations that signified Israel's turning into a globally oriented Western-like liberal democracy. Most salient of these transformations are the liberalisation and opening of the economy to world markets, the gradual pacification of Israel's relationships with its Arab neighbours, and the changing of its demographic and territorial boundaries. These new spirits of change manifest themselves, especially after the 1993 Oslo Accords, in a (partial) shift in public attention from 'external' to 'internal' issues, and in the re-aligning of the political system accordingly. Specifically, in the 1990s, Israel saw an increase in the power of political parties that are considered as representing sectorial interests, those of the Arab minority, the new immigrants from the former USSR, and the non-dominant *mizrahi* Jewry (Shafir and Peled 2000; Lustick 1999). One aspect of these changes, that seems to challenge the very definition of what constitutes Israeli national identity, is the development of an overt 'ethnic discourse' within the Jewish sector, a phenomenon that contradicts a basic tenet of Zionism, namely the ethos of the unity of the Jewish nation.

In education, these transformations were evinced in the opening of new schools and school networks, many of which offered new pedagogical and educational methods, thus bringing to the fore new conceptions that challenge the characteristically monopolistic structure of state education. Three stories help us evaluate the meaning of these changes, their manifestations, and their implications for social relations, and particularly for ethnic relations, in Israel.

### I

In April 1994, *Kedma* (see Glossary), a recently founded academic secondary school in a poor Tel-Aviv neighbourhood, provoked a public controversy when it made public that it would deviate from the 'standard' Holocaust commemoration ceremony. In its ceremony, the school children were to light a seventh torch – in addition to the six torches that symbolise the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi killing machine – in memory of non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as well as of victims of genocide and xenophobia in other parts of the world. The controversy that ensued revolved around several themes, the most conspicuous of which was the daring attempt to expand the memory of the Holocaust to include non-Jewish victims as well as to place it within the context of other instances of genocide. This, it was claimed, would blur the uniqueness of the Holocaust, and would result in undermining its significance for the Jewish national memory. As one Israeli writer, Aharon Meged, who opposed *Kedma*'s initiative, said: "there are things that a nation should cherish as a cultural asset, otherwise it loses its uniqueness as a nation" (cited in Levy and Barkay 1998, 37).

This controversy, however, was not only about what is or is not a cultural asset, nor was it merely a debate over the memory of the Holocaust. It was, no less significantly, an argument about who can speak on, or in the name of, the Holocaust. This made the identity of the speakers crucial. These speakers were teachers, parents, and pupils of *Kedma* who, from their particular location within Israeli society as *mizrahi* Jews<sup>1</sup>, were speaking on behalf of a non-mainstream school that had been established on the premise that the Israeli educational system had failed them. In particular, the *Kedma Association* challenged the alleged universality of state education by claiming that the failure of *mizrahi* Jews to become equal members of society, some five decades after the establishment of the state, was not educational or pedagogical, but a political one. It thus sought to rectify this situation by offering these children an alternative educational path, one that circumvented the principles of 'integration' offered by the state. In *Kedma*'s view, what these children needed was a school that would provide them with appropriate educational preparation for higher education and that would instil in them a feeling of belonging and worthiness within the context of their own history as *mizrahi* Jews in Israel. In this respect, the controversy about the Holocaust commemoration day was also a conflict between the presumably universalistic educational approach of the state and the allegedly particularistic nature of an educational project such as *Kedma*.<sup>2</sup>

The question of whether *Kedma* may or may not propose an alternative conception for the commemoration of the Holocaust was, then, a premise for a debate over the nature of this school and over the 'right' of its members, *mizrahi* Jews who had mostly not suffered from the Nazi persecution, to cast doubt on common forms of Holocaust remembrance. This debate has also resonated a year later in discussions within the school community itself, and it reflected the ambiguous position of *mizrahi* Jews, presumably equal members within Jewish society, vis-à-vis the 'national memory'. *Kedma* school, whose *raison d'être* was to defy the marginalised position of *mizrahi* Jews within Zionist memory, had touched upon an open nerve when it offered to re-construct this memory by making the ceremony 'universal'. It above all questioned the universality of the state when compared with the alleged particularity of *Kedma* itself, and hence of *mizrahi* Jews, who from their particularistic position, dared to re-interpret the ceremony as a commemoration of genocide and xenophobia of Jews *and* others.

## II

In recent years, another new schooling network has also become a target for political debate. *Ma'ayan ha-khinukh ha-torani* (hereafter, *Ma'ayan*; see Glossary) is a network of pre-

<sup>1</sup> By using the terms *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* Jews I don't mean to consider these social groups as pre-existing entities, but rather to refer to the (indeed contestable) 'labels' that are commonly applied to these groups in daily parlance (see also, Glossary).

<sup>2</sup> For an elaborated analysis of this event see, Levy and Barkay (1998). On the *Kedma* project see also Glossary.

elementary and elementary schools that spread quite rapidly in the poorest *mizrahi* neighbourhoods and towns during the 1990s (Horkin 1993, 59–61; Chen 1995). *Ma'ayan* is a part of a larger network of welfare and educational institutions established by *Shas* – an ultra-orthodox political party led by *sephardi* yeshiva students that emerged in the mid-1980s (see Glossary) – as part of its effort to establish itself in the political and social arenas and to create a mass-based constituency.

A recently article published in *Ha'aretz*, an Israeli liberal newspaper, sought to portray the *Ma'ayan* school network. The author describes the school, and his point of view is worth quoting at some length:

All the classrooms in the *Tashbar Harav* elementary school in Tel-Aviv's Hatikva neighbourhood [where the *Kedma* school was also located, GL] are decorated with pictures of famous rabbis. A picture of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the *Shas* party, is nearly always given pride of place, in the spot normally reserved for a portrait of the president or prime minister. Pictures of kabbalist Yitzhak Kedouri are also very popular. [...]

Initially, this might seem like a marginal detail – just a matter of aesthetics, a question of taste or style. But, in fact, it could be said to define the point at which the *Ma'ayan* network parts ways with mainstream Hebrew culture, bids adieu to Zionist symbols and all thing modern, and sets its face toward a world that has its own heroes and priorities. The images on the wall reflect the goals of the *Shas* school system; the tools for achieving them are found in the curriculum. (Bar-Moha 2000).

The aesthetics of the school, as this article rightly suggests, are not a marginal detail. It is indeed a reflection of the place of *Shas*, the party and its constituency, within Israeli society, and primarily, of its position vis-à-vis Zionism, the constitutive ethos of the Israeli state. The decoration of school walls, that in most nation-states expresses the symbols of nationhood, is telling. Apparently, from its very early days, the state allowed for *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox Jews to hold on to their own school network. Yet, liberal Jews have been hardly concerned with the content of its teaching. The *Ma'ayan*, the first *sephardi* ultra-orthodox school system, has stirred antagonistic and ambivalent feelings among the liberal strata, as insinuated by the tone of the above-cited article, which show sympathy for the reasons that have made these parents send their children to these schools. Thus, describing the structure of the school day, the reporter observes regarding the content of education:

At the beginning of the school year, no secular studies, which include English, mathematics, nature, geography, and history, will be taught. As soon as the long school day begins, these subjects will be covered during the final three hours of the day. In the state system, schools that have adopted the long school day use this afternoon period to offer students help with their homework, tutoring and various enrichment activities. In the *Shas* schools, students will devote time to secular studies only after a full day of religious studies.

The genuine concern for the children's education notwithstanding, this interest, shown by liberal newspapers and political figures, must be put in its political context. In 1997, several self-proclaimed liberal intellectuals published an educational manifesto that called for the implementation of humanistic values in education, either in the form of a new educational stream or as a main goal of state education. This initiative was at once pedagogical and political, and the founders of the *Network for the Advancement of Humanistic Education in Israel* admitted that the reasons behind it related to the growing power of the religious political parties, and particularly *Shas*' phenomenal ascendance to power. Nimrod Aloni, a lecturer in the philosophy of education and a leading figure behind the initiative, preferred to see it in terms of a *kulturkampf*. Commenting on a highly controversial book on Jewish messianism, he said:

Maybe after all, not all hope is lost and the enlightened public in Israel started to comprehend the bellicose writing on the wall: the culture war waged by the religious national establishment against the democratic and progressive foundation of sane Zionism. (cited in Wurmser 1999).

This view of the 'internal' conflict in terms of a 'cultural war' between 'religious' and 'secular' is, however, partial, not to say misleading. The cultural war is only one aspect of a growing social schism between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', that has indeed been manifested in several battles, such as the case of those waged by 'seculars' against the 'penetration' of newly founded ultra-orthodox schools into their middle class suburban neighbourhoods. This conflict has been depicted as a clash of civilisations between the 'enlightened' and 'reactionaries', whereas the hatred for *Shas* – or, *Shas-phobia*, as a title of a leading article in, again, *Ha'aretz*, suggested – forms a common denominator that unifies the 'secular' middle class (Livne 2000). The latter, who were previously hardly concerned with 'the religious', mostly feared the rapid spread of *Shas*' school network (whose reality has not yet met the secular image of it). From their middle class position, they saw *Shas*' appeal to populations that were otherwise considered 'normative', i.e., Zionist and moderately religious, as a threat to the supposedly secular identity of the state and the nation. In this conflict, terms like Western and Eastern cultures were essentialised and homogenised, thereby rendering other cleavages, such as economic and educational gaps, irrelevant. Due to this, the attractiveness of *Shas* for *mizrahi* Jews – for whom ultra-religiosity was strange until recently – could not be seen as its providing a refuge, or escape, for a group with a marginal location within Israeli society.

### III

A third fairly new phenomenon in the Israeli educational sphere is the development, against a long-standing policy (or, tradition) of public schooling, of quasi-private schools. One case in issue is the foundation of several schools based on principles of democratic education. This development did not stir the same agitation as did the other schools, perhaps the

contrary. In yet another recently published article (Levy-Barzilai 2000), the story of a closure of one such school is told.

The initiative to open a democratic school in Arad, a southern town of relatively high socio-economic status, came, as in many similar cases, from a group of parents who were disappointed by the formal school system. They felt that this system was stagnating and that there was a place for a school “where children would be respected and their creativity developed”. The principles of this type of school include free choice on the side of the children, individual tutoring, informal relations between pupils and teachers, and a ‘parliament’ in which pupils, parents and teachers have equal say and vote. A Mathematics teacher and parent to a child in the school described the learning process in these words:

Of course, they learn. They are not inhibited. Their curiosity returns. Their creativity reappears. They learn also within their activities. [...] If a child stays outside [the classroom] it doesn't mean that he doesn't learn. Once I saw that I had no children in the classroom, that they were all outside. I went to the yard and we played arithmetic games with a ball. A child sits in the garden and sees a bird. He learns. He follows the ants, he learns. A child is sitting in the yard and talks to a teacher about what he feels, he learns. It's all a matter of perception. (Levy-Barzilai 2000).

In spite of the seemingly sympathetic administration at the Ministry of Education, the democratic school in Arad was ordered to close a month after its first school year started. The reason for this was a new policy initiated by the then Minister of Education of the liberal *Meretz* party, Yossi Sarid, who decided not to allow the opening of more such schools because, as he was quoted, “these schools are founded under very enlightened, nice code names, and end up as elitist schools that do not recognise the integration [policy].” Instead, he added, “I want all of the schools in Israel to become democratic, not just the exclusivists.” Sarid had his own political motives for making such a decision<sup>3</sup>, yet his observation remains valid.

The democratic schools, like various other ‘distinctive schools’ (such as the elementary schools for the arts, or for nature, environment and society), are mostly concentrated in the more affluent areas, and became one of two major paths (‘grey education’ was the other; Cohen and Cohen 1996, 9) to bypass the ‘integration’ policy that, since the late 1960s, has been the main policy of the Ministry of Education. In the absence of a recognised private educational system in Israel, these schools are characterised by being, to a large extent, self-financed by parents who organise in ‘not-for-profit’ organisations in order to rent school buildings and hire teachers. Gradually, these schools have been recognised by the authorities and granted buildings and other facilities from public funds.

<sup>3</sup> Sarid, who resigned from his post because of differences of opinion with *Shas* (another coalition member) over the extent of autonomy of the *Shas* schools, admitted so himself in this interview.

One main feature of these schools, that rendered them legitimate, was their definition as 'magnet' schools. This enabled them, first, to bypass the 'registration zones', which determine the registration of all children to a school in their immediate vicinity, and, second, to designate themselves as universal. The latter has been critical in presenting these schools as serving a diverse population with respect to place of residence or socio-demographic backgrounds. Still, these schools have enacted screening mechanisms, and acceptance is made conditional upon aptitude tests, or interviews to determine whether the child is apt for this kind of schooling. The financial capacity of the parents has not been irrelevant to this selection process (Swirski 1999, 231).

This selection process, which emphasises individual aptitude, has been a target of criticism from educators and officials who still believe in the integration policy. Yet, in the 1990s, the jargon of excellence, achievement-based criteria, and individuality had become a 'common sense' in a society undergoing a Thatcherite-like process of liberalisation and privatisation. The explicit disengagement from commitment to equal education for all, rhetorically as it might have been, paved the way for this new type of 'public-qua-private' education for the upper middle class in Israel.

### **STATE, ETHNICITY, AND EDUCATION: ARGUMENTS**

There is a recurring theme in these three stories, of de-centralisation and a retreat from notions of social integration and uniformity, that makes them emblematic of the spirit of change in Israeli society. This theme appears in various guises – whether as a challenge to the ethnocentric nationalistic hegemonic perspective, in the case of *Kedma*, or in *Shas'* attempt to de-sanctify the state symbols and replace the secular notion of Zionist nationalism with a theistic notion of Jewish nationalism, or still more in the story of the Democratic School which bluntly presents a vision of individualised and privatised social relations. In this sense, these stories constitute one story of transformation, from a social order based on collectivism and nationalist-ideological mobilisation, to a society dominated by ideals of democracy, liberalism, and individualism. Yet, at the same time, it is also a story of the break-up of Israeli society into a 'collective of collectivities', couched in an emerging 'politics of identity'. Understanding this seemingly contradictory dual process lies at the core of this dissertation, which seeks to account for these developments by tracing the roots of 'ethnic relations' from the origins of the Israeli educational system.

The growing sense of individualism, and the parallel increasing importance of collective identities, are characteristic of recent processes of globalisation, and underlie the changing social relations in contemporary nation-states (Barber 1996; Green 1997). While only some five decades ago, modernisation theorists seemed to see the 'nation' and the 'state' as overlapping concepts, these concepts now seem to be drifting apart. Specifically, the

delineation of internal boundaries and, more often than not, of cross-cutting boundaries that transcend the geographic boundaries of states, gave rise to ‘ethnicity’ as a notion which represents a sharp contradiction to the ideal of national unity and homogeneity, and, by the same token, to the ideal of egalitarian citizenship. The ubiquity of the ethnic phenomenon thus calls for further investigation of the relation between universalism and particularism in contemporary nation-states. Studying education, as an arena where these notions meet, is an attempt to reassess their meaning for social relations, and in particular, for the development of ‘ethnic relations’.

The most general question to be asked, then, is what has made ethnicity an integral feature of contemporary social relations? or, how did it turn into a main prism through which social relations are explained and understood? These questions arise from a view, shared by both structural-functional and Marxist theorists, which presupposes the inefficiency, or dysfunctionality, of social associations based on ascriptive criteria, rather than on economic interests. From this point of view, ethnicity (and its persistence) has been seen as ‘a problem’. Rejecting this view, I wish to explain why ethnicity became a part of the modern social order, or, how the modern ‘ethnospace’ has been created.

This concept, borrowed from Comaroff’s analysis of the colonisation of South Africa, suggests that alongside the making of ‘savages’ into citizens, the colonial project involved “their fabrication as ethnic, racialised subjects” (Comaroff 1998, 330-331). This suggests that while ethnicity may be seen as a problem, it is not essentially the problem of the ‘ethnicised’ group. Seeing ethnicity as a characteristic of the relationship between state and society implies that its problematic stems from the employment, by the state apparatus, of concomitant practices of universalisation and particularisation vis-à-vis its subjects. Thus, the failure to account for ‘ethnic relations’ in Israel lies, I suggest, in a subscription to the misleading representation of the state as being necessarily universal against a conception of ‘ethnic’ groups as being essentially particularistic. A critical account, then, ought to transcend this dichotomy, which has dominated both social analysis and the advancement of modernism. From such a perspective, various (ethnic, racial, gendered etc.) challenges to the modern state cannot be separated from the ways in which state universalism has been conceived of or applied. Nor can they be isolated from the ways in which social agents came to think of themselves in these terms.

One main aim of this study, therefore, is to explain the role of education in creating the Israeli ‘ethnospace’. Given the centrality of education, both in structure and content, in the processes of nation-building and state-formation (Green 1990, 80), the exploration of its history is meant to demonstrate how the effort to create a social order, based on the supremacy and universality of the state, is implicated in the making of particularism a feature of state-society relations. My prime argument, therefore, is that state policies – aimed at the

formation of a universal, centralised state-sponsored educational system – resulted in the construction of the Israeli ethnospaces by creating segregated paths and differential educational policies for children designated as ‘different’ by their social backgrounds and ethnic origins.

Thus, contrary to conventional historiographies of education in Israel, this argument suggests that the current fragmentation of education is not a ‘new’ phenomenon, and that this should not be seen as a deviation from an otherwise smooth process of modernisation. Rather, the ‘unevenness’ of the seemingly universal educational order is derived from the fact that, from its early beginnings in the pre-state period, Zionist education was established on the principles of segmentation and segregation. With the transition to statehood, these principles re-appeared (though in a different guise) and came to dominate the state system, thus entrenching ethnicity as a constitutive factor of the educational order in the state.

This argument, however, which is in agreement with at least one critical account of the uneven expansion of education amongst ethnic groups in Israel (Swirski 1999), only partially explains the relationship between ethnicity and education. Swirski, like most scholars of ‘ethnic relations’ in Israel, remains instrumentalistic in his approach to ‘ethnicity’, hence in seeing it as an attribute of specific (hegemonic or subordinated) social groups. His analysis, therefore, is thus still confined to an understanding of ethnic identities in terms of fixed, pre-defined categories, according to which the ‘ethnic’ is identified with particularism (even when it is no longer assumed that the ‘ethnics’ are essentially incapable of adopting a universalistic perspective, or that they have a ‘good’ reason for acting in a particularistic manner). The question, therefore, is how the ‘ethnic’ category has been constructed as ‘particularistic’ and in what ways this construction attributes to the state (and those other ‘ethnic’ categories that are identified with it) the quality of being ‘universal’.

A complimentary argument, therefore, must account for the entrenchment of ‘ethnicity’, or ‘ethnic differences’, as a factor in the establishment of a seemingly universal social order. More specifically, presupposing that the emerging segregated educational order has been instrumental for the advancement of the interests of hegemonic groups, this order has to be legitimised. This, I propose, is explained by the development of ‘ethnic thinking’ that enabled the state to apply diverse policies and employ differential educational measures towards hegemonic and non-hegemonic groups, and to justify this in terms of ‘inherent’ cultural differences between these groups (Grosvenor 1997, 185). ‘Ethnic thinking’, I therefore argue, presupposed the ‘problematic’ incorporation of non-Europeans, both Jews and Arabs, into the emerging Israeli society, which created the grounds for the implementation of social and educational measures that designated these two groups as non-modern, and hence constituted and reproduced the boundaries between the ‘ethnic’

categories. Yet, from a Zionist perspective, non-European Jews, unlike Arabs, were considered as an ‘assimilating’ group.

The following study thus aims at explaining, in light of these arguments, the role of education, as a state agency, in the delineation of ethnic categories and the construction of ethnic identities, or, in making Israel an ethnicised society. This concept, I argue, not only explains why educational reforms, and the changes in the structure of education at large, bear an ethnic character (as demonstrated above), but also, and more importantly, how education and schooling have constrained the democratisation of social relations in Israel. The reasons for this, I propose, lie in the peculiar conditions of nation-building and state-formation, and, particularly, in the ways in which these have determined the ‘ethnicisation’ of the educational system. More specifically, it is the prevalence of the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* (see Glossary), as a particularistic notion of state universalism, that has determined the limits of state education and thus entrenched an “ethnic division of education”, hence the ethnic character of social relations.

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

This thesis unfolds in three steps that examine the ethnicisation of social relations in Israel from three distinctive, though related, angles. Part I, which offers the most general perspective, puts forth a dual theoretical framework for the ensuing analysis. In Chapter One, I discuss theories of ethnicity and their application to explaining intra-Jewish ethnicity in Israel. Assuming that theorising social phenomena is a contextual act, the question of “what ethnicity (theoretically) means?” is similarly a question about the (changing) conceptions of, and beliefs on, the ethnic phenomenon in a specific place and at a particular time. By the same token, theorising ethnicity has not been confined to the scholarly effort to understand the ‘ethnic problem’. In Israel, at least, it was the close, sometimes intimate, relationship between academia and politics that rendered the sociology of ethnicity even more important, as theoretically articulated conceptions were invariably translated into policy programmes.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the relationship between education, nation-building and state-formation. Modern education, which in its universality and impartiality embodies the logic of the modern nation-state, has been a vehicle for the creation of modern national societies and for the determination of the supremacy of the state. Yet, education has been similarly powerful in reproducing the existing social order and, thereby, it plays a role in the re-delineation of (particularistic) social boundaries. Education, then, is an arena of contestation between state and society, and between forces of change and stagnation, but, no less important, it is also a tool in the hands of these forces that seek either to maintain, or to transform power relations.

The second step, or angle, sets to explore the politics of ethnicity, and hence the making of the ethnic categories, in relation to the nation-building and state-formation efforts before and after statehood. In Part II, I explore four challenges that pertain to the effort of the Zionist movement, and later the state, to bring about social, political, economic, and territorial integrity. These challenges – colonisation, the transition to statehood (Chapter Three), the absorption of immigration, and industrialisation (Chapter Four) – form the backdrop for the process of the ethnicisation of social relations, and have thus become crucial in explaining the peculiar features of the ethnic categories in question. Equally important, this analysis offers a time framework for the understanding of the ‘history of ethnicity’ in the broader context of Zionist nation-building and state-formation and, thus, I identify four critical turning points in which ‘ethnic relations’ have taken their shape and course. This suggests that the making of an ethnicised society was in fact not antagonistic to the processes in which social relations were undergoing modernisation, but rather a part of this very process. Specifically, it was the Zionist effort to modernise and nationalise the Jewish people that resulted in the designation of Jews of non-European origin as non-modern, and hence as constituting ‘a problem’. Yet, it was for this very reason that the state became explicitly interested in eliminating the ‘ethnic problem’.

These theoretical and historical considerations set the grounds for the final and major step that this dissertation takes, namely, an exploration of the history of education in Israel and an examination of its relationship with the ethnicisation of social relations. In Part III, then, I seek to explain how the construction of the Israeli educational system has been entangled in, and determinative for, the shaping of ‘ethnic relations’. This exploration spans the early beginnings of modern education in Ottoman Palestine through the British Mandatory period (Chapter Five), and the transition to statehood (Chapter Six), to the educational reforms in the 1950s and 1960s (Chapters Seven and Eight).

In Chapter Five, which begins with the early signs of modern education in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Palestine and ends with the withdrawal of the British Forces in 1948, I examine the fundamental features of education in Palestine, especially following the foundation of the Zionist Palestine Office in 1908. This was a critical moment in which the Jewish colonisation of Palestine became nationalised. The growing separation between Arabs and Jews in the labour and land markets was soon reflected in the educational sphere, and particularly, in the gradual appropriation of the Hebrew schools by the Zionist movement. Consequently, a federative-like educational system was formed, composed of three distinctive educational streams – the ‘General’, the *Mizrahi*, and the Labour streams (see Glossary) – each of them affiliated to, and autonomously controlled by, the Zionist political parties. This highly partyfied educational system, known as the *stream system*, was a source of power for the political parties that also determined the limits of inclusiveness of the Zionist polity. More specifically, the ideological makeup of this system was designed to

address the particular needs of European Jewish settlers, while forsaking those of non-Europeans, thus laying the ground for differential ethnic paths for education.

The characteristics of this system turned out to be critical once the Zionist polity became sovereign. In Chapter Six, I discuss the ‘transition to statehood’ and the struggles that ensued over the control of education. This ‘transition’ was marked by the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine in 1947, and it ended with the conclusion of the ‘struggle over education’ that determined state control and monopoly in education. Ironically, the resolution of this struggle, between the political parties that sought to retain the partyfied character of education and the state, was made possible by the reproduction of the voluntaristic features of the pre-state system. Thus, the *stream system* was abolished, yet, the new educational order, under the banner of *Mamlakhtiyut*, was based on the ‘old’ division between religious and non-religious education. This, however, was made at the expense of the non-European immigrants who were thus sent, en masse, to the religious schools. In turn, this contributed to their definition as ‘different’ and as non-modern, and as in need of special educational measures in order to become full members of Zionist society.

These measures are the subject matter of Chapters Seven and Eight, in which I explore the changes in the education policy towards non-European Jews, and their implications for the crystallisation of a *mizrahi* ethnic identity. Chapter Seven goes back to the 1942 ‘Million Plan’ that marked the Zionist ‘turn to the Orient’, and the making of Oriental Jewry as a main reservoir of human power for the Zionist national project. This gave rise to a growing concern over the education of Oriental children and, particularly, to a view of their incorporation in the Zionist education system as ‘a problem’. This conception underlay the absorption of the Great Immigration following statehood, and it was translated into a shift from a policy of ‘egalitarianism’ to a policy of ‘compensatory education’ that was designed to address the ‘special’ needs of this population.

In Chapter Eight, which concludes the analysis, I further discuss the changing education policy and, particularly, the shift to a policy of ‘integration’, which was also intertwined with a structural re-organisation of the school system. The urgent need to introduce the notion of ‘integration’ emerged after the 1959 *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, when it turned out that the dissatisfaction of poor *mizrahi* Jews had taken a clear ethnic form. The notion of integration (or desegregation), which soon became a pretext for the introduction of the structural reform, and for the intertwining of the two policies within the 1968 Educational Reform Programme, thus marked a turning point in the pattern of state-society relationship. Particularly, it reflected the dissociation of the state from the political parties, and the re-definition of the social order on the principles of citizenship. In this sense, this was the precursor of the liberalisation of social relations, but, concomitantly, as was attested to by the principles of

the *integration plan*, it equally set the ground for the development of a ‘politics of identity’ in Israeli society.

Ending the analysis at the 1968 Educational Reform is thus not an arbitrary choice. This point, I suggest, marks the end of one period and the beginning of a new one, and thus it brings me full circle to my point of departure, that is, to the contemporary changes in education and the fragmentation of the educational system along ethnic lines. The 1968 Reform, I argue, signifies the replacement of principles of collectivism and ideological commitment with a ‘new’ notion of meritocracy. The new educational (hence, social) order thus implied the predominance of the notion of individual achievement, and also, if only rhetorically, the equality of *all* social groups vis-à-vis the state. This facilitated the ‘rolling back’ of the state and its dissociation from the dominant *ashkenazi* group, and no less important, the rise of ‘other’ ethnic groups. In this respect, the predominance of neo-liberalism in the 1990s was only a logical extension of the principles of integration.

## CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH

The contribution of this study lies, primarily, in its treatment of ethnicity as a feature of social relations and, in particular, as a phenomenon characteristic of the relationship between state and society, and not of a specific social group. This study of ethnic relations is meant to expand our understanding of the history of social relations in Israel in three main ways. First, a state-society perspective offers an attempt to overcome the theoretical and conceptual limitations of both the once dominant structural-functional approach and of the contemporary critical approach in explaining ‘ethnic relations’. More specifically, while these explanations mainly focused on either the features of the ethnic group itself, or the conditions under which it was ‘politicised’, little has been said on the construction of ethnic identities as a political phenomenon. This study seeks to correct this by concentrating on the process of ethnicisation, and by placing this process within the context of state-society relationship. Ethnicity, it is argued, cannot be reduced either to its manifestations (be they objective or subjective, modern or primordial etc.), or to other interests that have allegedly made ethnicity salient. Nor can ethnic identity(ies) be taken for granted. Casting ethnic identity as a structural effect of the construction of the modern capitalist nation-state better explains why (and how) ethnicity has become a salient feature of a social order that, both by the intentions of its advocates and by its own logic, was supposed to be ‘ethnic blind’.

This latter point relates to the study’s second contribution, which is to make the study of ethnicity a means to explain the character of social relations. Most accounts of ethnicity, despite their cognisance of the highly centralised process of immigrant absorption in Israel, offer explanations whose focus is on ‘society’ rather than on the ‘state’. This renders the understanding of ethnicity teleological insofar as it ascribes the ‘ethnic’ organisation of

groups to their ‘ethnicity’. Furthermore, from a ‘society-centred’ perspective, the ‘state’ is seen merely as an arena for pre-determined conflict between different ‘cultural groups’. The state, in spite of its central role in the encounter between these groups, is thus seen to be indifferent to the actual character of ‘ethnic relations’. Yet, not only is the formation of ‘ethnic’ groups not arbitrary, it also reflects the vested interest of the state itself in ‘ethnic relations’. Arguably, identifying the role of the state in the particulars of ‘ethnic relations’, that is, in defining which group is considered ‘ethnic’, is bound to also explain the ‘ethnicised’ character of state-society relations, and how this relationship compels social groups to organise on an ethnic basis, as currently exemplified by the socio-political organisation of recent immigrants from the former USSR.

Finally, this study is meant to add to the historiography of education in Israel, and thus to Israeli political history at large. There are only a few studies that have sought to offer an extensive, let alone critical, account of the history of education in Israel. Most of them, nonetheless, exhibit an adherence to a structural-functionalist conception of social relations in general, and of the relationship between education and politics in particular (Levy and Saporta 2000). This study aims to offer a critical perspective, rooted in the principles of “new social history”, which, in one view,

directs attention to people whose names never figured in the older history books, the people who were deprived or neglected in their own time and whose participation in government was minimal or non-existent, whose attitudes towards ‘authority’ could be deferential or resentful, passive or hostile. (Briggs 1989, 162).

This perspective is meant to counter ‘historicism’, the adherents of which, Benjamin (1969, *thesis* 7, p. 258) wrote, empathise with the victor. Hence, searching for the history of the ‘conquered’, this study is designed, by its focus on education, to offer an alternative to the more established history of Zionist nation-building and state-formation. This alternative, based on archival work and on a critical analysis of existing accounts of the history of education, does not presuppose the benevolent intentions of policymakers in their actions, and thus enables me to identify and examine those historical moments when other courses of action that would affect the ethnicisation of social relations were, at least hypothetically, available. I thus wish to offer a more susceptible perspective to the dynamic of history and social action, which is less constrained by the actual historical results. In this respect, this study is meant to offer a critique of the history of education and ethnicity that, in Weber’s formulation, is made from the standpoint of ‘becoming’, and not in the domain of ‘necessity’ (Weber 1949 [1905], 165).

# PART I

## THEORIES OF ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION

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“Ethnic identities”, Comaroff (1996, 165-166) contends, “are not things but relations; [...] their content is wrought in the particularities of their ongoing historical construction.” Therefore, he continues, “there cannot be a theory of ethnicity or nationality *per se*, only a theory of history capable of elucidating the empowered production of difference and identity.” Taking this assertion as a premise for my investigation of ethnicity in Israel, I wish to examine how Israeli society became an ethnicised society and to explore the role of the state in perpetuating and creating ethnic categories and identities, that is, in the ethnicisation of social relations.

My contention with the existing study of ethnicity in Israel may be put forth quite simply: its theorisation lacks reference to the state, to its role and position *vis-à-vis* societal forces and groupings. Thus, while various theoretical perspectives have been employed and applied to the study of inter-group relations – i.e., either intra-Jewish or Jewish-Arab relations (usually separately) – their focus has tended to be ‘societal’ and not ‘statist’, thus missing, if not completely ignoring, the complexity of state-society relations and, particularly, the role of the state in perpetuating and maintaining internal boundaries within society (see also, Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 30).

More specifically, Israeli sociology of ethnicity has evolved from understanding ethnicity as ‘*a problem*’ – and, particularly, as the problem of the ‘ethnic’ group, especially of the most recent immigrants (or, its individual members) – to its problematisation in the context of the structure of power in Israel, as a modern, capitalist nation-state. This shift from primordialist

conceptions of ethnic identities to the more contextual, circumstantial conceptions, however, has only been partial. Arguably, these critical explanations, while trying to avoid essentialism, tend to completely discard the primordial aspect of ethnic identities (compare: Laitin 1998, 20-21). They thus fall short of explaining, to borrow from Comaroff (1998, 331), how ‘the landscape has been transformed into an ethnospaces’, and how people came to think of themselves in ethnic terms. By highlighting the role of the state in creating ethnicised subjects, I wish to overcome this lacuna in contemporary understanding of ethnicity in Israel.

Taking the state into account renders the history of ethnic relations somewhat differently. Ethnicity, or ethnic identity, has not been inflicted upon modern societies from the ‘outside’, exogenously as it were; neither by simply transplanting pre-modern ideological constructs in a substantially modern setting (like functionalists tend to argue), or by mobilising the latent, sometimes inexplicable, powers of the ‘ethnie’ (as instrumentalists believe). Rather, ethnicity is a relationship which denotes the relative position of groups vis-à-vis the state. It is, specifically, a type of social affiliation emerging from ‘within’ society and imposed on a specific group of people, usually of the weaker strata of society, by those who sought to ‘modernise’ that group.<sup>1</sup> Ethnicity, therefore, is neither an unintentional feature of social relations, nor a mere tool for the determination of power relations. It is rather an integral factor in the constitution of a modern social order defined by the supremacy of state power, and, particularly, by the notions of nationhood and statehood as embodying the desired and necessary form of identification in modern societies. The process of ethnicisation, one case of which this dissertation illustrates, is thus contingent upon the establishment of a nation-state as an overriding source of identification (universalisation), hence eliminating or subordinating any other (particularistic) forms of identification.

The process of ethnicisation, whereby ethnic identities are constantly formed and re-formed – or, paraphrasing Grosvenor (1997, 185), the development of ‘ethnic thinking’, which refers to the entrenchment of ethnic categories in common conceptions of social relations – occurs simultaneously in all spheres of social relations. In Chapter One, I explore how the concept of ethnicity has been defined and used in social theory. If, as many scholars of ethnicity propose, ethnic categories are socially constructed, then, our conception of them is similarly constructed. Social theory offers one arena where these processes take place (other discernible arenas could be the popular media or literature, to give only two examples). In this sense, an exploration into the sociology of ethnicity, especially in Israel, where

<sup>1</sup> Nederveen Pieterse (1996, 33) proposes the term “ethnicities-in-relation”, a term which suggests that “ethnicisation is part of a chain reaction”, and that “in many situations *new* subjects are termed ethnic whereas *established* subjects or the dominant group remain outside the field of vision” (*italics* added). Interestingly, David Riesman (1953), who is thought to be the first to use ethnicity with its contemporary meaning, referred to it in the following way: “The groups who, by reason of rural or small town location, ethnicity, or other parochialism, feel threatened by the better educated upper-middle-class people.” (cited in Sollors 1996, 7).

sociologists were actively involved in the process of immigrant absorption (Shokeid 2000), is not merely a theoretical act. It also reflects the changing social conception of ethnicity and ethnic relations. This chapter thus aims at critically reviewing these conceptions and their implications for the understanding of ethnicity and the state.

In Chapter Two, I focus on education, nation-building, and state-formation, and on their relationship to the processes of universalisation and ethnicisation. Education, I argue, is not simply one arena in which power relations are reflected, but it is also where these relations are formed and entrenched, in their class, ethnic, gendered, racial forms etc. (e.g., Bowles and Gintis 1977, 5). In this respect, the focus on education is not merely an analytical tool for the examination of the politics of ethnicity. Rather, it is a framework integrally related to the ways in which ethnic politics became an immanent feature of the social, economic, cultural, and political relations within Israeli society. In this respect, the study of the history of education is bound to render the processes of nation-building and state-formation – and their relation to the construction of ethnic identities – comprehensible.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THEORIES OF ETHNICITY: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT

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Most studies of ethnic relations begin with a mapping and classification of theories and explanations of ethnicity. Classificatory criteria are almost as ubiquitous as theories of ethnicity themselves. These criteria refer to the causes for ethnic groupings, the parameters for delineating ethnic boundaries, the source of ethnicity, etc.<sup>1</sup> What characterises these classifications, however, is their tendency to present theories of ethnicity, and by implication ethnicity itself, in terms of an either/or phenomenon. More specifically, they reinforce discourses of ethnicity that view ethnic boundaries as fixed rather than dynamic, discourses that tend to describe rather than explain why ethnic boundaries exist in their specificity, and what they consist of.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these classifications, hence categorisations, confine the study of ethnicity (as with the study of any other social phenomenon) within the power relations that engendered these categories at the first place (Williams 1989, 429-430). These categories conform to, and follow on from, a sharp division between the forces of order and forces of disorder (Tilly 1984, 12), and thus reflect and reinforce a particular conception of the desired social order.

Not, however, anybody's conception. "These sharp dichotomies", Tilly claims, "rest on a sense that social order is fragile [and they] express the will of power-holders – actual or

<sup>1</sup> Banks (1996, 47) enumerates several 'polar extremes' between which various theories oscillate: "the individual versus the group; the contents of an ethnic identity versus its boundary; the primordial gut feeling of an identity versus its instrumental expression; ethnicity as an all-inclusive general theory versus ethnicity as a limited approach to particular problems." Thompson (1989, 15) also suggests a few binaries of his own, such as between biologically based universalist theories (e.g., sociobiology and the 'naturalist strain' of primordialism) and socially based non-universalist theories (like the 'social-historical strain' of primordialism, assimilationism, world-system theory, and Marxian approaches). Another criterion for comparison, he offers, is whether the theories are 'individualist' or 'holistic' (structural) in their ontology. "Sociobiology, primordialism and assimilationism are individualist, whereas world-system theory and Marxian approaches are heavily structural." Burgess (1978) suggests two main axes for classification: the 'rationality' vs. 'non-rationality' of the group's motivation and the objective/subjective differentiation. Accordingly, the debate focuses on the nature of the criteria that define ethnicity. "For most social scientists", Burgess (1978, 268-270) writes, "the *symbolic* aspects of ethnicity are fundamental objective criteria." These elements, or markers, she goes on, "are culturally *defined* and used in group differentiation." Identity and ethnic consciousness, in contrast, form the subjective factors for ethnicity.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Comaroff's (1996, 164-165) objection to these theories. "How many more times", he argues against the primordialist position, "it is necessary to prove that all ethnic identities are historical creations before primordialism is consigned, finally, to the trash heap of ideas past." On the far end of this continuum, he views the problem with constructionism as different: "It is simply not a theory, merely a broad assertion to the effect that social identities are products of human agency."

would-be – to improve the people around them, by means of coercion and persuasion, at a minimum cost” (Tilly 1984, 12-13; see also, Horton 1966, 705-706). Social categories rest upon such dichotomies, hence, they do not represent an objective knowledge of the world (Foucault 1981). They, in fact, claim the rationality of the modern social order against the non-rationality of the ‘older’ (dis)order. Dichotomies, then, are not ‘value-free’ and serve those who ‘create’ them as a means to acquire power and control over the subjects of these categorisations, and, in this sense, they become a tool for reproducing a social order in which those who are identified as ‘modern’ gain access to positions of power and are capable of retaining their control over society.

Within the context of theories of ethnicity the designation of a group, or groups, as ‘ethnic’ renders the other as ‘non-ethnic’, and this division, unsurprisingly, overlaps with the ‘modern’ vs. ‘non-modern’ dichotomy. More specifically, ‘ethnic’ refers to those who live at the margins of society, whereas “established subjects or the dominant group remain outside the field of vision” (Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 33).<sup>3</sup> The tendency, then, to depict the world of social phenomena in binary terms, renders the language of ethnicity deceptive, “because of its essentialist logic with its assumption of continuity and sameness, [...] suggesting dichotomies of tradition and modernity old and new, while in the process concealing the modernity and newness of ethnic responses.” (*ibid.* 29).

Theories of ethnicity, as Nederveen Pieterse (1996, 29) critically observed, generated a static and disabling discourse of ethnicity, which “implies that ethnic sentiments and identifications are somehow primordial.”<sup>4</sup> This discourse “overlooks and underplays how ethnicity changes, so that what is happening is not the reassertion of an old identity but the creation of a new one.” In a somewhat different formulation, what these theories miss is the emergence of a “rhetoric of alternative modernities” (Comaroff 1996, 167). In this respect, most theories of ethnicity (again, most evidently the Israeli case), tend to subscribe, uncritically, to the pre-dominance and superiority of the modern social order, as representing

<sup>3</sup> Abner Cohen (1974, xxi), e.g., emphasised that city men “are indeed as ‘ethnic’ as any ethnic group can be. But they are not usually described as an ethnic group because the term is principally social and political, and not sociological [...] To many people, the term ethnicity connotes minority status, lower class, or migrancy.” However, as Williams (1989, 410) rightly argues, “Cohen’s interest-group approach is [...] weakened by his dismissal, as a terminology problem, of lay and academic tendencies to equate ethnic with lower-class or ‘minority’ status. [...] this assertion still fails to account for the ideological implications of lay and academic uses of these terms.” This tendency to dismiss lay uses of ethnicity simply as being theoretically incoherent, or to search for theoretical clarity at the expense of explanation, is indeed a problem in theories of ethnicity to which Comaroff attends in his dismissal of the possibility of ‘producing’ a theory of ethnicity (see above).

<sup>4</sup> Essentialism is a characteristic underpinning of the primordialist and the socio-biological explanations of ethnicity. Only a few scholars have adopted a ‘pure’ primordialist approach (maybe Isaacs [1975] is the only good example: see Banks 1996, 39). Yet, those who focused on people’s own experience of ethnicity as primordial tended also to conceptualise this identity in primordial terms, and thus ended up reinforcing this identity’s essentialist conception (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Shils 1975; Geertz 1963; for a critique of the latter, see Laitin 1986, 12-14). The most articulated socio-biological explanation is offered by van-der Berghe (1967). The main, but certainly not the only, problem with these explanations is that they fail to account for change and for the dynamic of the ascent and descent of ethnic groups (for a critique, see Thompson 1989, Chapters 2-3; Eller and Coughlan 1993).

rationality and effectiveness, and so as being morally and functionally superior to pre-existing social associations. But, more significantly, this view emphasises the non-rationality of the social organisation of the ‘ethnic group’, compared to the alleged rational behaviour and organisation of those groups that are referred to as ‘society’.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between the boundaries of a group and its contents, which also relates to the internal and external boundaries of ‘society’ (e.g., Comaroff 1996, 170), began to concern anthropological studies of ethnicity especially after Barth’s seminal introduction to his edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Barth 1969).<sup>6</sup> It is, Barth claimed, the boundaries that matter for the definition of an ethnic group, and not its ‘cultural stuff’. His interest in ‘boundaries’ was important mainly because it came at a time when anthropology shifted away from studying ‘tribes’, and then ‘ethnic groups’, as “corporate social phenomena”, and because he was writing against the preoccupation with, and the taking for granted of, these dimensions of order and institutionalised social groupings within the dominant structural-functional school (Jenkins 1997, 16-17). Still, Barth’s preoccupation with the concepts of ‘boundary’ and ‘group-ness’ left him uninterested in the contents of ethnicity (e.g., Banks 1996, 13). This lack of interest, however, has contributed to the reification of the ethnic group, i.e., essentialism, because despite the growing understanding that boundaries are socially constructed, “it allows [us] to celebrate the situational flexibility of ethnicity without taking on board the more difficult questions – about the nature of collective social forms” (Jenkins 1997, 21).<sup>7</sup> This latter criticism explains how even critical accounts ended up essentialising ethnic groups and, more specifically, taking for granted the ‘non-modernity’ of ethnic groups against the (self-acclaimed) ‘modernity’ of non-ethnic groups.

After Barth, it was clear that what matters is not simply the boundary of the ethnic group, or its contents, but the relationship between them. As one critic (Handelman 1977, 200)

<sup>5</sup> “In the classic case”, writes Burgess (1978, 266), “ethnicity is viewed essentially as a primordial, innate, or ‘instinctive’ predisposition. [...] some ‘non-rationalists’ speak of the primordial attachment in ethnic diversity that stem from the ‘givens’ of social existence.” In contrast, “Many find the ‘non-rational’ arguments overly deterministic or uninformative. [...] ethnicity is seen as a rational group response to social pressures and a basis for group action.” (ibid. p. 267). This is a common description of the non-rational/rational dichotomy that overlaps the primordialist/constructionist one. However, even the latter view tends, in many cases, only to ‘rationalise’ what seems to it as a non-rational response that replaces other more rational ones (this is symptomatic, I think, of Marxist analyses that wonder why class struggle never occurs).

<sup>6</sup> Thompson (1989, 8) rightly suggests that although this was “a much needed corrective in anthropology, [...] this view was already accepted in the other social sciences.” (See also ibid. note 10, pp. 18-19). Weber’s conception of ‘social closure’ (see Stone 1995, 397-399) is only one manifestation of the interest in boundaries. More political analyses, such as *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Glazer and Moynihan 1963), acknowledged, explicitly or implicitly, that group-boundaries are socially constructed. As they maintain in one passage: “One could not predict from its first arrival what it might become or, indeed, whom it might contain. The group is not a purely biological phenomenon. [...] Ethnic groups then, [...] are continually recreated by new experiences in America.” (ibid. 16-17).

<sup>7</sup> This criticism, made by Ronald Cohen (1978, 386-387), conforms to other criticisms that pointed to Barth’s position as being close to the primordialist end of the scale (Banks 1996, 13). His work was also criticised for its emphasis on free will and choice and the failure to account for hierarchy and stratification within poly-ethnic systems (ibid. 15-16).

contended, “‘cultural stuff’ [...] and ethnic boundaries mutually modify and support one another.” Assertions of this kind had made the ‘historical perspective’ essential for the study of ethnic groups and identities (Jenkins 1997, 52), a shift in approach which was also attributed to the revitalization of a Weberian legacy in this field (Stone 1995, 398). Ethnicity has been seen as transactional, whereas these transactions were of both internal and external processes of definition (Jenkins 1997, 53). It became vital to concentrate on “the sociological process of group formation” (Stone 1995, 396), as evinced in the shift in anthropology towards “processes of group identification rather than social categorisation” (Jenkins 1997, 55). Soon, the question of ‘who defines an ethnic group?’ was raised.

This question was indeed important. One (and by now obvious) answer was social science and social scientists. In a critical analysis of anthropological theorisation of ethnicity, Williams (1989) points to the relation between the determination of the boundaries and content of the ‘ethnic group’, and position of the researcher vis-à-vis her or his research subject. Examining Ronald Cohen’s account of the shift to ethnicity in the 1970s, and the ‘ubiquitous presence of ethnicity’ in research and in lay usage (Cohen 1978, 379), Williams (1989, 413-414) posits:

The unit problem was also the objective-vs.-subjective problem in that it brought to the fore issues of who (the anthropologists or their subjects) would construct the categories of identification and what difference it would make for description, analysis, and theory. [...] Ideologically, this meant that for many of the citizens of these new [postcolonial] states, anthropological designations of group identity, and the labels used to generalize about them, were fundamentally colonial.

This, of course, was worse for the colonised than for the anthropologists. Yet, the question regarding the objectivity of an ethnic group was not divorced from the role of social scientists in objectifying these socio-political entities (Comaroff 1998, 332). The objectification of group identity was, first and foremost, a political act (Comaroff 1996, 166), brought about primarily by political (mostly colonial) elites who saw subordinated groups as tribes, or races, and whom anthropologists designated ‘ethnic’ (e.g., Williams 1989, 404). This understanding yields an immediate implication for social scientists: that the question of what constitutes an ethnic group, and where its boundaries lie, should be a matter for the conclusions of analysis, and not for its presuppositions.

This brings me back to Comaroff’s rejection of the possibility of ‘a theory of ethnicity’. The debate between the various approaches continues, and seems to be inconclusive as long as these theoretical artefacts are reinforced by the politics of both nationalism and ethnicity, and reappear as ideologies (Comaroff 1996, 180).<sup>8</sup> If so, the ‘solution’ would not be in yet

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Marx (1998, 19) makes this argument regarding the analysis of racial relations and contends further that social movement theorists, “like theorists of racial domination, [...] tended to assume as a given the salient

another attempt to demonstrate the superiority of one type of explanation over the other, but in a better understanding of the conditions under which a specific explanation prevails and those under which it is replaced or challenged.

In the following, I wish to offer an exploration of the shifting conceptions of ethnicity in their socio-political historical context. This exploration traces the shift from primordialist through instrumentalist to recent constructivist explanations of ethnic relations, with two main themes underpinning this review: **a)** the nature of the ‘ethnic problem’, and, **b)** the role of the state in the problematisation of ethnicity and ethnic relations.

- a)** Generally speaking, theories of ethnicity differ in how they identify the ‘ethnic problem’, and hence in determining what, or ‘who’!, is responsible for its emergence as a problem. The question, therefore, is how did various approaches conceive of the ‘ethnic problem’ and how was this conception implicated in the development of ethnic relations?
- b)** Theories of ethnicity also differ in their conception of the state. This is related to the ethnic question in two main ways. First, since scientific knowledge is related to political knowledge (or, political practice), the former question is tied to the way in which the state, as a centre and a source of political power, is problematised. Second, given the importance of social boundaries, of various kinds (see Mitchell 1991), for the very existence of the state, the discussion over the ‘ethnic boundary’ cannot be isolated from a discussion about how the state ‘manages’ social boundaries. The problem of the state is not so much a particular problem in ‘theories of ethnicity’, but rather a reflection of a deeper theoretical controversy on state-society relations (e.g., Isaac 1987a; Held 1983). What makes this question pertinent for the following exposition is that, in Israel, while various explanations differed in both their assumptions and conclusions regarding the nature of the ethnic phenomenon, they still shared a misconception regarding the role of the state in perpetuating and delineating ethnic boundaries.

## ETHNICITY – PLACING THEORIES IN CONTEXT

The history of theories of ethnicity may be divided into three distinct periods. The first period, between the early 1950s and early 1970s, saw ethnicity gradually moving to the forefront of the social and political analysis. In their heydays, modernisation theories did not consider ethnicity as a ‘problem’, but rather as a temporary phenomenon bound to wither away with the progression of modernity (e.g., Thompson 1989, 2; Comaroff 1996, 164). ‘Ethnicity’, or ‘tribalism’ as anthropologists then referred to it, belonged to the plains of Africa and not to the developed First World (Cohen A. 1974; Williams 1989, 404; Banks 1996, 24). This changed in the early 1970s. Then, it turned out that de-colonisation did not

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identity around which mobilisation (or domination) builds. [...] The question remains, Why does race become salient at all, with black singled out?”

make ethnic affiliations obsolete in the colonies, and, more significantly, that ethnicity, or ‘cultural localism’ (Comaroff 1996, 162), was a ubiquitous phenomenon even in metropolitan areas (Cohen R. 1978, 379; Williams 1989, 402; Banks 1996, 49). Ethnicity had begun to be explained in terms of conflicts and interests, and not as a residual effect of modernisation. In the 1980s, the ‘ethnic question’ became implicated in the developing concept of ‘identity politics’, hence as a challenge not only to the more ‘conservative’ notions of modernity and modernisation, but also to its critical assessments. This criticism, grounded in post-colonial theories and in social constructivism (e.g., Calhoun 1994, 12 cf.), propagated ‘cultural pluralism’ as a counterbalance to the repressive aspects of modernity, in both its idealistic and critical formulations. One reflection of this shift was the retreat from an assimilationist approach to the formation of a homogeneous national identity to a multiculturalist discourse that offered instead a hyphenated ‘ethnic-national’ identity.

The main shift in explanatory models of ethnicity between the first and the second period was reflected in the context of the distinction between primordiality and instrumentality (Comaroff 1996, 165; Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 27). The debate between those two positions within the anthropology of ethnicity has revolved around the *reasons* for the existence of ethnicity. “At its most extreme”, Banks explains (1996, 39),

the primordiality position would hold that ethnicity is an innate aspect of human identity. It is a given, requiring description rather than explanation. At the other end of the scale, the instrumentalist position (known sometimes as the ‘circumstantialist’ approach) would hold that ethnicity is an artefact, created by individuals or groups to bring together a group of people for some common purpose.

The former category represents explanations that take ethnicity for granted, and hold an essentialist view of ethnic identity, suggesting that it always exists waiting to resurface “when modernisation fails or cracks” (Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 27). The latter, in contrast, assumes that ethnic identities are socially constructed. This explanatory shift was not merely theoretical, but involved, sometimes reflected, a change in the ‘external’ socio-political setting. In fact, politics has been vital for our understanding of theoretical shifts and, as has already been suggested (Ram 1995a, 8), they have always been connected. This interconnectedness is the subject matter of the following analysis.

### **The first wave – modernisation and nation-building**

‘Ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic group’, as many scholars have noticed, are relatively new (theoretical) terms that were first used (in English) only in the early 1950s.<sup>9</sup> The sociology of ethnicity has thus developed after World War II in conjunction with the rise of new modern

<sup>9</sup> Except for Max Weber, in his *Economy and Society*, none of the founding fathers of modern sociology made any reference to these terms (Eriksen 1997, 33). Prior to Reismen (see above footnote 1), there are earlier references to the use of the term in 1948 (Jenkins 1997, 10), and in 1942 (Lloyd-Warner and Lunt 1996 [1942]).

nation-states following the de-colonisation of the non-Western world. Under the presuppositions of modernisation theories that prevailed during the 1950s and 1960s, de-colonisation was seen as a (linear) transition from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ societies (Geertz 1963; Gellner 1983; for critical assessments see, Comaroff 1996, 162). Accordingly, social relations, formerly based on kinship and ascriptive criteria, were bound to be replaced by a functional, voluntaristic type of affiliation based on citizenship. Within the modernisation school of thought, liberal theorists, who were predominately functionalists in their conception of the social order, came closer to seeing ethnicity in essentialist terms and tended to view ethnic affiliations as being dysfunctional and inconsistent with the needs of modern society (e.g., Deutsch 1953 190; also Thompson 1989, 74). Nation-building, and hence the formation of national identity, was seen as a gradual, linear and progressive process, based on assimilation, through which the nation-state becomes the main and only locus for the definition of social relations and values. Underpinning this approach was the presupposition that civic affiliation was both functionally and morally required for the progression of modernity, and hence that the transition from primordial to civic social ties, which was compatible with the character and the needs of the nation-state (see Enloe 1973, 9-11), would eventually occur. In this context, ethnicity, when and where it surfaced, was seen as a problem.

Liberal-functionalist theorists have not been alone in considering the prevalence of ethnicity as a threat to the development of a modern social order (Mason 1986, 11). On the left too, the idea that ethnic ties still constitute an effective bonding has been seen, specifically by functionalist Marxist theorists<sup>10</sup>, as a liability and a hindrance to the development of rational, class-based social associations (Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 26). Ethnicity, and politics of identity in general, thus seemed to impede the development of a liberating class-consciousness and progressive politics (e.g., Solomos and Back 1995, 411). While both Liberals and Marxists shared an understanding of ethnicity as being dysfunctional and non-rational (see also, Burgess 1978, 272-273), they differed in their response. Structural-functional theorist sought to explain the problem by turning to ‘primordialism’ and by pinning the failure of modernisation on the rigidity of ethnic affiliations (e.g., Geertz 1963). Critical theorists, in contrast, suggested that the problem arises from the fact that there are other, objective interests that rigidify ethnic bonding.

<sup>10</sup> Marxist theorists, as Thompson (1989, 141-143) notes, rarely referred to the dynamics of race or ethnicity. Thompson himself refers to what he distinguishes as Neo-Marxist approaches to race and ethnicity in which ‘mode of production analysis’ is central. In some formulations, these analyses sought to accommodate the class struggle with the anti-racism struggle (*ibid.* Ch. 6). However, he claims (p. 145), certain Neo-Marxist accounts were reductionist and viewed “racial and ethnic formations as secondary or epiphenomenal to class formations”, or denied “either the autonomy or significance of their everyday oppression or their struggles for equality.” For another critique of the Marxist approach to ethnicity, see Parkin (1979, Ch. 3).

### Israel: the dominance of structural-functionalism

The modernisation approach had its parallels in Israeli sociology of ethnicity. In fact, Israeli sociology owes much to the study of ethnic relations, which played a constitutive role in its development as a discipline. The first sociology department in Israel, at the Hebrew University, grew out of a research seminar – sponsored by the Department of Oriental Jews at the Jewish Agency – on Oriental Jews, their social predicament and their absorption in the Zionist polity (Eisenstadt, 1951; Kimmerling, 1992, 448; Ram 1995a, 16). This ‘inauguration’ was more than a symbolic manifestation of the interrelationships between the Zionist movement and this Jewry, as well as between the Israeli political and academic establishments (see Shamir and Avnon, 1999). It is, therefore, not surprising to find great resemblance between the theoretical explanations supplied by academia and the course of action taken by state agencies as, for example, in the policy of immigrant absorption and in the planning of educational policy. Academia, in fact, provided a scientific cloak for governmental policy, and shared its dogmatic conceptions of the power of modernisation to bring about social change and of the ability of the state to engage in enlightened social engineering (see Swirsky 1993; Ram 1995a, Ch. 3).

The structural-functional school dominated Israeli sociology until the 1970s, and it offered an ‘idealistic’, normative approach to the study of social and ethnic relations (on this sociological school, see Ram 1995a, 26-30). Ethnic phenomena, seen through the ‘modernisation’ perspective, were conceptualised and explained as a *cultural* rather than *political* problem (Eisenstadt 1951; 1954; *Megamot* 1952). They were a ‘problem’ because they displayed a discernible ‘cultural gap’ between traditionalist-particularistic ‘ethnic’ group(s) and society. For this purpose, ‘society’ was seen as being comprised of those social groups whose cultural characteristics were compatible with the needs of the modern state, and who shared consent on its foundations. For this perspective, which offered a structural-functionalist formulation for the Zionist ideology, ethno-national differences (i.e., Arab-Jewish) and intra-Jewish ethnicity (i.e., *mizrahi-ashkenazi*) were two separate issues.<sup>11</sup> The exclusion of the Arab minority from the Zionist vision of a Western-like modern state did not constitute a theoretical problem because of this approach’s insistence on consent, and on a conception of the state as the embodiment of a singular, unitary national identity. Within the Jewish sector, however, ethnic affiliations signified the persistence of ‘traditionalism’ and an obstacle to the articulation of an all-encompassing Israeli/Jewish national identity. The encounter between the ‘ethnic’ group and modern society, it was thus contended, would inevitably lead the former to recognise the normative and functional inferiority of their identification and organisation on traditionalist premises, hence to its disappearance. The

<sup>11</sup> In fact, neither phenomena was conceptualised as ‘ethnic’. Whereas the Arab-Jewish schism was termed ‘national’, and hence had no inherent bearing on the Jewish nation-building process, intra-Jewish relations were coined by the Hebrew term, *Edah* (see Glossary: *mizrahi*), which also signified their view of the ethnic problem in Israel as unique and distinct from any other ethnic phenomena, hence temporary.

responsibility for change rested with the ‘ethnic’ group itself, and even more so, with its individual members (e.g., Eisenstadt 1986, 18; Cohen E. 1983, 116).

Concomitantly, the structural-functional approach ascribed to the state a central role in perpetuating this transformation and in directing the less-advanced, or ‘primitive’, groups to consciously accept that their forms of life had an ineffective-immoral basis, and, as a result, to adopt, at once, a collectivist national, *and* individualist civic identity. The state, in this view, was identified as an authentic, indispensable political manifestation of a modern social order, based on the rationality of civic affiliation and on the morality of nationhood. This lay the grounds for a conception of the state as an impartial agent of modernisation, which justified, in the eyes of the advocates of ‘modernisation’, the policy of ‘integration through cultural assimilation’ (the melting pot policy). This policy was based on the eradication of the cultural attributes of Oriental Jews, and on a demand that they would integrate as individuals into society (e.g., Bar-Yosef 1980).

The deterministic expectation of modernisation theories that non-national and non-individualistic social affiliations would simply wither away led their advocates to see ethnicity as a problem. Yet, it was not the problem of ‘society’, which by definition was viewed as modern, but of the ethnic group itself, and its individual members. This was how S. N. Eisenstadt, Israel’s most prominent sociologist, identified the problem in his *Introduction to the Study of the Sociological Structure of the Oriental Communities* (1947), a monograph that stemmed from the above-mentioned seminar:

The fundamental problem that we faced was the problem of the adaptation and the amalgamation of the Oriental communities in the life of the *yishuv* [see Glossary]. It seems, from the given facts, that this adaptation is not always successful, and that the encounter with the new *yishuv* generates various phenomena of social disintegration. The broad and general hypothesis that seems to us to explain these phenomena is that we are facing a crisis of the continuation of social situations of the Oriental Jews. In terms of sociological theory this is a peculiar situation of ‘anomie’. (Eisenstadt 1947, 6-7; 1950, 204-205).

In a footnote, Eisenstadt explained the term ‘anomie’ as “the lack of an organised system of norms that determines a uniform pattern of social behaviour”, and attributed its original usage in sociological literature to Durkheim’s study of suicide.<sup>12</sup> He emphasised that what he was describing and analysing was one of the most interesting examples of “culture contact”, a term that became the underpinning of most analyses of ethnic relations in Israel for some three decades. In the epilogue, which focused on “the social politics towards Oriental Jews”, Eisenstadt (1947, 39) reiterated his assumptions regarding the causes of the ‘crisis’:

<sup>12</sup> This placed Eisenstadt’s analysis in a psycho-sociological framework, whose origins were found in the works of Gustav Le Bon and Emile Durkheim, who had in turn been inspired by the democratisation of the lower classes (see, Mitchell 1988, 123; The Frankfurt Institute 1973, 74-75).

This is a two-faced crisis, [...] On the one hand, it is a situation of crisis [in their] value [system] and social needs, while on the other, it is a crisis of the institutional social structures that [ought to be] organised in accordance with their social needs and maintain them. One cannot be solved without the other. The main general role of our social policy ought to be: to establish social institutions and organisations that would give most of the Oriental Jews themselves the possibility to acquire the new values and sustain them permanently within a continuous, stable social framework.

This epilogue exemplified the duality in this view's conception of social change. While Oriental Jews themselves had to change, and replace their ineffective value system with a new, obviously modern, one, this would not happen by itself. The state should thus adopt policies, and establish the necessary institutions to make this change possible. In other words, state intervention was necessary, although the change would require the active participation of the 'ethnic' individuals themselves. In the closing remarks of this essay, the urgency of this intervention was made clear. Notice the echo of Le Bon's fear of 'the crowd':

It is most important, in regard to the social policy towards Oriental Jews, to plan and to guide their social activities towards those social institutions and activities that are largely immune to common elements. In this respect, it is important to direct [them] to co-operative pioneering frameworks, to autonomous frameworks of self-rule that are founded on [self-] conscious and on active social activity. (Eisenstadt 1947, 42).

The last sentence reveals Eisenstadt's modernist view (with its concomitant fear of the crowd<sup>13</sup>), and is followed by an optimistic closing remark: "It might be that this kind of action, which is directed towards a large segment of the *yishuv*, will be capable of weakening common elements in the *yishuv* at large." Interestingly enough, at the time, Oriental Jews did not compose a large segment of the *yishuv*. Still, this anxiety, although it was not made as explicit so often, underlay the analysis of ethnic relations for decades to come.

### **The second wave – ethnicity discovered and revisited**

The structural-functional school began to lose its dominance when it turned out that modernisation was not as smooth a process of progression as had been depicted. The growing inconsistency between its theoretical presuppositions and social reality gave rise, especially in the post-colonial stage, to a new conception of society, namely the plural society, and to an attempt to offer a 'special' theory for race and ethnic relations (Mason 1986, 11). At first, this new approach sought to "comprehend the apparently radically different structures to be found in colonial and ex-colonial societies when compared with their erstwhile Western colonies" (ibid.). In this respect, Mason continues, "It offered an

<sup>13</sup> In Hebrew, the term 'common elements' is derived from the word 'crowd', which makes the reference to Le Bon much stronger of course.

important counter to much contemporary Western scholarship which operated with consensual models of relatively homogeneous societies.” The notion of the plural society, as Jenkins (1986, 178) notes, was another response to the loss of empire, and “sits very comfortably with the ethnicity paradigm” (ibid. 180). Thus, as opposed to the homogenous nation-state, there was a new type of society, a heterogeneous plural society characterised by its “multi-racial and/or poly-ethnic populations” (Smith 1986, 188). With the rise of black resistance in the USA, and the growth of immigrant populations in the European states in the 1960s, “the idea that pluralism denotes a distinct type of society has been increasingly challenged.” (Mason 1986, 12).

The development of ‘ethnic’ tensions in the metropolitan states, i.e., in Europe as well as in the USA, evoked a new interest in ethnicity, referred to as Urban Ethnicity (Cohen A. 1974, xi). The “apparently trivial difference [of] the geographical location of the group studied”, according to Banks (1996, 49), created a division between two groups of academics: “those who study the ethnicity of groups outside [and within] the academics’ own country”. He went on to ask, “Are we then to assume that there are (at least) two kinds of ethnicity?” (ibid.). The answer, of course, depended on the observer’s belief regarding the essence of ethnicity. Nonetheless, the very question reflected the change in both the theory and the politics of ethnicity.

The 1970s experienced an upsurge of diverse studies of, and explanations for, the ethnic phenomenon, and mainly, the crystallisation of a conflictual approach that derived from a variety of sociological traditions. It was not accidental that this interest grew in parallel to an increasing concern regarding the capacity of the nation-state to contain its internal crises. Put differently, the ‘ethnic phenomenon’ in itself had challenged, politically and theoretically, the omnipotence of the nation-state and, especially, its capacity to be an impartial agent of modernisation and to act as the equaliser it was thought to be. This ‘crisis of the state’ generated two types of response: the structural-functional school, which still relied on consensual assumptions, attributed this crisis to ‘overloaded governments’ (Held 1989c, 105-118), and thus led to the articulation of a new-Right platform that asked to ‘roll-back’ the state (ibid. 139); critical theorists, mostly Marxists, contended that the problem was one of legitimisation (ibid. 120-124), and sought to re-examine the role of the state in social relations while attributing to it a varying degree of autonomy vis-à-vis societal forces (e.g., Evans et. al. 1985; Block 1987).

#### Israel: the emergence of a critical perspective

In Israel, the crisis of the state was related not to de-colonisation but to re-colonisation. The decline in power of the dominant structural-functional school was thus tied up with its failure to account for the crisis in state governability following the 1966 economic crisis (Shalev 1984e; Levy and Peled 1994). This crisis – which manifested itself in the aftermath

of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War in the protest of the *mizrahi* lower class led by Israel's own Black Panthers in 1971 (Bernstein 1984; Dahan-Kalev 1991), in the 1973 War and the subsequent elections, and in the 1977 political 'upheaval' – also signalled the decline in the hegemony of the Zionist-socialist ideology of nation-building and state-formation. These events underscored the conceptual limitations of the dominant sociological perspective by revealing the discrepancy between the expectation of a smooth extension of modernisation and the deepening of 'ethnic' gaps, or, using the local idiom, the increasing antagonism between 'Second-' and 'First-Israel' (see also below, Chapter 4).

The structural-functional school's response was only partial. The existence of ethnic tensions did not lead them to question the ideological underpinnings of the social order, but to ask whether its implementation failed (see also, Swirski 1993, 58-59). Hence, for example, Eisenstadt (1986, 34) placed the responsibility for this on the political centre's failure to implement egalitarian Zionist ideology. Another response was to relate this failure to 'overload', that is, to the difficulty of the state in meeting the increasing demands of those groups that were undergoing modernisation (Horowitz and Lissak 1989; compare: Held 1989c, 105-118). Both explanations focused on the disparity between the response of mobilised *mizrahim* (who sought integration but still manifested their grievance in ethnic terms) and the masses (who simply remained 'ethnic', that is, backward), thus insinuating that, by and large, the Zionist vision of national cohesion was still a valid grounds for social integration. The question, then, regarding the 'ethnic' group remained: when and whether these groups would discard their traditionalist characteristics and conform to the value system of a modern, rational society? (Ram 1993, 12). On the other hand, the 'question' for the state was, at least in Eisenstadt's account (and to which Horowitz and Lissak sought to respond by adopting the model of 'over-burden'), how did it distance itself from the just egalitarian ideology of nation-building?

Against these political developments, and the failure of structural-functionalism sociology to account for them, several responses emerged. These responses formed a 'new' school of thought, named by Ram (1995a, 199) 'critical sociology', which sought to unravel the hitherto consensual depiction of Israeli society.<sup>14</sup> Thus, with the rise of the 'ethnic problem' to the political agenda (following the local Black Panthers and more saliently, after the 1977 political upheaval), a new perception of Israeli society was theoretically articulated. This approach took, as its point of departure, a challenge to the positivistic sociological discourse and those presuppositions that were, in this context, received in Israeli sociology and society as 'givens' (Bernstein 1978, 13-14). The call for a new sociological agenda first appeared in

<sup>14</sup> Ram (1995a, 5-6) identified five major trends that fall under this category: elitism, pluralism, Marxism, feminism and colonisation. Each of them responded also to the question of ethnic relations. Yet, for purposes of clarity and simplicity, I shall not refer to each of them individually except when this is needed for the purposes of my own analysis.

a self-financed journal – *Notebooks for Research and Criticism* – published by a group of sociologists at Haifa University (Weiss 1999, 303-305). The journal called, primarily, for reposing the relation between ideology and practice and thus signalled the ‘reflexive turn’ in Israeli sociology (Swirski 1993; Weiss 1999, 305). It also re-drew the boundaries of ‘Israeli society’ and, against the prevailing tendency, ‘included’ the Arab minority within these boundaries (Rosenfeld 1979). Similarly, it was the first forum to develop an explicit class perspective on Israeli society (Weiss 1999, 307). But, its most valuable contribution was that it placed the ‘ethnic problem’ at centre-stage in analysing Israeli society (ibid. 309).

From this moment onward, several scholars began to perceive the ethnic gap as a problem of conflicting interests, a product of economic and political disparities (Swirski 1981; Smooha 1978), or, an expression of power struggles in society (Herzog, 1985, 1986). The explanation for the emergence and formation of ethnic groupings, and for the ethnic gap, shifted from the cultural to the material and became subject to an analysis of the concrete social interests and the concrete groups that constitute ‘Israeli society’.

Two explanations stood out in the critical current of the 1980s: the dependency and pluralist approaches (see Smooha, 1987). The former, identified with the work of Swirski (1981), relied on a labour market analysis in order to establish the correlated emergence of ethnicity and class position among Oriental Jews. Accordingly, this segment of society constituted an ethno-class as a result of processes of proletarianisation that Oriental Jews underwent upon their arrival in the 1950s (Bernstein and Swirski 1982). In his book, Swirski coupled his analysis of the Israeli political economy (based on papers that were first published in the *Notebooks*), with conversations with *mizrahi* political activists (Swirski 1981). This structure reflected, as Weiss (1999, 309) explained, the underlying rationale of this critical approach:

The *Notebooks*’ conception of [social] change was grounded in the assumption that since the modernisation project has failed – there is an emerging *mizrahi* social identity, which is the basis for a political action that would bring about the transformation of the social structure itself.

Smooha (1978) was another major contributor to the ‘new’ conception of Israeli society based on pluralism and conflict, and also the first to include the Arab-Jewish schism as a major feature of this society (see Ram 1995a, 101). Smooha identified two other schisms in Israeli society, between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* Jews and between non-religious and religious Jews, and thus echoed the new ‘pluralistic’ spirit in the USA and in Europe that rejected the notion of inevitable assimilation (ibid. 102). Smooha’s pluralist perspective drew upon the then-new perception of post-colonial societies as comprised of loosely associated cultural entities bonded to, and by, state institutions. This analysis was thus a precursor to a critical sociological stance that no longer accepted Israel’s self-representation as a Western society.

In his view of the ethnic problem, Smooha oscillated between the cultural explanation given by the structural-functional school and the Neo-Marxist analysis of the ethnically stratified Israeli labour market. Put differently, constrained by the pre-suppositions of the pluralist framework, Smooha was compelled *a-priori*, to accept Oriental Jews as a distinctive cultural social unit, and was thus placed on the side of the ‘idealistic’ school. Yet, as did Marxian analysts, he refused to accept that this entailed their marginalisation and non-incorporation within Jewish society (Smooha 1978; Ram 1995a, 106-107). Still, Smooha put greater emphasis than did those from the Marxist perspective on the ethnic factor, and on cultural discrimination against *mizrahi* Jews.

In sum, these two perspectives introduced a new conception of the ‘ethnic problem’ as a representation of objective interests produced in the context of a given power struggle. Thus, the critical approach had the insight to conceptualise ethnicity as a modern phenomenon and, by so doing, to undermine the status of the hegemonic nation-building ideology.

Furthermore, this perspective even hinted at the possible existence of an alternative path for social change that would not be based on ‘cultural assimilation’. In this respect, social change would not result from a conscious transformation of *mizrahi* Jews themselves, but from a confrontation with those social interests that had determined their inferiority within society. Yet, two major problems arise in the critical approach.

First, because of its symptomatic conception of ethnicity, as a reflection of class relations or of political power relations (see also Mason 1986, 9), this approach fell short of seeing ethnicity as a motivation for political action, or as a *real* interest (see Isaac, 1987b). By and large, this school offered instrumentalistic explanations to the ethnic question. Thus, for example, Herzog (1983, 133), who demonstrated how the Zionist political parties acted purposefully to block autonomous *mizrahi* parties, adhered to the dominant Zionist view by claiming that ‘ethnicity is a *means* rather than an *end*’. This was not all wrong, and it has already been rightly acknowledged by the structural-functional school that the *mizrahi* segment was interested in integration rather than in secession. Yet, it also attested to the limits of instrumentalist explanations: namely, their focus on the boundaries of the ethnic groups, and on the conditions for the mobilisation of ethnic identities, while neglecting their content. This school, instead of questioning the essence of the ethnic identity, thus resorted to the default lines as they were defined by modernisation theories. In this respect, although the critical school adequately explained why the articulation of ethnic identities should be considered a consequence of modernisation, it failed to account for the “alternative modernities”, to cite Comaroff again, that they presented. Furthermore, it could not explain

either the meaning of ethnicity for the social agents themselves, or the differentiation within ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup>

Second, the critical school refrained from re-conceptualising the state. This school, which confined the structural-functionalist conception of the state as a modernisation agent to the rubbish bin of history (see, Shokeid 2000, 80), viewed the state as parasitic to other power relations, be they class, ethnicity, elite or other. In other words, within this new perception of society as based on conflict and antagonism between competing interests, the question of what holds together society as a whole was hardly addressed. Whether seen simply as an arena for struggle and competition between rival elites (Herzog 1985), or, following the ‘dependency approach’<sup>16</sup>, as ‘the executive committee of the ruling class’, the state was not conceptualised, either as a political actor, or as the historical entity which embodied the modern social order against which ethnic relations develop.<sup>17</sup> Smooha’s approach was the only one to contain a specific conception of a consociational state, but, as Ram (1995a, 116) rightly notes, “it should be remembered that it is based on the principle of a pact among ascriptive groups (or, worse, their respective elites), not a contract among free and equal individual citizens.” This makes Smooha’s politics, as it does crude Marxist and elitist approaches, problematic for it takes a paternalistic position vis-à-vis the members of the ethnic group themselves.

“[D]ecoding the relationship of power” (Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 33) was a timely and a necessary step in the 1970s, for it enabled social scientists not only to better account for social reality, but also to identify the link between the assumptions that underpinned the study of ethnicity and those underlying social policy towards *mizrahi* Jews. The critical approach turned out to be more realistic in its view of ethnicity as a political, and not a cultural issue. Yet, its focus on mobilisation and on politicisation of ethnic identities left the explanation of particular instances of ethnicity wanting. Similarly to the structural-functionalist approach, critical accounts still tended to view the ethnic category as given, and, in most cases, did not attempt to conceptualise the dominant group as an ethnic group (although, following the Black Panthers protest the division between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* became self-evident). Thus, while formerly ethnicity was assumed to be a component of ‘traditionalism’ imposed on an essentially modern society, it was equally contended that

<sup>15</sup> This is of course obvious for the pluralist perspective that considered the ‘cultural stuff’ of the *mizrahi* ethnic identity as pre-empting the encounter between those immigrants and the dominant *ashkenazi* ‘cultural’ group. In Swirski’s analysis, essentialism is a result of the adoption of the ‘dependency approach’, which categorically distinguishes between First- and Third-World countries and also ascribes the ensuing dependency relationship between them to cultural differences. In both cases, the *mizrahi* segment is conceived of *a-priori* as a monolithic (non-modernised) group.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Bernstein and Swirski (1982) on the role of the state in perpetuating the proletarianisation of *mizrahi* Jews, and Rosenfeld and Carmi (1976) on the state-made middle class.

<sup>17</sup> Two relatively recent studies of Israel’s political economy indeed looked at the role of the state from a corporatist perspective, however, neither referred specifically to its role in perpetuating ethnicity or ethnic relations (Grinberg 1991; Shalev 1989, 1992).

these traits could be discarded if the group members or the state would take the necessary measures to do so. The critical school, in contrast, remained more pessimistic. Considering ethnicity as an epiphenomenon of otherwise more rational politics of class or elite contestation, it predicted that ethnicity was bound to constitute a social problem as long as the conditions that had made it instrumental for political mobilisation did not change. The limited explanatory power of this instrumentalist perspective was proven in the 1980s and 1990s, and particularly in the shift to a ‘politics of identity’.

### **The third wave – post-colonialism and the ‘return to culture’**

“The political naiveté of the early work on ethnicity”, argue Solomos and Back (1995, 413) in a review of Marxian theories of ethnicity and racism in Britain, “meant that, for much of the 1980s, the analysis of cultural processes and forms was rejected in favour of a focus on the politics of racism.” This inclination, they explain, resulted from the fact that “the culturalist perspective of the 1970s did little more than blame the victims of racism.” In the early 1990s, the agenda of ethnicity and racism had been changed, and its focus was on “the multifarious historical formulations of *racisms*” (Goldberg 1990, xiii), and, similarly, ethnicities (Banks 1996, 49; Comaroff 1996, 167; Lamont 1999, p. x).

The ‘return to culture’ marked a dual shift in the theorisation of ethnicity. First, it became clearer that the ‘ethnic problem’ should no longer be sought in the ‘ethnic group’ itself, but rather in the process of ethnicisation. Therefore, the key concern should be “to explore the interconnections between race and nationhood, patriotism, and nationalism” (Solomos and Back 1995, 414; for recent examples see, Laitin 1998; Marx 1998). This was equally true for ethnicity, the contents of which came to be understood in the broader context of the relation between its invention and nation-building. More specifically, the formation of social identities, national and ethnic alike, were seen as products of “the construction of myths of homogeneity out of the realities of heterogeneity that characterise all nation-building.” (Williams 1989, 429). ‘Ethnic identities’, it was now argued, do not reflect a previously existing ‘authentic culture’, but rather the various interests that underpin their invention and classification, which also implies that explaining their construction cannot be separated from the mythmaking that underlies other invented identities, such as national, racial, etc. (on the ‘invention of tradition’, see Hobsbawm 1983). In this respect, Williams (1989, 429) is right to suggest that “[a]s nation builders, mythmakers become race-makers”, and one should add, ‘ethnie-makers’.

Second, and consequently, the loci for the development of ethnic relations shifted to the state and to the dominant group, whose own ethnic identity also became subject to analysis (Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 34; Roediger 1994, 3). Understanding ethnicity as relational, or ethnicisation as “part of a chain reaction” (Nederveen Pieterse 1996, 33), requires the re-conceptualisation of the role of the state in perpetuating and constructing ethnic identities.

No longer can one conceive of the state, either as an ‘objective’ impartial agent of modernisation, or as a reflective arena where political struggles simply take place.

The ‘new’ post-colonial theorisation of ethnicity also suggested that the relation between the universal and the particular should be re-formulated. Ideology, in the Marxian view, was understood – recalling Marx’s assertion that “every class which is struggling for mastery [...] must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest” (Marx 1977, 169-170) – as the particular masquerading as the universal.

Post-colonial theorists took this assertion a step forward, railing against the reluctance of the left to recognise racial and ethnic identifications as a ‘sign’ of *New Times*. “The left”, Stuart Hall contended on the meaning of *New Times*, “should not be afraid of this surprising return to ethnicity.” (Hall 1996, 236). From his perspective, “ethnicity is the necessary place or space from which people speak” (Hall 1997, 184), hence being ‘particularistic’ appears as a necessary condition for making universalistic claims, since “everyone speaks from positions within the global distribution of power” (Hall 1996, 237). If this is so, then, every group must have an equal access to the state (e.g., Parekh 1997, 190-193).

The shift to a ‘politics of identity’ resulted also in a re-formulation of the circumstantial approach, namely in a shift from instrumentalist to constructivist explanations. While the structural-functional approach pinned too much on cultural traits as determinants of the adaptability of a group to the condition of modernity, it failed to question why certain groups are better ‘equipped’ with modern values than others. The early critical response, on the other hand, discarded culture altogether and sought to explain it away by shifting to the realm of the material. This perspective thus failed to account for the powers of culture, and hence to explain how certain cultural traits became identified with marginality, or with a particular position within the social hierarchy. This, notably, resulted in a retreat to an essentialist conception of the ethnic categories in question. Constructivist theorists assumed that any mobilisation begins with some form of social identification and that, unless one believes in a crude version of instrumentalism, identities are not a clay in the hands of political entrepreneurs. Therefore, they focused on the processes whereby social, or ethnic identities were constructed (see Calhoun 1994, 13). In other words, they took the process of ethnicisation as the subject matter for investigation.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, from seeing ethnicity as given, as nothing but the sum of identified cultural traits of a group, usually the minority group, through understanding ethnicity solely in terms of the interests that ethnic groups represent, we arrived at explanations that ‘took culture seriously’ and viewed it as designating a relationship between human subjects, cultural artefacts and nature (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 2). Considering ethnic identities as constantly produced and re-produced renders culture as an interest in itself (Lamont 1999, xi). This allowed, first, for

<sup>18</sup> I wish to thank Ran Levy for helping me clarify this position.

an understanding of the production of culture, or more precisely the attribution of cultural traits to certain groups, as a political act, and, second, for a recognition of the state as an agent that actively participates, and which has a vested interest, in this production (e.g., Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 9).

#### Israel: Post-colonialism and the cultural division of labour

These changes in the theorisation of ethnicity occurred, as before, in relation to a shift in the way ethnicity manifested itself in politics and society. More specifically, it developed in parallel to the advancement of ethnicity to the forefront of the political arena following the formation in 1981 of *Tami*, a moderately-religious party that conspicuously called for the mobilisation of the *mizrahi* vote, and more clearly, in 1984, with the ascendance of *Shas*, a party that was initially formed as a split from the ultra-orthodox *Agudath yisrael* party (see Glossary) (but see also Peled 1990 on right wing extremism). Soon it became apparent that *Shas*' protest against ethnic discrimination transcended the boundaries of the ultra-orthodox sector, and that its grievance resonated with a broader population. Within a decade and a half, its electorate more than tripled, and in the 1999 general elections it became the third largest party in the *Knesset*. Its political power was even greater, taking into account *Shas*'s pivotal position in coalition politics in Israel. In this period, public political discourse became clearly ethnic and the 'ethnic question', once an issue to be avoided and easily dismissed, gained distinctive attention. This, however, posed a problem for theory.

The ethnic issue could no longer be explained away by circumscribing ethnicity to a manifestation of other forms of subjugation and stratification. More specifically, neither of the two main answers of the early 1980s could explain the 'ultra-religious' turn that ethnicity had taken. In Smooha's pluralistic view, the ethnic and the religious conflicts constituted two distinctive conflicts with significantly different consequences. While *mizrahi* Jews approved of the Zionist ideology, their preferred course of action was, in this view, to seek integration through political participation. In contrast, the ultra-religious sector, which constantly opposed Zionism, was bound to remain segregated from general society (Smooha 1978, 241-249). It was, therefore, inconceivable by this view, not only that the two schisms would overlap, but most importantly, that this would constitute a new type of politics that defied what were normatively considered as 'integrative' and 'secessionist' modes of action.

The other 1980s perspective, which viewed the *mizrahi-ashkenazi* relationship in terms of an ethno-class conflict (Swirski 1981), could barely offer a better explanation. According to this view, it was not surprising that lower class *mizrahi* Jews translated their class position into an explicit ethnic agenda. However, that ethnicity eventually manifested itself in an ultra-religious cloak, constituted a puzzle for this approach, which was missing a theoretical and conceptual framework that could see ethnicity as a cause for political action. Ethnicity, then,

could no longer be seen either as an isolated phenomenon, as Smooha implied, or merely as a reflection of class relations. There was a need, therefore, for a structural explanation.

The first major contribution to such a course of analysis, articulated within the then emerging discipline of cultural studies, was Shohat's 1988 critical essay titled, after Edward Said (1979), "*Sephardim* in Israel: Zionism from the standpoint of its Jewish Victims". The purpose of such an analysis was made clear at the outset:

I would like to extend the terms of the debate beyond earlier dichotomies (East versus West, Arab versus Jew, Palestinian versus Israeli) to incorporate an issue elided by previous formulations, to wit, the presence of a mediating entity, that of the Arab or Oriental Jews, those *Sephardi* Jews coming largely from the Arab or Muslim countries. A more complete analysis, I will argue, must consider the negative consequences of Zionism not only for the Palestinian people but also for the *Sephardi* Jews who now form the majority of the Jewish population in Israel. For Zionism does not only undertake to speak for Palestine and the Palestinians, [...] it also presumes to speak for Oriental Jews. (Shohat 1988, 1).

The new agenda was, then, to break the silence of those who were now considered as 'the victims of Zionist colonialism and nationalism', and to offer a counter-narrative – a *mizrahi* critical one (Shohat 1988, 32-33). Shohat – a *mizrahi* woman who emigrated from Israel and graduated in cultural studies in New York, was one of the first to identify as an Arab-Jew (Karpel 1989) – thus paved the way for an understanding of Israeli ethnicity in relation to the role of Zionism as representing and constituting the ideological make up of power relations (also, Shohat 1989). In contrast to Smooha, for example, who implicitly criticised Zionism for, what by then was already known, its misguided melting pot policy, Shohat sought to question the foundations of the Zionist project. Furthermore, while not the only scholar who placed the critique of Zionism within the framework of the post-colonial debate (Shapiro R. 1984; Kimmerling 1983; Shafir 1989), she indeed was the first to point to its cultural practices as a part of the subjugation of both Palestinians and *mizrahi* Jews.

Shohat, backed up by Said's concept of *Orientalism* (1978), thus provided a 'cultural' framework for a critique that sought to re-problematise ethnic relations within a broader context of colonialism and modernisation.<sup>19</sup> The state ideology and practice moved to centre stage, and the cultural oppression of Oriental Jews was no longer viewed as an epiphenomenal consequence of economic or political subjugation, but as the epitome of the

<sup>19</sup> A more recent example is Khazzoom's attempt to construct social relations in Israel within this framework, and to argue that "the history of the [Jewish] exile, from the period of the enlightenment onwards, can be conceived of as a series of processes of 'Orientalisation', or as phases in which one group uses the East/West dichotomy in order to present another group as inferior." (Khazzoom 1999, 385). This framework, she further argues, is applicable to almost all aspects of conflict within Israeli society – from Arab-Jewish relationship to the character of the feminist movement.

*mizrahi-ashkenazi* relationship.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the history of this relationship has been re-written, mainly but not only, by *mizrahi* political activists and scholars who participated, in the 1980s and 1990s, in struggles against discrimination and injustice in Israeli society. This re-writing rendered a *mizrahi* history in which, to posit a few examples, the experience of Arab-Jews in their homelands and in Israel has not been 'ruptured' (Ben-Dor 1997, 67), or that has demonstrated the link between early and recent forms of *mizrahi* resistance to subjugation (Chetrit 1997, 57), or still further, that has placed the '*mizrahi* question' in the broadest context of the emergence of religious nationalism in the Middle East (Behar 1997, 75).<sup>21</sup>

These critiques appeared in parallel to the development of a critical position in Israeli sociology and historiography, publicly known as post-Zionism, which marked a shift to a critique of the hegemonic Zionist discourse and practice.<sup>22</sup> Yet, while these activists were formulating a more secular critique of ethnic relations, politics provided a fundamentalist ultra-religious critique in the form of *Shas*. The 'new' focal point, for both theory and the public debate, was *mizrahi* ethnic identity.

### RE-CALLING CONVENTIONS: ETHNICITY AND THE STATE

It was in the face of the quandary that *Shas* posed, for informed and lay observers alike, that the theory of ethnicity was found wanting. The consecutive electoral successes of *Shas* defied conventional beliefs regarding the powers of ethnic politics. *Shas*' overt ethnic agenda placed into question the hitherto proven capacity of politically established parties to impede similar attempts to make *mizrahi* ethnicity a resource of electoral power (Herzog 1985). It was, however, not only because of this that *Shas* did not sit comfortably within the 'normal', or better normative, classifications of Israeli political parties. Its ultra-orthodox guise suggested that it would take an anti-Zionist stance, which it refrained from doing. Overall, the coupling of an explicit ethnic *mizrahi*, or as *Shas* prefers it, *sephardi*, platform and ultra-orthodox politics (a characteristically *ashkenazi* phenomenon), made *Shas* seem enigmatic (Peled 1998, 704) and a challenge for the theorisation of ethnicity in the 1990s (Levy and

<sup>20</sup> These theoretical developments parallel, in both timing and structure, similar re-formulations of race relations in Britain. On the crystallisation of 'cultural racism' in Britain in the 1980s, see, Solomos and Back (1995, 414). An alarming consequence of new (or, cultural) racism, according to Gilroy (1987, 55-56), is that it reproduces Blackness and Englishness as mutually exclusive categories.

<sup>21</sup> These activists were involved in the foundation of the *Kedma* academic high schools network, which emerged from another organisation, led mainly by *mizrahi* feminist activists, that sought to develop political consciousness among parents in poor neighbourhoods regarding the educational rights of their children (for an overview of these organisations see, Chetrit 1997; 1999e; 1999h).

<sup>22</sup> It is beyond the scope of this exploration to examine the various perspectives that are included under this title. Two main branches of this critique are 'critical sociology' (of which some works are discussed here; see Ram 1995a, Chapter 9), and 'new historiography' (Morris 1998). In Ram's view (1995a, 206), a post-Zionist agenda should be "congruous with the consolidation of a democratic Israeli civil society: a society of free and equal civilians and of diverse identities." On Post-Zionism in context, see also Ram (1999a, 1999b).

Emmerich 2001). It was against the backdrop of these theoretical conventions that the absence of a theory of the (Israeli) state became salient.

The need for such a theory became all the more pertinent in light of the ‘post-Zionist’ critique of the structure of Israeli society. This critique, which focused mainly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, apparently tended to reproduce the separation between ‘internal’ (e.g., ethnic) and ‘external’ (e.g., national) issues in its analyses, a dictate that has been imposed upon Israeli sociology by Zionist ideology. This critique thus assumed that either the ‘*mizrahi* question’ had been solved, or it should await its resolution until after the ‘more important’ problem, namely the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, was resolved (Hever et. al. 1999, 6). In both cases, it remained the case that the ‘ethnic question’ has not only been consistently perceived as a ‘problem’, but that it continued to be seen as the ‘problem’ of *mizrahi* Jews themselves. This also implied that in the eyes of at least some of its main speakers, who sought to depict a post-hegemonic Israeli identity, post-Zionist Israel would remain an ostensibly *ashkenazi* society (see Shenhav 1996). Thus, theoretically and empirically, the post-Zionist perspective stood aloof from the pertinent questions about the meaning of Israeli identity that the rise of *Shas* raised for Israeli society, until the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and beyond.

The question of *mizrahi* identity, however, became a matter of concern for scholars who sought to reconcile the gap between the ‘ethnic’ and the ‘national’. One such attempt was offered by Peled (1998), who set out to resolve the enigma of *Shas*. Beyond being interested in the timing of its emergence, Peled sought to answer why *Shas* succeeded in mobilising the *mizrahi* vote “under the religious ideological banner [...] rather than under some other ideological formula” (ibid. 705). In response, he offered to look at it from the perspective of the Israeli cultural division of labour (CDL). This model, he proposes following Hechter (1975), can explain why ethnicity matters, and how “Cultural markers are used [...] to identify particular groups as belonging to particular niches in the CDL.” (Peled 1998, 706). He parts from this model in two ways: in identifying the *mizrahi* Jews as a semi-peripheral group, set in between *ashkenazi* Jews from above and Palestinians from below, and, in suggesting that this explains why this group opts, by adhering to the religious platform of *Shas*, for integration, rather than secession (ibid. 707).

This explanation, however, does not fully account for two questions: **a)** why religiosity? and **b)** what explains the ‘ethnicity’ of non-lower class *mizrahi* Jews? The answer to these questions, as I shall demonstrate here, lies in the stratified structure of Israeli citizenship and in the practices of stigmatisation that designated *mizrahi* Jews as ‘second class citizens’. Yet, Peled fails to bridge the conceptual gap between his understanding of the dynamics of the labour market and that of citizenship (Peled 1992; Peled and Shafir 1996). In spite of his insightful understanding of the latter, he overlooks the state, the most important arena where

these dynamics are set and challenged, and thus leaves his explanation of ethnicity as, to an extent, essentialist.<sup>23</sup>

Yiftachel, a political geographer, is one scholar who came closest to explaining the transformation of the Israeli space into an ‘ethnospace’ (recall: Comaroff 1998, 331). In various studies, Yiftachel analysed planning policies and spatial processes that had led to development of “Israel’s ethno-class division of space” (Yiftachel 1997a, 506), and to his identification of Israel as an ‘ethnocracy’. The Israeli ethnocratic regime evolved, in his view, from the effort to settle the periphery, the frontier, and “to ‘Judaize’ disputed (previously Arab) territories.”<sup>24</sup> Building his argument on the concepts of ‘frontier’ and ‘control’, Yiftachel (1997b, 151) observes that, “because the settlement of frontiers is first and foremost a project orchestrated by and for the national core for its particular interests, it involves the exercise of control and domination over peripheral groups, usually through the active involvement of the state and its supporting apparatus.” In this respect, Yiftachel’s analysis did not ignore the role of the state, and its interests, in creating the Israeli ‘ethnospace’.

This analysis, however, had yet another contribution. As Yiftachel shows, the exclusion of Arabs from the ‘demos’ also resulted in the creation of spatial segregation and social disparities between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* Jews (Yiftachel 1997b; 1998a; 1998b). This spatial perspective thus offers an understanding of the interrelationship between the ‘national’ and the ‘ethnic’ conflicts that could sidestep the problem, common to other post-Zionist critiques, of homogenising the Jewish sector, hence of ignoring the role of ‘ethnic politics’ in perpetuating the ‘national’ conflict, and vice versa. Eventually, this led Yiftachel himself to also study the *mizrahi* ethnic identity that developed in the periphery (Yiftachel and Tzfadia 1999).

### **The state, citizenship and ethnicity**

The growing understanding of the interrelation between the ‘ethnic’ and the ‘national’ has given rise to an interest in the ‘state’, and especially, in its function, as an emblem of a universal order, in perpetuating social inequalities. The most ambitious endeavour thus far was Yagil Levy’s attempt to explicate Israel’s military policies as simultaneously a determinant and a consequence of social interests (Levy 1997, 23). In this view, Israel’s security interests were not crafted only as a response to Arab states’ hostility, rather they

<sup>23</sup> Peled does not fully explain why *Shas*’ religious platform is appealing for *mizrahi* Jews. He thus implicitly confirms mainstream accounts that consider the proclivity of *mizrahi* Jews to express a sympathetic approach to Jewish tradition as their essential characteristic (see also Peled unpublished). The very definition of *mizrahi* Jews as ‘traditionalists’ answers, in my view, the second question, which refers to the effects of stigmatisation on the articulation of a *mizrahi* ethnic identity also amongst non-lower class *mizrahi*.

<sup>24</sup> See, Yiftachel (n.d.). This, he suggests, is the main reason for defining Israel as an Ethnocracy, rather than democracy. Thus, the main constituency for governmental policies is the Jewish ethnic group, hence the effort to create an ethno-national identity (Yiftachel 1997a; 1999; see also Smooha 1990).

“were also largely determined by the social interests of a rising [mostly *ashkenazi*] middle class” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, he argues, “[d]ue to the protracted state of war, this class achieved its dominant status over [...] Oriental Jews [...] and the minority of Palestinian citizens both of whom comprised the peripheral classes”, the legitimisation of which was “owing to the war-driven internal empowerment of the state.” This structure of inequality, in other words, was constructed and reproduced due to the centrality of the state in rendering it legitimate, mainly by universalising its own actions by means of a state ideology, *Mamlakhtiyut* (see Glossary).

This analysis, which theoretically followed the footsteps of theoreticians who opposed a clear-cut distinction between state and society (e.g., Althusser 1971, 138; Block 1977, 52; Tilly 1984, 12-24; Mitchell 1991, 95), was thus suggestive in two main ways. First, it was the first to offer a theory of the Israeli state. Thus, contra to the modernisation school, which saw it as an impartial agent of modernisation, and in contradiction to other critical perspectives that mostly refrained from developing such a theory, Levy has turned the state into a main focal point in the social analysis (yet, see footnote 17). Second, it presented the state as an interested party in social relations, again contra to previous analyses, and thus pointed to its role in perpetuating ethnic inequalities. In these two respects, the following study is built upon the presuppositions of Yagil Levy’s work, yet it differs from it on one main point. Namely, in its focus on the construction of ethnic categories and boundaries, and in attempting to render the content of these categories explicable, two aspects of ethnic relations that remain underdeveloped in Levy’s analysis. To better account for their development, and for the particular ways in which the state functions as the perpetrator of ethnic identities, my own study will focus on education, and particularly, on its relation to nation-building and state-formation, two major imperatives of the construction of the modern nation-state.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EDUCATION, NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-FORMATION

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The choice of education, as an arena for the study of the development of ethnic relations is not arbitrary. State-sponsored educational systems have developed integrally to, and at times as a pre-condition for, the advancement of the processes of nation-building and state-formation. Therefore, they are qualitatively distinct from earlier forms of education (e.g., Green 1990, 29). This distinctiveness lies primarily in the role of education in rendering the modern, liberal state universal, that is, in setting the ‘state’ apart from ‘society’, hence attributing to the former a quality that is contradistinctive of the particularistic tendencies of the various social forces. My main purpose, therefore, is to examine the relationship between nation-building, state-formation, and education, in respect to this ‘universal’ quality. Thus I wish to offer a perspective that can better account for the role of the modern nation-state in the development of ‘ethnic relations’ and in shaping ‘ethnic identities’.

If, as argued above, ethnicity should be seen in terms of a relationship, rather than as designating fixed identities or entities, then its understanding must be founded on a theoretical framework accountable for the power relations that characterise state-society relations in Western-like liberal democracies. Within this framework, specific attention should be paid to the role of the state in constructing and perpetuating ethnic identities, mainly because of its centrality in delineating social boundaries (Walzer 1984, 324-325; Mitchell 1991, 78). This function may be attributed – given also the state’s interest in maintaining social order and industrial peace (Althusser 1971, 138; Block 1977, 52; Isaac 1987a, Ch. 5) – to the interplay between citizenship and nationalism (Giddens 1987, 209 cf.), two mediums through which the state is seen at once as both representative and ruler of its subjects (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 3).

These subjects, however, are not an abstract aggregation of people. They constitute a nation. Or, what is imagined and constructed as a nation (Anderson 1983; Nairn 1998, 121). Thus, the process whereby ‘peoples’ are turned into nations is a part of, and integral to, the transformation of subjects into citizens, i.e., into members of a nation-state (Tilly 1992; Giddens 1987, 216-221; Brubaker 1992, 27). In this sense, the processes of nation-building and state-formation, although historically distinctive (see below footnote 12), are only analytically separable. This separation is nevertheless needed if we wish to avoid a

teleological explanation for the development of social, and in this particular case, ethnic relations. More pertinently, as I show here, ethnicity played a role in bridging the conceptual and practical disparities between these two processes that, at times, related to two differing collectivities.

The imperatives of nation-building and state-formation generated two major processes, both of which relied on the centrality and supremacy of the state, and on its role as an 'educator' (see below). One, the cultural homogenisation of the nation, made education a central means by which people are instilled with a sense of belonging to a transcending national collective (Brown et. al. 1997, 3); the other, gave education a particular role in bringing about political integration under the aegis of a state apparatus (e.g., Green 1990, 71). These two goals not only affect the content of education, i.e., the curriculum, but they are equally manifested in its structure, as much as they determine it (e.g., Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992, 131). This is because both processes also aim at strengthening state universalism, or, the universalistic imagery of the state, which is inscribed in the idea of 'education for all'. Thus, the developments of mass schooling, and of state monopoly in education, create and reinforce a hierarchical order in which state precedes society. In this sense, education is also meant to reconcile the tension between cultural homogenisation and political integration, insofar as these two processes, in most if not all cases, are based on differential criteria of exclusion and inclusion and therefore generate contradictory pressures on the state. To understand this, and especially, to make the role of the state in reinforcing particularism explicable, it is pertinent to examine what the concept of the 'state' means, and how it 'works'.

## THE STATE AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

There are two main ways in which the 'state' is referred to in this study: as a historical entity, i.e., as a particular form of rule, characterised by its role within a (predominantly) capitalist world order; and as an idea, a theoretical construct which enables us to make explicable the functions of government. These two perspectives of the state are complementary, and one cannot be fully comprehensible without the other. In the historical perspective, the state ought to be understood as a structure of governance that, under the conditions of capitalism, seeks to establish itself as an arbiter between capital and labour.<sup>1</sup> The term that best explains this relationship is 'relative autonomy'.<sup>2</sup> This term denotes a rationale that underlies the

<sup>1</sup> Although this claim does not imply that the state *must* be capitalist, it suggests that the tension between capital and labour is most helpful in explaining state-society relationship (for other conceptions of the state, see Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987). Specifically, as will be shown here, this tension existed in Israel (even prior to statehood) although Israel did not identify itself as a capitalist state. One purpose of the following analysis, then, is to show how the inter-dependence between state, capital, and labour affected the relationship between ethnicity and education.

<sup>2</sup> On the history of the state, see Hall (1984, 2-9), Poggi (1990, Chs. 3-4). I discussed the relation between 'relative autonomy' and the practices of ethnicity and citizenship at length in my MA thesis (Levy 1995). This discussion was primarily based on Althusser (1971), Miliband (1973), Poulantzas (1980), Block (1977; 1987), Isaac (1987a), Giddens (1987), Held and Krieger (1983), Held (1989b), Offe (1984).

practice of the state, which is aimed at gaining control over a defined population within a given territory, by means of universal inclusion, while maintaining industrial peace in order for the process of capital accumulation to progress. The disparity between these practices of inclusion, which are based on an egalitarian notion of membership (of either citizens or nationals), and the inequalities created by the capitalist mode of production, generates a ‘structural contradiction’ which states seek to manage and contain (but cannot resolve). (For a critical discussion, see Dunleavy and O’Leary 1987, 243-248).

The other perspective on the state is premised on a scientific-realist conception of the mutual relationship between structure and agency.<sup>3</sup> In this view, social structures are both the medium and the outcome of purposeful human action; this action, however, cannot be dissociated from the constraints put on it by social structures. This duality best explains how the state, as a social structure, can be at once a representation of a specific social order and an institution (or set of institutions) that implements this order. Equally, this explains why the functions of the state cannot be understood without ‘a theory of the state’, or more specifically, without a theorisation of the historical specificity of the modern capitalist state.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, any reference to the state, as ‘an agent’, relates to those functions, or actions of state institutions, whose rationale can be derived from the above interests: maintaining social stability and enabling the process of capital accumulation. This also forms the context for understanding the role of the state in delineating social boundaries.

The idea that the ‘state’ is theoretically constructed does not imply its non-existence, but rather the contrary. In fact, it is because ‘the state’, as a unitary single agent, remains an abstraction, that the scientific-realist perspective allows us to translate ‘its’ actions, and, more precisely, the combined actions of various state agencies (or, agents: Nordlinger 1981, 7), into a coherent language of cause and effect. The view of the state as a *real*, yet not empirical structure (Isaac 1987b, 30), makes sense of a variety of social (physical and discursive) practices and mechanisms, and relates them to the interest of the state in delineating boundaries, be they gendered, racial, ethnic or other. These methods and practices “create the effect of an agent or structure – the state – that stands outside the social” (Mitchell 1992, 1017), and that should therefore be the object of investigation.

The study of education in order to explain ‘ethnic relations’ is meant to illuminate these practices and methods that, in liberal democracies, are based on the image of a ‘given’ separation between state and economy. This image underpins a (modernist) conception of ethnicity and citizenship as two antagonistic forms of social affiliation. This conception is

<sup>3</sup> For scientific realism I rely mostly on Isaac (1987a; 1987b) and on Shapiro and Wendt (1992). As is made clear in the preceding paragraph, I also base my understanding of ‘relative autonomy’ on Isaac’s neo-Marxist presuppositions regarding the relation between state power and class power (Isaac 1987a, 152).

<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that the use of ‘function’ in this context differs from that of the functionalist approach, mainly by not ascribing to it any measure of conceptual necessity (Isaac 1987a, 169).

nonetheless both flawed and misleading. It is flawed because both are mediums of relationship between state and society, and hence the differential (at times, non-mutually exclusive) application of citizenship or ethnic boundaries is a matter of politics, not a question of functional necessity. It is misleading because it conceals the decisive role of the state in the employment of these differential practices of exclusion and inclusion.<sup>5</sup> Thus, state acts that are aimed at delineating citizenship boundaries render the citizenry's political participation rational and legitimate, while the delineation of ethnic boundaries ascribes to ethnic group(s) the quality of irrationality. The interplay between the two acts is made visible in education, which is one such state agency/structure that demonstrates – but more importantly, facilitates – the differential inclusion of social groups in the state.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, since it is hardly disputable that “national educational systems were not simply elaborated networks of schools of the earlier type: they were qualitatively distinct” (Green 1990, 29), there is a need for some terminological clarity. National education, Green rightly argues, marked a break with traditional, clerical dominated types of schooling and became characterised by “its ‘universality’ and specific orientation towards the secular needs of the state and civil society.” Moreover, the peculiarity of modern education lay in “its focus on individual achievement, its general rather than occupationally specialised curriculum, its inclusion not only of elites but of entire populations, and its critical role in the ‘project’ of collective or national progress” (Soysal and Strang 1989, 279). Given these features, the term national is a little too narrow and somewhat misleading. What we are actually talking about ought to be termed ‘state education’, or ‘state schooling’, or a term that I prefer to use, ‘state-sponsored education’. This insistence is not only semantic. First, it does not assume that educational goals are only ‘nationalistic’, but that there are other features that underpin the educational system. Second, it equally refrains from presupposing the ‘nation’, but allows us to render this definition a subject for investigation, and so also does not presuppose the congruence between national collective and citizenry. Third, this term is characteristically Eurocentric in that it constitutes the Western European model of nationalism, a supposedly non-ethnic type of nationalism, as the model for other nationalist projects. Finally, by replacing ‘national’ with ‘state’, I wish to strengthen even further Green’s conclusion that mass schooling “was to a large degree organised from above by the state.” (Green 1990, 308).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This understanding of citizenship as a medium of control is premised on Giddens’ (1987, 198-221) critique of T. H. Marshall’s (1963) theory of citizenship. For other critiques, see Barbalet (1988), Gorham (1992a; 1992b), Held (1989d), Leca (1992), Mouffe (1992), Roche (1987), Tilly (1996), Turner (1990), Waters (1989), Young (1990).

<sup>6</sup> This interplay may also be seen as a part of a process of *structuration* whereby social structures (e.g., of inequality) are sustained or changed (Giddens 1984, 25).

<sup>7</sup> Green (1990, 310) uses ‘state-formation’ and ‘nation-building’ interchangeably. This, I presume, stems from the subject matter of his analysis, namely the European nation-states and the USA, where the term ‘nation’ usually equates with ‘citizenry’. For a discussion of the different relationships between nationality and

## EDUCATION AND CULTURAL HOMOGENISATION

At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine, but the (aptly named) *doctorate d'état* is the main tool and symbol of state power. The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence. (Gellner 1983, 34).

In spite of its somewhat exaggerated tone, and although military force has always been a determinative factor in the establishment and expansion of the modern nation-state (e.g., Tilly 1992), Gellner's assertion of the centrality of education in nation-building remains solid and has acquired a wide-spread agreement among scholars of nationalism. Whether seen 'from above', as a manifest expression of the state's power and desire to indoctrinate 'the people' and instil in them a sense of a collective national identity, or 'from below', as a process of accumulative learning and an expression of some sense of commonality, education has been seen as a means to enable the definition of the collective as homogeneous, and even more, national.

One account that exemplifies how education, and schooling, 'creates' a nation is Eugen Weber's (1976) exploration of the making of *Peasants into Frenchmen*.<sup>8</sup> Focusing on rural France, Weber demonstrates not only how France was 'nationalised' through the 'civilisation' of its population (Weber 1976, 303), but also how lingering a process this was. The slow development of education, as a state institution, was one area in which this process was reflected.<sup>9</sup> As he argues, this was related to the gradual spatial expansion of the French state:

It was only when what the schools taught made sense that they became important to those they had to teach. It was only when what the schools said became relevant to recently created needs and demands that people listened to them; and listening, also heeded the rest of their offerings. People went to school not because school was offered or imposed, but because it was useful (ibid.).

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citizenship see, Brubaker (1992). In Brubaker's terminology, Israel constitutes a case similar to that of Germany in constructing a discourse and a practice of citizenship based on "ethno-cultural understanding of nation-state membership" (ibid. 50).

<sup>8</sup> This, however, was not unique to France. In Nairn's view, "Ethnic nationalism is in essence a peasantry transmuted [...] into a nation" (Nairn 1998, 108). More generally, he argues, at the core of ethnonationalism (France definitely not excluded), and by and large, "Underneath all the accumulating paraphernalia of the modern lies a prolonged and massive social Calvary out of peasant subsistence and towards eventual urban interdependence." (ibid.)

<sup>9</sup> Weber, it should be noted, saw educational development as only one aspect of the French state's penetration of its periphery. Still, the role he attributed to schooling was somewhat different from the infra-structural changes that this process initiated. Especially, education had an added value inasmuch as it embodied the state's civilisational role. The language of 'civilisation' was in itself a manifestation of modernity, and ascribed to the (European) state a distinctive quality as an impartial agent of modernisation vis-à-vis its own subjects, and later, in the civilisation of colonised peoples (e.g., Adams 1995).

Yet, before school was useful for the ‘needs and demands’ of rural France, schooling became instrumental in disseminating the French language and in creating a sense of collectivity among these people. This process, which had already begun in the French Revolution, took a whole century, from the royal ordinance of 1816 that set standards of competence for teaching, through the 1833 law that reaffirmed them and also required that communes set up and maintain elementary schools, to the institution of an elementary teaching programme in 1886 (Weber 1976, 307-309). This effort, as Weber shows, was great but worthwhile. This was evinced by the rising number of schools, school enrolment and attendance, in the growing rate of literate children, both boys and girls (*ibid.*), as well as by the expanding scope of learning. It was the 1880s, he writes (*ibid.* 317), that “saw innovations – an enrichment of the teaching of French, the introduction of history and geography”. By the end of that decade, “the assault against provincialism” (*ibid.* 334), had begun to show results, most saliently in the area of ‘national pedagogy’.<sup>10</sup> There, education had proven to be of major importance and schooling played a critical role (see also, Hobsbawm 1990, 91). As Weber (1976, 330-331) puts it, national pedagogy was where,

the schools provide a complementary, even counter-education, because the education of the local society does not coincide with that needed to create a national one. This is where schooling becomes a major agent of acculturation: shaping individuals to fit into societies and cultures broader than their own, and persuading them that these broader realms are their own, as much as the *payes* they really know and more so.

Literacy in French was the main medium through which the new schools sought to make Frenchmen out of peasants. Yet, French remained an artificial language for many of its speakers.<sup>11</sup> Education for patriotism, on the other hand, proved more fruitful.<sup>12</sup> Throughout France, “all children became familiar with references or identities that could thereafter be used by the authorities, the press, and the politicians to appeal to them as a single body.” (Weber 1976, 337).<sup>13</sup> Children became aware of a France their fathers never knew, they

<sup>10</sup> Weber, however, seems to present a rather simplistic, linear conception of the relationship between centre and periphery, one identified with Shils (1975). In the following analysis, I will show this process in a more dialectical manner.

<sup>11</sup> See, Weber (1976, 336); on the importance of a common language for the building of a nation, see e.g., Hobsbawm (1990, 94-95) and Gellner (1983, 43-44).

<sup>12</sup> Hobsbawm (1990, 93) rightly suggests that “the type of nationalism which emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century had no fundamental similarity to state-patriotism, even when it attached itself to it. Its basic loyalty was, paradoxically, not to ‘the country’, but only to its particular version of that country: to an ideological construct.” This assertion emphasises the contention that nation-building and state-formation are not similar processes, and yet in the twentieth century they became ‘only analytically separable’. It also partly explains why, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the language of nationalism was less developed, the French government’s interests were embedded in a conception of patriotism, that is, loyalty to the state, or to the republic. This conception is echoed to some extent in Renan’s enquiry into “What is a nation?” (1990), where he places a considerable emphasis on the role of institutions in constructing and defining a nation.

<sup>13</sup> Saying this, it is noteworthy that Weber (1976, 324) himself was aware of the continuing disparities between the urban and rural areas and between the schooling of boys and girls. Similarly, it took a great deal of time and

became fascinated by their ‘new’ fatherland, and learnt that their first duty was to defend it as soldiers (*ibid.* 333). Teachers, on the other hand, satisfactorily reported “how they implanted the love of the fatherland [...] and develop[ed] this sentiment by showing France strong and powerful *when united.*” (*Ibid.* 333).

Weber’s analysis demonstrates what Gellner theoretically articulated, namely, that modern nationalism was premised on a process aimed at creating a culturally homogeneous collectivity that transcended the division between particularistic ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures. A common language was one main instrument in bringing about cultural unity, yet, in order to instil in ‘society’ (or, what would become society) a common feeling of belonging, it was necessary to provide it with content. That content was nationalism, which, in Anderson’s (1983, 14) view, was an ideology of the state and not of a particular social group.<sup>14</sup> It was based on the development of a loyalty to the state, and on ascribing it the moral power to civilise society, thus justifying state’s expansionism and its penetration of the periphery. Schools played a significant role in this expansionism, and became a main site for raising and nurturing the spirit of civilisation and a sense of patriotism. Teachers became the emissaries of both the nation and the state (Weber 1976, 318; Gellner 1983, 37). The growing state apparatus was not simply instrumental in making this happen, it was an essential feature of these processes (e.g., Tilly 1992, Ch. 4; Brown et. al. 1997, 2-3). Thus, the penetration of the state, its geographical expansion and political and institutional integration, underpinned the expansion of education and schooling.

## EDUCATION AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION

“The great problem of modern societies”, so Weber (1976, 331) cites the memoirs of the 1833 French Minister of Public Instruction Francois Guizot, “is the governance of minds.” And he adds: “Guizot had done his best to make elementary education ‘a guarantee of order and stability.’” These words should remind us that modern education was not, after all, only a ‘national’ imperative, but also one that derived its logic from the very structure of the state. In many respects, it was primarily a state machinery, aimed at achieving political integration, before it became a means to disseminate nationalist ideas.

If Weber’s analysis of the transformation of rural France into a French nation can be seen as a particular instance of nation-building through the expansion of schooling, the case he made about the role of the state in this process may be more easily generalised. Education and schooling did not spread and become universal without reason. Their expansion was

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effort before teachers were adequately trained to carry out the job of making patriots out of peasants and in disciplining children as citizens of the state (p. 330).

<sup>14</sup> The debate on the origins of nationalism is certainly beyond the scope of my argument. Whether ‘modern’ or ‘old’, ‘real’ or ‘invented’, that nationalism is an expression of belonging, and some ‘thing’ that is transcendental (at least in the eyes of those who hold to it), seems to be beyond dispute (see also Nairn 1998).

dependent upon those specific actions undertaken by the state that had made it free, universal, and valuable (Weber 1976, 323-324; Green 1990, 140 cf.). The reasons for this lay in the development of state secularism and in the pattern of state expansion. Only then, when the state made the whole world change (Weber 1976, 303), schooling turned out to be useful for people's daily life, and became a part of their routine. This, in other words, happened when secular mass education and schooling became significant for the processes of political and institutional integration, namely for state-formation.

Modernist scholars of nationalism have already pointed to the integral relationship between the emergence of nationalism and that of the modern state. Thus, Hobsbawm (1990, 81), for example, viewed compulsory elementary education as one feature that bonded subjects, now citizens, to the state and to the state's machinery. The relationship between the state and its citizens however is reciprocal. The state may 'need' education in order to make subjects into citizens, yet, as important, education became essential for the citizens themselves:

Industrial man [...] can no longer breathe effectively in the nature-given atmosphere. [...] Hence he lives in specially bounded and constructed units, a kind of giant aquarium or breathing chamber. But these chambers need to be erected and serviced. The maintenance of the life-giving and life-preserving air or liquid within each of these giant receptacles is not automatic. It requires a specialized plant. The name of this plant is a national educational and communications system. Its only effective keeper and protector is the state. (Gellner 1983, 51-52).

Gellner's thesis of nationalism points to "a functional relationship between nationalism and modernity" (O'Leary 1998, 53), hence the role he assigned to national education. In this view, once it is no longer expressed in a "strongly functionalist form" (*ibid.*), education, or culture (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 1), appears as a state function, not as a matter of functionalist necessity, but rather because this is how modern states function.<sup>15</sup> Culture, as a process of cultivation, provides "the ground for political citizenship", hence the foundation on which "the theoretical principles that inform the development of state educational institutions were elaborated" (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 1). The relationship between culture and nationalism, and more importantly, between culture and the state, should thus not be taken on face value. Culture is not merely the ideational framework within which modern

<sup>15</sup> O'Leary (1998, 52) rejects Gellner's functionalist reasoning, yet he suggests that this can be amended by using "a filter explanation". Still, what he offers is too voluntaristic in my view, as it ascribes nation-builders a preliminary knowledge of the desired, beneficial consequences of nationalism. My own rejection of this view rests upon a scientific-realist perspective that sees causality not as "regular sequences of events", but "as the actualisation of the properties of real natural entities with causal powers." (Isaac 1987b, 17). Thus, Gellner's linking of nationalism to industrialisation should not be seen as suggesting that the latter necessarily preceded the former, but that there is a causal relationship between them inasmuch as each is dependent upon the other for their mutual development (see, Green 1990, 47). Functionalists, then, are right to suggest that various aspects of the modern state are functional to the advancement of industrialisation, yet they remain wrong in trying to claim a functional necessity in terms of cause-and-effect (see also, Shapiro and Wendt 1992, 211-212). In this respect, a theory of the state may prove to be one "filter explanation" that can amend Gellner's functionalist reasoning.

nation-states are formed and bred. Rather than seeing culture and state separately, the division between the political and the educational spheres ought to be understood as part of the very construction of the modern state and its various apparatuses of control (see, *ibid.* 8-10; Althusser 1971). In this context, education has a distinctive role in making the modern state an ‘ethical state’, a conception which marks the “shift from domination to hegemony” (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 19). This Gramscian perspective informs the argument regarding the relationship between education and state-formation.

“In reality”, Gramsci (1983, 124) wrote in his *Prison Notebooks*,

the state must be conceived of as an ‘educator’, inasmuch as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilisation. Because one is acting essentially on economic forces, [...] the conclusion must not be drawn that super-structural factors should be left to themselves, to develop spontaneously, to a haphazard and sporadic germination.

It became the role of the state to ensure that these factors would not develop haphazardly. More specifically, the function of the ‘ethical state’ “is to form citizens and to gain consent”, thus making the state hegemonic. The schools (and the intelligentsia at large) are thus crucial factors in forming the subject “as one who consents to hegemony.” (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 21). Or, as Green (1990, 109) argues, it is in this context that education “corresponds most closely to that aspect of state-formation which concerns ideology.” And state ideology, it should be reminded, was not just bound to nationalism; in most Western states it was equally enmeshed in a capitalist mode of production. Functional and critical approaches to the study of educational expansion differed on that issue, namely the ideological structure of the modern state and, particularly, its universality.

## UNIVERSALISM AND EDUCATION: BETWEEN ORDER AND HEGEMONY

Universality is one important characteristic that makes modern education qualitatively distinctive from previous forms of education. Notwithstanding the role of religion in the expansion and extension of education and schooling (Green 1990, 27-30), the development of this concept under the conditions of modernisation and secularisation was intrinsically tied to the development of the modern state, both internally and externally. Internally, education became compulsory independent of class and gender, and thus sought to encompass all children within, at least, the framework of the elementary level.<sup>16</sup> Externally, mass education became a model that, within the last two centuries, has been adopted by virtually all states (Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992, 128; Ramirez and Boli 1987, 2-3;

<sup>16</sup> It should, of course, be noted that although education “sought to create each person as a universal subject [...] it did so differentially according to class and gender” (Green 1990, 80). One way to understand this is by looking at the development of universal citizenship (a concept that contained the idea of ‘education for all’) through processes of expansion and extension in which class and gender remained crucial factors in determining the relative position of citizens within a given polity (e.g., Marshall 1963; Giddens 1987; Roche 1987; Young 1990).

Benavot et. al. 1991, 98), thus making this phenomenon ubiquitous, and in itself a characteristic of, and a tool in, the formation of the modern nation-state.

### **Universalism and order: from Durkheim to structural-functionalism**

What makes universalism so important? The answer to this question depends on how the emergence and expansion of modern education is conceptualised and explained. The earliest, and most widespread, type of answer was functionalist.<sup>17</sup> This explanation traced the origins of mass education to industrialisation and the division of labour that this engendered. Of particular concern was the development of a complex, differentiated form of social organisation which required appropriate mechanisms of socialisation (Parsons 1959, 297-298). Education, it was argued, was bound to transcend the particular – i.e., the local or the occupational group itself – and act upon the needs of the collective, the universal, inasmuch as it should cater to the needs of ‘the system’ and not to those of its particularistic components (Brown et. al. 1997, 3).

This view owes much to the writings of Emile Durkheim on education and the division of labour (e.g., Durkheim 1956; see also Green 1990, 38), which offer a conception of modern society as being analogous to “organic unities, in which the parts of the body are functionally linked together as an integrated system.” (Giddens 1978, 109). Being concerned with the maintenance of this system, its social order and solidarity, Durkheim emphasised the role of education as a social practice, namely as a means of socialisation (*ibid.*). Education, Durkheim (1956, 71) contended,

is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its objects are to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined.

The division between the universal and the particular was reflected in the dual role Durkheim assigned to education. The demands of the child’s ‘special milieu’ were, as in pre-modern times, those of occupational training (but now in accordance with the needs of a modern division of labour). Political society, on the other hand, required that the child not bring to life “only his nature as an individual” (*ibid.* 72). “The work of education”, he continued, “creates in man a new being.” A social, moral being.

Durkheim viewed this latter task as being of great importance. His anti-individualistic stance, opposed to that of other, mainly English, thinkers (Green 1990, 37), led him to emphasise the value of a “shared core of educational experience” (Giddens 1978, 72; also, Green 1990, 36). With the demise in power of institutionalised religion, this educational

<sup>17</sup> There can be other possible classifications, of course, such as Green’s (1990), who focuses on Liberal Theory; Industrialisation; Urbanisation, Proletarianisation and Family Life; and, a Weberian explanation (see also Archer 1982).

experience would be based on the transmission of “secular values and codes of conduct which permit the autonomy of action called for by the differentiated division of labour” (Giddens 1978, 72). It was here, more than in occupational training, that Durkheim (1956, 124) viewed education as a means to create solidarity and social stability, and where he saw the crucial role of the state as a moral agent.<sup>18</sup> Education’s goal was to prepare children for their future roles in the economy (ibid. 122), but it was for the state to ensure that this would be “exercised in a social way”. Otherwise, he claimed, pedagogical influence “would necessarily be put to the service of private beliefs, and the whole nation [...] would break down into an incoherent multitude of little fragments in conflict with one another.” (ibid. 79). More important still, the state had to guarantee that the curriculum reflected the moral ideals of society. In this view of the state as representing the whole, the universal, there was no doubt as to what those ideals were: “respect of reason, for science, for ideas and sentiments which are at the base of democratic morality” (ibid. 81). Nor was there room for social conflict (Giddens 1978, 109; Green 1990, 37).

This evolutionary approach premised the structural-functional school of thought in the mid twentieth century American social science, and became the “textual reference for conservative educational theories” (Green 1990, 38).<sup>19</sup> This approach, as pointed out by Green, made the relationship between education and work its focal point, and emphasised the principles of meritocracy in the function of education. It has thus left the question of moral education, Durkheim’s other educational function, beyond its scope.<sup>20</sup> The functionality of education was measured against the needs of society in terms of its capacity to develop in children the necessary skills as members of an industrialised society (Parsons 1959, 298; Reid 1986, 50-51). This, however, was proven wrong both historically and empirically: historically, as Green (1990, 39-48) argues, modern education advanced independently of the progress of industrialisation; empirically, the content of most education seems less practical in terms of work performance than functionalist explanations predict (e.g., Benavot et. al. 1991, 97).

Universalism was, in the eyes of the structural-functional approach that viewed the state as a coherent system based on consensus, a trait of the state and its education system. This was

<sup>18</sup> See Durkheim (1956, 78-81). As Giddens (1978, 72-73) notes, Durkheim participated in the controversy in France in the late nineteenth century over the educational role of the state. He believed that the demand to leave education to the family and the church was ‘out of tune with the demands of modern society’, and that the state could no longer stand aloof from developments in education.

<sup>19</sup> Green (1990, 38) also emphasises that, “Modern functionalism has lost much of what was useful in Durkheim’s work without in any way mitigating its deficiencies.” Especially, he argues, it ignored his anti-individualistic position and, it should be added given the American tendency to minimise state intervention, his conception of the state as a moral agent.

<sup>20</sup> This neglect was evinced in the study of national curricula. As Benavot et. al. (1991, 86) show, in recent research the basic structure of the curriculum became “surprisingly uncontroversial”, and has been received in a taken-for-granted manner as, they argue, demonstrated in “Parsons’ completely abstract discussion of the presumed functions of the content of schooling.”

in accordance with its ‘taken-for-granted’ conception of the state as essentially progressive, and as a just agent of modernisation.<sup>21</sup> The progressiveness of the state, and of education, was rarely questioned. On the contrary, it was assumed that progress spread evenly and justly across the nation and, in fact, that education functions to this end. Nonetheless, functionalist theorists were aware that the rewards of education, as of modernity at large, were not evenly distributed. Parsons, who conceived of differentiation according to actual achievements as the most important function of education (Reid 1986, 50), acknowledged that this will inevitably be a source of strain. This strain would be relieved, he proposed, if the family and school shared a belief in the fairness of the educational system, namely in the principle of “equality of opportunity” (Parsons 1959, 309; for a critical assessment see, Reid 1986, 51-52). Within the context of the structural-functional approach, the state was the embodiment of this principle and its guarantor.

### **Universalism and hegemony: a critical perspective**

This consensual conception of universality had its critical observers, who held the assumption/prediction regarding the even, smooth spread of modernity as suspicious. As Green (1990, 48) rightly suggests, whereas functionalist explanations tended to focus on the changing *forces of production*, critical accounts focused on the capitalist *relations of production*. The latter were mainly concerned with “the social conditions necessary for the reproduction of capitalist relations” and with “the new forms of labour socialisation for work and new modes of class control in the community.” (ibid.). The underlying assumptions for this critical line of analysis were that modernisation is not a linear process, that it serves the interests of different social groups (classes) differentially, and hence that education is not necessarily liberating, but rather a means of social control and dominance. From a state-centred point of view, this critique entailed a different conception of universality in education.

The critique of the notion of educational universalism was, primarily, directed against the liberal interpretations of the nature and purpose of educational expansion. Bourgeois education theories, writes Green (1990, 30) in his exploration of Marxist accounts, were informed by “the predominance of nurture over nature and therefore the principle of universal educability.” This principle, which extolled education as a human right, underlay the democratic interpretation that mainly middle class thinkers have adopted. In this view, the expansion of mass education was a part of the democratisation of European societies and a reflection of this latter process (for a critique of this approach see, ibid. 27-36).

The relationship between mass education and democracy has been more complicated than this, however. Education, apparently, has not been evenly applied, and when it has, its effect

<sup>21</sup> Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 178) express a similar critique regarding the problematic view of “the School, invested by ‘Society’ with a single, purely cultural function of ‘enculturation’”.

was not necessarily democratisation. In some respects, universalisation had the opposite outcome. In England, for example, the making of modern education, and particularly its centralisation under state control, was, as Lloyd and Thomas (1998) demonstrate, interrelated with the working class' struggle for self-representation.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century educational reforms were a middle class counterattack against flourishing working class self-education (Green 1990, 51; Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 87-90). Thus, as Lloyd and Thomas (1998, 81) claim, while bourgeois thinkers were promoting the idea that “education must precede franchise”, working class and some petty-bourgeois radicals had shown a “systematic refusal [...] to accept the division of education, politics and economics into separate if interinfluential spheres.” This division eventually underpinned the development of the liberal notion of universalism, and it empowered the emerging middle class that sought to mobilise the state to its side (ibid. 87). In this respect, the opposition of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century socialist radicals had “strikingly prefigured later theorists like Gramsci”, who pointed in their writings to “the mediating function of educational institutions” (ibid. 84).<sup>23</sup> It was this function that had made education critical for the development of what Gramsci called the ‘ethical state’.

Both Durkheim and Gramsci, as was noted above, saw the state as an ‘educator’; they differed, however, in their conception of universalism. For Durkheim, the state’s moral role was to counterbalance the individualistic spirits of modernism, and its capacity to do so was derived from its disinterest in the particularities of society. Gramsci, on the other hand, saw the state’s educative role as creating a new type of civilisation, embedded in the capitalist relations of production. Its means were the state’s capacity to penetrate civil society, and, to treat its subjects as individuals.<sup>24</sup> This difference was substantial: whereas for Durkheim, the

<sup>22</sup> Lloyd and Thomas (1998) present an argument over the development of the concept of representation for which the history of the struggle over state-sponsored education is an important theme. In short, they argue, “the very formulation of the space of culture demands [...] its actualisation in pedagogical institutions whose function is to transform the individual of civil society into the subject of the state” (ibid. 67). For the purposes of the current analysis, it will suffice to emphasise that the notion of state-sponsored education has not been a logical derivative of democratisation, but a consequence of centralisation. Thus, the primacy of the state in providing education was not because it was a ‘fair agent of modernisation’, but a result of a struggle over the provision of education and over the relation between the state and production (ibid. 84). The appropriation of education by the state signified the start of its subsequent alliance with the emerging middle class (ibid. 87).

<sup>23</sup> The mediating function of education, Lloyd and Thomas (1998, 84) argue, has been identified in at least two senses: one, in “the assumption that knowledge is valid only when mediated through institutions defined by their distance from the conditions of labour”; and second, in “its invocation as the necessary, but, of course, infinitely extensible, condition of the exercise of the political franchise”.

<sup>24</sup> For Gramsci, the educative role of the state was not restricted to the educational field proper. The state’s power vis-à-vis civil society, he contended, is based on its punitive capacity. Talking of the educative role of the state, he asked, “how will each single individual succeed in incorporating himself into the collective man, and will educative pressure be applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into ‘freedom’?” The answer, for Gramsci, was to extend the concept of Law “to include those activities which are at present classified as ‘legally neutral’, and which belong to the domain of civil society; the latter operates without ‘sanctions’ or compulsory ‘obligations’, but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc.” (Gramsci 1983, 123).

state was the only means to re-create social solidarity, for Gramsci, its very power was immoral. For both, state universality was, in a sense, a means of social control, yet it was only in Gramsci's formulation that it came to be understood as an ideology. Structural-functional explanations, notably, that ignored Durkheim's moral role of the state, became merely idealistic.

The structural-functional school failed, from its idealistic point of departure, to explain the uneven development of education. Nor could it see that due to industrialisation working class children could not benefit from education (Green 1990, 52). As Eugen Weber (1976, 319) shows for France, and in consistence with other records on the spread of education (Green 1990, 52-53), education spread slowly from the urban to the rural areas, but there was a considerable pressure (from both families and officials) against ending child labour for schooling. The reason for change, however, did not lie in the need of industry for 'learned' labour force, that is, for the teaching of new technical skills. Rather, the new factories required "new habits of regularity, subordination to routine, and monotonous work and strict discipline" (ibid. 52), hence the 're-education' of the work force. A similar logic applied to the appropriation of education by the state. As Lloyd and Thomas (1998, 123-124) show throughout their analysis, 'education', as a means to discipline the savage nature of the working class, became a pre-condition for the extension of the political franchise.

Universalism was not 'interest-free' at both the economic and the political levels, and it served the interests of the middle class better than those of the working class. It was in this sense that universalism became an ideology.

Universalism, however, became a powerful concept because it became associated with state power, rather than with middle class politics, or interests. It thus became the ideology of the state and not of a particular class.<sup>25</sup> Education has been a means for the development of the state itself, both as a concrete political structure and as an *idea*. It produces *abstract* citizens, that is, "shaping a population that is less and less divided by differences of place and interest and more subject to a national 'common sense'" (Lloyd and Thomas 1998, 125). In other words, making education universal was a necessary step towards universalising the state, and thus in allowing it to distance itself from the particularities of civil society.

## UNIVERSALISM ETHNICITY, AND THE STATE

The modern nation-state, distinct from previous forms of governance, achieves political stability through processes of homogenisation and integration, to which the processes of

<sup>25</sup> In Habermas's view, universalism is the fundamental principle of the moral and legal codes that developed alongside the material evolution of capitalism (Lawrence 1989, 151). In his view, also, the extended period of schooling is a way, *inter alia*, to enable children to escape the traditional agencies of socialisation, and thus to develop a moral identity which corresponds to the morality of the nation-state and the morality of individual citizens (ibid. 153).

nation-building and state-formation attest. Another characteristic of the modern state is its commitment to economic growth that, under the condition of capitalism, means a commitment to the process of capital accumulation, but, also a concern for the welfare of the people. These imperatives create a constant constraint on the formation of nation-states, characterised by the contradictory simultaneous processes of unification and separation, that is, between egalitarianism, aimed at creating the national collective as a classless society, and stratification, based on class, gender, ethnicity, race etc.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, state-formation and nation-building are continuous processes aimed at the maintenance of social order and stability (Lustick 1985, 1-3). If only in this respect, a state's work is never done.

The expansion of state-sponsored educational systems was, as has been shown, a part of the formation of citizenship and national identities as universalised identities. Although these two kinds of identity are not one and the same – the former is based on abstraction, the latter on specification – both are a result of the state's effort to create a classless society based on cultural homogeneity. Through this process, the state itself is constantly re-constructed as universal, that is, as representing both the citizenry and the nation. Ethnicity, or ethnic identity, in contrast, is perceived of, and premised on, a counter notion of particularism. But, as is argued above, these seemingly contradictory processes are two-sides of the same coin, and they are advanced through the same mechanisms of the state. Education has from the start been one such mechanism.

Given this, the main purpose of this study is to explain the interplay between the notions of universalism and particularism, and, specifically, to account for the ways in which this interplay gives shape to one particular society. Assuming that modern nation-states share basic similarities, in terms of the logic of processes of nation-building and state-formation, this interplay, I propose, accounts for differences between them. In other words, the main effort of social analysis is to unravel these process of nation-building and state-formation in order to expose and explain how the notions of universalism and particularism are employed and applied, and how these notions create an ethnicised social order. This study aims to offer a critical perspective on the processes of cultural homogenisation and political integration that characterise the Zionist national and political project. Such a perspective, I argue, placed in the history of education, is necessary in order to better account for the history of ethnic relations in Israel.

<sup>26</sup> It should be borne in mind that other patterns of exclusion and inclusion, defined by gender and race, operate with the same contradictory logic against the homogenising effort of the state. These various levels of exclusion are not necessarily mutually exclusive and, in most cases, they even overlap. Such, e.g., is the case of women, whose social inferiority might be weakened or ameliorated by their ethnic or racial identity relative to other women who also suffer from the patriarchal social order (hooks 1982, 1-13).

## PART II

### ETHNIC POLITICS, NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-FORMATION

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In this part, I offer an historical perspective of the understanding of ethnicity as a feature of state-society relations in Israel. This is needed for two main reasons: **a)** if ethnicity is not given, that is, not a pre-defined social category but a particular type of relationship, then there is a need to trace the processes whereby ethnicity becomes a meaningful concept for the understanding of social relations; **b)** as a derivative of the former, this process of ethnicisation of social relations ought to be placed in the broader context of the processes of nation-building and state-formation and, particularly, in relation to the role of the state in these processes.

The following analysis, therefore, is meant to serve three main purposes:

- 1) To account for the processes whereby the ethnic categories used in Israel were delineated and given content and, more specifically, to trace the history of the *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* ethnic categories and to examine not only of whom they are constituted, but also what it means to be identified as belonging to either of them.
- 2) To account for the role of the state, or the state-like agent, in these processes and, more broadly, to explain how ‘ethnicity’, or ‘ethnic relations’ became a factor in, and a characteristic of, the development of state-society relations.

- 3) To propose a time framework for the understanding of the ‘history of ethnicity’ in the broader context of nation-building and state-formation, hence to identify the critical turning points in which ‘ethnic relations’ have taken their shape and course.

The next two chapters discuss the Zionist nation-building and state-formation before and after statehood, and the relation between these processes and the ethnicisation of social relations. In Chapter Three, I take as a point of departure two turning points in the history of Zionist nationalism and in the history of Palestine which mark, respectively, the beginning and the end of the pre-statehood period. The opening in 1908 of the Zionist Palestine Office, from this perspective, was a critical moment in the history of modern social relations in Palestine in two respects: first, it marked a shift in the history of modern Jewish nationalism by turning the idea of Zionism into a concrete political act; and, second, it had turned the Jewish colonisation of Palestine into a nationalistic project, and in this sense, into a nationalistic conflict between Jews and Arabs. This period ends with the 1947 UN resolution on the partition of the land between its Arab and Jewish inhabitants, which is the second critical moment that I discuss in this chapter. At this point, when the ending of the British mandate became a fact and the prospects for statehood real, the achievements of nation-building and state-formation in the pre-statehood were the grounds for the transition to sovereignty. These two critical moments thus delimit a period in which many features of social relations in Israel were set and determined. Ethnicity was one of them.

The analysis in Chapter Three, then, is set to trace the roots of ‘ethnic relations’ in that phase when the conflict between Jews and Arabs in the emerging colonial economy had turned national and when Jews of European and non-European origin had met. At this moment, when the Zionist Office was only an office, ‘ethnic relations’ appeared as a result of the conflicting interests of Eastern-European Jewish workers, European-Jewish capitalists and the Zionist movement itself. This triadic relationship, I argue, was critical for the ensuing social relations inasmuch as it determined how and why the political has been constructed in ethnic terms. Apparently, the Zionist Office, which represented the interests of the Zionist movement, was not interested *a-priori* in the emergence of ethnic boundaries within the Jewish collective. Nonetheless, ‘ethnic relations’ turned out to serve the Office’s interest in establishing itself as a ‘state-like’ agent in the process of colonisation. This development of the Jewish community in Palestine as an ethnicised polity significantly affected the ‘transition to statehood’. Then, when the Zionist political elite sought to dismantle (some of) the *yishuv*’s structures, and to bring about a social order based on the principles of sovereignty, ‘ethnic relations’ turned out to be a critical impediment in making the Jewish nation-state universalistic and egalitarian.

Chapter Four is set to explore two processes, or state projects, that yield two more critical moments in the history of ethnicity. The process of *absorption of immigration* and the

process of *industrialisation* were historically crucial in determining the structure of social relations and the makeup of Israeli society, and both exhibited a pre-planned effort by state agencies to bring about a change in the existing social order. Indeed, the Great Immigration did not occur until after statehood, yet, its grounds were set almost a decade earlier, in Ben-Gurion's 'Million Plan' of 1942. This plan marked a change in both the method and scope of immigration: on the one hand, it showed the capacity and the intention of the Zionist movement to undertake the management of immigration and absorption, while, on the other, it signalled a shift away from its European orientation. In the days of the Great Immigration (1948-1951), immigration had turned the dominantly European-Jewish polity into a society divided, almost equally, between Jews of European and non-European origin. The challenge, hence the pattern, of the absorption of immigration soon became entangled in the changing political-economic structure, and the transition to liberal-like politics. At this juncture, the 1959 *Wadi-Salib* Revolt was deemed a critical moment, when those who were hitherto stigmatised as 'ethnic' and thus relegated to the margins of society, had made their ethnic identity an organising factor in their relationship vis-à-vis the state.

From one historical juncture to another, ethnicity has been given shape and content. The Zionist space has become, to borrow from Comaroff, an ethnospaces in which the boundaries between Jews of European and non-European origin, and between them and Palestinian-Arabs, were drawn over and over again. The interplay between these three parties reflected, only partially, the variety of interests that underlay the shaping of the Israeli ethnospaces. Not less significant was the variety of interests within the Jewish sector. Thus, the efforts of cultural homogenisation and political integration were directed not only externally, towards 'the Arabs' or 'the World', but not less importantly, internally, towards Jewish society itself.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PRE-STATEHOOD PERIOD:

### COLONISATION AND THE TRANSITION TO STATEHOOD

In this chapter, which explores the pre-statehood period, I examine the ethnicisation of social relations in Zionist/Israeli society by focusing on two critical moments, which mark the beginning and the end of this period: the establishment of the Zionist Palestine Office in 1908 and UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 29 November 1947. In this period, which began under Ottomans rule and ended with the withdrawal of the British forces from Palestine, the Zionist national movement turned from a national movement into a ‘state-builder’ and the Jewish people became a nation. These processes of nation-building and state-formation determined not only the structure of the *yishuv*, the Zionist polity under Mandatory rule, but also entrenched several features of the Israeli state that came to characterise it as an ethnicised polity.

While the Zionist effort of nation-building and state-formation was successful – indeed within this period the Zionist movement had managed to create a relatively highly integrated polity and to place itself at the head of a new political (national) order – these processes of homogenisation and integration were neither comprehensive, nor complete. In fact, homogenisation was achieved at the cost of an acknowledgement of social heterogeneity, that is, by allowing a considerable degree of autonomy for various social sectors within the Jewish community. In this respect, the *yishuv* developed as a semi-federative society in which ideological inclination formed a legitimate basis for social organisation and political participation. This depiction, common to mainstream analyses of Zionist history (e.g., Eisenstadt 1967; Horowitz and Lissak 1978), is however only partial. While it adheres to the Zionist self-representation as an ideological movement, its emphasis on ideological divisions conceals the ethnicised character of social divisions in the *yishuv*. This, I propose, was a result of the Zionist movement’s effort to establish itself as a ‘state-like’ agent in the process of colonisation and of the particular power relations that were thus developed between the Zionist movement, Jewish capitalists and the organised Eastern European Jewish workers.

Through these processes, I argue, European Jews distinguished themselves from non-European Jews by presenting themselves as ideologically committed to Zionism, and thus

acquired a favourable position, which had both symbolic and material implications, in the national redemption project. This was first evinced in the ‘import’ of Yemenite Jews to displace the Arabs from the Jewish colonial labour market. This event (see below), although minor in scale, was significant in two ways. First, it was the earliest encounter between European and non-European Jews in the context of the colonial project, which determined many patterns of future conflicts between these two sectors. Second, this encounter was a result of the Zionist Palestine Office’s intervention in the conflict between Jewish workers and capitalists, which established this body as a central factor in the colonial economy and in the process of colonisation. In these respects, the Yemenite affair was emblematic. It showed how ‘cultural differences’, or ethnicity, came to explain and justify power relations and social inequality within the emerging Jewish society, and, not less significant, in revealing the crucial role of the Zionist movement in this process.

When the prospects for statehood became real, with the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine between its Arab and Jewish inhabitants, both the ideological-sectorial division of the *yishuv* and intra-Jewish ethnic inequality were at odds with the notion of sovereignty. The structure of the *yishuv*, and mainly the inclination to favour the needs and interests of its European Jewish, or *ashkenazi*, segment, which was manifested in the power of their various socio-political organisations, contradicted the monopolistic and universalistic tendency of a sovereign state. Under these circumstances, and already prior to the declaration of independence, the Zionist political establishment became engaged in several processes that were aimed at dismantling the *yishuv*’s social order and replacing it with a state-oriented order. The notion that encapsulated these efforts was *Mamlakhtiyut*, which, in the context of the above discussion, had two main goals: to weaken the political power of the *yishuv* socio-political organisations, and to de-emphasise the role of ideological mobilisation which empowered the political parties that controlled the various social sectors. The ideology of *Mamlakhtiyut*, which underlay the conflict between the emerging state apparatus and the machineries of the political parties, thus became the state ideology. Yet, given the dependency of the state on the capacity of the *yishuv*’s societal organisations to mobilise the veteran *ashkenazi* sector, it turned out in practice to be nationally and ethnically exclusive. In this sense, I argue, *Mamlakhtiyut* did not mark a total break from the power structure of the *yishuv*, but remained favourable to the interests of the *ashkenazi* sector, and was thus a manifestation of the extension of the process of ethnicisation into statehood.

## COLONISATION AND ETHNICISATION

In 1908, when the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) opened the Palestine Office as its executive arm in Palestine, the idea of Jewish nationalism had begun to take a concrete political form. Yet, the Zionist Palestine Office was not immediately the most powerful, and certainly not the single, factor in the Jewish emigration to and colonisation of Palestine, and

it took some time and struggle before it established itself as such. This occurred after the Palestine Office became increasingly involved in, and to a large extent the initiator of, two main practices of the colonial project: ‘the conquest of labour’ and ‘the conquest of land’. These practices did not just establish the Palestine Office as a ‘state-like’ agent in the colonisation of Palestine, but were also determinative in the ethnicisation of social relations.

### **The Ottoman Period: preliminary notions of modernity**

Although Jewish presence in Palestine persisted throughout all centuries, modern times saw both quantitative and qualitative change in the nature and purpose of Jewish emigration to, and settling in, Palestine. This change had already occurred in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the processes of modernisation, nationalisation, and colonisation in Europe, and it was further enhanced with the emergence of Zionist nationalism. The latter development and, more specifically, the establishment of the Zionist Palestine Office in 1908, has changed dramatically not only the Jewish community of Palestine, but also its relationship with the Arab inhabitants of the land.

In Ottoman Palestine, Jews were divided along lines of religious practice: the *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* communities, each composed of smaller congregations according to country of origin. For centuries, the *sephardic* community had constituted the majority of Jews in Palestine, and throughout Ottoman rule was recognised as the representative of the Jews within the structure of the *millet* system that endowed the religious communities with a certain degree of political autonomy (Sharabi 1989, 5; Smooha 1978, 57). Also, this community proved to be more autonomous economically and thus it differed from the *ashkenazi* community, which was mainly comprised of aged Jews who emigrated to the Holy Land for the sake of their Torah-studies (Friedman 1977, 5). The latter were mostly dependent upon ‘distribution funds’, that is, philanthropic support for Jewish Torah-learning centres by their respective European communities (Eliav 1970, 304). This changed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A considerable immigration of European Orthodox Jews had turned the *sephardi* majority into a minority among Jews in Palestine (Sharabi 1989, 5); by 1895, it constituted only forty percent of the population.<sup>1</sup> This also engendered a change in the relationship between the funding European congregations and the growing *ashkenazi* population of Palestine. The European home-communities began to question the justification for retaining the latter as dependent and unproductive (Eliav 1970, 304-306), and soon they demanded its modernisation. This destabilised the relationship between the *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* communities, and after the Zionist movement had taken its first steps in Palestine, it took advantage of these internal rifts in order to mobilise the ‘old-*yishuv*’, as it came to be known,

<sup>1</sup> The Jewish population, estimated in the 1840s at 24,000, more than doubled during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, in 1900, reached 55,000 (Naor and Giladi 1990, 461).

to its side. Consequently, the *sephardi* leadership found itself in the margins of the political processes, which also implied that, despite its greater inclination to modernise, this community came to be seen as opposing modernisation, and thus as hindering the nationalisation (equated with modernisation) of the Jewish community.

In the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, new waves of immigration, triggered by global economic and political factors, marked a shift in social relations in Palestine. These immigrants, mainly youngsters from Eastern Europe and young families from Yemen, settled outside the major cities and the main concentrations of Jewish population, and for both ideological and material reasons sought to integrate into the modernising economy of the land.<sup>2</sup> Soon they became rivals in the land and labour markets, a rivalry that was coloured ‘ethnic’.

### **The conquest of labour: a dynamic of an ethnically split labour market**

Shafir (1989, 8), in his comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Zionist nationalism and the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, typified Israeli nation-building and state-formation as a combination of an Eastern European nationalism and a late instance of European overseas expansion. While the former explains Zionism as “an ethnic movement in search of a state”, the latter accounts for the specific form this nationalist ideological mobilisation has taken. According to Shafir, the Zionist colony was of a distinctive type, similar to the British in Rhodesia and the French and Italian in North Africa, which he classifies as *an ethnic plantation settlement*. The key features of which are: **a)** European control of the land; **b)** the employment of local labour; **c)** a full-blown European national identity and opposition to ethnic mixture; and finally, **d)** a notion of massive European immigration and settlement (Shafir 1989, 9). In the early years, this colonisation was based on the flow of European-Jewish immigrants who sought employment on the newly founded, Jewish-owned plantations (Shalev 1992, 37).

Soon, this pattern of Jewish workers’ settlement had reached a deadlock. This happened when European Jewish workers failed to replace the Arab workers on the plantations and to form a reproducible Jewish working class. Discouraged by their failure, the European Jewish workers established political parties that had as one of their main aims to exert pressure on the Jewish plantation owners to prefer them to the Arab labourers on nationalistic grounds (Shapira 1968, 27-29; Shapiro 1976, 13-14; Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 70; Druyan 1981, 116-130; Kimmerling 1983, 245; Shafir 1990, 175). The plantation owners rejected this pressure on economic grounds – Jewish labour was dearer and the Arab labourers were more competent for agricultural work (Kimmerling 1983, 100-101). The failure of the European

<sup>2</sup> The failure of the first waves of immigration from Yemen to integrate into the old-*yishuv* was in great part attributed to the ‘distribution system’ which disadvantaged those communities that could not rely on their home-community. Thus, the lack of a strong home-community resulted in their secession from the *sephardi* community and in their inferior position in society (Druyan 1981, 16-17, 77-79; Herzog 1986, 43).

workers, in spite of their nationalist zeal, to conquer the labour market, led to demands on the Zionist Palestine Office, despite its lack of official authority over the Jewish community (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 33), to intervene in the market and to seek alternative solutions that would satisfy the plantation owners and, at the same time, protect the interests of the European-Jewish workers (Shafir 1989, 92-96).

The Palestine Office, discouraged by its vain attempts to convince the plantation owners to prefer dear European-Jewish over cheap Arab labour, eventually consented to work for an initiative, raised by one of the Jewish plantation owners, to 'import' cheap Jewish labour from Yemen (Shafir 1989, 96-102). In 1911, it sent an emissary to encourage Yemenite Jews to immigrate to Palestine. For, as Patai (1953, 187-8) amply put it, Arthur Rupin, head of the Palestine Office, felt that,

here [...] was a human element as modest in its demands as the Arabs of Palestine, as able or at least as willing to carry out heavy physical labour under the blazing sun of Palestine, and yet Jewish, hence constituting no danger to the Zionist plans for development.

This development forced the WZO to get involved in perpetuating immigration, despite its reluctance at the time to become a 'philanthropic organisation' (Shilo 1986, 91; 1994, 91; Shafir 1989, 95; 1990, 176). The significance of this development, however, was that it demonstrated the limits of labour market dynamics, hence the need for a 'state-like' agent to split the market between Arab and Jewish workers, and the stepping in of the WZO, through the Palestine Office, to this role. In this sense, importing Yemenite workers marked the establishment of the PO as an arbiter between (Jewish) labour and capital, and equally significant, it attested to its relative independence of societal forces. In other words, it enabled the Palestine Office to mobilise the colonialist project to its nationalistic ends. Yet, the conditions were such that the Palestine Office remained dependent upon the support of Jewish capitalists and organised (European) Jewish labour in materialising its goals. Within this triadic relationship, the Yemenite immigrants found themselves as objects of the colonisation process rather than as equal partners.

In sum, the policy of 'the conquest of labour' was based on a dual strategy of a split labour market. Against the Arabs, European Jews employed a strategy of exclusion based on nationalistic grounds; however, vis-à-vis the anticipated Yemenite immigration, they employed a 'caste' strategy, based on a distinction that was instrumental from that time onwards, between 'idealistic' and 'natural workers'. Accordingly, the European workers considered themselves 'idealistic workers', or *pioneers*, for they preferred the hardships of Palestine and participation in the Zionist national redemption over immigration to the West; in contrast, the 'natural workers' were the native Middle-Easterners who, seen through European eyes, were capable of performing manual agricultural work and of being content with little (Shapira 1968, 101; Druyan 1981, 134-144; Shafir 1989, 107; 1990). This served

the European Jewish workers as a means to define a hierarchical distinction between themselves, 'idealistic' workers who were *qualitatively* contributing to the Zionist project, and Jews of the Orient, 'natural' workers, considered merely as a *quantitative* addition. This distinction, therefore, provided the former with a rationale that served as a justification for their privileged position in the economic and political spheres.<sup>3</sup>

### **The conquest of the land: a dynamic of ethnic segregation**

The effort of Eastern European workers to differentiate themselves from the Yemenite workers did not necessarily coincide with the interest of the Palestine Office. The PO did not *a priori* adhere to this approach, yet these practices of segmentation diffused from the economic to the political and social spheres. Apparently, the WZO did not provide the Yemenite settlers with the same conditions that it did to the Eastern Europeans. They were thus settled in separate quarters, near to *ashkenazi* populated plantations, housed in smaller lodgings, in spite of their larger families, and, above all, they were not allocated land (Smooha 1978, 55; Kimmerling 1983, 89; Shafir 1989, 112-113). In one infamous occasion, Yemenite Jews were even expelled from an agricultural settlement near the Sea of Galilee when European Jewish settlers refused to share the land allocated to them with the Yemenite workers (Nini 1996). The Zionist movement eventually gained from this practice that, although subject to some moral and practical objections (Nini 1983, 110), kept the Yemenite Jews as labourers who would be paid as 'Arab workers', but who could still remain within the boundaries of the Jewish, national collective.

Towards the end of the Ottoman period, the WZO established itself as an indispensable factor in the Jewish colonisation of Palestine and, by 1914, the Palestine Office became directly involved in this process by engendering a new policy of land acquisition and settlement. This policy, that led to the transition from a policy of 'conquest of labour' to a policy of 'conquest of land', was based on the settling of Jewish workers in agricultural farms, owned by the WZO, and thus created non-competitive enclaves of exclusive Jewish labour and settlement (Kimmerling 1983, 34; Shafir 1989, 113-114). In this way, the exclusion of Arabs from the labour market coincided with their displacement from the land. This shift was critical for the further development of the Zionist nation-building process in three ways: **a)** in determining the centrality of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict in Zionist and Palestinian nation-building, **b)** in shaping a social hierarchy, based on cultural distinction,

<sup>3</sup> How far the image of 'natural workers' was from the actual life experience of the Yemenite Jews was evidenced in the fact that most of them were not workers in their homeland, but rather artisans and merchants (Druyan 1981, 136-137; Tobi 1983, 38-39). Also, when Yemenite workers replaced the Arab workers, who were refused a raise in their wages, most of them turned out to be unsuitable for manual labour (Nini 1983, 108; Shafir 1989, 92-3). Furthermore, the representation of the Yemenites as non-modern was also incongruent with the social reality: as early as 1903, two years before the establishment of a similar Eastern-European workers party, Yemenite workers organised in demanding that the plantation owners employ them instead of the Arab workers (Shafir 1989, 92-3).

between European and non-European Jews, and c) in establishing the powers of the Labour movement in this process.

The significance of the policy of ‘the conquest of land’ to the development of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict, as well as its implications for the further segregation between Jews of different origin, cannot be overestimated (see, Kimmerling 1983; Shafir 1989). This new policy required co-operation between the Zionist movement and the organised Jewish settlers, and it resulted in the establishment of the *kibbutzim* and the *moshavim* as quasi-military settlements designed to ensure Jewish ownership of the land and secure the settlers from the hardships of the labour market.<sup>4</sup> This, in turn, reinforced the power of the workers’ political parties, who gained materially and symbolically from the new policy. Materially, European Jews, more than non-European Jews, gained access to both the labour and land markets. In several cases, Yemenite workers were displaced and re-settled in accordance with the demands and interests of European ones (e.g., Shafir 1989, 112-113). Symbolically, the new type of settlement was the ground on which the self-image of the Jewish colonisers as pioneers was created. Accordingly, the true bearer of the Zionist, national cause was the *Halutz* (literally, pioneer), who was an agricultural settler and a soldier. Unsurprisingly, he was an *ashkenazi* too. In this sense, not only did the new land policy reinforce the segregation between Jews of European and non-European origin, but it also reiterated the non-ideological image of the ‘ethnic’.

### **Labour, land and politics: the ascendancy to power of the Labour movement**

The political and economic co-operation between the Zionist movement and the Zionist political parties was also reflected in the political sphere, and it resulted in the ascendancy to power of the Labour sector, headed by *Mapai* (see Glossary). Under the condition of the mandate, when the Zionist movement did not enjoy sovereign power, political control was based on the development of mutual dependency between the Jewish Agency, which had replaced the Palestine Office as the main Zionist executive, and the *Histadrut*, that became the stronghold of the Labour movement.<sup>5</sup> This structure of power benefited those sectors that were organised to provide their constituencies with their mundane needs and, in light of the differential pattern of social organisation, it equally determined the further ethnicisation of social relations.

<sup>4</sup> *Kibbutz* and *Moshav* are two types of agricultural settlements. In the former, the settlers own and cultivate the land collectively, whereas in the latter, each settler cultivates his own plot, while the marketing of the goods is done co-operatively.

<sup>5</sup> The *Histadrut* (The General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine) was established following the demand of the movement’s American branch to make the colonisation project profitable. The Palestine-based leadership favoured the further collaboration with the Labour movement, in spite of its socialistic posture, in managing the colonisation project inconsiderately of ‘profit and loss’ (Shapiro 1976, 235; Kimmerling 1982, 19-20). The WZO eventually accepted this position, however, it demanded that the workers’ parties would unite (Grinberg 1991, 38). The *Histadrut* was thus created with WZO funds as a roof organisation of the workers’ parties; yet, its aims remained grounded in the nation-building process (Shalev 1992).

One main consequence, and a manifestation, of the semi-autonomous structure of the *yishuv* was that the Zionist political parties extended their functions beyond the ‘normal’ political function. As ‘role-expansion’ became a main structural feature of the political parties (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 71), the parties that could offer a collectivist rationale for this practice gained most from this situation. In 1933, when *Mapai* came to dominate the Jewish Agency (ibid. 48), this was not an ideological triumph of socialist-Zionism. Nor was it because the Zionist leadership adhered to socialism. The emerging relationship between the Zionist movement and the Labour movement was rather, as Shalev (1992, 35) put it, ‘a marriage of convenience’ between a colonising movement without settlers and a working movement without work. Under these circumstances, where the *Histadrut* was a main vehicle in the politicisation and nationalisation of the Jewish community in Palestine, membership in its institutions became equivalent to citizenship in the Jewish polity (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 97-98, 184-185). Conversely, those social sectors that were not represented in the *Histadrut* (such as the revisionist-Zionists and the non-European segments of society) had a lesser capacity to effectively influence the social and political developments in the Zionist polity. Nor did they enjoy the same symbolic rewards of being associated with the nation-building process. That the *Histadrut* became less trade-unionist and more nationalistic in its orientation, also implied that it was acting, despite its socialist-universalistic posture, not as the representative of labour, or *the* labourers, but more as an interest group for a specific segment of the labour force, that was organised in the Labour movement’s political parties, namely the European Jewish settlers and workers (ibid. 179; Shapiro 1976, 231; Grinberg 1991, 40; Shalev 1992, 42-43).

### **Ethnic politics and the politics of ethnicity**

The way in which the *yishuv* became politically integrated disadvantaged two relatively organised segments of the Jewish society, namely the Yemenite Jews and the veteran *sephardic* sector. Although not represented in the Zionist Congress, these sectors, which comprised most of the non-European population, were organised politically in two main parties: the Yemenite Association, and the *Sephardic* Federation, which was based on the political elite of the veteran Jewish community. These parties – which at their peak mobilised about a quarter of the Jewish vote for the Elected Assembly (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 74; Herzog 1986, 198-199) – retained their relative political power because of the voluntaristic nature of the *yishuv* as a political community (Herzog 1985, 166-167). Yet, the Zionist establishment constantly sought to undermine their legitimacy by stigmatising them as ‘ethnic’. Ethnicity thus came to play a significant role in the politics of the *yishuv*. But, as Herzog (1985; 1986) shows, this was a double-edged concept – whereas ethnicity was denied as a legitimate basis for political organisation, it concomitantly had served the Zionist parties (that is, those represented in the Zionist Congress) to mobilise the vote of the ‘ethnic’ segments and, eventually, to bring the demise of the ‘ethnic parties’ by the end of the *yishuv*.

period (also, Eliachar 1983, 187-188). Ethnicity, in both political discourse and practice, was designated as particularistic and separatist and, against the emerging ‘ideological division’ of the *yishuv* (see below), as non-ideological. From this perspective, ‘ethnic politics’ came to be seen as attesting to the ‘cultural incompetence’ of non-Europeans to adapt to a ‘modern’ society such as the *yishuv*.

This depiction of the failed incorporation of non-European Jews as stemming from a ‘cultural problem’ ignored, however, the existence of ethnic divisions in the labour and land markets, and the *de facto* ethnic segregation in housing and settlement. Even more important, it overlooked the fact that the *yishuv* – that is, the various communities that composed the Zionist society – was culturally distinctive and oriented towards the needs and cultural background of the European settlers. Moreover, while *sephardic* and Yemenite Jews were denied self-representation because this was seen as jeopardising the effort to ‘modernise’ society, the Zionist establishment acknowledged the separate organisation of another, ‘non-modern’ group – namely, ultra-orthodox *ashkenazi* Jews. This, which was best demonstrated by the educational autonomy this sector enjoyed (to be discussed in Part III), attested to the precedence of political over ideological considerations in the Zionist opposition to the notion of self-representation. Yet, the failure to recognise the political, rather than cultural, reasons for the non-incorporation of non-European Jews also concealed the interest of the Zionist movement itself in keeping ethnicity salient.

### Conclusion

Already in the late Ottoman period, the encounter between the Zionist movement and the Jewish settlers lay the ground for the nationalisation of the colonisation project, thereby creating the conditions for the development of an autonomous Jewish economy. This economy, based on exclusionary Jewish land and labour markets and on ‘national’ capital, turned out, with the beginning of the British mandate, to be the basis for political autonomy. By the end of the Arab Revolt (1936-39), when Arabs were excluded from most of the Jewish dominated economy (Bernstein 1996, 255-256)<sup>6</sup>, and the Zionist movement strengthened its grip on the land through an extensive acquisition policy (Kimmerling 1983, 89), the combined struggle for the ‘conquest of labour’ and the ‘conquest of land’ had come a full circle. These processes of colonisation and expansion continued after statehood and became characteristic of the relationship between the Israeli state and the Palestinians (Shafir 1989). Yet, the creation of an ‘external’ boundary was not the only consequence of these developments.

<sup>6</sup> This, Shapira (1977, 345-346) rightly concludes, was a victory of the *idea* of “Jewish labour”, rather than a victory in practice. Even then, the employment of cheap Arab workers had not been totally abandoned. This is also the conclusion of Bernstein (2000, 206 cf.), who found, in a study of the mixed town of Haifa, that there was a growing tendency amongst organised Jewish sectors to build up national boundaries, and yet, that these two populations remained intermingled in the labour market.

‘The conquest of labour’ and ‘the conquest of land’ were equally important practices that delineated a social, ‘ethnic’ boundary between Jews of European and non-European origin. The case of the Yemenite Jews was not only emblematic of this effect, but also determinative in setting the terms by which European Jews could, and indeed did, become identified with the ‘national project’, and by which non-Europeans were excluded and marginalised. European Jews, primarily workers, employed a colonialist-Orientalist discourse, which was reinforced by the practices of the state-like Zionist movement, that distinguished the ‘enlightened nationalism’ of European Jews from the passive, primordial nationalism of non-European Jews (e.g., Shohat 1988). This served as a justification for a hierarchical social order in which ethnicity came to play a critical role. Paradoxically, it was the interest of the Zionist movement in incorporating the non-European Jews into a single homogenised national collective that had rendered these distinctions legitimate and had made this group distinctive and marginalised.

The Palestine Office, and later the Jewish Agency, sought to establish itself as representing the Jewish, national cause, first, by acting as an arbiter between ‘Jewish capital’<sup>7</sup> and Jewish organised labour and, second, by pertaining to represent the interests of the nation as a whole. Paradoxically, this created an unspoken alliance between the Zionist establishment and non-European Jews, an alliance characterised by the unequal mutual dependency between them. For the former, the incorporation of non-European Jews had served as a source of legitimacy and strength, and eventually, as a means to distinguish itself from the institutions of the European-Jewish settlers. In the context of the evolving Jewish-Arab conflict, the inclusion of the non-European Jews emphasised the ethno-national basis on which the Zionist project had been established. Thus, vis-à-vis both the *ashkenazi* sector and the Arabs, this strengthened the Zionist self-representation as a universal movement, that is, its claim for monopoly in representing the Jewish, national cause. This, however, also explains why this alliance was unequal. For the Zionist movement, cognisance of the ‘ethnicity’ of this group would undermine its universalistic image and thus could endanger its co-operation with the organised European sector. In the context of this co-operation, denying ‘ethnicity’ had also enabled the Zionist movement to deny the ethnic character of the *yishuv*, that is, its orientation towards the needs and interests of the European settlers.

Thus, in the course of the colonisation of Palestine, both the contours and the content of the ethnic category(ies) began to take shape. On one level, ethno-nationalism became the underpinning of the consolidation and organisation of the inhabitants of Palestine under British rule. On another level, intra-Jewish ethnicity turned out to constitute a national society in which ‘ethnic origin’, standing for a distinction between East and West, or

<sup>7</sup> Composed of both private capital and ‘national’ capital (mobilised by the WZO) (Frenkel, Shenhav and Herzog 1999).

between ‘modern’ and ‘non-modern’, was not only a reflection of power relations, but also a factor in their creation. In the context of the processes of nation-building and state-formation, the ‘minor’ problem of Yemenite Jews (that is, their competition with Eastern European workers in the labour and land markets) had turned into an ‘ethnic problem’. This became all the more clear when the Zionist polity declared its independence, and when the non-European Jewish minority had turned into (almost) a majority (see Table 3-1). With the ‘transition to statehood’, ethnicity did not lose its relevance to the ensuing social relations.

**Table 3-1**  
**The ethnic composition of the population of Palestine, 1880-1953**

	Palestinians		Jews	
	Total (thousands)	Percent Muslims <sup>a</sup>	Total (thousands)	Percent <i>mizrahi</i>
Ottoman Period (1880)	470.0	na	8.0	60
Mandatory Period (1922) <sup>b</sup>	668.0	88	84.0	30
Declaration of Independence (1948)	108.0 <sup>c</sup>	57	716.7 <sup>d</sup>	23
After the Great Immigration (1953)	185.8	69	1,483.6	40

Sources: Smooha 1978, 281 Table 8; Porath 1974, 19; *Statistical Abstract of Israel* No. 6 (1954/5), No. 48 (1997)  
Notes:

<sup>a</sup> The percentage of the Muslim population excludes the Muslim-Druze population which is negligible.

<sup>b</sup> The data is based on the 1922 Census, the break-up is an estimation based on Smooha’s data on 1918.

<sup>c</sup> This is an underestimated figure since not all of the non-Jewish population was surveyed at the time (31.12.1948). The yearly average figure for the years 1950-52 was in the vicinity of 170,000. The Christian population was estimated at some 32,000.

<sup>d</sup> This is based on a census conducted on 8 November 1948. The percentage of the *mizrahi* population is taken from Smooha’s estimation for 1947.

## THE TRANSITION TO STATEHOOD

The ‘transition to statehood’ was a process whose beginnings lay in UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 29 November 1947, on the partition of the land between its Jewish and Arab inhabitants. Following this resolution, three significant developments took place. First, the resolution triggered a civil war in Palestine between its Arab and Jewish inhabitants, a war that was motivated by the will of each side to gain absolute control over the country. Second, this decision initiated, within the Zionist polity, a concrete effort to turn itself from a ‘community into a state’, and hence to accommodate the features of the *yishuv* to those required by the condition of statehood. Finally, with the withdrawal of the British forces, the Zionist polity unilaterally declared, on 14 May 1948, the foundation of a sovereign Jewish State. This declaration turned the civil war into an all-out war between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states. It was against this backdrop that a new concept developed, a concept that implied new practices of control but, equally important, that offered a new basis

for the legitimisation of the anticipated social order. This concept was *Mamlakhtiyut* (see Glossary).

*Mamlakhtiyut* – which historically has been identified with the political vision of David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister – marked a break with the 'old' order and its replacement with a new one, based on the principles of sovereignty and on the centrality and supremacy of both the state apparatus and the idea of statehood. Yet, I argue, despite its universalistic bearing, the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* was nationally and ethnically exclusive. In particular, it generated and reinforced an 'anti-ethnic' discourse, and thereby further de-legitimised 'ethnicity' as a basis for political organisation. In this respect, *Mamlakhtiyut* was an ideological artefact and a political practice, implicated in the ethnicisation of social relations. This, I propose, was a result of the structural features of the *yishuv* that the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* was aimed at dismantling.

### **Between the *yishuv* and statehood – some structural constraints**

During the late Ottoman period and throughout the British rule, the functioning of the Zionist movement within the Jewish community proved to be motivated by the need to bring about national cohesion and political integration. The Zionist establishment thus acted as a state-like agent, albeit in a constrained fashion. The lack of sovereign power, I argued above, yielded a particular pattern of co-operation between the Palestine Office/ Jewish Agency and the Zionist political parties that blurred the boundaries between state-like agencies (and functions) – such as the military, education, health etc. – and the societal forces that provided these functions. Under these conditions, 'the transition to statehood' was a matter of struggle, in which the legitimacy and powers of 'the state', i.e., the Zionist movement, were at stake. It was in this context that statehood did not mark a break with the process of ethnicisation, but rather the contrary.

The imposition of the British mandate, following the conquest of Palestine in World War I, as well as the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which marked the British recognition of the Zionist movement as the representative of the Jewish national cause, provided the Jewish Agency with the required legitimate authority to organise the Jewish community of Palestine as a political entity. Indeed, during the Mandatory period, the *yishuv*'s political institutions were strengthened and expanded, and both the Jewish and the Palestinian communities became more distinctive in terms of their political, social, and economic development. Yet, the lack of sovereignty determined the limits of this expansion (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 47-48).

Notably, the expansion of political control was confined by the pattern of co-operation between the Jewish Agency, which controlled material and symbolic resources, and the Zionist political parties that controlled most of the *yishuv*'s societal organisations. This relationship was based on cooptation and co-operation at the elite level, and on ideological mobilisation at the rank and file level (Shapiro 1976, 254 cf.). Thus, despite the effort of the

JA to impose homogeneity, Jewish society remained organised on a sectorial basis, and political parties enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy in representing the interests, and maintaining the ways of life, of their constituencies. This also implied that what seemed to be a voluntaristic social order was basically a more complex system of control, in which the welfare of Jews was practically conditioned by their affiliation to a specific political party. Consequently, those who lacked similar political access, mainly non-European Jews, became unequal members in society, since they enjoyed only a limited access to public goods. This lack of political access, however, was not a result of the non-Europeans' failure to organise themselves in a 'modern' fashion. Another 'non-modern' segment, the religious sector, was successfully playing a part in the *yishuv* political order.

Given the atheistic stance of the Zionist leadership, the fact that 'religion' became a legitimate basis for political organisation (whereas 'ethnicity' did not) was not self-evident. This was partly a result of the non-sovereign character of the *yishuv*, which allowed its leadership to avoid issues that could pose greater difficulties for sustaining the mutual co-operation between the Zionist establishment and the political parties. This was the case of state-religion relations that staked the secular, modern character of Zionist nationalism. The effort to achieve national cohesion and political integration brought about an alliance between the secularised Zionist factions and the religious Jewish factions – represented by the political parties of the World *Mizrahi* movement – and, even more surprisingly, a latent co-operation with the anti-Zionist ultra-orthodox *Agudath yisrael*.<sup>8</sup> The complex relationship between Zionism and Judaism is beyond the scope of the current analysis, yet the way in which this complexity was accommodated in this period was indicative, mainly because it demonstrated the non-linear progression from 'traditionalism' to modernism. Not less important, it also revealed what was considered as legitimate 'ideological' diversity. For, while ethnicity was rejected as an illegitimate basis for political organisation, because of its presumably non-modern character, Jewish orthodoxy was accepted as legitimate. In this respect, the Zionist reluctance (or lack of interest) to confront state-religion relations resulted in a legitimisation of 'traditionalism' as a basis for political organisation, yet only a certain kind of traditionalism, one which was based on, and gave precedence to, the political organisation of European Jews.

It thus becomes clear that the semi-voluntaristic nature of the *yishuv* played a crucial role in perpetuating social relations that were based on segregation and differentiation. Apparently, the allocation of public resources and social services on a collective basis favoured those segments that were capable of providing and organising this pattern of distribution,

<sup>8</sup> The *Mizrahi* movement was an active partner in the politics of the Zionist *yishuv*, whereas the ultra-orthodox *Agudath yisrael* remained beyond its boundaries. The latter successfully demanded that the British Government would recognise it as a separate congregation according to the Ordinance of Religious Communities. Still, it co-operated with the Zionist polity on several political matters as, e.g., in the case of obtaining immigration certificates for ultra-orthodox Jews (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 43; Swirski 1999, 105).

irrespective of their ‘internal’ social organisation. This was equally true for the European segments of Jewish society, both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, that were acting collectively to promote the particularistic interests of their communities. Non-Europeans, in contrast, were required to act as individuals within the *yishuv*’s political and social institutions.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the *yishuv*’s political structure also determined and strengthened its cultural cohesiveness, that is, its European orientation, and thus made the demand of non-European Jews to organise and act on a collective basis particularistic.

Nonetheless, while the *yishuv*’s social structure, and its strong European-oriented culture, enabled it to function as a relatively integrated polity, these very features turned out to be a liability once the prospects of statehood became real. More specifically, neither the political autonomy of the political parties, nor their European orientation, could enable the Zionist apparatus to act as the universal agent of a sovereign state. At this point, the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* appeared as the ideology of the ‘transition to statehood’.

### ***Mamlakhtiyut: an ideology of the state***

When the *yishuv* era came to a close and the prospects for independence became real, the Jewish Agency initiated several processes aimed at preparing its institutions to take over the state apparatus from the hands of the British government (ZA J17-5922). These processes were dictated by Ben-Gurion’s call, following the UN resolution of November 1947, “to think in terms of a state” (Ben-Gurion 1949b, 260), and were aimed at replacing the old political institutions with new ones. In this respect, although the state would be, in several ways, a continuation of the Zionist polity, the transition to statehood would also mark a break with the *yishuv*’s political and social arrangements. The term that encapsulated the changing social relations, and which had become identified with this transition from a political community to a sovereign state, was *Mamlakhtiyut*.

The policy and ideology of *Mamlakhtiyut* developed in contradistinction to the *yishuv*’s social order; specifically, it contradicted the *yishuv*’s mode of organisation by the political (‘ideological’) affiliation of its members. This term thus epitomised the construction of a state apparatus against the previous centrality of partisan organisations. *Mamlakhtiyut* encapsulated three features of the condition of statehood: **a)** the state monopoly in allocating societal resources and social values; **b)** the unification of society and, hence, its being identified with the state; and **c)** the universality of the state, namely its impartiality vis-à-vis its citizenry (compare, Don-Yehia 1977, 461). In practical terms, *Mamlakhtiyut* meant the dissociation from the political parties of those various functions they had carried out under

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly enough, Yisrael Yeshahiau, of *Mapai*’s Department for Yemenite Affairs, whilst criticising the Yemenite political parties, said: “There is only one way ahead: to work on cultivating **individuals** and raise them to be capable [members of] society, in culture and arts, as their life instinct nurtures them to be capable in the economic sphere. [...] in this way, maybe the attitude towards the whole community would be better.” (ZA J17-4364, 13.7.1947).

the condition of non-sovereignty (Don-Yehia 1995). The two most important of these functions were military and educational. But, whereas the state successfully appropriated and monopolised the control over the use of violence as early as during the 1948 war, it took some time before it gained similar control over education (to be discussed in Chapter 6). By forcefully dismantling, in the name of *Mamlakhiyut*, the paramilitary units that were previously controlled by the political parties<sup>10</sup>, this notion came to symbolise the transformation to statehood. It equally helped in creating a conception of the Israeli army as a symbol of *Mamlakhiyut*, hence making it a means to present the state as the unifier of society and as an agent of integration and egalitarianism, i.e., universalism, specifically within the Jewish sector.<sup>11</sup> In this context, *Mamlakhiyut* was an ideology that served a dual purpose: first, to set out the criteria for inclusion and exclusion in the national collective, as well as in Israeli citizenry; and, second, to build up an autonomous state apparatus. *Mamlakhiyut* became the state's ideology.

In light of this, it was not surprising that *Mamlakhiyut* developed as an exclusionary discourse of citizenship, both ethnically and nationally. The condition of statehood demanded that the Israeli state would equally recognise the citizenship rights of all of its inhabitants, and particularly those of the Arabs (e.g., Ben-Gurion 1949b, 260). Indeed, following pressure from the UN, Israel recognised the Arab minority's residence rights and granted them full political rights (i.e., the right to vote for the *Knesset*) in January 1949 (Bishara 1993, 206; Kretzmer 1987, 50-60). This, however, was circumscribed by the imposition of the Military Administration on the Arab populated areas, which limited Arabs' movements and their ability to return to their homes (for analysis see, Lustick 1980; Pappè 1995, 621-626). Thus, while the Arabs became citizens of the state, they could not, and were not, considered equal members of the *mamlakha* (lit. kingdom), that is, of the nation. The discourse of *Mamlakhiyut* ensured that the political realm would remain exclusively Jewish, thus leaving the concept of citizenship empty from the point of view of the Arab citizens.

This state of inequality was even more salient given the need of the state to absorb and incorporate the massive waves of Jewish immigrants following the establishment of the state. In 1950, the state legislated the Law of Return that granted full citizenship rights to Jewish immigrants upon their arrival (Rubinstein 1996, 878-881). This law, based on the immigrants' self-definition as Jews, enabled the state to absorb the influx of immigrants

<sup>10</sup> These included the *palmach* unit, that was controlled by the left-leaning *Mapam* party, and the right wing underground militias of the *Lehi* ('The Stern Gang') and the IZL (*irgun*) (see Peri 1983, 52-3). It is worth noting that health services were not 'nationalised' at that time, thus leaving to the *Histadrut* (as well as its political parties) the machinery and finance of health services as a source of power (Eisenstadt 1967, 321).

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it was argued elsewhere (Levy 1997, 36-39, 43), that with the transition to statehood the image of the pioneer (*Halutz*), once a mythological image epitomising the Zionist settler, had been replaced by that of the soldier (or even in Hebrew, the fighter). This transformation was connected to the ascendance of *Mamlakhiyut* as the legitimising ideology of the state and was clearly manifested in Ben-Gurion's conception of the role of the Israeli army in bringing about social integration.

within the existing (Jewish) political and social order, and more importantly, to determine the character of the state as a “Jewish state”. In other words, while the Arabs were facing difficulties, to say the least, in materialising their residency (as was evidenced in the issue of ownership and possession of lands and homes), Jewish refugees were not only welcomed, but were also met with a preferential state policy (that provided the newcomers with the houses of the expelled Arabs, see Lustick 1980, 58). This, however, was not a result of their citizenship rights, but a mere consequence of their belonging to the Jewish national collective.

The differential incorporation of the new immigrants and the ‘new’ minority was based on the exclusionary meaning of *Mamlakhtiyut*. Whereas, legally, citizenship was equally conferred upon all subjects, this notion determined its unequal distribution between Jews and Arabs. In this respect, the ideology and practice of *Mamlakhtiyut* had a clearly national, racial character; being a citizen, in terms of formal political rights, would not suffice in order to be considered a full member in society. To become one, it was necessary to be recognised as a member of the national community. *Mamlakhtiyut* did just that; it set up a criterion of inclusion in the (Jewish) national collective that rendered, at least in the first two decades, the concept of (Israeli) citizenship (almost) irrelevant. This concept, however, also determined the limits of state universalism vis-à-vis its non-European citizens.

### ***Mamlakhtiyut, the state, and political institutions***

The ‘transition to statehood’, I have argued, was not a simple continuation of the *yishuv* period, nor did it constitute a total break with the previous social and political arrangements. The condition of statehood created new rifts and conflicts that the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* sought to overcome, yet this notion (and practice) did not necessarily eliminate past conflicts, and the process of ethnicisation prolonged into statehood. Thus, although some of the past reasons for its development disappeared, mainly the condition of non-sovereignty, ethnicity remained a constant feature of social relations after statehood. This was evinced in the practice of the Jewish Agency and the *Histadrut* which, despite a change in function after independence, remained exclusive towards both Arabs and *mizrahi* Jews.

*Mamlakhtiyut* was not only an ideological construct. It was, in fact, also a practice that enabled the state to appropriate the functions of the *yishuv*’s societal organisations, and thus to create a state bureaucracy that would give the idea of state sovereignty and supremacy a concrete meaning. Still, although the state appropriated most social functions for its own apparatus (primarily military and educational), two main institutions of the *yishuv* remained (almost) intact: the Jewish Agency and the *Histadrut*. In the *yishuv*, these institutions had played a significant role in defining the Zionist polity’s boundaries and in setting the conditions for inclusion and exclusion. The fact that these institutions were neither dismantled, nor fully de-politicised, thus requires an explanation. This implies that the state

was not truly universalised – the functions that the JA and the *Histadrut* were providing (on behalf of the state) were primarily directed at Jewish nationals. This had further implications for the continuation of ethnic segregation and differentiation.

When Israel was declared independent, the new government was reluctant to share its power with executive members from abroad, and therefore re-defined the status of the JA in a special legislation. The JA thus lost its direct political functions and was charged with organising and financing the immigration of Jews from abroad (Hacohen 1994a, 23-26), as well as with establishing new settlements on WZO-owned lands. This of course put at odds the universality of the state vis-à-vis its Arab citizenry, who were thus denied the right to purchase, or even lease, ‘state-owned’ land (Yiftachel 1997b). This practice, however, was also discriminative against Jewish immigrants. The JA, which remained controlled by the Zionist political parties, collaborated with the (politically affiliated) ‘settling movements’ in managing its settlement policy, which thus conformed to the interests of the organised segments of the Jewish sector and so further disadvantaged the unorganised *mizrahi* immigrants.

The development of state universalism was also impeded by the fact that the *Histadrut*, as a trade union, was not fully de-politicised. One reason for this was that *Mapai*, the dominant party, controlled both the state apparatus and the *Histadrut*. In this sense, and given the central role of the *Histadrut* in the Israeli economy, its autonomy served as a source of power for both the party’s apparatus and for the state political elite. The autonomy of the *Histadrut*, however, was also functional in maintaining a stratified labour market: first, because Arab workers were not accepted as members in the *Histadrut* (until the late 1950s), and, second, because it represented the interests of organised labour, namely the veteran *ashkenazi* workers, at the expense of unorganised newcomers. In this respect, the *Histadrut* played a critical role in the proletarianisation of both Arab and *mizrahi* citizens. Nonetheless, its apparent autonomy allowed the state to retain, and even to strengthen, its universalistic posture vis-à-vis society (see, Grinberg 1991; Shalev 1984e, 1992).

### Conclusion

Inasmuch as the concept of *Mamlakhtiyut* had been powerful in justifying and legitimising the state’s efforts to de-politicise, or better de-partyfy, the *yishuv*’s social institutions, it had also been instrumental in maintaining its ethnic practices. First, *Mamlakhtiyut* served as a seemingly universal discourse of citizenship that allowed the state to grant the Arab minority full citizenship rights, and yet to enact discriminatory practices against them. Second, and indispensable to the former point, it was an all-Jewish concept of citizenship that enabled the state to be regarded as universal vis-à-vis the Jewish citizenry, in spite of the appearance of a clearly ethnic-based class society. In these two respects, this discourse strengthened the

ethno-national character of the new state. Ironically, at the same time the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* served to de-ideologise society and, to a large extent, to de-politicise it.

Given the relatively high degree of ideological mobilisation in the *yishuv*, the effort to weaken the power of the political parties also required reducing their role in the re-socialisation of newcomers. In this sense, the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* was meant not only to appropriate from the political parties their ideological function, but also to instil in society a belief in the appropriateness and efficiency of the state as modern and bureaucratic. This was evinced in the process of immigrant absorption, in which the transfer of the centre of power from the political parties to the state marked a change not only in the balance of power between them, but also a shift in the state's orientation towards non-European Jewry.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AFTER STATEHOOD: IMMIGRATION AND INDUSTRIALISATION

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In the previous chapter, I focused on those moments that marked the beginning and the end of the pre-statehood period, and argued that at these critical turning points in the history of the Zionist national movement ‘ethnicity’ came to be a characteristic of social relations, and more broadly, of the relationship between state and society. At these two moments, I implicitly claimed, there was, at least hypothetically, a chance to make a difference and to set the grounds for an inclusively Jewish national collective that would not discriminate between Jews of different origin and backgrounds. Nonetheless, neither the foundation of the Zionist Palestine Office, nor the declaration of an independent Zionist state ended the ethnicisation of social relations. On the contrary, on both occasions, ‘ethnicisation’ appeared as a practice that, on the one hand, enabled the Zionist movement to establish itself as the main factor in the processes of nation-building and state-formation and, on the other, reinforced the favourable position of European Jews in these processes. In this chapter, I wish to further explore this process of ethnicisation in relation to two main projects – absorption of immigration and industrialisation – that brought about a change in the relationship between state and society. These projects, or processes, which point to two more critical turning points in the history of ethnic relations, were determinative in entrenching ethnicity as a prism through which social relations were explained and legitimised and, equally important, in establishing the centrality of the state in this relationship.

In the early 1940s, the Zionist nationalistic project was by and large a European-Jewish project. This was a result of the Zionist movement’s prime concern with this Jewry, but maybe more significantly, it was an expression of social relations in the *yishuv*. Non-European Jews constituted only a minority in the *yishuv* and, to a large extent, a negligible minority. It was not surprising, then, that the main Zionist effort to perpetuate Jewish immigration was concentrated in Europe. This had changed when the horrors of the Holocaust became known and the prospects of statehood became clearer. At this point, marked by the 1942 ‘Million Plan’ (see below), the Zionist movement in Palestine sought to change both the method and the scope of Jewish immigration. This was evinced in the greater involvement of the Zionist political bodies themselves in encouraging immigration (compared to the centrality of the Zionist political parties hitherto) and in searching for new

sources of human power for the national project in the Orient. From that moment onwards, I argue, once immigration became a business of the state, 'ethnicity' turned out to be the main explanatory framework for the understanding of social relations in Israel.

The absorption of immigration in the first decade of independence was entangled with a shift in Israel's political economy from agricultural to industrial, and the (partial and gradual) transfer of market control from the public to the private sector. The process of industrialisation turned Israel into a Western-like polity with a growing private sector, which also implied the diminishing of the political and economic power of the political parties that had previously predominated the economy. Immigration was determinative in these processes in two main ways: first, by creating both a supply of human power to the developing economy and a demand for housing, employment etc.; and, second, through the specific patterns of its absorption which had spatial, social, cultural and political implications. In a broader sense, these two processes of immigrant absorption and industrialisation underlay the making of the Israeli periphery, geographically and socially, and this periphery was ostensibly ethnic. This was demonstrated in the ethnic unrest that erupted in 1959, known also as the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, which was not only a manifestation of the development of ethno-class relations within the Jewish society, but not less importantly, of the development of a *mizrahi* ethnic identity (see also Deshen 1974). In the 1966 recession, when the state had taken the path of liberalisation, in terms of both economic and social relations, ethnicity was further entrenched as a basis for the articulation of social demands, and became just as important as citizenship as a means for meaningful political participation.

### **ABSORPTION OF THE IMMIGRATION PROJECT**

On the day after independence, the Zionist transitional government decided to nullify the White Paper's restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine. For the Zionist movement, this was a manifestation of the *raison d'être* of the Zionist/Jewish state. It was not surprising, then, that immigration was seen as a 'war', but not only for its own sake, i.e., for providing Jews with a safe haven from racial, religious, and nationalistic persecution. Rather, and more significantly, it was seen as a war for the sake of the state itself (Ben-Gurion 1949b, 259). Less than five years after the state's gates were opened, the Great Immigration doubled the Jewish population of Israel (see Table 4-1). Paradoxically, while state power became dependent upon immigration, its absorption threatened the state's stability and legitimacy.

The turning point in Zionist immigration policy, however, antedated the foundation of the state. During most of the *yishuv* period, this policy was based on the principle of 'selective immigration', that is, on perpetuating immigration in line with political, social, and economic constraints, and no less importantly, on the condition of prior Zionist ideological

indoctrination. This policy, which in practice gave precedence to European Jewish immigration, was changed in the early 1940s; the logic of the new policy was encapsulated in Ben-Gurion's 'Million Plan' (1942). This plan signalled a dual change in the immigration policy: first, in the scope of immigration and the shift to a policy of 'mass immigration' and, second, in its orientation towards non-European Jewry. From this point onwards, the Zionist political elite not only acknowledged the potential for Jews of the Orient to become the main human resource for the Zionist national project, but also placed the question of the absorption and assimilation of these Jews high on the political agenda.

**Table 4-1**  
**Jewish immigration to Israel, 1948-1953**  
(in thousands, by continent of origin)

	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	Total
Total	102.9	239.6	169.4	173.9	23.4	10.3	719.5
Asia-Africa	12.8	107.9	84.0	122.8	16.5	7.8	351.8
Europe-America	76.3	120.8	81.7	48.9	5.8	1.7	335.2
Unknown*	13.8	10.9	3.7	2.2	1.1	0.8	32.5

Source: Hacohen 1994a, pp. 323-324, Appendix A.

\* This data is also revealing, for the declining number of immigrants whose origin was unknown manifests the increasing efficiency of the absorption process, hence the growing efficiency of state apparatus.

It was, then, the Zionist 'turn to the Orient' that had made the shift to 'state controlled' immigration and absorption, or the *Mamlakhtisation* of immigrant absorption, possible. This, however, threatened the existing social order, and particularly, the favourable position of European Jews within the Zionist polity. Whereas under the condition of 'selective immigration' the political parties, hence their *ashkenazi* constituencies, controlled the flow and incorporation of newcomers, the new policy reflected and entrenched the increasing power of the state apparatus to control these processes. This policy was also bound to change the demographic composition of the *yishuv*, and the hitherto uneven pattern of immigrant absorption, that is, the relatively organised absorption of European Jews compared to non-Europeans. Still, if the Zionist establishment wished to retain its legitimacy in the eyes of the veteran, as it did, then there was a need for a new language that would justify the favourable position of the *ashkenazi* sector. In this sense, the abandonment of 'selective immigration' had also been a shift away from ideology. The new condition of 'mass immigration' could no longer make use of the language of Zionist idealism to explain and justify the uneven absorption of immigrants of different origin. At this point, sociology came to the fore and offered a new scientific language that could re-define the terms for (equal) inclusion and, equally important, could justify the centrality of the state bureaucracy in the absorption

process. ‘Ethnicity’ thus appeared as both a cause and an explanation for the uneven absorption of immigration process.

### **‘Selective immigration’ and differentiation**

During the *yishuv* period, immigration constituted a main source of growth for Zionist colonisation yet, its materialisation was limited by both internal and external constraints. Externally, the Mandatory government, by controlling the supply of immigration certificates, set its limits in accordance with the changing economic and political conditions (Hacohen 1994a, 5-6; Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 178-179; Gelber 1998, 249-252). Internally, given the particular structure of the *yishuv*, this policy was mainly based on the means and resources of the political parties, which through their European annexes controlled the flow of Jewish immigration (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 177-178). The pivotal role of the parties stemmed from their control over the distribution of immigration certificates, but more importantly, because they were involved in the ideological indoctrination of prospective immigrants and in their actual absorption in Palestine (Tzur 1995, 544-545; Gelber 1998, 251). This yielded a differential pattern of immigration and absorption for Jews of different origin and background.

Until the early 1940s, ‘partisan-controlled’ immigration meant that most of the immigration was of European origin, and indeed non-European immigration amounted to only some eight percent of total immigration (Gurevich, Gertz and Bachi 1944, 7). Furthermore, prior indoctrination entailed that those immigrants who were prepared for the social and political conditions in Palestine, would also constitute the rank and file of the Zionist political parties (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 177). Immigration was thus a source of strength for the political parties vis-à-vis the *yishuv*’s political institutions. Finally, and following from the above, this pattern of immigration ensured, to a certain extent, that immigration would not create a tension between newcomers and veterans (e.g., Eisenstadt 1967, 46-50). Generally speaking, these two groups shared the same cultural background, but more importantly, went through the same ideological indoctrination, which ensured their mutual co-operation within the framework of the *yishuv*.

This pattern of ‘partisan-controlled’ immigration indeed dominated Jewish immigration at the time, but was still not the only path for social integration. Another example was the experience of German Jews, who fled Europe following the rise to power of the Nazi regime. These immigrants were mostly unaffiliated to the Zionist political parties and remained isolated from the ‘absorbing surrounding’, which actually resulted in the German Jews forming their own ethnic political party (Gelber 1998, 258-259). Yet, this immigration was financially well off, which meant that its absorption was dependent neither on their political integration, nor on their ideological indoctrination. Rather, it was their economic power that

facilitated their integration through the market, and not through the political sphere (see also Halamish 1998), which also explains why their political association dissolved quite quickly.

The absorption of non-European Jews stood in contradistinction to the partisan-ideological absorption of (mostly) Eastern European Jews, as well as to the integration of (mostly) Western European Jews ‘through the market’. Thus, the only experience of an organised migration of non-European Jews – that of the Yemenite Jews (see above Chapter Three) – was co-ordinated by the Palestine Office, a quasi-state organisation.<sup>1</sup> Unlike European migrants, these immigrants were not prepared for their migration, nor could they rely on their affiliation to a political party in order to ease their absorption and integration into the Jewish polity. This, I argued, resulted in a mutual dependence between the institutionalisation of the Zionist polity and the incorporation of non-European Jews. This pattern repeated itself from the early 1940s when the Zionist movement had decided on the principle of ‘massive immigration’.

The Zionist ‘turn to the Orient’ developed in direct relation to the growing awareness to the scale of destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust (Hacohen 1994b, 212; Gelber 1998, 275-276). The idea to consider Oriental Jewry as potential immigrants was raised by David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the JA, as part of his ambitious plan to bring about a massive immigration, of a million Jews, to Palestine as a ‘proper Zionist response’ to the 1937 Peel Commission and the 1938 Woodhead Report, both seen in Zionist eyes as an end to the British commitment to the establishment of a Jewish national home (Ben-Gurion 1949a, 37; Hacohen 1998b, 18-19; Weitz 1998, 238). The proposed plan to initiate massive Jewish immigration from the Arab and Muslim countries had not been accepted by all of Ben-Gurion’s colleagues at the JA, nor within *Mapai*. The reasons for this opposition ranged from *realpolitik* considerations to questioning the impact of the ‘cultural gap’ between the potential-immigrants and the *yishuv*’s European settlers.<sup>2</sup> Although it had not been materialised, ‘The Million Plan’, as it came to be known, made feasible the option of mobilising Oriental Jewry, a possibility that had its beginnings in the organisation of Zionist activities in Iraq and North Africa in 1941 and 1943 (Gelber 1998, 277; Shenhav 1999a, 608-609).

<sup>1</sup> From the early days of this century, there was Zionist activity among Jews in the Arab world. Most significant was the organising of several ‘Zionist societies’ in the Jewish communities of the Maghreb (North Africa). Still, this activity was, in part, an outcome of initiatives made by these Jews and was mainly affiliated to the efforts of the WZO to expand and increase its financial support. More importantly, despite the sincere will of some members of the Zionist organisations to take a larger part in the colonisation of Palestine and in the implementation of the Zionist goals, the Palestine-based establishment did not consider them suitable. In the early 1920s, e.g., several Moroccan Jews asked to immigrate and, independently, arranged for immigration certificates from the local British council. However, they were denied entry at Jaffa port (Abitboul 1998, 153).

<sup>2</sup> Some opponents claimed that the world public opinion would not be as interested in such an effort as it was interested in solving the refugees’ problem in Europe. Others raised the severe implications that such a demand might have on those Jews who might choose to remain in their home countries. Still others emphasised the cultural gap, as well as the lack of a Zionist, ideological, infrastructure within these communities (Hacohen 1994a, 208, 213-214; Gelber 1998, 276-278).

This initiative marked the shift to a policy of ‘mass immigration’ (Gelber 1998, 278-279), and a turning point in the further development of the processes of nation-building and state-formation. First, ‘The Million Plan’ signified a change in the European-orientation of the Zionist movement. Although in motivation this resembled the previous ‘import’ of Yemenite ‘natural workers’ – that is, in that it was a response to the failure of *ashkenazi* Jews to fulfil the Zionist goals – the two were markedly different. Whereas in the former case, only several hundreds Yemenite Jews were ‘imported’ (Shafir 1990, 173), in the latter the idea was to bring in three-quarters of a million Jews, which was bound to re-shape Zionist society. Furthermore, while in the first case the Yemenite Jews were integrated into a society that lacked fixed and stable political and social institutions, the anticipated immigration in the 1940s was seen as a threat to the *yishuv*’s social order. In this case, not only was the status and power of the *ashkenazi* workers at stake, but also that of the political elite.

Second, the shift to ‘mass immigration’ was facilitated by the development of designated apparatus, the *mossad le-alyia bet* (lit. the institution for immigration), which was directly controlled by the JA and was capable of carrying out the immigration policy independently of both the Zionist political parties and the WZO. This was not merely an institutional change, but had bearings on the balance of power in the *yishuv*. By 1944, towards the end of World War II, the JA had taken upon itself the management of the absorption of immigration. This was directly correlated with the declining role and status of the political parties, as well as of family relatives, in perpetuating immigration and absorbing it (Gelber 1998, 279; Lissak 1999, 107). When the state was established, the *mossad* disengaged from the JA and became the most important organisation in carrying out the government’s immigration policy (Hacohen 1994a, 28-29; Lissak 1999, 16-17). In this respect, ‘mass immigration’ had strengthened the apparatus of the ‘state-to-be’, namely the Zionist establishment.

Finally, the decision to relinquish the policy of ‘selective immigration’, and particularly to dissociate the political parties from the organisation of immigration and absorption, also had its ideological aspect. The new policy implied that the potential immigrants would not undergo a process of training (*Hacshara*) prior to their migration, a process that combined ideological indoctrination and practical training for agricultural work (e.g., Lissak 1999, 18-20). This lessened the role of the political parties in the absorption process, and increased the importance of the ‘state’ in the socialisation of the newcomers. Yet, although this applied equally to immigrants from Europe and the Orient, it posed a greater concern for the Zionist political elite in light of the anticipated immigration from the Orient (Gelber 1998, 274). In fact, many of the potential immigrants from Europe, while awaiting their migration in the refugee camps, were still undergoing some ideological, educational, and political preparation through various Zionist organisations (see Chapter 6). In contrast, most of the anticipated immigrants from the Orient arrived without any such preparation. Unsurprisingly, the Zionist

political parties were more easily inclined to support the needs of the European immigrants, than catering to those of the Oriental Jews.

In sum, the shift, in the early 1940s, from a policy of ‘selective immigration’ to a policy of ‘mass immigration’ had shown that the question of immigration was no longer a mere aspiration, but rather, in Ben-Gurion’s words, “a method of a political war” (cited in Hacohen 1994b, 21). At that time, in light of the anticipation of political independence, the need to assure a Jewish majority became an urgent one; the transition to a policy of ‘mass immigration’ implied that the target population would be expanded and, no less significantly, that the methods of immigration and absorption would be changed. These changes became apparent in the decision to ‘turn to the Orient’, and in the growing involvement of the JA, through its own institutional means, in causing Jewish immigration, in post-war Europe and in the Arab and Muslim countries. This, however, only highlighted and further exacerbated the differential pattern of immigration and absorption, a pattern that became all the more critical with the transition to statehood and when the ‘massive immigration’ had begun. The justification for such a differential pattern of absorption, however, lay in the emerging sociology of ethnicity.

### **Immigration and the construction of the ‘Oriental’**

The new policy engendered, then, contradictory implications and ramifications for the Zionist nation-building and state-formation. On the one hand, it strengthened the autonomous powers of the central political institutions, mainly the JA, vis-à-vis the political parties; on the other, it created real fears that the Oriental immigration would destabilise the existing social order and would undermine its legitimacy. The discussions that followed Ben-Gurion’s ‘Million Plan’, however, testified that these concerns had not been ignored or dismissed. In this respect, and contradicting accounts which claim that immigration was unanticipated (Hacohen 1994a, 7), when the massive immigration began, not only did the newcomers not arrive in an ethnic-blind social order, but the absorbing establishment was in fact well prepared for them.

The notion that Oriental Jews were not ‘like us’ was, notably, well entrenched in the *yishuv*’s social and political order. This was evidenced in the ‘cultural division of labour’ that developed in the early days of colonisation (Peled 1998), as well as in the *yishuv*’s political divisions. In this context, the *yishuv* was less concerned with the specific characteristics of the anticipated immigrants, than with its conception of them as ‘Orientals’. Against this backdrop, when the idea to turn to the Orient was raised and the prospects for Oriental immigration became real, the Zionist leaders revealed their concerns regarding its implications for the yet unborn Jewish state. Soon, the distinction between *quantity* and *quality* reappeared and was re-employed. Thus, Moshe Shertok (Sharet), a prominent Zionist leader and later Israel’s Prime Minister, proposed, at a meeting of the executive of the JA

(20.6.1944) dedicated to the question of Oriental immigration, to counterbalance this immigration by encouraging American Jewry to immigrate too (quoted in Gelber 1998, 280):

There is an important question [...] not merely of *quantity* versus *quality*. What are the implications of perpetuating the migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Orient to Palestine, in their present state, not as I wish them to be after being educated and acculturated? [...] We must approach the issue of American Jewry differently. We must mobilise this reservoir and demand its immigration [to Palestine]. (*italics* added).

This view of the ‘cultural gap’ as the source of inequality, and the prominence of the distinction between quantity and quality received support from an unexpected direction. In his 1947 monograph, S.N. Eisenstadt sought to ‘prepare’ the *yishuv* for its anticipated encounter with the Oriental Jews (see also Chapter 1). In his study, Eisenstadt sociologically ratified the distinction between quantity and quality and conflated it with another available political distinction between *mehagerim* (literally, immigrants) and *Olim*. This term, or *Oleh* in the singular (literally, ascendant), expressed the Jewish traditional view of migration to *Eretz-yisrael* as an act of self-elevation, and equally reflected the importance that the Zionist ideology attributed to the act of immigration. To this very day, this term is used when referring to Jewish immigrants to Israel.<sup>3</sup> The term *mehagerim* is used as a neutral term.

The dividing line between the two terms lay in the motivation for migration: *Olim*, were those who willingly emigrated from their homelands in order to build up a new, independent, Jewish society in *Eretz-yisrael*; *mehagerim*, in contrast, migrated because they were urged to abandon their own homeland, but they still did not reject its social reality (Eisenstadt 1947, 8). The latter term, needless to say, he regarded as portraying the condition of non-European immigrants. This Jewry, unfamiliar with the Zionist ideology, was by and large motivated to emigrate by political, economic, or religious factors, none of which prepared them for the new conditions in Palestine (*ibid.* 9). This distinction was thus added to the conception of non-European Jews as non-modern and non-ideological and, maybe more importantly, as being in need of special measures for their absorption. In this latter respect, this distinction differed from previous distinctions that sought to explain and legitimise social inequality. Soon, this sociological perspective, due to its ideological and practical value, came to dominate the discourse of immigration and absorption.

In light of the anticipated condition of statehood, the sociological terminology became appealing not merely for its scientific explanation of the differences between various Jews, but because of its ability to list the measures that could alter these differences. These measures were summed up in one word: ‘modernisation’. It was in this respect that the

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Jewish emigrants from Israel are termed *yordim*, literally descendants, and are regarded as having abandoned the homeland.

emerging sociology of ethnicity was congruent with the shift away from ‘selective immigration’, and with the transition to ‘state-controlled’ absorption.

In the early 1940s, Ben-Gurion (1949a, 15) suggested abandoning the distinction between those immigrants who came from “love, Zionist idealism, [and] pioneering will”, and those who were forced to do so. He was thus setting the grounds for the ‘universalisation’ of the absorption process. From his ‘state-oriented’ standpoint, all immigrants were equal. This required a change in the conception of ‘who is a Zionist’. While under the condition of ‘selective immigration’, ideological commitment was a criterion for selection, and the political parties acted as gatekeepers, the new policy of ‘mass immigration’ required a new non-ideological criterion for inclusion and exclusion. Sociology offered just that by making available a scientific language that was both universal and objective and that placed the state at centre stage.

The sociological perspective, which was couched in a discourse of modernisation, presumed that all immigrants, whether they were charged with Zionist zeal or not, were potentially equal members of the national collective. Prior ideological indoctrination was no longer a prerequisite for immigration, and the emphasis shifted to the absorption phase, thus making the question of re-socialisation the main concern of the immigration process. By equally considering all Jews as potential-Zionists, this perspective also implied the blurring of the boundary between Jews and Zionists. In these two respects, this sociological terminology did not only reflect social reality, but it also offered the justification for a policy that was aimed at defining the (anticipated) Jewish state as universal and modern. By being ascribed the role of modernisation agent by this terminology, the state was also placed in a favourable position vis-à-vis the political parties that were thus seen as representing particularistic interests.

The greatest value of this sociological perspective, however, was in the way it sought to offer a universal answer to the ‘ethnic question’. In the language of ‘modernisation’, the differential pattern of immigration and absorption was explained as stemming from ‘objective’ reasons that had more to do with the specific socio-economic and cultural background of non-European Jews, than with methods of immigration or absorption. In this sense, when sociology was talking about immigration, it was in fact talking ethnicity. The sociology of ethnicity offered a rationalisation for the (uneven) absorption process that rested, to a large extent, upon a conception of the ‘Oriental mentality’ as primitive and as an expression of the ‘undeveloped self’ (e.g., Frankenstein 1953a, 17). This definition of the ‘ethnic problem’ in ‘scientific’ terms implied that it could also be solved scientifically. In this respect, sociology was not merely descriptive, but prescriptive. The sociological language thus turned out not only to be ideological, that is, to legitimise and justify the existing social order by ratifying the dichotomous distinction between non-modern *mizrahi* and modern *ashkenazi*, but also to be a means for reproducing this distinction. In the early

1950s, the days of the Great Immigration, sociologists and anthropologists took an important part in the absorption of non-European immigrants, both in defining the needs of this population and in managing this process (e.g., Shokeid 2000; Ram 1995a, 52-53).

### Conclusion

Ben-Gurion's 'Million Plan' of 1942 marked a shift in the policy of immigration that was critical for the process of immigrants' absorption, and for social relations at large. The new policy of 'mass immigration' signified a change in the Zionist orientation towards the Orient, and thus it determined the demographic composition of Israeli society for years to come. This change had two main consequences. First, it helped to establish, in the aftermath of the 1948 War and following the expulsion of the majority of the Arab population, a Jewish majority and helped to secure, at least in this respect, the viability of the "Jewish State". In less than five years after independence, the Jewish population was doubled; the Arabs, once the majority of the population, turned into a minority of some 11 percent of the total population. Second, 'mass immigration' and the Zionist 'turn to the Orient' also determined that Jewish society itself would change: non-European Jews, who constituted a minority of some 23 percent in 1947, composed five years later, some 40 percent of a total Jewish population of 1,483,600 (Table 3-1). Thus, by turning the *ashkenazi* segment into a minority, and by tipping the balance of power from the political parties to the Zionist institutions, immigration had threatened to destabilise the existing socio-political order and to endanger the favourable position of the veteran *ashkenazi* sector. In this sense, immigration had created a new social reality which required a new language to explain it, and, moreover, that would be capable of retaining the privileged position of the veteran *ashkenazi* sector and rendering it legitimate.

Before and after statehood, immigration and absorption were characteristically uneven. Whereas until 1942, Zionist idealism (embodied in the practice of the political parties) served as an explanation and a justification for the uneven pattern of absorption, this justification could not suffice once the Zionist movement had taken the lead in these processes. The shift to 'mass immigration' thus threatened to render inequality illegitimate. At this point, sociology appeared as a powerful political factor by offering a language that would explain these inequalities and justify the supremacy of the state in managing them. This new language of 'modernisation' was enmeshed in an Orientalist perception of the (anticipated) newcomers, and gave rise to an ethnic social category: *Edot Ha-mizrah*, the Oriental communities. This category was juxtaposed not to the *ashkenazi* sector, but to 'society', which thus became identified with the latter group. It was against this backdrop that the differential pattern of absorption prolonged into statehood and that newcomers did not arrive into an ethnic-blind society.

When the first waves of immigrants arrived into the newly founded state, there was no apparent sign that they were going to be absorbed differentially. On the contrary, the two bulks of immigrants, from Europe and from the Orient, were similar in size (see Table 4-1), and most of them, regardless of their country of origin, were undergoing a similar process of absorption in the immigrant and transit camps. Yet soon it appeared that the language of absorption was in fact a language of ethnicity. The political and social absorbing institutions (as well as the academia that had taken a concrete part in these processes) were not concerned with immigrants as such, but with a specific kind of immigrants – those from the Muslim and Arab countries.

Within less than a decade, the distinction between newcomers and veterans practically disappeared and the Jewish sector was (re-)organised into two new categories: ‘Second-‘ and ‘First-Israel’ (e.g., Lissak 1999, 112). It is not accidental that the order in which these terms are presented is logically inverted: the former label, relating to Jews of Oriental descent who were also second in terms of their social position, was part of the explicit public rhetoric, whereas the latter, which by definition related to Jews from Europe and America, was implicitly derived from the existence of a ‘Second Israel’. In public rhetoric, as well as in sociological terminology, ‘First Israel’ was seen and referred to as representing ‘Israeli Society’.<sup>4</sup> This distinction made manifest the further stigmatisation of those immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries as essentially non-modern and non-Zionists. Sociology had played a significant role in facilitating this development. Still, it was after the processes of incorporation and integration of the newcomers into the Israeli economy that these distinctions became charged with a more concrete content.

### THE INDUSTRIALISATION PROJECT

The change in immigration policy in the early 1940s, as I have shown above, was significant inasmuch as it created the setting for the Great Immigration immediately after independence. Thus, in contrast to mainstream conventions about Zionist history (e.g. Lissak 1999, 108), it is apparent that the turning point in immigration and absorption policy came long before statehood. The policy of ‘mass immigration’ determined the central role of the Zionist apparatus in the perpetuation of immigration from the Orient, as well as in these immigrants’ re-socialisation as Jewish nationals and Israeli citizens. Absorption, however, was only one part of the story. No less significant was the process whereby immigrants and veterans took their place in the economy, and more specifically, in the emerging industrial-based capitalist economy. The process of industrialisation resulted both in the emergence of a ‘state-made’

<sup>4</sup> Referring to the ‘First-Israel’ also as “The Beautiful *Eretz yisrael*” further strengthened this euphemism (for a critical assessment of this terminology, see Ram 1995a, 98). This ‘blindness’ to the identity of the dominant group is not unique either to Israeli sociology, or to the discourse of modernisation. Ethnic and racial discourses typically tend to speak from the non-reflexive standpoint of the, commonly White, dominant group.

(managerial) middle class, which was based on the veteran *ashkenazi* sector, and in a parallel process of proletarianisation which encompassed both the *mizrahi* segment and the Palestinian-Arab minority. In this context, the differential pattern of absorption was only one factor that conflated with the evolving ‘cultural division of labour’, and with the development of spatial segregation, to determine the ethnicised character of Israeli society.

These processes underlay a more profound transformation in state-society relations, namely the transition from a political-economic order in which the political machineries of the *Histadrut* and the ruling party, *Mapai*, were central in determining the function of the state, to a new, Western-like order. The new political-economic order was characteristically more liberal and capitalistic in that it allowed a greater role for the private sector in the economy (for a discussion see, Shalev 1999). This transition was accompanied by the strengthening of the welfare state and of the notion of citizenship, as the determinants of the relationship between the state and its subjects. Paradoxically, these changes paralleled the entrenchment of ‘ethnic relations’. At this time, and more precisely in 1959 following ethnic unrest known as the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, ‘ethnicity’ was no longer merely a practice of stigmatisation, used by the state or the dominant sector as a way to retain the marginal social position of non-European Jews. Instead it became a method of self-organisation, a political identity, which determined that for *mizrahi* Jews, ethnicity was a way (maybe a necessary way) to demand recognition and meaningful political participation.

### **Economic growth, population dispersal and ethnicity**

The rapid economic growth that the Israeli economy underwent in the first two decades of its existence was attributed to two main factors<sup>5</sup>: the inflow of a considerable amount of foreign capital in the form of the German reparations and American aid, coupled with an influx of property-less immigrants who were a source of increasing demands, mainly for housing, and were also a supply of cheap labour (Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 67-68; Shalev 1984e, 366; Halevi and Klinov-Malul 1968, 51). Other reasons for this growth were the confiscation of Arab-owned lands, within the extended borders of the new state, and the proletarianisation of the Arabs, who were concentrated in designated, Military-controlled areas and who formed another source of cheap, unskilled labour (Yiftachel 1998b, 50; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1993). These factors were consolidated in a concentrated developmental policy that consisted of two main elements: the dispersal of the (Jewish) population in the periphery, and an enhanced process of industrialisation. A facilitating factor in these developments was the centrality of the state apparatus in controlling the supply of capital and labour through highly centralised bureaucratic mechanisms (Gross 1990, 83; Shalev 1984h, 21).

<sup>5</sup> The average annual rate of growth per capita GNP was, between 1953-1965, 10 percent. This was coupled with a decline in the annual rate of unemployment from 11.5 percent in 1953 to 3.5 percent in 1961 (Shalev 1984e, 367).

The development of the Israeli economy during the first decade of the state was a result of a deliberate and planned effort to create a viable ‘national economy’, based on a mixture of national and private capital (Gross 1990, 69). One important aspect of this effort was the Israeli government’s decision, in 1949, to adopt a planning policy that aimed at populating the most remote (‘frontier’) areas of the country (Cohen 1969, 143-144; Gonen 1990, 160; Gonen 1998, 151-153). The ‘population dispersal’ policy was meant to generate internal migration that would distribute the Jewish population more evenly between the centre and the periphery. Still, the scattered pattern of the new settlements (most of them small rural settlements, each inhabited by only a few hundred residents) showed that this policy’s main goal was in fact to re-affirm the state’s control over the 1949 Armistice borders by creating ‘Jewish presence’ in those areas, thus preventing the Arab refugees from returning to their homes and lands when the war ended (Gonen 1990, 164; Yiftachel 1992, 65). Nonetheless, this policy was received by an overall reluctance from the veterans, mostly *ashkenazi*, who refrained from moving to the under-developed periphery. Instead, the state’s highly centralised control over the new immigrants facilitated the implementation of this policy later, with the arrival of new waves of immigration from North Africa (Cohen 1969, 155; State of Israel 1972, 5; Gonen 1998, 151).

During the height of the Great Immigration, between 1948 and 1951, immigrants were absorbed in transit camps, which they gradually evacuated according to (the scarce) availability of employment and housing (Hacohen 1994a, 298-301). By 1951, the deteriorating situation in the transit camps, and specifically the growing pressure for work and better housing, threatened to destabilise society (*ibid.* 291-296).<sup>6</sup> This encouraged the government, while anticipating a new wave of immigration from Morocco in the mid-1950s, to adopt a new method of absorption. This new method was aimed at overcoming both the conditions in the camps and the failure of the ‘population dispersal’ policy. The new policy, known as ‘from the ship to the settlement’, was based on the allocation of the immigrants to a specified destination prior to their departure from their home countries (Shuval 1963, 8; Cohen 1969, 150-151; Arnon 1998, 322-324).<sup>7</sup> Concomitantly, the inhabitants of the camps were re-allocated to the newly founded rural and urban settlements (Hacohen 1998a, 96-103; Lissak 1999, 35). These policies had made the immigrants from the Arab and Muslim countries the rank and file settlers of the ‘new frontier’, or in Weingrod’s term (1966, *vii-viii*), ‘reluctant pioneers’. Like their predecessors in the early days of the Zionist

<sup>6</sup> A 1957 survey revealed that the length of stay in the transit camps (*ma’abarot*) was much longer than had been anticipated at the time of their establishment: 56 percent of their inhabitants lived there between 4 to 8 years; 17 percent – 4 to 5 years; 22 percent – 2 to 3 years; and only 5 percent between one to two years (Lissak 1999, 33). The harsh conditions in the camps caused a mass migration of newcomers who sought work and housing elsewhere, and which was perceived by government officials “as a beginning of a revolt” (Hacohen 1994a, 294).

<sup>7</sup> In 1955-56, some 75,000 immigrants arrived from North Africa, some 61,000 of them from Morocco (Hacohen 1998c, 309). Many of the newcomers were directed to new rural settlements, but by the end of 1955 most of them were settled in the Development Towns (Arnon 1998, 338).

colonisation, the newcomers were sent to ‘settle the frontier’, however, in most occasions without their consent, and without being rewarded the same material or symbolic benefits enjoyed by their *ashkenazi* peers (e.g., Arnon 1998, 322; Lissak 1999, 34, 36). Two new types of settlement – the Development Towns (hereafter, DTs) and the new *moshavim*<sup>8</sup> – became the locus within which the newcomers from the Arab and Muslim countries turned into *mizrahim*.

### **The making of the Israeli (ethnic) periphery**

Between 1948 and 1952, the state established some 270 new agricultural settlements, fifty-four percent of them populated by newcomers (Lissak 1999, 33).<sup>9</sup> These settlements served two main purposes: first, they offered an immediate solution to the housing and employment difficulties of the inhabitants of the transit camps and the newcomers; second, as some forty percent of them were in the outlying areas of the country, they actually formed the prime factor in the state’s expansion and penetration into the periphery (Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 69; Lissak 1999, 85; Yiftachel 1998b). Yet, although this policy was preferable to absorption through immigrant and transit camps, it did not circumvent the uneven nature of absorption. Eventually, the new *moshavim* enhanced and reproduced the inequality between veterans and newcomers and between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* Jews.

The *mizrahi* newcomers, the ‘reluctant pioneers’, were discriminated against in several ways. First, many of the new *moshavim*, unlike the veteran ones or the *kibbutzim*, were founded on non-arable land and their settlers were allocated smaller plots of land.<sup>10</sup> Second, the state’s investment in agricultural development was greater in the veteran settlements, primarily the *kibbutzim*, thus leaving the new ones behind in these terms (Hacohen, 1998a, 96-103). Finally, the new *moshavim* became secondary and peripheral within the *moshav* movement itself. They received fewer means of production and, consequently, their income was lower (Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 70). As a result of this discrimination, the new pioneers became heavily dependent upon the state for their survival, while the veteran agricultural sectors – the *kibbutzim*, the veteran *moshavim*, and the private farming communities – enjoyed an economic boom (*ibid.* 71).

This discrimination, however, was not limited to the material realm. The policy of ‘from the ship to the settlement’ turned many of the new settlers into agricultural workers against their

<sup>8</sup> *Moshav*, pl. *moshavim*, is a co-operative agricultural settlement, in which, unlike in the *kibbutz*, each settler is allotted a plot of land to cultivate, but the distribution of the products is still organised co-operatively by the settling movements’ organisation.

<sup>9</sup> The establishment and settlement of the new *moshavim* was carried out by the ‘settling movements’, and according to their respective political power and will. The immigrants were directed to these new settlements on the basis of country of origin, which created the new *moshavim* as homogeneous settlements (Hacohen 1998a, 96-103; Lissak 1999, 35, 85).

<sup>10</sup> See, Bernstein and Swirski (1982, 70), Klinov-Malul (1969, 100) indicates that possession of land was one source of inequality between the veterans and the newcomers.

own will (or skills), due to administrative decisions, made by Zionist emissaries abroad to that effect (Malka 1998, 111-113). This was part of a 'selection policy', enacted during the migration of Moroccan Jews in the mid-1950s, that sought to prefer 'productive' to 'non-productive' immigrants. Fitness for agricultural work was one criterion for this selection (Lissak 1999, 36). By 1954, 65 percent of the new *moshavim* were populated by Jews from Arab and Muslim countries, who also constituted some two-thirds of the overall population of the *moshavim* (Lissak 1999, 85; Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 70). This vast population was not considered, and did not consider itself, as heroic, and did not enjoy the symbolic rewards of the pioneers (for an extensive study of the 'selection policy' see, Malka 1998).

The Development Towns, unlike other urban centres in Israel, were pre-planned urban centres designed to serve as anchors for their surrounding agricultural environment. They were designed to absorb a new population that would lay the basis for the further development of these areas (Swirski and Shoushan 1986, 14; Cohen 1969, 143-144; Lissak 1999, 38; Gonen 1998, 153). Soon the DTs became less developed and more dependent than the agricultural settlements that surrounded them (Swirski and Shoushan 1986, 22-23). The failure of the new towns to attract the middle class entailed that these new immigrants' towns lacked a core element that could make them stable, at least in the eyes of their residents.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, the term Development Town, which at first pointed to the developmental thrust that these towns would generate, turned out to describe and characterise places that were in constant need of further development (*ibid.* 6).

Some twenty years after their establishment, a 1972 survey of all the DTs<sup>12</sup>, revealed that *ashkenazi* Jews composed only 30 percent of the DTs population against 70 percent *mizrahi*, compared to a ratio of 51.5 to 48.5 among the overall Jewish population. In only four out of 29 DTs was the majority of the population of *ashkenazi* origin; in 16 DTs, the proportion of the *ashkenazi* population was less than 15 percent (State of Israel 1972, 6; Cohen 1969, 155). In this period, the population of the DTs grew in number, as well as in its proportion to the overall population: by the end of 1971, more than 471,000 inhabitants in the DTs composed 17.4 percent of the overall Jewish population, while ten years earlier, a DT population of 249,000 comprised only some 12.5 percent of the Jewish population (State of Israel 1972, 5). Most of the growth in the DTs' population was attributed to immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries (see also, Arnon 1998, 338); apparently, in the second half of the 1960s,

<sup>11</sup> Various studies of the DTs emphasise the high rate of internal migration as a salient characteristic of the dynamics of these towns. Many of the middle class residents of these towns were governmental officials or high rank employees of various private companies who temporarily resided there (Gonen 1995, 90).

<sup>12</sup> The official designation of a town as a DT is a political act, and the number of towns included varied with time. This designation has concrete material implications in the form of subsidies, tax exemption etc. This often creates a 'competition' to be included in this category, mainly between various political parties that seek to benefit those sectors they are identified with. This also reproduced the dependency of these towns upon the government. It is however noteworthy that over the years, a considerable number of towns remained categorised as DTs because of their overall poverty level (Swirski and Shoushan 1986, 11).

when the relatively high rate of growth decreased, this was due to the decline in immigration from these states (State of Israel 1972, 6). By the end of the 1960s, the massive construction of public housing in the periphery had come to an end (Gonen 1995, 91).

These patterns of absorption and settlement rendered the Israeli periphery saliently ‘ethnic’. In 1953, immigrants from North Africa comprised 44.5 percent of the population of the northern and southern peripheral districts of the country. These immigrants, as well as Yemenite and Iraqi Jews (mostly, Kurds), were the most dispersed social groups; Russian and Polish Jews, in comparison, were the least dispersed (Gonen 1998, 155). The *mizrahi* segment of society became identified with the undeveloped Development Towns and new *moshavim* (as well as the poorest neighbourhoods in the cities, see Gonen 1985, 25-38), a fact that only intensified its marginality in Israeli society.

### **Industrialism and the road to liberalisation**

The immigrants were always dispersible, that is, readily available to be settled in accordance with state policy. The relative ease of providing these ‘reluctant pioneers’ with housing stood, however, in contrast to the difficulty of offering them employment. This, according to Gonen (1998, 157), became a characteristic of the Israeli periphery.

Notably, ‘ethnicity’ became a characteristic of the division of labour as early as the *yishuv* period. Yet, the evolving pattern of spatial segregation soon became a part of the reproduction of an ethnically differentiated labour market under the new conditions of statehood and industrialisation. In this sense, the ‘new’ ethnic division of labour was not a mere replica of the old one, and it reflected the expansion of the state bureaucracy and the industrial sector. By the end of the first decade of independence, Israel’s economy was by and large industrial, and the labour market re-organised. The parallel emergence of the middle- and working-classes reflected the evolving social, political, and geographical segregation: the veterans, mostly *ashkenazi*, occupied the (state-made) managerial middle class, whereas *mizrahi* Jews and Arabs underwent a process of proletarianisation.

The first waves of immigration were primarily absorbed in agriculture and construction, which also enjoyed a considerable rate of public investment (Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 69-73). Soon, the government faced unemployment at levels that threatened social stability (*ibid.* 71). This, coupled with a growing need to invest in agricultural infrastructure, urged the state to initiate ‘public relief works’ in which new immigrants, mostly *mizrahi*, were employed on a daily basis in drainage, forestation, road construction and manual agricultural work (*ibid.* 71; Simons 1969, 119; Lissak 1999, 23). This changed with the transition of the Israeli economy from agricultural to industrial.

A massive inflow of capital, from 1954-55 onwards, enabled the state to accelerate the development of manual-based industries by offering private entrepreneurs considerable

subsidies for investing in new factories in the periphery (State of Israel 1972, 7).<sup>13</sup> More than 70 percent of government loans were directed to the textile, metal, food, chemistry and pharmaceutical industries; in the mid-1970s, 43 percent of the working force in the DTs were employed in industry, compared to only 27 percent nation-wide (Swirski and Shoushan 1985, 9-11). These developments, which were accompanied by a considerable decrease in wages, especially in the lower strata (Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 74-75), pointed to the mutuality between the development of the middle- and lower-classes. Apparently, the large government investments in the development of the periphery were the source of capital accumulation for the state-sponsored middle class (ibid. 75; Klinov-Malul 1969, 98-100; Carmi and Rosenfeld 1976). In general, the peripheral DTs were characterised by the abundance of non-sophisticated industry, and an unskilled, cheap labour force (whereas professional labour was usually ‘imported’ from the central areas), and by a low level of public services (State of Israel 1972, 7).

These processes of enhanced industrialisation and settlement peaked in 1959, a year that marked the start of the characterisation of Israel as an industrialised state. Several indicators were evident for this change, amongst them, the condition of full employment (Shapiro and Grinberg 1988, 8; Shalev 1984e, 367); the growth in the government’s systematic investment in industry, rather than agriculture (*Davar*, 14.7.1959; Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 74); the increasing employment of new labour in industry<sup>14</sup>; and that by this time industrial export exceeded agricultural export (Horowitz 1965, 158). One effect of the shift to industrial economy was the further integration of the Palestinians into the Israeli economy, mainly as (low) waged, unskilled workers. This urged the *Histadrut* to accept Palestinian workers as members (*Davar*, 3.8.1959), and the government to remove some of the movement restrictions on the Palestinians (*Davar*, 5.8.1959). These changes were the precursor of the 1966 Recession (as well as of the abolition of the Military Administration at that year), which signifies for various scholars of Israeli political economy a turning point in the liberalisation of the economy (Shapiro and Grinberg 1988; Grinberg 1991; Levy and Peled 1994; Shalev 1984e, 1999), as well as in the “dynamics of citizenship” in Israel (Peled and Shafir 1996). This, however, also marked a shift in the politics of ethnicity that followed the 1959 *Wadi-Salib* revolt.

### ***Wadi-Salib: the dynamics of citizenship and ethnicity***

In July 1959, a shooting incident in *Wadi-Salib* – once an Arab neighbourhood in Haifa that was by then mainly populated by working class Jews of Moroccan origin – upset the

<sup>13</sup> Government investment in industry had grown significantly following the acceptance of German reparations: from 11 percent of the total governmental development budget in the years 1949-53 to 19 percent in 1956-59. The reparations paid, between 1955 and 1958, for 17.5 percent of the expenditures on the import of machinery (Swirski and Bernstein 1993, 133).

<sup>14</sup> In the following seven years, industry absorbed 35 percent of the addition to the labour force and employed 25 percent of the overall employees (Swirski and Bernstein 1993, 134)

country. This shooting of a *mizrahi* Jew by a policeman triggered a spontaneous demonstration on the night of the incident, which was followed, on the next day, by an organised march that developed into a violent clash with the police (Dahan-Kalev 1991, 99). This incident ignited a chain reaction among *mizrahi* workers in many other DTs and poor neighbourhoods that led to strikes, public demonstrations, and riots against various political institutions (*Davar* 10.7.1959; Dahan-Kalev 1991, 101). The state responded forcefully and managed to suppress the protest and regain social stability only after a full month of unrest. Still, the Revolt's consequences have been felt far longer, and reveal much of the role of ethnicity in Israeli society.<sup>15</sup>

First, the protest was not indiscriminate; the protesters' rage was directed against the institutions of the *Histadrut* and the ruling *Mapai* party (Dahan-Kalev 1991, 99). Given the conditions of the absorption of North African Jewish immigrants, and the centrality of the apparatuses of both the *Histadrut* and *Mapai* in controlling them, this was not accidental. Particularly, the *mizrahi* workers' discontent with the institutions that were supposedly the representatives of the working class emphasised the ethnically based split within the Jewish labour market (Shapiro and Grinberg 1988, 1-2). Unsurprisingly and ironically, the *Histadrut*'s leaders, who became concerned with the class motives behind the revolt (e.g., *Davar* 24.7.1959), denounced the protesters in the name of the interests of the workers and employed physical means to oppress them (Shapiro and Grinberg 1988, 17; Dahan-Kalev 1991, 106-107). Their demand to put an end to the protest should be understood as being consistent with the *Histadrut*'s social and political position as the representative of the organised, *ashkenazi* working class, hence, that was therefore inclined to forsake the interests of the *mizrahi* lower working class.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the revolt, which turned in a day from local to national protest, manifested the contingency that developed, through the processes of absorption and settlement, between ethnic origin, social class, and residential patterns. This became evident, even prior to the revolt, in the organisation of a new political party, *Likud yotzei tzfon-africa* (lit. The Unity of Immigrants from North Africa). This party, formed in anticipation of the upcoming general elections, was led by one of the key figures in the revolt, David Ben-Haroush, and it aimed at mobilising North African, but mainly Moroccan, Jews. This party, using explicit class and

<sup>15</sup> For more on *Wadi-Salib*, see Dahan-Kalev (1991), Breenbaum (1975), Barzilai (1997), and also the report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry that was set up to investigate the incident (Etzioni 1959).

<sup>16</sup> The *Histadrut*'s and *Mapai*'s leaders used the *Histadrut*'s daily newspaper, *Davar*, to express their disapproval. Their language was ostensibly offensive (see also, Khenin 2000, 96-97). *Mapai*'s Minister of Labour declared in a party electoral gathering in Haifa, three days after the eruption of the Revolt, that: "only an enemy from within could instigate such a shameful and harm-causing provocation between communities within the Jewish nation" (*Davar*, 12.7.1959). Yossef Almogi, the *Histadrut*'s secretary in Haifa, published an announcement stating that: "political and criminal elements had taken advantage yesterday of a miserable incident in the neighbourhood in order to agitate riots in Haifa" (*Davar*, 10.7.1959). A few days later, in a report of the *Histadrut*'s secretariat meeting in Haifa, the reporter added: "A small group of ignorant [people] agitated and guided by a small unconscientious group delivered a nice gift to the haters of Israel." (*Davar*, 13.7.1959).

ethnic rhetoric, pointed at the *Histadrut* and *Mapai* as responsible for the poverty of the *mizrahi* workers (Dahan-Kalev 1991, 98-99; Herzog 1985, 164-165). In the aftermath of the revolt, after the Unity's leader was jailed, it disappeared. Yet, this attempt marked a break with previous 'ethnic political parties' in that it created a direct link between class and ethnic origin.

In sum, although the revolt erupted against the backdrop of the booming economy and the transition to full employment, and manifested the discontent of the workers, it was not a 'working-class struggle'. The protesters – mainly, if not solely, of *mizrahi* origin – articulated their demands not in terms of 'class-solidarity' but rather in ethnic terms. The working class itself, at the time, was not exclusively *mizrahi*. Furthermore, the Zionist rhetoric of the protesters was unmistakable. They waved their veteran soldiers' identity cards in the air and demanded an equal share in return for their participation in the 1956 Suez War. In these two respects, the protest was directed against the 'second-class' status of *mizrahi* Jews as citizens, and particularly as Jewish citizens of the state, not as workers. This demand for full citizenship rights, coming from a particular segment of the working class – *mizrahi* Jews – made this revolt politically and historically significant. Not only did it reflect the ethnicised character of society, but it was equally a sign for the further entrenchment of ethnicity as a political resource.

### The political economy of ethnicity

The economic boom of the late 1950s was halted in the 1966 Recession. The need for a recessionary economic policy was explained by the state's difficult relationship with labour and capital at this time. The shift to full employment, on the one hand, which "upset power relations by reducing the dependence of ordinary workers on the state and the ruling parties" (Shalev 1999, 125), and, on the other, the extent of the government's subsidies for industry (Bernstein and Swirski 1982, 75-77; Shalev 1984e, 379) – had put the state in a vulnerable position. Under these circumstances, it sought to regain its power and legitimacy by restraining both (organised) labour and capital.

The recessionary policy, however, was neither inevitable, nor was it the only possible response to the booming economy (Grinberg 1993, 169-170). In fact, the industrialists preferred to 'import' cheap, unemployed labour from the DTs to the central areas where most industries were concentrated. The government instead opted for an overall economic slow-down that would prevent: **a)** the (*mizrahi*) workers in the DTs from gaining power, **b)** the strengthening of the industrialists' political power by further subsidising them, and, **c)** the strengthening of the *Histadrut* (Shalev 1984h, 31-34). This decision, apparently, was a decision against the workers. Still, not less significant, it entrenched ethnic politics as a practice of pacification of capital and labour that enabled the state to re-establish itself as an arbiter between them. This was evinced in the state's response to the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt and,

specifically, in the way in which the state political elite saw it as an opportunity to further dissociate its own apparatus from that of the *Histadrut* and *Mapai*.

Following the revolt, General Moshe Dayan, a war hero and a cabinet minister, went on a *tour-de-force* in the poor *mizrahi* neighbourhoods and towns (Shapiro and Grinberg, 1988). In his appearances, Dayan showed sympathy with the rage of *mizrahi* Jews, but this had less to do with their class position, than with their antagonism to *Mapai* and the *Histadrut*. What he offered them instead was to place their trust in the state. Dayan was not identified with the machineries of the *Histadrut* or *Mapai*, and in this sense he was a genuine ‘representative’ of the emerging managerial class, whose power rested in the state apparatus (Shapiro Y. 1984; Kalderon 1984; Levy 1997). Thus, using his aura as an army general on the one hand, and an ideal of military service as a path to equality on the other, Dayan offered the *mizrahi* lower class the refuge of *Mamlakhtiyut*. He praised the function of the state apparatus in caring for the poor, and denounced the *Histadrut* for its inclination to attend to the demands of organised workers. He similarly called for an end to the violent protest and emphasised the egalitarian nature of the military service (see, *Davar* 7.8.1959; 9.8.1959). Yet, speaking in the name of *Mamlakhtiyut*, he also gave precedence to the needs of the state over those of the lower *mizrahi* class. Dayan, more than any other political figure, has been identified with the claim that the state could not simultaneously confront its security and social problems, leading to a call to postpone the social struggle until after the state resolves its security problems (Shapiro and Grinberg 1988, 17). To this very day, this kind of argumentation proves to be effective in silencing (*mizrahi*) calls for social justice and equality.

### **Liberalisation, citizenship and ethnicity**

The declaration of independence did not make the ‘transition to statehood’ a *fait accompli*. ‘State-formation’ was, rather, a prolonged process of social, political, and economic transformation that was directed by the need to build up a powerful state apparatus (at the expense of societal forces) and which was legitimised by the ideology of *Mamlakhtiyut*. The need to complete this transformation, or to finish the project of *Mamlakhtiyut*, became all the more urgent by the end of the 1950s, as part of the adjustment of the “political-economic regime” (see Shalev 1999) to the condition of industrialism. This adjustment included the re-positioning of the state vis-à-vis society, and particularly its dissociation from the *yishuv*’s partisan institutions, as well as the re-definition of its relation to its citizenry. Yet, I argue, this shift towards liberalisation equally determined the importance of ethnicity as a basis for social organisation and, more potently, for political action.

By the end of the 1950s, or more precisely in 1959, the political-economic regime that dominated the Zionist polity of the *yishuv* and the ‘transition to statehood’ proved to no longer be effective (Shalev 1999, 125). This brought the state to the verge of a legitimacy crisis. On the one hand, the *ashkenazi* sector that was highly represented amongst

industrialists and organised workers, empowered by the economic boom, was making higher demands for governmental support. On the other hand, the *mizrahi* newcomers were protesting against their social marginality. Under these circumstances, the shift to ‘welfarism’ (see Swirski 1999, 154-159), turned out to be a necessary step in shifting power from the political parties to the state. More specifically, the formation of a state controlled safety net had changed the relationship between ‘private’ entrepreneurs, partisan controlled capital (*Histadrut*) and organised workers (*Histadrut* again), and thus allowed the state to re-gain power and legitimacy. This change was not merely reflected in the “dynamics of citizenship”, to cite Peled and Shafir (1996), but, more pertinently, in the relation of this dynamic to the changing role of ethnicity in re-defining both the internal and external boundaries of Israeli society.

Notably, one of the consequences of industrialisation was the easing of military control over the Palestinian minority. Thus, while the fundamental alienated relationship between the state and this minority has not changed, Palestinians (who by then had had most of their land appropriated from them) became ‘more’ integrated into the Israeli economy, albeit as the Israeli lumpenproletariat. This implied that ‘control’ (see Lustick 1980) would from now on be a matter of the market and not of military might. Consequently, although Arabs remained excluded from the Jewish nation, they actually acquired their status as ‘citizens’ (and not subjects of the Military Administration), and hence, were provided with a ‘new’ path for political integration. Indeed, since the abolition of the Military Administration (1966), Palestinians within Israel’s 1967 borders were increasingly enjoying (though to a limited degree) a liberal-type of citizenship (Peled 1992). In this respect, the changing relationship between the Arab minority and the state, as well as the salience of the concept of citizenship in defining this relationship, enabled the state to re-assert its universalistic image vis-à-vis society. Still, while this blurred the ‘civic’ boundary between Jews and Arabs, it also re-emphasised the ‘ethno-national’ boundary between them by strengthening the ethno-republican type of citizenship enjoyed by Israeli Jews (ibid.). By the same token, citizenship and ethnicity had played a similarly significant role, though in a different manner and degree, in delineating internal boundaries within Jewish society (see, Levy 1995). In this sense, *Wadi-Salib* was an important turning point in state-society relations in Israel.

The *Wadi-Salib* Revolt proved that while *mizrahi* Jews were considered a part of the national collective, their social and economic position severely harmed their sense of belonging. The revolt eventually turned out to be an opportunity for the state political elite to complete the project of *Mamlakhiyyut* in two senses. First, this elite sought to re-gain the support of the *mizrahi* segment by emphasising the path of identification with the state as a means of ensuring their belonging to the national collective. In this sense, the state showed its preference for the notion of citizenship as a medium of political participation over the pre-statehood practice of partisan affiliation. Second, the revolt enabled the state to further

dissociate itself from the machineries of the partisan institutions, and thus to re-determine its autonomy and supremacy vis-à-vis society. This was also reflected in the 1966 Recession, which enabled the state to strengthen its position between capital and (organised) labour. This period, between the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt and the Recession, thus marked the extension of the concept of citizenship and the development of a Western-like industrialist social order.

Nonetheless, the ethnic character of these developments was unmistakeable. The fact that the *mizrahi* working class was articulating its struggle in ethnic terms attested to the crystallisation of an ethnic identity, a *mizrahi* consciousness, that was bound and confined within the boundaries of the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*. In other words, *mizrahi* Jews were seeing themselves as a part of the *Mamlakha*, the Jewish nation, and not as merely Israeli citizens. Similarly, although the state was seeking to strengthen the notion of citizenship, it was not forsaking the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*, as a discourse of Jewish citizenship. This notion helped the state to mobilise the *mizrahi* working class, yet without empowering them or enabling them to develop their class consciousness. Thus, rather than create employment opportunities, the state preferred to deepen its welfare policy that practically reinforced the ethnic, rather than class, consciousness of the *mizrahi* sector.

## PART III

### EDUCATION AND ETHNICITY

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“Historicism”, Walter Benjamin contended in his *Theses on History* (Appendix A), “is satisfied with making a causal correlation between different moments in history. However, by that alone, no complex of evidence becomes historical. It becomes historical retrospectively, following events that might be thousands of years apart.” The purpose of the following analysis is to make the history of education historical, and thus to offer an understanding of the role of education in the ethnicisation of social relations in Israel. This understanding, I propose, is embedded in the preceding analysis of nation-building, state-formation, and ethnicisation, and it takes as its point of departure those historical moments in which ‘ethnic relations’ took their course and shape.

The origins of ‘ethnic relations’, it was shown, lay in the Jewish colonial labour market, from where it spread to the social and political spheres, sometimes in spite of the Zionist desire to ‘eliminate’ intra-Jewish ethnicity. Nonetheless, Zionist nation-building and state-formation shaped, as much as they were shaped by, the development of ‘ethnic relations’. This resulted in the creation of the Israeli ethnospaces, which has been dominated by the Palestinian-Zionist ethno-national conflict, as well as by spatial and social segregation between various Jewish ethnic groups. Education, I argue, not only reflected these developments, but played a crucial role in bringing them about, and more pertinently, in facilitating the development of ‘ethnic thinking’ that connected the historical moments discussed above into a history of ‘ethnic relations’.

### Cultural homogenisation and political integration in the Zionist project

From its beginning, the Zionist movement viewed education as a key instrument in achieving its political nationalist goals. Whether bringing about cultural homogenisation (thus ‘making a nation’ out of the Jewish people), or ensuring political integration in the Zionist polity in Palestine, education, or ‘cultural work’, was at the core of these processes (Nardi 1945, 199). These processes developed against the backdrop of a reality that was characterised by the heterogeneity of society, and by the lack of a single sovereign power, a reality that had made the institutionalisation of a centrally controlled education system both a means to, and a consequence of, the advancement of nation-building and state-formation, and hence, the ethnicisation of social relations.

Jewish nationalism was only one response to the ‘age of nationalism’ that swept 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Zionism, as Shafir (1989, 7) argues, “was neither self-evident nor widespread.” The search for ‘new’ ethnic and cultural distinctiveness yielded several responses amongst Jews in Eastern- and Central-Europe, whose traditional role as middlemen in the pre-industrialist economy was undermined by the new social order. These responses ranged from assimilation through Jewish socialism to a traditionalist maintenance of an orthodox religious identity. Only a minority responded with the articulation of a national identity, or, more precisely, with mobilisation within the newly founded Zionist national movement (*ibid.*; Peled 1989). This reality, of several ‘Jewish existences’, although contradicting the Zionist self-representation<sup>1</sup>, was the backdrop against which the Zionist movement, from its early days, became involved in what it termed ‘cultural work’, namely, an extensive effort to determine the cultural make-up of the Jewish collectivity and to establish itself as an educator (recall Gramsci).<sup>2</sup>

One major area in which this ‘cultural work’ was undertaken was language. Hebrew, although common to all Jewish congregations and communities in the Diaspora, was not a spoken language, but ‘the language of the book [Torah]’. Already in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish intellectuals in Central-Europe sought to ‘secularise’ the Hebrew language and began publishing periodicals in Hebrew, and to advocate its teaching in Jewish schools (Elboim-Dror 1986, 48). By the time the Zionist movement began to establish itself in Palestine, it made the struggle to replace the Yiddish vernacular (and any other Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Unsurprisingly, this ‘particularistic’ view of Jewish history according to which the Jewish people was essentially national was shared by Zionist historians like Ben-Zion Dinburg (Dinur) and Yitzchak Baer who proclaimed that “Jewish history is the annals of the Israeli nation, that have never been interrupted nor lost their importance. Jewish history is united by a homogeneous unity that encompasses all periods and places, all of which come to teach us upon each other.” (Cited in Raz-Karkotzkin 1993, 40; also, Peled R. 1995, 223 ft. 1).

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of ‘cultural work’ was a matter of constant debate within the Zionist movement. Hever (1994), to offer one example from the field of literature, shows that there was a systematic struggle between two conflicting conceptions that competed for centre stage in Hebrew culture: one, mainstream, that sought to construct a dominant model of the national literature of “a nation like all nations”, created in the national language and within its own national land; the other was an oppositional attempt(s) to create a Hebrew national literature in the Diaspora with modest political aspirations to set up an ethnic minority culture.

vernacular) with Hebrew a means of modernising the Jews, and a symbol of nationalist redemption. The slogan of “Jew, speak Hebrew” became common in the new Jewish settlements. This effort to achieve linguistic standardisation was seen as necessary for the creation of cultural homogeneity among Jews, who gathered from different parts of the world, carrying with them different cultural heritages and traditions (Nardi 1934, 20-21). This struggle, as will be shown here, was also a part of the Zionist effort to appropriate the Hebrew schools and to gain control over the *Hebrew Teachers Federation*, that coincided with its interest in achieving political integration.

Another characteristic of Zionist ‘cultural work’ was the development of an anti-Diaspora discourse, of which the struggle over language was only one aspect. This discourse was based on the negation of Jewish existence in the Diaspora, and its representation as antithetical to national existence.<sup>3</sup> The notion of the “negation of exile”, which still has several authoritative manifestations in Israeli culture, underscored a Zionist historical consciousness that claimed a continuity between the ancient past – when an allegedly national entity was in existence – and the present, conceived as the rehabilitation of this ‘glorious’ past. Thus, as Raz-Krakotzkin (1993, 23) argues, the exile was seen as a temporary phenomenon, a mere break in the otherwise normal existence of the Jewish people as a nation. But, in order to justify this position, the denial of any possible positive contribution by the exile to the history of the Jewish people was required. Consequently, the elimination of this period from the national memory was seen as a pre-condition for national liberation.

This historical conception, Raz-Krakotzkin (1993, 24) contends, explicitly assumes that the very negation of the exile, i.e., the “return to the (promised) land”, will lead to the full realisation of a Jewish national culture that, it should be emphasised, overrides all differences between the various Jewish communities. Thus, an image of the “New Jew” was developed against various images of the “Exile Jew”, who was seen as a proto-Zionist but concomitantly ‘flawed’. This conception had two concrete implications for the developing (anti-diasporic) national memory. First, by negating Jewish existence in exile, Arab existence in Palestine was also denied (a conception clearly manifested in Zangweill’s slogan: “a land without a people for a people without a land”). Second, this notion implied denying the concrete histories of the various Jewish communities in the Diaspora, and was particularly critical for *mizrahi* Jews, who were thus forced to adopt a national identity that was based on the history of European Jews (seen as representing an allegedly universal

<sup>3</sup> The following critical perspective of the notion of the “negation of exile” is based on Raz-Krakotzkin (1993; 1994). By no means am I trying to summarise his ideas or thesis, but only to offer an example of the effort undertaken by the Zionist movement to establish itself as the sole bearer and interpreter of the Jewish ‘national memory’, and by so doing, to present the history and memory of European Jews as representing an allegedly universal narrative of the ‘Jewish nation’. For similar critics, see Ram (1995b), Shenhav (1999b).

Jewish history), and to forsake their own (Arab!) cultural heritage.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, this consciousness shaped the way in which Jewish Holocaust refugees were received in Israel, namely as being the victims of their own diasporic existence (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994, 121; Yablonka 1999). In sum, the “negation of exile” was the basis for the development of a Zionist national memory that sought to offer a single historical narrative by denying the historical memories of the various collectives that comprised the Israeli nation. Zionizing the Jewish educational system in Palestine was one means of achieving these goals.

<sup>4</sup> See, Raz-Krakotzkin (1994, 125-126). Piterberg (1995, 94), who examines the morphology of nationalist historiography in Israel and Egypt, contends, following Raz-Krakotzkin, that the representation of *mizrahi* Jews in Israeli-Zionist historiography is ostensibly Orientalist and that this representation is “the most extreme and vulgar expression of the constitutive principle of the ‘negation of exile’”. On the implications of cultural homogenisation for *mizrahi* Jews and other marginalised groups, see Yonah (1999, 416-417).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MAKING OF NATIONAL EDUCATION IN PALESTINE, 1846-1947

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Modern education preceded nationalism in Palestine. Thus, although the opening of the Palestine Office in 1908 marked the turning of the Zionist colonisation project into a national one, several features of modern education were already present. This process of modernisation was neither smooth nor uniform, yet it touched the various communities that composed Ottoman Palestine. When the British mandate was imposed, in 1920, the notion of modern education, and especially its conception as a means to achieve national consolidation, was already common amongst both Jewish and Palestinian nationalists. Yet, nationalism was not the only feature of the evolving modern educational sphere. During the Ottoman and the British periods, education developed along several dividing lines – most notably between Arab and Jews, but also between religious and non-religious, and between partisan and non-partisan school systems. The Zionist educational system, that later became the core of the Israeli educational system, developed as a quasi-federative system comprised of three main educational streams – the General, the Labour and the Zionist-religious (*Mizrahi*) streams – that differed in their organisation and curriculum and were subject to the control of different political parties. The structural features of this system, known as the *stream system*, embodied the tension between a vested ideology of national homogenization, and practices of differentiation and stratification that permeated from the labour market into the political sphere. In this respect, the structure of education reflected its turning into a powerful mechanism of both homogenisation and segregation that, under the condition of colonization, played a distinctive role in the ensuing Arab-Jewish conflict, as well as within the Zionist polity itself.

The sub-division of the Zionist educational system, commonly referred to as reflecting pre-existing ideological rifts within the *yishuv*, was not an unintended consequence of a problematic process of modernisation. Rather, I argue, it was an integral part of this very process, which was also related to the development of the *yishuv* as an ethnicised polity, and primarily, to the efforts of the *ashkenazi* segments of the Jewish society to retain their own cultural and social homogeneity. In this sense, the *yishuv* was not merely a ‘micro-state’, nor was its educational system a replica of a state system. In both its structure and practice, education proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of a specific Jewish segment, the

European-Jewish one, that enabled its various sectors to build up their own modern institutions and, most importantly, to develop, through the mechanism of 'educational autonomy', their own distinctive ideological conceptions of the 'common good'. This, in turn, further entrenched the superiority of European Jews, both politically and morally, in Zionist nation-building and state-formation. It was in this context that the structure of education was critical for the ensuing social relations, as it determined the marginal social position within the Zionist social order of those segments that lacked similar educational autonomy, mainly the *sephardi* veteran community and the *mizrahi* Jewish settlers.

### THE OTTOMAN PERIOD: NOTIONS OF MODERN EDUCATION IN PALESTINE

Zionism saw and sees itself as an agent of modernisation for the Jewish people, by raising that people's modern national consciousness, but also for Palestine and its people, by introducing modern technologies and values into the region.<sup>1</sup> Yet, preliminary notions of modern education and schooling developed earlier, throughout the nineteenth century, and in relation to the growing European influence over the Ottoman Empire. This influence was reflected in the changing of the Ottoman social structure, as well as in the growing capacity of the various communities (*millets*) to develop their own conceptions and practices of modern education.

As early as 1809, the first Ottoman educational law determined the establishment of 'state schools' and in 1846 the Ottoman government assumed responsibility over the educational services throughout the empire. The 'new' schools catered mostly to the needs of the Muslim population, yet only for a minority of them (Tibawi 1956, 19-21; Elboim-Dror 1986, 61). The secularisation of education was a similarly gradual process and only during its last imperial decade did the Ottoman government make education compulsory and also place the religious schools under the Ministry of Education (Al-Haj 1995, 37-38; Mar'i 1978, 8). This incorporation of the schools under state control was accompanied by the modernisation of the Arab, Muslim traditional *kuttabs*, and of both Christian and Jewish schools.

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Palestine, there was a clear religious division in educational responsibility: government-controlled schools served mostly the Muslim sectors, while Christians and Jews were developing their own distinctive educational institutions. Under the condition of the *millet* system, the European powers had taken the Christian missionary schools under their auspices (Mar'i 1978, 10), whereas European-Jewish philanthropic

<sup>1</sup> Many Zionist leaders shared such an Orientalist approach, from Theodore Herzl, who saw the Jewish state as "a vanguard of civilisation against barbarism" (in his "The Jewish State"), to Ben-Gurion, who explicitly conceptualised Zionist colonisation as modernisation. In the latter's own words: "And the land is awaiting a civilised, diligent people, materially and spiritually enriched, equipped with the weapon of modern science and technology, that will settle it [...] and the deserted land will turn into paradise. [...] The Hebrew colonisation is not meant to eradicate the Arab settlement, on the contrary: it will save it from its economic hardships, elevate it from its social humiliation, and will rescue it from moral and physical decay." (Ben-Gurion 1971, 89-90).

organisations began to establish modern schools throughout the Middle East and North Africa (Elboim-Dror 1986, 62, 107). Since Jewish cultural nationalism was not yet politicised, the European states did not consider this development as contradictory to their own efforts to penetrate the region, but rather, the opposite (Eliachar 1983, 14; *Educational Encyclopaedia*, p. 704). Nonetheless, despite the secular character of these initiatives, religion remained the main factor in the delineation of social boundaries in nineteenth century Palestine until nationalism, and one might say, ethno-religious nationalism, became the main political factor in British colonial Palestine.

Modern education among the Arab population developed in parallel in both the Muslim and the Christian sectors, but not to the same level and scope. The Muslim majority was disadvantaged as its children were confined to the government educational system, on the one hand, and to the under-developed quasi-private religious institutions of the *kuttab* type<sup>2</sup>, on the other. In 1911, only 34 percent of Muslim boys and 12 percent of Muslim girls at school age attended any school, and they were almost equally divided between the two systems. The Christian minority, on the other hand, enjoyed the protection of the ‘capitulation’ – the extraterritorial rights granted to subjects of the European countries within the Ottoman Empire (Eliachar 1983, 14; Elboim-Dror 1986, 62). Thus, in that year, while some 7,608 boys and girls attended the government schools (mostly Muslim children), some 9,647 children were in the private and foreign Christian schools (Al-Haj 1995, 41). Since the Muslim population outnumbered the Christian population this meant that the rate of school attendance among Christian children was much higher than among Muslims. The two systems differed also in their curricula and in the scope of ‘general’ studies. The Christian population was better off in all respects. The level of education in the Christian schools outclassed both the government and the private Muslim schools (*ibid.* 40-41). The medium of instruction in the Christian schools and in the Arab private system was Arabic, whereas Turkish was taught and spoken in the Ottoman government schools. Only in 1913, and following a fierce struggle of Arab leaders, did the government agree to the use of Arabic in elementary schools (*ibid.* 38). The Arabs were thus split not only by religion, but also by the language they spoke in school.

Another division was between the urban and rural population, a division that reflected the relative independence of the private (Christian and Muslim) schools against the dependence of the rural population upon government policies.<sup>3</sup> The private Arab-Muslim schools

<sup>2</sup> During the Ottoman period these schools lagged behind the other schools. However, in the early days of the Mandate they became more accessible to the majority of the population, despite their mostly religious curriculum and lack of government financial support, because of the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction (Al-Haj 1995, 41, 44; also Tibawi 1956, 56-57).

<sup>3</sup> Only 16.4% of the Muslims lived in the cities and towns of Palestine in 1860; the process of urbanisation of this sector was relatively slow, in 1922 the figure had increased to 23.2%, and to 30.5% in 1946. In comparison, 36.3% of the Christians were urbanised in 1860, and 80% in 1946 (Al-Haj 1995, 18).

remained elitist since most of the population could not afford the fees (Mar'i 1978, 11-12). The European powers, which were interested in strengthening their grip in the region, were less concerned with the welfare of the population than with the creation of a bureaucratic elite that would function to promote their economic and political interests. Thus, the missionary schools, despite their contribution to the expansion of education within the urban areas, remained exclusive to the Christian population, and this served as a limit to the spread of education among the rural, mostly Muslim, population. In the Ottoman period, then, schooling for the Arab population was a matter of religion; Christians and Muslims were scarcely integrated in the educational sphere. It was only during the British mandate, and the nationalisation of the Arab-Palestinian population, that a more significant integration between these two groups took place (Swirski 1990, 27; Mar'i 1978, 11-12).

Within the Jewish population, *sephardic* schools were the first to adapt to the changing modern spirits in Ottoman Palestine. This community's rabbinical leadership was willing to accept the need for a more technological knowledge and thereby contributed to the secularisation of education.<sup>4</sup> Within the *ashkenazi* community, in contrast, the issue of the extent and content of education was more complex and was raised following the growth and diversification of this community in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Friedman 1977, 5; Elboim-Dror 1986, 62). The immediate impetus for the initiatives to introduce modern schools for *ashkenazi* children was the changing demographic structure of the *ashkenazi* immigration, and primarily the declining average age of this population (see Chapter 3). This had made the funding European congregations feel that they could no longer finance this population, hence they urged it to include 'general' subjects in the curriculum, and to allow for its members to participate in the economy. *Ashkenazi* rabbinical leaders saw this as a threat to the children's faith, and so rejected these 'secular' studies.<sup>5</sup> This dispute reflected the different attitude of *ashkenazi* and *sephardi* leaders to 'modernity'. While the former rejected modernism altogether, *sephardi* rabbis were gradually accepting it and sought to incorporate into the economy of the region and the emerging Zionist *yishuv* (Nardi 1934, 19; Eliachar 1983, 13; Herzog 1986, 81-84). Later, this dispute became emblematic of the conflict between the *ashkenazi* rabbinical leadership and the Zionist movement.

The Austrian *Lamal* school (opened 1856) was the first to offer the Jewish community in Jerusalem 'general' education in addition to religious education. The *ashkenazi* religious community rejected the school for its non-religious education and most of its pupils came

<sup>4</sup> One such institution was the *Sephardic Talmud-Torah* in Jerusalem that was re-built in 1875 and in which some 500-600 pupils studied a variety of secular and religious subjects (Mizrahi 1950, 26).

<sup>5</sup> Facing a pressure from below, to add vocational subjects to the curriculum, the *ashkenazi* rabbinical leadership was willing to accept Hebrew and arithmetic studies and, to a limited degree, the acquisition of vocation through apprenticeship (Friedman 1977, 6, 9-11). On the objection of the *ashkenazi* leadership to modern education, see also Eliav (1970, 326-341), Nardi (1945, 101), Elboim-Dror (1986, 67).

from the *sephardi* community.<sup>6</sup> In 1870, The French *Alliance Israelite Universelle* opened their first school. The Anglo-Jewish Association took over the Evelina de-Rothschild school in 1891; and the German *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* (known in Hebrew as *Ezra*) was founded later in 1901 (Al-Haj 1995, 41, 53; Kleinberger 1969, 31; Swirski 1990, 25; Elboim-Dror 1986, 108-113). Unsurprisingly, these companies were more concerned with the imperialist interests of their home countries than with Jewish nationalism (*Educational Encyclopaedia*, 703-705; Eliachar 1983, 14). Hence, the curriculum of these schools was not national in content but rather contained general, modern subjects alongside orthodox, theological studies (Friedman 1977, 26).

At the turn of the twentieth century, with the expansion of the Jewish plantations, more modern schools were founded in which Hebrew became the medium of instruction – symbolising the immigrants' concern with modern, secular Jewish/Hebrew culture (Elboim-Dror 1986, 122; Al-Haj 1995, 52-53, Swirski 1990, 20-24, 28-31). The teachers in these schools, operating under the patronage of the Baron de-Rothschild (*Educational Encyclopaedia*, p. 705), imported modern notions of education from their European home countries. Later, they were organised in *The Hebrew Teachers' Federation* and engaged in professing the use of Hebrew in all Jewish schools (see below). Most of these schools were oriented towards a cultural notion of nationhood (against the Zionist movement's political, state-oriented one) and were exclusively Jewish. By the end of the Ottoman period, Hebrew was the spoken language in 66 out of 84 elementary schools, but only some 2,800 pupils were attending the Hebrew schools in comparison to some 3,100 pupils in other schools.<sup>7</sup>

In sum, modern education in Ottoman Palestine developed in a characteristically segmented way, thus creating religious and linguistic lines of division, and leading to differentiated levels of education within and across each group. Muslims, Jews and Christians attended different schools and were under the influence of different political powers, thus, intentionally or otherwise, they represented a variety of both external and internal interests in the region. These differences notwithstanding, education was not yet 'nationalised'. When the British government assumed power it had apparently taken upon itself the legacy of the Ottoman Empire by retaining the *millet* system and by keeping a remote pattern of control over Palestine. This was reflected in its educational policy and in the subsequent developments in the educational sphere.

<sup>6</sup> Eliachar (1983, 13), a prominent *sephardi* leader, testifies in his memoirs that general education was part of the curriculum in the *sephardi* educational system (*Talmud-Torah*) since the early days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This included the teaching of Arabic, Turkish, grammar and arithmetic and also the teaching of Hebrew (in the *ashkenazi* schools by comparison, Hebrew was reserved as the language of the sacred scripts; see also Elboim-Dror 1986, 83). The same was true for the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish-Yemenite schools (Zurieli 1983, 319, 321-2). See also *Educational Encyclopaedia* (p. 703) and Sharabi (1989, 112).

<sup>7</sup> According to *The Educational Encyclopaedia* (p. 709), in 12 *Alliance* schools and 6 *Ezra* schools the medium of instruction was French and German, respectively; 18 *Ezra* schools were bi-lingual and in the other 48 schools Hebrew was the medium of instruction. Notably, most of the pupils in the philanthropic schools were of *sephardic* origin (Elboim-Dror 1986, 88, 113-115).

## THE MANDATORY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: AN INTERPLAY OF THREE SYSTEMS

By the end of Ottoman rule, the trends toward nationalising social relations in Palestine had been enhanced, and new social boundaries were delineated along ethnic-religious lines. The opening of the Zionist Palestine Office in 1908, and moreover, the British conquest of Palestine and the imposition of the mandate, further accelerated the pre-dominance of nationalism which manifested itself in the mutual consolidation of the Zionist National Committee and the Supreme Muslim Committee (see Miller 1985, 8-9). Yet, sovereignty lay with the external colonial power, i.e., the British, and the submission of individuals, and groups for that matter, to their respective 'national polities' remained voluntary in nature. In this context, the national political elites enjoyed only limited capacity to exert power over their respective potential constituencies and to incorporate the various groups within their control. The inclination towards homogenisation, among both Jews and Arabs, was accompanied by a *de-facto* recognition of the heterogeneous character of each national community. These similarities notwithstanding, it was the better organisation of the Zionist polity that eventually determined developments subsequent to the withdrawal of the British mandate.

### The British educational policy in Palestine

In Palestine, like elsewhere in the Middle East, the development of a new (imperialist) global economic order and the penetration of Western powers resulted in a growing tendency towards national homogenisation and the formation of modern centralised states (Hobsbawm 1987, 17; Miller 1985, 17; Mitchell 1988, 14). Still, modernisation did not spread evenly or smoothly. Apparently, the British colonial government in Palestine failed to establish a universal, or even a unified, educational system, and given the absence of local long-established political institutions, this resulted in the reinforcement of segmentation and differentiation in the educational sphere (Tibawi 1956, 241). Thus, the developments in education during the Mandatory period were facilitated, as much as they were constrained, by the interplay between three forces: the British government, and the Palestinian and the Zionist national movements.

At first, it seemed that the implementation of the British mandate would have a progressive impact on educational development. This was mainly reflected in the considerable public investment in infrastructure, and in the relative expansion of educational facilities throughout Palestine. It was not long though before this generosity ended, and the level of public expenditure on education was cutback (Bowman 1942, 252-254; Nardi 1945, 74; Swirski 1999, 53). More pertinently, it soon turned out that the British educational policy was characteristically designed to bring about stability rather than change. This was most conspicuous in its relation to the education of Arabs, but also in its reluctance to engage

itself in any substantial transformations in education, let alone to act as the central authority that would establish and institutionalise the modern notion of ‘education for all’.

The overall attitude of the mandatory government is exemplified in the views of Humphrey Bowman, the first Director of the Palestine Government Department of Education (1920-36):

The first responsibility of the newly formed administration was to take over its heritage of Turkish state schools, to re-organise them, to improve them, to adapt them to modern conditions and to increase their numbers. They remained ‘government schools’ and the system under which they operate became known as the Arab Public School System. (Bowman 1942, 252).

On educational grounds it was judged that one language is enough. [...] But quite apart from the educational argument, on which we rightly took our stand, the introduction of Hebrew into the Arab schools would have met with such fierce opposition that it would soon have become inoperative. We were the trustees for the Arab as well as for Jewish Palestine; and it would have been not in accord with British traditions to enforce in governmental schools any subject liable to cause universal disapproval. English was taught in all town schools, Arab and Jewish throughout the country: this would serve as a common language between the two races. (p. 331).

The British government, then, had not only kept the religiously-based separate schooling system, but it also refrained from re-organising education according to modern, universal lines, and, for example, from enforcing a language policy that would form the basis for mutual understanding (Nardi 1945, 22). Thus, apart from a general inclination to transmit what it considered as universal values, the British government had made only a few attempts to promote a common ‘Palestinian consciousness’ through education. These included the idea to establish a British university and agricultural schools that would serve jointly Arabs and Jews (Bowman 1942, 264). These proposals, however, were met by opposition from the Zionist establishment, which feared that such institutions might endanger the development of a distinctive modern Hebrew culture (Nardi 1945, 121, 247 note 66; Al-Haj 1995, 60; Elboim-Dror 1997, 50). Nonetheless, as also noted in Bowman’s memoirs, the government was not dissatisfied with the growing educational separation, for it eventually served its interest in keeping social order.

In sum, the British policy was characterised by a policy of ‘divide and rule’, which jeopardised any attempt, futile or artificial as it might have been, to extend and modernise education. This reluctance to interfere in either the structure or content of education, or to insist on a unified educational system, eventually led to the system’s further segmentation. It equally encouraged both the Zionist and the Palestinian national movements to further engage in creating their own educational paths and to make these instrumental in the consolidation of their respective national collectives.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARAB EDUCATION UNDER THE MANDATE

The British educational policy reflected a duality, which is characteristic of processes of modernisation, and was reflected in the uneven expansion of public, Muslim education. Thus, as a result of the government's interest in maintaining social order and stability, the expansion of public education was accompanied by the reinforcement of 'pre-modern' social structures, especially in rural areas where the population (again mostly Muslim) was kept behind in terms of educational development. This policy, which aimed at preventing the Arabs from developing strong nationalistic sentiments, did not yield the desired results (Nardi 1945, 155; Mar'i 1978, 17; Miller 1985, 97).

The government's rhetoric on the promotion of literacy and the uplifting of the overall level of education among the Arab population stood, eventually, in sharp contrast to its practice. Thus, the expansion of education remained limited and constrained by the government's interest in upholding the existing occupational structure. This entailed that significant differences between rural and urban education were maintained, specifically that secondary education would not be extended to the rural areas, that only a few new schools would be established there, and that the overall level of school attendance outside the cities would remain relatively low.<sup>8</sup> In general, as Miller suggested, the policy in these areas was characterised by a "willingness to follow rather than encourage rural initiatives" (1985, 101).

The paternalistic approach towards the Arabs had already been revealed in the course of the debates over The 1927 Education Ordinance. One proposal, formulated for the Local Government Commission by George Antonios, later a high rank official at the Palestine Department of Education, was to allow unofficial Arab representatives to participate in running state schools. Rejecting this proposal, J. Farrell (later, Head of the Palestine Department of Education), argued, resonating the rationale that underlay the British educational policy, that: "the existence of the mandate implied that the local population was immature" (Miller 1985, 99; compare, Mar'i 1978, 17). The publication of the Ordinance disappointed the Arabs, for it abandoned the initial recommendation of the Local Government Commission to establish a higher council of education in which representatives of the population would participate. Nonetheless, the Ordinance also faced opposition within the Jewish Agency that criticised its "exaggerated direction towards bureaucratic centralisation and interference with the internal management of the schools" (Miller 1985,

<sup>8</sup> Thus, e.g., villagers were required to build their own schools and the existing ones offered only basic skills (e.g., Nardi 1945, 24). Moreover, children were withdrawn from schools into the domestic labour force. This was compatible with the British government's interests, to increase literacy but not to a level that could lead to widespread unemployment and would endanger stability. According to Mar'i (1978, 14), only some 30 percent of school age children among the Arabs were enrolled in 1946 (see also Swirski 1990, 26; Miller 1985, 97-98). The development of secondary education was much slower than elementary education: during the first decade and a half of British rule, there was only one high school within the public system; by 1930, there were only 25 classes and 353 pupils in secondary education, and in 1944/45, 959 high school pupils, and 98 Arab students in post-matriculation level (Al-Haj 1995, 43).

99).<sup>9</sup> Eventually, the Arabs resisted the collection of local taxes for education and this, in turn, enhanced individual efforts in the urban areas to establish private schools.

The interest of the British government in political and social stability underlay its view of the Arab rural population as *tabula rasa*, to cite the words of the head of the Department of Education (Miller 1985, 100). Consequently, public education policy “was based on the reinforcement of traditional norms and values, which is obvious from the curriculum of the public government schools where religious education, e.g., was emphasised vigorously in order to undermine national education.” (Al-Haj 1995, 47; Miller 1985, 93). This policy, nonetheless, provoked clear opposition among the educated strata, who criticised it for limiting higher education among Arabs (Miller 1985, 100-101; Al-Haj 1995, 49-50; Zureik 1979, 64-65). This apparently only led to the strengthening of nationalistic sentiments amongst the Arabs.

As early as 1921, the Supreme Muslim Council, encouraged by what it conceived of as the unfavourable education policy of the British government, initiated the establishment of a private school system that was on the whole secular, and emphasised nationalism as an integral aspect of religion (Al-Haj 1995, 44; Mar'i 1978, 15-18). At their peak, these schools, combined with the private Christian schools, encompassed only one third of the total pupil population in the Arab sector: in 1945/46, there were some 81,000 pupils enrolled in the public schools, compared to 44,000 in the private Arab schools (Swirski 1999, 56). Yet, these schools were involved in a continuous struggle against the British educational policy towards the Arabs (Nardi 1945, 161; Tibawi 1956, 88-89; Al-Haj 1995, 48-49; Mar'i 1978, 18; Swirski 1999, 53), and hence in defining the Arab schools as practically national. Dr. Khalil Totah, headmaster of the *Friends Boys* School in Ramallah, expressed this, claiming that Arabs in Palestine saw in the British control over Arab education an attempt “to bring up a generation which is to be docile and subservient to imperialism and its chief attendant, Zionism. [...] The government knows it only too well that if the schools were in Arab hands they would become hotbeds of antagonism to the British policy, the Balfour Declaration, and perhaps the existence of the Mandate itself.” (cited in Nardi 1945, 157). In another statement before the Peel Royal Commission, he further argued against this policy: “It would seem that Arab education is either designed to reconcile Arab people to this policy [the establishment of the Jewish national home] or to make the education so colourless as to make it harmless, and not endanger the carrying out of this policy of the Government.” (cited in Nardi 1945, 157).

<sup>9</sup> A similar proposal had already been made in 1924, although it was not made public, by Dr. Joseph Lurie, a Director of the Jewish Department of Education. He offered to create two parallel systems under the supervision of the government and to form a joint board where Jews and Arabs might discuss issues together. Ironically, Nardi (1945, 162) recommended adopting this plan in light of the dissatisfactory operation of the Zionist educational system at his time.

Eventually, when the British mandate was over, it turned out that the Arab educational sphere had changed. In terms of infrastructure, this period was crucial for both the expansion of educational institutions and for creating cadres of teachers, headmasters, and educational bureaucrats, as well as for developing teachers' training facilities and the formation of local education committees that created an interest in the spread of education (Tibawi 1956, 241 cf.). Arabic became the medium of instruction and many of the teachers were themselves Arabs who shared in the growing Palestinian national consciousness (Swirski 1999, 54). Another indication of the evolution of a Palestinian educational system was that by the end of the Mandatory period a growing number of Christian children were attending the Palestine government school system rather than private Christian schools (*ibid.* 246-248; Swirski 1990, 27).

This period also marked a shift in terms of schools and schooling. In the private sector, the number of schools, both Muslim and Christian, increased from 181 to 317 between 1921/22 and 1944/45; the total number of students rose correspondingly from 14,244 to 36,673. The most significant change, however, was registered in the public sector where the number of students increased six fold, from 16,442 in 1921/22 to 103,000 in 1947/48.<sup>10</sup> Yet, most of the Arabs lacked access to educational resources and were by and large dependent upon the British government for educational services and facilities. The rural, mostly Muslim, majority was confined to a low level of education, while the Christian population in the urban centres kept its distinctive high level of school attendance and better quality of education (Nardi 1945, 24). The rate of school attendance among the Christian population was four times higher than among the Muslim population.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, the development of Arab education under the mandate was characterised by a rapid increase in educational attendance and a growth in educational facilities, but also by the continuing differences between rural and urban education (and between Christian and Muslim education). Yet, and more importantly, the political and social environment for education changed. The development of a nationalistic conception of education, that is, a view of education as a path for national construction, rendered the government's efforts to de-politicise the schools, e.g., by excluding contemporary history from the curriculum (Al-Haj 1995, 48), a failure. The Arab leadership challenged this policy throughout the British mandate and, in 1936-39, this resistance was materialised by the active involvement of Arab teachers and students in the Arab Revolt (Mar'i 1978, 17).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> All figures are from Al-Haj 1995, Tables 2.2, 2.3, pp. 43, 45.

<sup>11</sup> In 1935/36, for example, 44,800 Muslim children aged 5-15 attended school while 17,200 Christian and 44,500 Jews did the same. Nonetheless, the rates of attendance were 20.0%, 78.0% and 81.0%, respectively (see Al-Haj 1995, Table 2.4, p. 46).

<sup>12</sup> The Royal Commission Report, criticising the government's education policy, referred to this issue: "We pointed out [...] that the schools have become seminaries of Arab nationalism; that school masters are for the

## THE NATIONALISATION OF HEBREW EDUCATION

The British education policy was consequential for the nationalisation of both Arab and Jewish education. These sectors, however, differed in their degree of institutionalisation and in their capacity to mobilise education for their respective political integration. More specifically, in spite of the expansion and further consolidation of a nationalist-oriented Arab educational sphere, it should be borne in mind that, by and large, Arab education remained dependent upon the British government's practices and policies (Swirski 1999, 55). In contrast, the designation of the Hebrew schools as private eventually enabled the Zionist establishment to make education a significant factor in its political consolidation (Bowman 1942, 254; Nardi 1945, 154, 158, 161; Swirski 1999, 53). This highly institutionalised, and relatively centralised, national educational system also turned out to be a crucial determinant in the structure of social relations within the emerging Zionist polity.

The Zionist educational system developed in parallel with the consolidation of the Zionist polity and as a part of the latter's increasing control over the Jewish community in Palestine. The foundations of this system lay in the organisation in 1903 of *The Hebrew Teachers' Federation*. This Federation of non-professional teachers (many of them were writers and poets) from the new Jewish plantations was formed to improve education, to impose Hebrew as the only medium of instruction, and only lastly to act as a teachers' union.<sup>13</sup> The Federation's prime contribution to the nationalisation of education was the writing of a curriculum for elementary schools; later, in 1913-14, it was actively involved in what became known as the 'language war' – the struggle against the German *Ezra* network over the imposition of Hebrew as the medium of instruction in all schools – as well as in the foundation of the Education Committee, thus leading to a Zionist hegemony in the Hebrew schools (see Table 5-1).<sup>14</sup>

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most part ardent nationalists; and that during the disturbances of last year (1936) practically no work was done in the government schools." (cited in Nardi, 1945, 340).

<sup>13</sup> The pre-Zionist secular immigration to Palestine was politically supported by *Hovevei-Zion*, an Eastern-European proto-nationalist movement that was dominant in the emerging Jewish plantations. In 1893, it established the first Hebrew school in Jaffa, a school that signified a break away from both the other modern Jewish schools and pre-modern religious education. The school curriculum exhibited pristine features of modern, secular nationalism that were based on cultural rather than religious claims, and thus differed from the former by being nationalistic and from the latter by propagating an alternative national identity whose expressions were the immigration to Palestine and the Hebrew language. Unsurprisingly, the *ashkenazi* rabbinical leadership opposed this development and saw it as a symbol of the illegitimacy of the 'new' Jewish settlement in the Holy Land (Friedman 1977, 26).

<sup>14</sup> See *Educational Encyclopaedia*, (pp. 710-716); Kleinberger (1969, 31-32). According to Y. Shapiro (1984, 28-30), the struggle of the teachers and writers to constitute Hebrew as a 'national language' was one reason for their status as a political elite. However, this elite originated in the cities and plantations and thus it was conceived of as an alternative to the political elite that emerged within the labour sector, which eventually brought about its decline. Interestingly, the Palestine Office's appropriation of Hebrew education also involved a struggle with *The Teachers' Federation*, whose director wished to retain its pedagogical autonomy (Elboim-Dror 1990, 391-393). On the role of the *Federation*, see also Elboim-Dror (1986, Ch. 4).

**Table 5-1**  
**The development of the Hebrew schools under the control of the Zionist movement, 1914-1921**

Year	Schools	Teachers	Pupils
1914	12	91	1,064
1915	24	192	3,315
1916	30	214	3,955
1917	38	255	5,002
1918	41	238	5,273
1919	94	525	9,200
1920	110	584	10,100
1921	137	605	11,800

Source: Elboim-Dror 1990, 61, 166, Tables 7, 10

In 1914, Arthur Rupin, head of the Palestine Office, initiated with *Hovevei Zion* and *The Teachers' Federation*, the establishment of the 'Education Committee', which turned out to be the most meaningful step towards the formation of a Zionist, national educational system (Nardi 1945, 48-49; Elboim-Dror 1986, 206; Al-Haj 1995, 53; *Educational Encyclopaedia* p. 716). Consequently, the Zionist Executive Committee in Berlin began financing Hebrew education in Palestine. In 1920, after the British conquest of Palestine, the WZO and *The Teachers Federation* formed a new Education Committee. In the aftermath of the war, during which the *Alliance* network closed and the British military forces shut down the *Ezra* schools, most of the Jewish schools became subordinate to the Zionist establishment, including the traditionalist, religious schools. In the same year, the Zionist Congress also reached a decision on the supervision of the developing educational system, a decision that determined the course in which education would develop in subsequent years.

The 1920 Zionist Congress in London had granted the *Mizrahi* Movement, the Zionist religious party within the Zionist Congress, power over the religious schools. It was a political deal designed to confront the threat of secession of the Religious Orthodox parties from the Zionist Congress (Kleinberger 1969, 35; Rieger 1940, 34; Don-Yehia 1977, 432; Elboim-Dror 1990, 305-310; Elboim-Dror 1997, 58); soon it became a model to be copied by other parties, namely the socialist-Zionist parties. In 1923, these parties, united within the *Histadrut* (see Chapter 3), confederated their own schools that, three years later, were acknowledged by the Zionist National Committee as the Labour educational stream. Consequently, the rest of the Hebrew schools – i.e., the schools in the major cities that were under the control of the municipal authorities and those in the private agricultural sector – were also organised as a separate stream, the 'General stream'. The liberal, General Zionists party loosely provided this stream with political support (see Table 5-2).

**Table 5-2**  
**Schooling in the Zionist sector according to educational stream, 1926-1945**

Year	Total number of pupils	General (percent)	<i>Mizrahi</i> (percent)	Labour (percent)
1926	16,243	67.7	28.0	4.3
1930	21,031	62.4	30.4	7.2
1933	23,911	60.4	27.9	11.7
1939	52,816	56.9	24.8	18.3
1945*	79,441	53.3	23.6	22.3

Source: Shelhav 1981, 207

Note: \* Less than 1% of the pupils were under joint supervision.

Two main features of the Zionist educational system were then evidenced: **a)** the crystallisation of a federative-like educational system composed of three distinctive and autonomous educational streams – the ‘General’, the *Mizrahi*, and the Labour streams; and, **b)** the interconnectedness of education and party politics, i.e., the direct affiliation of each stream to a political party and the autonomy of the parties in determining their own curriculum in accordance with their ideology (Nardi 1945, 46-47; Kleinberger 1969, 35; Zucker 1985, 188-189). The readiness of the Zionist Congress to recognise the educational autonomy of the political parties had cut across political ideologies. Thus, the British government’s recognition of the exclusive status of the ultra-orthodox sector lent urgency to the compromise between that sector and the Zionist establishment which chose to co-operate with them despite their anti-Zionist stance. In the educational sphere it meant actual recognition of the *Agudath yisrael* party as representing another branch of the developing educational system, that is, the ultra-orthodox system (Nardi 1945, 101; Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 34).

The quasi-federative structure of education was not merely a reflection of the *yishuv*’s social order. It was in fact a factor in creating and maintaining this order and, even more important, in legitimising it. These educational arrangements expressed and reinforced the reciprocal relationship between the political parties and the Zionist establishment, and thus also ensured the loyalty of most of the Jewish population to the latter. In this sense, the educational order was deemed to be a method of control. Moreover, this educational order, and particularly the concentration of educational authority within the *yishuv*’s institutions, intensified the dual process of homogenisation and heterogenisation. Thus, by defining the Jewish Agency as the central authority in education, this educational order reinforced the function of the Zionist movement as a ‘state-like’ agent, and implicitly authorised it to perform other quasi-state actions, while concomitantly it further strengthened the exclusively Jewish character of this polity. At the same time, the lack of a central educational authority (state), combined with a limited Zionist authority (because of the *yishuv*’s semi-voluntary character), set the limits of this system. The resultant quasi-federative educational system thus became a source of power for the political parties and their respective constituencies. This had two important

consequences: it determined the high degree of internal homogenisation among the various Jewish social groups, but not less significant, it designated those (Jewish) social sectors that lacked similar educational autonomy as marginal. This, I argue, was critical for non-European Jewish immigrants, whose lack of educational autonomy prevented them from establishing their own power bases, hence of being recognised as equal partners in the Zionist national project.

### **Missing subjects – *mizrahi* Jews in the *yishuv***

The *yishuv* was a community of communities, or micro-societies (Swirski 1999, 87-90), whereby a variety of Jewish collectivities enjoyed autonomy and representation within either the Zionist institutions or *Knesset yisrael*, or both (see Chapter 3). It is, therefore, a mistake to look at the Jewish polity in terms of either (an aggregate of) individuals or as a homogeneous entity. Any individual, in order to be a member of society, had to be part of a certain community, and preferably a recognised one. This recognition was, first and foremost, a question of political power. Yet, the capacity of each of these communities, or collectivities, to maintain its distinctiveness, hence to retain its power, was dependent upon its capacity to develop its own world-view, i.e., a unique conception of the desired (national) social order. Education, and more specifically educational autonomy, was an important determinant to this effect.

Unlike the Zionist European Jews, who enjoyed autonomy and self-representation, the *sephardi*, or non-European, Jews failed to be similarly recognised as forming distinctive community(ies). The Zionist Congress, the authoritative body in terms of its capacity to recognise the autonomy of various educational streams, refused to acknowledge the *Sephardic* Federation as a legitimate representative of the *sephardi* community (Eliachar 1983, 188; Herzog 1986, 88; Swirski 1990, 23). This implied denying this community's leadership the opportunity to take an equal part in the managing bodies of the *yishuv*'s educational system, and similarly, ensuring that it would be incapable of developing its own modern educational system. Eliachar, a prominent *sephardi* leader, made his own observations in regard to the discrimination against non-European children, mostly of the unorganised *mizrahi* sector, within the emerging fragmented educational system (see, appendix A):

[P]riority was given increasingly to that segment of the population which was identified politically and which was represented in Zionist Congresses and in the Elected Assembly on a proportional basis. Instead of establishing a universal educational system supported by pooled donations from abroad and income from the National Council, separate educational networks were set up – general, religious, religious-independent, labour, *kibbutz* and others. (Eliachar 1983, 177-178)

Similarly, the Jewish-Yemenite community that had had its own educational institutions since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Druyan 1981, 85-86), had also given up its schools after the *yishuv*'s educational authorities refused to acknowledge their autonomy, and they were integrated into the *Mizrahi* educational stream. This community's self-definition as *Haredi-Zionists*, i.e., religiously ultra-orthodox and politically Zionist, was an obstacle to raising funds from either the World *Agudath yisrael* or the *yishuv*, as each side refused to support it for ideological reasons (Zurieli 1983, 315; Swirski 1990, 23-24). The *yishuv*'s education department insisted on the principle that ethnically based education was unacceptable but, at the same time, offered the Yemenites a choice: to join either one of the Zionist streams or the ultra-orthodox system (an offer which illustrates how the Zionists perceived and accepted the latter as a legitimate stream). The Yemenites tried in vain to gain resources and support directly from the Palestine Government's department of education (ZA J17-4364), and they eventually chose to join the Zionist system. Still, for quite a while they kept on struggling to retain their own traditions and religious practices as part of the curriculum.<sup>15</sup>

These attempts by non-European Jews to gain recognition and self-representation stood in clear contrast to the effort of the Zionist Congress to label them as being particularistic, and hence to present their demands as separatist and divisive. In fact, these sectors were torn between their desire to integrate into Zionist society, on either individualistic or collectivistic basis, and between the reluctance of the Zionist movement to accept them as equal members (Eliachar 1983, 187-188; Herzog 1985). Their demand, to either retain or establish their own communal institutions or educational distinctiveness, was not more particularistic or anti-universalistic than that made by other sectors. As noted above, *sephardi* children were overwhelmingly represented in the new, modern schools of 19<sup>th</sup> century Palestine, a fact that contradicts their labelling as non-modern. Similarly, the desire of Yemenite Jews to hold on to their own cultural heritage did not differ from that of either the *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox, or the Zionist religious sectors, and it offered, as in the case of the latter, a way of integrating modernism and tradition.

Cultural uniqueness, however, was not the only issue at stake. As noted in Eliachar's testimony before the Peel Commission (see Appendix A), and elsewhere (Eisenstadt 1947; Ben-Yossef 1974, 15), *mizrahi* children constituted the vast majority of children who dropped out from, or never obtained, regular schooling (see below, Chapter 7). This fact had not escaped the notice of the Jewish communities abroad, as attested in a letter from the

<sup>15</sup> On 5.8.1940 S. Greidi of the Yemenite Federation provided the head of the Education Department with the conclusions of this party's investigation into the question of "distinctive Yemenite education", and asked him to re-consider this question (ZA J17-4364, 5.8.1940; also, Zurieli 1983, 315, 317; Elboim-Dror 1990, 247-248). On the failure of inter-ethnic integration, and the attempts to alleviate the poor educational conditions of Yemenite children during and after World War I, see Elboim-Dror (1990, 93-100). For more on the struggle of *mizrahi* religious schools to retain their autonomy vis-à-vis the Zionist establishment, and on the low priority of the issues of integration and the advancement of non-European children see, Elboim-Dror (1990, 239-242).

Zionist federation in Tripoli to the Education Department of *Knesset yisrael* on 9 June 1935 (ZA J17-239). The author of this letter depicted the poor conditions of Tripolitan Jews in a Tel-Aviv working class neighbourhood who could not afford tuition fees, and protested against the low level of education there. This, he said, might jeopardize the Zionist movement's efforts and capacity to raise funds in his home country, and he also warned that, "this problem will form in the future the grounds for severe delays in Jewish immigration, and if this situation will prolong, there is a fear that the great passion for immigration that pounds in the hearts of our brethren will cease."

This example also attests to the incongruence between the *mizrahi*-Jewish reality and its depiction within the Zionist establishment. In general, this establishment, and this point will be elaborated in subsequent chapters, tended to portray non-European Jews, at best, as lacking modern consciousness regarding the importance of education and, at worst, as being indifferent to the future of their children. That this kind of position, made by a Libyan Jew abroad, is hardly seen in other historical accounts, is also telling. This silence, in fact, is a manifestation and a consequence of the marginality of *mizrahi* Jews within the national collective (e.g., Shohat 1988; Ben-Amos 1995; Shenhav 1999b; Gal 1997).

The fact that non-European Jews did not constitute a legitimate sector within the segmented educational structure of the *yishuv* should now be seen from a different perspective. In Zionist rhetoric, the denial of educational autonomy for *mizrahi* Jews was seen as part of the effort to eliminate ethnicity, or ethnic affiliations, and thus to create Jewish society as an egalitarian society of Jewish nationals. In Zionist practice, the opposite was observed. The *yishuv*'s educational system was not an ethnically-blind system, rather the contrary. European Jews were enjoying educational paths that reflected their specific cultural backgrounds and social needs, while non-European children lacked similar opportunities. This, for example, was evidenced in them being ousted from schools in the plantations, where *ashkenazi* veterans refused to admit Yemenite children into their own schools, thus creating *de-facto* ethnic segregation within the educational system (Zurieli 1990, 29-30; see also, Elboim-Dror 1990, 94). In the large cities, it similarly affected the low rates of attendance amongst children of *mizrahi* origin at schools, partly because there was no single political power that would back up their demand for adequate education (see also, Eisenstadt 1947). The powerlessness of Yemenite Jews during World War I was reflected in a newspaper article published in 1916:

There are schools – although not for them; there is a kindergarten – although not for them. Allegedly, who would take care of these poor children? Who would pay attention to them at a time when all ideals are obsolete, when everyone is immersed in his own troubles? (cited in Elboim-Dror 1990, 94).

The highly-segmented and highly-partyfied character of the *yishuv*'s educational system implied that because they lacked political power, non-European Jews could not enjoy what other communities enjoyed, namely an educational system within their own, integral communities. While the two 'ideological' streams of this system, the *Mizrahi* and Labour, allowed *ashkenazi* children to be educated within a coherent social and cultural environment, for *mizrahi* children to enter one of these streams implied leaving their cultural heritage behind. In this respect, they were asked to enter the system as individuals, rather than on a collectivistic basis. This was exemplified in the case of the Yemenite Jews, who had to forsake their distinctive religious practices in order to be included in the Zionist-religious *Mizrahi* educational stream (Elboim-Dror 1990, 98), and it was further strengthened by the ideological imagery of the educational system.

Seeing the *mizrahi* population as constituting an ethnic group enabled the Zionist establishment to employ a dual strategy of exclusion: denying it self-representation (since only 'ideological' distinctions were considered 'legitimate'), and designating this group as being 'culturally' different (hence in need of special measures). The distinction between 'ideology' and 'culture' thus served as a way of presenting the educational system as universal, despite its discriminatory practices against non-European Jews: for while it allowed the European sectors to retain their power and autonomy, and maintain their cultural distinctiveness, denying educational autonomy to the 'ethnic' groups, and demanding their integration as individuals (Eliachar 1983, 184), reinforced its seemingly universal image.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, the categorisation of *sephardi* and *mizrahi* Jews as 'ethnic' was contingent upon the evolving power relations in the *yishuv*. More specifically, it reflected the favourable position of European Jews, and their capacity to effectively mobilise the *yishuv*'s symbolic and material resources for their own interests. The segmented character of the evolving Zionist educational system testified to the fact that while educational autonomy was the rule, its application was not universal. In other words, whereas 'ideology' was considered a legitimate basis for self-representation, this quality remained exclusively *ashkenazi*. Thus, there was no place in this segmented society for distinctive educational streams that could represent the needs of non-European Jews. In this respect, the 'ideological' division of education only concealed the ethnicised character of the Zionist educational system, which was, in Swirski's view (1990, 23), a 'Zionist-European system'. The structure of education thus not only reflected its European origins, but also its orientation towards the needs of European-Jewish teachers, parents, and children. This, however, also conformed to the needs of the Zionist establishment, which relied on this sector for power.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly enough, although the educational system was allegedly de-ethnicised, during the 1930s, parents were still required to state their ethnic origin on registering their children with the municipal schools (personal testimony).

This interrelationship, nonetheless, only further entrenched ‘ethnicity’ as a signifier of social power and position. Educational autonomy was a source of political power and legitimacy, but only for specific groups, those from a European cultural background. In this sense, ‘ethnicity’ turned out to be a criterion for conferring the powers of education upon those who shared a Eurocentric approach towards the Orient. These groups thus became capable of articulating their own particular needs in the hegemonic terms of a universal social order, which implied that affiliation to a certain (‘recognised’) collective not only meant for affiliates that their interests were politically articulated, but also that their lives became meaningful. In this respect, educational autonomy – combined with economic autarky and political representation – was a catalyst and a tool that rendered certain collectivities powerful and, above all, legitimate. Under these conditions, the term ‘ethnic’ was used to downgrade others. The question of who the ‘others’ were, and who obtained educational autonomy became crucial. Non-European Jews were denied educational autonomy, despite their distinct social position (see Chapter 3), and this determined, to a large extent, their subsequent marginality in other spheres of life. When the developing educational system had become a core factor in the consolidation of the Zionist polity, these inequalities became all the more crucial.

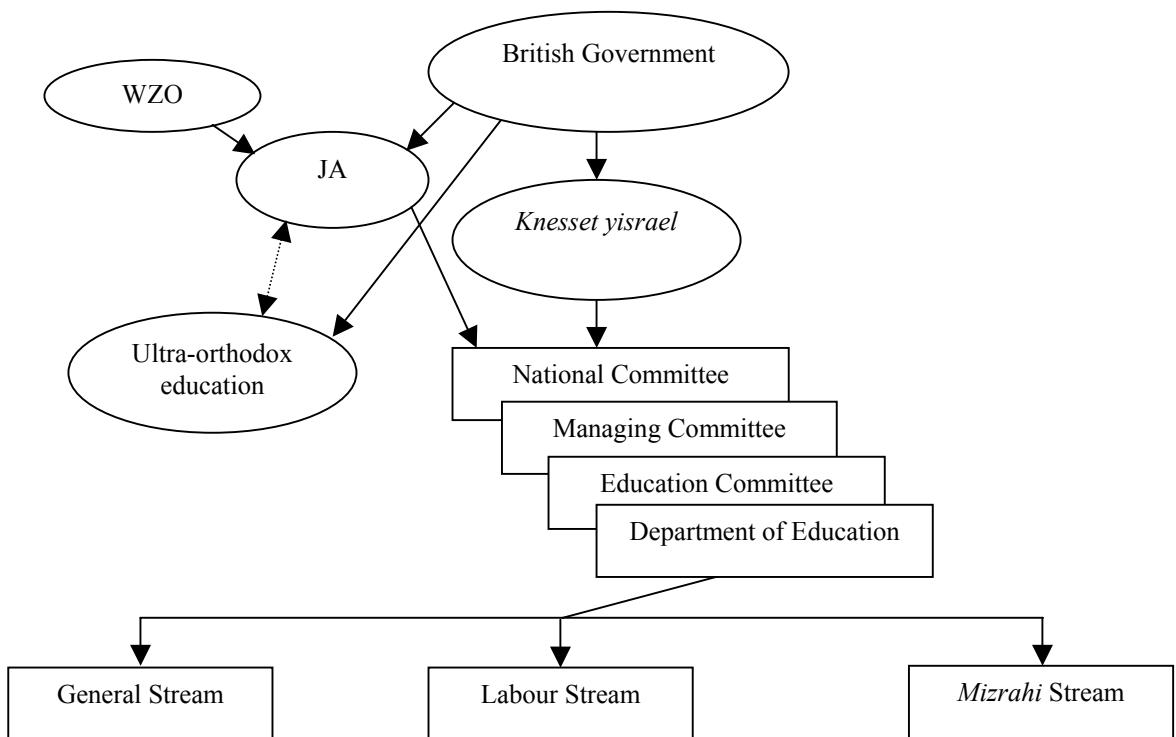
### **‘A STATE TO BE’: THE STRUCTURE OF THE ZIONIST EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

With the end of the British mandate, it was the Zionist movement that turned out to be the main benefactor of the British educational policy. This movement created, within the framework of *Knesset yisrael*, a highly institutionalised, bureaucratic educational system that became an infrastructure for a state-sponsored system. The centrality of this system in the processes of nation-building and state-formation was built into this structure, and into the way in which this system facilitated the political co-operation between the stronger sectors of the Jewish community.

The Zionist educational system consisted of four bodies (see Chart 5-1):

- i) The National Committee, the Zionist political body in Palestine, was the supreme authority (since 1933 it was also officially the owner of the Jewish schooling system in Palestine).
- ii) A Managing Committee served as its administrative arm (however, on what seemed to be vital issues the National Committee was the authoritative body).
- iii) The Education Committee was responsible for the curriculum, albeit only for a minimal curriculum that was shared by the three educational streams.
- iv) The Department of Education was the executive body and was responsible for supervising the schools according to their political affiliation (Rieger 1940a, 28; Kleinberger 1969, 35-36).

**Chart 5-1**  
**The structure of Zionist/Jewish education in Mandatory Palestine**



This education system was primarily funded by the WZO and by parental fees and, to a limited extent, by the British government that allocated a per-capita grant to non-governmental schools in Palestine (Nardi 1945, 73-74; Al-Haj 1995, 56; Kleinberger 1969, 33). Maintaining the Zionist educational system as a private system was a source of both strength and weakness. It empowered the central Zionist bodies, that in fact owned and controlled education (Nardi 1934, 82-83; Rieger 1940b, 71-73), but concomitantly created the conditions for continuous budgetary constraints that affected the level of education.<sup>17</sup> Within this system, the educational streams enjoyed a relatively high degree of autonomy which was reflected in the existence of separate management of, and supervision over, the hiring and firing of teachers, the determination of the curriculum, and the acceptance of children into the schools (Rieger 1940a, 29; Adan 1973; Ben-Yehouda 1973, 25-27). This resulted in the formation of a highly partyfied educational system which made education a major arena for political contestation and a source of political power.

<sup>17</sup> This did not only hinder the strengthening of Zionist education (Elboim-Dror 1997, 49-53), but it also prevented this system from adequately addressing the needs of the poor. In 1921-22, a report of the Zionist Congress indicated that some 41% of the children in Jerusalem alone could not afford tuition fees (ZA J17-8536).

The educational order of the *yishuv* was constituted on two organising principles: **a)** the *self-definition principle* which allowed for Zionist (as well as non-Zionist Jewish) parents to choose the appropriate educational stream for their children; and, **b)** the *proportional principle*, a derivative of the peculiar features of the Zionist political organisation under Mandatory rule which determined the principle of power sharing in case of dispute (Don-Yehia 1977, 481). A derivative third principle was *educational autonomy*, which became determinative for future relations within the Zionist polity. These principles served the dual basis for legitimisation and political inclusion in the Zionist polity.

One condition for political inclusion was adherence to the Zionist nationalist ideology and representation in the Zionist Congress. This quality, shared by the Zionist political parties, determined the centrality of those parties in the emerging educational order, and moreover, their capacity to effectively influence the course of educational development. This implied, as was shown, the limited degree of inclusion of non-European Jews, who were not similarly represented in the Zionist Congress. Still, as the Zionist movement sought to become a representative of all Jews, in Palestine and abroad, it was willing to compromise its secular stance in return to recognition. This was made evident when the Zionist congress recognised the educational autonomy of the religious parties – within its structure (as in the case of the *Mizrahi* movement) and outside it (as in the case of the ultra-orthodox *Agudath yisrael* sector). Thus, Jewishness, alongside Zionism, became a condition for political inclusion, albeit with a different value attached to each: whereas being Zionist determined equal participation in the national project, Jewishness was an attribute that determined inclusion to a lower degree. Put differently, for those who were accepted into the national collective merely for being Jews – and this included mainly the religious and the non-European segments – equal membership was always conditional. This distinction, however, requires further refinement.

The orthodox religious Jewish sector was divided in itself between Zionists and non-Zionists, respectively represented by the *Mizrahi* and the *Agudath yisrael* movements. These two movements differed in their basic relation to Zionism: while the former accepted the need for deliberate action that would result in the constitution of a Jewish ‘national home’, the latter failed to meet this basic Zionist criterion.<sup>18</sup> This difference was reflected in the 1920 Zionist Congress decision to confer upon the *Mizrahi* movement monopolistic power to provide religious education. This decision, that manifested the complex relationship between the Zionist (secular) movement and the Jewish religious sectors, was never fully

<sup>18</sup> This is, of course, a sketchy illustration of the *Mizrahi* position within the Zionist movement. The point, however, is that compared to the ultra-orthodox, who opposed Zionist (modern) nationalism as a replacement for divine redemption, the Zionist-religious ideology saw secular nationalism as a means to the same end, hence as a necessary transitory stage (see, Lustick 1988; Don-Yehia 1987; Liebman 1993; Ravizki 1997). On the struggle that led to the decision of the Zionist Congress to recognise the *Mizrahi* movement as the sole provider of religious education see, Elboim-Dror (1990, 272-310).

materialised. Yet, although the ultra-orthodox sector retained its educational autonomy throughout the *yishuv* period, the Zionist establishment continued to co-operate with it (see Chapter 3), and de-facto recognised its (educational) autonomy. This co-operation can be understood as a tool that could serve, on the one hand, the delineation of a clear boundary between Jews and non-Jews, and on the other, the inclusion of all Jews, whether they asked to be included or not. In this sense, emphasising the 'Jewish criterion' for inclusion, even in the absence of the 'Zionist criterion', allowed the Zionist political elite to place itself as the sole representative of the Jewish sector, and of the Jewish people at large.

That Jewishness became a criterion of inclusion was a sound justification for the incorporation of non-European Jews into the national project. Still, it also led to the dominance of an *ashkenazi*-religious conception of the 'Jewish people' in the nationalist discourse.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, amongst Jews, the fate of *mizrahi* Jews was the worst of all: this discourse was pre-dominantly Orientalist in nature inasmuch as it perceived of *mizrahi* Jews as backward and non-modern.<sup>20</sup> The effect on *mizrahi* Jews was twofold. First, being considered only as potential Zionists, their treatment as inferiors was a barrier for equal participation in the political process, which in turn made their Zionist zeal irrelevant to their incorporation in the Zionist polity. As suggested above, the lack of educational autonomy was one main reason for their failure to articulate a Zionist-political perspective, or, to have their perspective heard. Thus, without meaningful political access, the Zionist political parties were left to decide 'who is a Zionist'. Second, this Orientalist perception also prevented the *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* religious from co-operating against the secular, nationalist movement. Ethnicity, in other words, appeared as a dividing line within the religious segments of Jewish society.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I sought to explore the roots of modern education in Palestine, and to examine its development in the context of the processes of nation-building and state-formation. This development, I argued, was shaped by the pattern of British rule, on the one hand, and by the particular forces that operated within the national collectives, on the other. Thus, the remote

<sup>19</sup> Thus, the different perception of the other, non-Jewish adversary is pertinent. Whereas the *ashkenazi* religious tradition, that was compatible with the dominant Zionist-nationalist discourse, tended to fence in, *sephardic* Jews had had a history of accommodation and integration with the Arab environment that stood in contrast to the nationalist interest in making clear-cut boundaries between the two people (e.g., Elazar 1989, 36-38).

<sup>20</sup> This perception is evident also today in the attitude of the *ashkenazi* religious elite to Oriental Jews as being backward and incapable of leadership. Thus, within the ultra-orthodox sector, *mizrahi* Jews have always been considered as less 'valuable', for example for the purpose of marriage. Similarly, they were also admitted to the various yeshiva institutions according to quotas. This led, eventually, to major discontent and to the formation of *Shas*, the *sephardic* ultra-religious party. Rabbi Ovadia, the spiritual leader of *Shas* once expressed this when he was talking of how his grandson was denied access to the elite yeshiva of the *ashkenazi* sector (Rahat 1998, 17). This was also evinced in a statement of the *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox political former leader of *Shas*, Rabbi Shach, who claimed during the 1992 general election campaign, that *sephardic* Jews are too immature for leadership (*Ma'ariv* 14.6.1992).

interest of the British Government in Palestine society allowed the nationalist forces within both the Arab and Jewish communities to enhance their distinctive nation-building processes and to delineate national boundaries. Yet, these nationalist elites were not sovereign. This implied that on both sides, the way to national homogeneity went through accommodation of the heterogeneity of the relevant population. For the Arab-Palestinian, this resulted in mitigating differences between Muslims and Christians, and in the consolidation of a Palestinian national identity.<sup>21</sup> In the Jewish sector, this led to the reinforcement of the religious aspect of the national identity (Shapiro 1977, 22-25; Kook 1998, 9-11).

The nationalisation of the Jewish community had, however, another effect, namely, the dissemination of Eurocentric conceptions from the labour market to the political, social, and educational spheres, and hence the creation of a hierarchical social order in which European Jews were placed higher than both 'native' Arabs and 'native' Jews. This Orientalist conception reinforced the European orientation of the Zionist colonial project, that is, its focus on solving the 'Jewish Question' as it arose in Europe. It thus implied, on the ideological level, that the Zionist movement, even when it had 'turned to the Orient' (see Chapter 4), could not conceptualise the peculiar, and not necessarily conflictual, relationship between Arab-Jews and Arabs in terms other than those that were applicable to the history of Eastern-European Jews (Shohat 1988, 8-9). On the institutional level, this conception was reinforced by the inclination of the Zionist political elite to favour the interests of those parties that were represented in the Zionist Congress, which was manifested in the educational autonomy of the European-Jewish segments, and hence in their capacity to develop their distinctive ideological and cultural makeup.

This, however, only reinforced the Orientalist perspective towards non-European Jews, and their conception as 'non-Zionists' (see below Chapter 7). The evolving educational order, which was based on segregation and segmentation and on the political power of the Zionist parties, ensured the latter's favourable position in the continuous debate over the goals and practice of the Zionist movement. This became all the more critical because, as shown above, determining 'whose Zionism counts', that is, what Zionist conception is legitimate, was used as a measure of inclusion in the national collective.<sup>22</sup> Representation and

<sup>21</sup> At the Third Arab Congress, held in Haifa in 1920, the Palestinians (who were represented in joint Muslim-Christian delegations) realised that the idea of Palestine as a part of a Greater Syria was obsolete, and that from that time onwards they should focus exclusively on Palestine (Kimmerling and Migdal 1993, 79-82). On the convergence between these two sectors see also Porath (1974, 293-303).

<sup>22</sup> In fact, the Zionist movement was also in a position to determine even whose Jewishness counts. This was evidenced in the 1950s, when a political dispute arose over the question of whether Egyptian Karaite (a Jewish religious sect) should be allowed to immigrate under the Law of Return. The opposition to their immigration was particularly intriguing given that this group was actively involved in the Zionist movement in Egypt. Ironically, or not, Polish Karaite were not prevented from immigrating once the immigration from Poland had begun (Hacohen 1994a, 50-52). The continuing debate in Israel over the question of 'Who is a Jew?' is another manifestation of this argument.

educational autonomy thus became essential both institutionally and ideologically. For those who failed to acquire at least one of the two, this meant exclusion or marginality.

The failure of non-European Jews to be recognised as a distinctive collectivity, and to enjoy educational autonomy, had yet another implication. One other condition for effective political participation was the degree of organisational development, or the extent of 'role expansion' (see Chapter 3). This became a main resource of power for the political parties, and made membership in a specific political community essential despite the *yishuv*'s voluntary character. Apparently, the degree of political organisation was both a condition for, and a consequence of, educational autonomy. Thus, those sectors that were organised in a quasi-state fashion and established social institutions that could meet the mundane needs of their respective constituencies also gained most from being able to develop their own educational frameworks, which served as a means to consolidate their constituencies, as well as for rendering their social organisation ideologically legitimate. In this context, educational autonomy benefited even this sector that professed an ostensibly anti-Zionist ideology, the ultra-orthodox sector.

Notably, Jewishness became the main, if not the only, criterion for bridging across the Jewish sector at large. Non-European Jews, both of the *sephardi* community and immigrants from the Arab countries, as well as ultra-orthodox *ashkenazi* Jews, had been considered as part of the national collective merely because they were Jews. This, however, defined their status as objects of the political order rather than as its subjects. Yet, since political organisation and educational autonomy became a source of political power, the religious parties were in a better position than non-Europeans. In other words, the ultra-orthodox sector, like the Zionist religious movement, could, and did, make its Jewishness into a source of power and political influence. This was, to a large extent, a result of the readiness of the Zionist political elite to forsake the movement's secular-national character in favour of a more religiously grounded one, and thus to be recognised as the representative of all Jews (see also Raz-Krakotzkin 1993, 1994). Jewish religiosity thus became a legitimate, almost equal, path to political participation (unlike 'ethnicity', for example), and this created the grounds for a relationship of exchange between the Zionist secular parties, in particular the socialist-nationalist parties, and the religious ones, Zionist and anti-Zionist alike.

In sum, when the Mandatory period came to a close, three main features of the *yishuv*'s educational system turned out to be pertinent to its transformation into a state-sponsored system: **a)** Jewish exclusivity; **b)** the decline in power of secular notions of nationhood and statehood in favour of a religious conception of the nation; and **c)** the Eurocentricity of the political elite. These features, which enabled the *yishuv*'s educational system to function as a relatively integrated system, had three main consequences with the transition to statehood: **1)** the subsequent problem of non-incorporated Palestinians; **2)** the autonomous power of

religious parties in education had been entrenched; and 3) the national identity had been defined in a Eurocentric manner. The significance of these features for the 'transition to statehood', and for the capacity to develop a state-sponsored educational system, became apparent in the crisis in education following independence.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IN-GATHERING OF THE EXILES:

### ETHNICISING THE ISRAELI MELTING POT, 1947-1953

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In the previous chapter I discussed the development of education in Palestine and how this lead to the emergence of an ethnicised educational order that reflected, but more importantly reinforced, the separation between ethno-national and ethnic collectivities. These lines of division have not disappeared with the transition to statehood, but on the contrary, have been reproduced within the new state order, and were formalised in the legislation of the 1953 State Educational Act. This order was qualitatively different from the old one in that it enabled the state, under the banner of *Mamlakhtiyut*, to become the monopolistic authority in education. Yet, I argue, its cost was that the new state-sponsored system rested upon the very features that had made the old order possible – namely, the separation between Arab and Jewish education, the autonomous power of the religious parties in education, and the Eurocentric discourse of nationhood. This raises two main questions: **a)** how did these features – which stood in contradistinction to the universalistic and impartial image of a modern, secular state – come to dominate the new order? and, **b)** how did this contribute to the further entrenchment of ‘ethnic relations’? The answer to these questions, which also explains how religiosity and ethnicity became further intertwined, lies in the ‘transition to statehood’, a process that unfolded in four discernible phases.

In the first section of this chapter, I focus on the period following the 1947 UN resolution on the partition of Palestine into two national states, Jewish and Arab. In this ‘interim period’ the prospects for statehood became real, and the Zionist establishment engaged itself in several processes that were meant to prepare for the new sovereign stage. In the debates that ensued, various ideas were raised regarding the character of the new state and, in particular, regarding the structure of education in it. Throughout this period, it was made clear that although there was a broad understanding that the state would be a major force in education, as was actually demonstrated by the growing role of the Zionist establishment in the education of the anticipated immigrants, the question of how this would shape state-society relations remained vague. This was evidenced in the rising concern regarding the future of the *stream system* and the question of Arab education, two issues that posed a challenge to

the idea of a universal state and turned out to be intrinsically related to each other. This phase ended with the declaration of independence in May 1948.

In the second section, I discuss the immediate consequences of independence. When it was made clear that only a Jewish state had been founded, the debate over the future of education ended, at least, in two respects. First, the imposition of the Military Administration over the Arab minority turned out to be the ‘solution’ for the ‘Arab problem’. This not only determined that Arab education would remain a separate issue, requiring different measures from those that applied to Hebrew education, but also destroyed the possibility of a common Israeli school, and hence of true universalism in state education. Second, at this point it became apparent that the question of the *stream system* was not going to be resolved. On the contrary, although the state assumed control over education, it had left this system, at least formally, intact. This was inscribed by the 1949 Compulsory Education Act, which eventually increased the inherent tensions in the educational sphere and brought the political order to the verge of crisis.

In the third section, I examine the ‘struggle over education’ that erupted in mid-1949 and ended a year later with an agreement between the religious political parties and *Mapai*, the dominant ruling party, over the question of education in the immigrants’ camps. Although this crisis revolved around the question of ‘religious education’, it brought to the fore the most fundamental issues pertaining to the relationship between state and society and, more specifically, to the capacity of the state to provide education universally and impartially. Furthermore, throughout this crisis, and all the more in its resolution, it was made clear that the ‘old’ division between religious and non-religious education was going to remain a main feature of Hebrew education, and, more importantly, that ethnicity would play a critical role in managing education. In this sense, this struggle defined the contours of the ‘ethnic problem’, and, in particular, the link between ethnicity and religiosity in the state. Nonetheless, since the resolution of this crisis failed to resolve the fundamental issue of the distribution of power between the state and the political parties, it took more time before the educational order was fully transformed.

In the final section, I examine the conditions that made the legislation of the 1953 State Education Act (SEA) possible. This act set the principles of state education, or what came to be known as *khinukh mamlakhti* (it was not surprising that the law employed the term *Mamlakhtiyut* and not national or state education, see Chapter 3). The parliamentary coalition that brought about this new order cut across ideological differences, but had one thing in common: that its parties represented the emerging state-made middle class, and thus it was characteristically *ashkenazi*. This had two interesting implications: first, that the new, supposedly universal order was not only discriminative towards non-Jews, but also as particularistic and unfavourable to *mizrahi* Jews as the ‘old’ one; second, by bridging the

conceptual gaps between them, the religious and non-religious political parties clearly demonstrated that not only did they share a common interest in keeping the social order intact, but also that ethnicity formed the basis for this co-operation. This, it will be shown here, eventually led to the re-entrenchment of ethnicity and religiosity in education.

### **“TO THINK IN TERMS OF A STATE”: THE ‘INTERIM PERIOD’**

The headlines of the Zionist press on 30 November 1947 declared the foundation of a ‘Jewish State’ as if it was already fact. Although it took some six months before Israel was formally declared a sovereign state, at the time the UN resolution was made the Jewish Agency was already engaged in planning and preparing the take-over of the state apparatus and the imposition of a new political order in Palestine under a Zionist rule. Following Ben-Gurion’s *diktat*, “to think in terms of a state”, the National Committee formed several committees to examine the organisational needs that would follow independence, in the fields of education, health and social work (Al-Haj 1995, 61; ZA J17-5922). Within this framework, it appeared that the ‘transition to statehood’ would imply neither the extension of the existing Zionist educational order, nor a total break with this order.

At stake was the sovereign social order, and, more significantly, the universalistic image of the state, against the continuation of the existing power relations in the *yishuv*. This was in fact acknowledged in these discussions, where various speakers seemed to realise that educational autonomy and ideological education, both features of the *stream system*, would pose a problem to the state in light of two major challenges: the incorporation of a non-Jewish minority, and the absorption of the anticipated Jewish immigration. In this respect, the discussions on the future of education were telling: first, they show that, contrary to conventional historiography (e.g., Zameret 1997a, 40-41), education was already on the political agenda prior to statehood; second, they also attest to the early cognisance of the “Arab question”, and that the question of the incorporation of a non-Jewish minority was a matter of concern before Israel ‘found’ itself facing the ‘Arab minority problem’ (see also, Lustick 1980, Ch. 2); and, finally, they show that these two issues were interrelated and, not less significant, that what linked them was the universal role of the state in education.

Thus, it appears that although in the ‘interim period’, the Zionists were “thinking in terms of a state”, the notion of statehood was not fully comprehended. More specifically, most speakers in these discussions seemed to acknowledge that the condition of statehood would imply the changing of the *yishuv*’s educational order, but, being committed to its principles, they also sought to retain the *stream system*. This was made clear in the way the discussants came to realise that the future of the *stream system* was intrinsically related to the question of Arab education, and that it would be difficult to maintain the former without properly addressing the latter. This dilemma also underlay another debate about the character of the

future state, and was reflected in the idea of keeping the institutions of the *yishuv*, or *Knesset yisrael* (see Glossary), intact. This was needed, it was argued, in order to maintain the ethno-national boundaries of society, and required the continuation of ideological education. This option, however, remained hypothetical once Israel was declared sovereign. One more development in the period before independence was the growing involvement of the Jewish Agency in the education of potential Jewish immigrants in post-World War II Europe. This involvement grew out of the Zionist interest in creating a 'Jewish majority' in Palestine, and it apparently reproduced in the state the *yishuv*'s differential pattern of immigration and absorption. This exacerbated 'cultural' differences between Jews of European and non-European origin, and thus resulted in the ethnicisation of the Zionist 'melting pot'.

### **Arab education and the dispute over the *stream system***

Education in the State of Israel will be determined to a large extent by the education given to the Arabs. The main principle is total equality between citizens, Arabs and Jews. [...] This is the litmus test of our values. (Meir Weil, the *Histadrut* Education Council, 1948 (LA IV-215-1529, p. 37).

On 28 November 1947, the Managing Committee of the *Knesset yisrael* Education System appointed Dr. M. Hendel, the inspector for secondary education in the National Committee Department of Education, as head of a committee on the planning of education in the Jewish State. The other members on this committee were Dr. A. Katzenelson of the National Committee, and Dr. B. Ben-Yehuda, the director of the Education Department (ZA J17-5922). The mandate of this committee was to advise the NC on the transfer of education to Jewish hands in the 'interim period', as well as in the state. About a month later, Dr. Hendel circulated an internal, confidential document, titled 'Planning education in the Hebrew State'. In it, the committee set out the premises for reviewing the existing educational system and for its proposals concerning the future of education:

1. Education is one of the basic roles of the state, especially, in a state that is in a process of formation, and whose national composition compels a unified approach for civic education and for lasting peace among its national sectors. The Arabs should enjoy educational autonomy (public school in the Arabic language and a certain degree of self-management), but on the condition that this autonomy will not hinder civic unification and lasting peace.
2. In the interim period, no significant innovations should be introduced, unless these are necessary for the future management of education, for its expansion

in order to absorb the expected massive immigration, and for the efficient incorporation of Arab education into the institutions of the Hebrew State.<sup>1</sup>

A revised version of chapter five of this document, sent out to Dr. Katznelson a little later, summarised the conditions and requirements for the transition to statehood. On the structure of education, it suggested that the Zionist Department of Education would be the core element of the Ministry of Education. The director of the department would remain in charge of education and, together with an appointee for Arab education, he would also manage the Arab Education section. The extent of the Arab sector's autonomy was yet to be determined, and the authoritative body to define this would be a public-administrative-pedagogical committee for Arab education. It was also suggested that the department would appropriate the power of the British Government's educational department [i.e., its control over the Muslim public school system, as well as its capacity to authorise private, namely Christian and non-Zionist education, GL]. Nevertheless, Hebrew public education would remain intact and so would its institutions. The document further discussed the necessary conditions for the transition to statehood and, especially, the need to make education free, and to compare the conditions between Arab and Hebrew education. More specifically, it stressed the fact that whereas Jewish education was subject to parental fees, the Arab sector enjoyed almost free education although, on the other hand, Arab teachers were paid lower salaries than their Jewish peers. Only in passing, the document noted the need to form a special section within the educational department to deal with the education of Jewish immigrant children.

The principal dilemma at the core of these discussions was revealed in a meeting of the *Histadrut*'s education board, held on 1 March 1948, that was set to examine the position of the Labour stream regarding state education.<sup>2</sup> The major difficulty in retaining the *stream system*, it was argued, would be that it might legitimise an Arab claim for educational autonomy on the grounds of religious faith, similar to that of the Jewish religious sector. Indeed, most of the discussion focused on the question of the relation between Arab education and the state. Although most, if not all, speakers remained favourable towards the idea of an all-Jewish state (see also Lustick 1980, 28-29), their positions reflected a wide range of possibilities for incorporating the Palestinians within the future state. On the question of autonomy, it was argued that it would be difficult for the state to reject such an Arab claim since Jews had always made this demand wherever they constituted the minority. Some speakers concomitantly expressed a fear that cultural autonomy would result in

<sup>1</sup> This document, as well as other exchanges regarding the planning of education in the Hebrew State, appears in the Central Zionist Archives (ZA J17-8092).

<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this meeting, which has not been fully discussed in other analyses of the history of education, was to articulate the *Histadrut*'s position on state education vis-à-vis the discussions that were held at the national level. The minutes of this meeting appear in the Labour Archive, (LA, IV-215-755). *Mapai* also formed several committees in which it was suggested that Arab education should be incorporated into the organisation of the general educational system, and also that an Arab-Palestinian would be one of three deputies to the Minister of Education (Segev 1984, 58).

irredentist claims (a claim that was also made by Ben-Gurion, see Segev 1984, 58). Most speakers also agreed that the state should control the Arab curriculum or this would become a bedding for the development of nationalistic sentiments amongst Arabs (see also ZA 10046-25, 1.12.1947). Nonetheless, some speakers said that it would be desirable to have, in due time, a unified civic education.

This discussion is telling in two ways: first, it reflects the idea that Arab educational autonomy was not considered negatively at the level of educational functionaries; second, it points to the fact that the notion of civic education that would encompass both Arabs and Jews was regarded as a means to create a unified citizenry, which in itself reveals the modernist orientation of some of those speakers. Yet, this discussion, like other deliberations regarding the future of education, only stressed, explicitly as well as implicitly, the fact that while the notion of civic education was not strange to Zionist thinking, its implementation was bound to be circumscribed by the Zionist effort to retain the Jewish character of the state. This contradiction between civic and national education was reflected in yet another issue that was raised at the time regarding the idea of retaining the framework of *Knesset yisrael*, within which the *stream system* was operating.

### ***Knesset yisrael* and the state: alternative conceptions of the state**

*Knesset yisrael* was a concept that encompassed the various political institutions of the *yishuv*, and in this sense, it embodied, as did the concept of a state (see Chapter 2), the idea of the *yishuv* as a political entity. In the time after the UN resolution and before independence, the question of the future relationship between *Knesset yisrael* and a Jewish state was raised. The debate that ensued, I propose, was suggestive, for it showed that although the prospects for statehood became clearer, the idea of what this implies was not yet clear. In other words, this was a moment in which alternative conceptions of the state were, at least hypothetically, available.

Following the partition resolution, and anticipating the dispersion of Jews and Arabs between the two states, the idea of a neutral state, i.e., a state that would not interfere in the cultural-national conduct of its people, was raised. In a newspaper article, published only five days after the resolution, one of *Mapai*'s functionaries called for holding on to the institutions of *Knesset yisrael*. This was needed, he argued, because of the nature of the two states, i.e., the heterogeneity of their populations. First, he claimed, the existence of a substantial Arab minority in the Jewish state, and vice versa, would entail that each nation would seek a certain degree of autonomy in the spheres of culture, education, jurisdiction, and other social issues. In his own words: "such autonomous arrangements are beneficial in regard to the mutual relations between the nations [Arabs and Jews, GL] and between the ethno-religious groups [i.e., the Jews and the Arab-Christians, GL]. Why should we participate in the decisions regarding Arab-Muslim education, culture and religion (beyond

minimal requirements that are mandatory in any civilised state)?" (*Davar*, 4.12.1947).

Second, he continued, keeping the institutions of the *Knesset yisrael* intact was necessary in order to protect the integrity of the Jewish people; i.e., in order that the Jewish minority within the Arab state would remain, culturally and socially, part of the Jewish nation.

Whereas this speaker implicitly expressed a fear of de-nationalising education, a similar proposal, made by the deputy-inspector of the *Mizrahi* educational stream, manifested a fear of the secular character of the anticipated state.<sup>3</sup> In his view, which practically called for the separation of the state from the nation, granting *Knesset yisrael* an autonomous status would serve as a means to continue ideological education. From a Zionist-religious perspective, the appropriation of the powers of cultural indoctrination by the state was seen as a threat to this sector's educational autonomy (see also Don-Yehia 1977, 480). In this sense, the purpose of keeping the institutions of *Knesset yisrael* intact would be to prevent the secularisation of society, and hence the diminishing of the political power of the religious sector. In an internal document on the organisation of education, the deputy-inspector wrote:

We are interested in administrating Hebrew education in all of *Eretz yisrael* [Palestine]. This [administration] cannot originate from the Hebrew State for obvious reasons, however, the centre for Hebrew education can be located in the International State of Jerusalem, on the condition that *Knesset yisrael* will be acknowledged as an ethnic and supra-state organisation in all of *Eretz yisrael* with its centre in Jerusalem. (Undated letter, ZA J17-8092).

These ideas on the future of *Knesset yisrael* were suggestive inasmuch as they reflected an ambivalent position towards the idea of a modern, secular state. Both speakers, who favoured the Zionist vision of an independent Jewish state, were expressing a concern that the anticipated state would be unable to fulfil its role as an educator, to use Gramsci's terminology. In this respect, despite their ideological differences (and maybe also concrete interests), both speakers seemed to acknowledge the qualitative difference between the condition of statehood and the national condition of the *yishuv*, and that a sovereign state could harm the ethno-national order of things. In other words, the idea of 'replacing' the supremacy of the state with that of *Knesset yisrael* was meant to prevent, in the eyes of these speakers, the 'de-Judaisation' of society. Still, this position, I propose, reflected a failure to understand what statehood actually implied, and, particularly, that cultural autonomy for the Arabs will result in a demand to make the state truly universal. This, however, was intolerable if the state were to remain a "Jewish State".

One speaker, who probably had a better conception of the meaning of statehood, was Y. Gurfinkel (Gurri), a prominent leader of the Labour educational stream. In a letter, dated 21 December 1947, to the Director of the Education Department, Gurfinkel explicitly linked the

<sup>3</sup> Thus, e.g., the JA explicitly denied a report, published in the Palestine Post, that the anticipated state would be based on the separation of religion and state (ZA S25-9884, 7.12.1947).

future of *Knesset yisrael* with the “Arab question”. He rejected the idea of leaving the institutions of *Knesset yisrael* intact – which, he contended, “is common within certain parts of the *yishuv*” – because it would compel the *yishuv* to agree to the formation of a similar institution that would consolidate the Arab population of the two anticipated states. This institution, in his opinion, “would aspire to a status of a state within the state, particularly since all of the Arab settlements – as with the Jewish ones [...] – are homogeneous in terms of their national demographic composition. [...] Eventually, the personal autonomy could become, in form and in content a territorial autonomy” (ZA, J17-8092).<sup>4</sup> This fear eventually determined the state’s policy towards Arab education, and, no less importantly, the need to appropriate educational powers from the political parties, namely, to abolish the *stream system*.

In sum, these debates during the ‘interim period’ were significant inasmuch as they reflected the limits of the *yishuv*’s social order. The demand to retain the *stream system*, like the idea of holding on to the institutions of *Knesset yisrael*, was grounded in the successful experience of the *yishuv* in creating a highly integrated polity, based on an overall agreement upon the idea of a Jewish national home. This generated a belief that this relatively homogeneous social order could be maintained with the transition to statehood, but more interestingly, that the same arrangements could be extended to the Arab minority.<sup>5</sup> These ideas were naive, mainly because they were based on a failure to understand that state monopoly in education was a pre-condition of statehood. Yet, the alternative conceptions that were thus presented only emphasised the nationalistic and coercive character of the state, and the limits of its universality. This was indeed made clear with the transition to statehood, when it turned out that not only was the idea of Arab educational autonomy infeasible, but also that the *stream system* could not be continued.

### **The “spirit of *Eretz-yisrael*”: Immigration and Education**

Another challenge to the idea and practice of educational autonomy was the forthcoming massive immigration of Jewish refugees from post-War Europe and from the Orient. This did not happen until after independence, yet already in the ‘interim period’, it was made clear that while the Zionist state was bound to become the major factor in the encouragement of immigration and in the re-socialisation of the newcomers, this would only reinforce and

<sup>4</sup> See also his address to the *Histadrut* Education Council in 1948 (LA IV-215-1529, pp. 24-25).

<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that the interest in Arab education was not theoretical so to speak, as indicated in a letter, dated 1 December 1947 (ZA S10046-25), which was sent out to Dr. Hendel, who was participating in a working team that studied the situation in Arab education. The letter summarised a working meeting and specified the rate of attendance in Arab education, and pointed to the need to expand this school system, and to train more teachers etc. It also raised the issue of teaching Hebrew in Arab schools, and the need to teach Arabic in Hebrew schools. One interesting point that it made, concerning the shortage of qualified teachers, was to suggest the use of Jewish teachers, which has eventually happened. Again, this strengthens the argument that, contrary to conventional wisdom (e.g., Reches 1990, 291), the “Arab question” was not unanticipated by the Zionist establishment.

reproduce the pattern of differential absorption of Jews of European and non-European origin (see Chapter 4). This was evidenced in the growing involvement of the Jewish Agency, relative to that of the political parties, in the education of Jewish refugees in post-World War II Europe. Still, the function of the Jewish Agency amongst potential immigrants in Europe as an 'educator', only reproduced the uneven pattern of absorption, mainly because non-European immigrants were not undergoing a similar process of prior indoctrination and preparation.

During most of the *yishuv* period, the Zionist political parties, mainly through their organisations in Europe, were actively involved in the education, or even indoctrination, of potential immigrants. This was in fact one of their main sources of power (see Chapter 4). Only during the 1940s, the JA, alongside other Zionist and non-Zionist organisations, became gradually involved in the education of potential immigrants (Ofer 1995, 713). Following World War II, this mainly included the provision of educational services for Jewish refugees in Europe by means of sending teachers to establish schools and teach in Jewish refugees' camps (LA IV-215-1574; ZA J17-8047). The content and the purpose of this mission were clear – to 'Zionize' these refugees and encourage them to immigrate to Palestine. One emissary of the Labour educational stream, who headed the Educational Bureau in Austria (that was jointly run by the JOINT, the JA, and the central committee for Holocaust refugees), described the contribution of *Eretz-yisraeli* (i.e., Jews from Palestine) teachers to this process:

The school's spirit is Hebrew and *Eretz-yisraeli-Zionist*. The song sang is Hebrew, the whole festivity is Hebrew. [...] In all of our schools and nurseries, there is a fruitful action for the benefit of the *Keren Kayemet Le-yisrael* [The Jewish National Fund, the JA executive organ for land acquisition in Palestine, GL]. In each classroom there is a corner dedicated to *Eretz-yisrael*. (LA IV-215-1574).<sup>6</sup>

The Zionist establishment was also involved, socially and educationally, in preparing Jewish refugees, who were held in camps in Cyprus after being deported from Palestine by the British forces, for their immigration.<sup>7</sup> These practices, limited as they were, were significant in, at least, two respects: first, by helping both the absorbers and the absorbed to drop (some) of the cultural and conceptual barriers between them, and, second, in making the latter familiar with their 'new homeland' (see also Eisenstadt 1967, 66). In contrast, most of the immigrants from the Orient arrived in Israel with a very minimal knowledge, if any, of the kind of society that they were about to enter, and had to undergo the process of

<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, the term Hebrew was more common at the time to designate the particular culture of Jews in Palestine. It was used interchangeably with the term Jewish, however, it was also a signifier of the emergence of a Jewish secular culture distinct from the Jewish religious one.

<sup>7</sup> This effort was in great part a result of the interest of the state in recruiting potential immigrants to the Israeli army in light of the Israeli-Arab war (see, Yablonka 1999, Ch. 6).

socialisation under the harsh condition of the immigrants' camps.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, unlike the European immigrants who could rely on societal networks for their absorption, immigrants from the Arab countries were almost solely dependent upon the state and its institutions for that purpose.

The growing involvement of the Zionist establishment in education, which supposedly was not as discriminating and partial as that of the political parties (see Chapter 4), eventually reinforced the 'old' differential pattern of absorption, and thus turned out to be crucial to the success of the melting pot policy. The main significance of the prior education of potential European immigrants lay in that it reinforced and reproduced a conception of hierarchical relation between Western (read: European) culture and Oriental (read: Arab) culture (see also Khazzoom 1999). This implied that the melting pot policy, despite being equally applicable to both groups of immigrants – and, without underestimating its traumatic effects for European-Jewish refugees<sup>9</sup> – was not ethnically neutral. It, thus, re-imposed cultural distinctions that also served as a justification for a differential, stratified social order. This, I propose, accounts for the ethnicisation of the Israeli 'melting pot', a process whereby non-European immigrants were considered as being in need of re-socialisation, that is, modernisation, while Europeans were considered as part of 'us'.

## THE TRANSITION TO STATEHOOD

The declaration of independence in May 1948 ended the 'interim period' and thus marked the turning of the debates over 'the future of education', and over the future of *Knesset yisrael*, from being hypothetical to a concrete political choice. At this moment, when the power of the state became paramount and determinative over the ideological deliberations regarding the required changes in the educational sphere, the future of both Arab education and the *stream system* was determined. Yet, whereas the former issue was (forcefully) taken off the political-educational agenda immediately, the resolution of the latter issue was put off. In the period immediately after independence, the principle of educational autonomy was extended and the *stream system* remained the core of the new educational order. This was soon formalised in the 1949 Compulsory Education Act, which, at the same time, manifested the change in the structure of educational authority, and that the state became the main source of power and authority in this sphere.

<sup>8</sup> This experience is also evident in many of the writings of *mizrahi* immigrants, mostly in prose and poetry. Some of the remarkable witnesses of this are Iraqi born writers like S. Michael, S. Balas, E. Amir, and R. Somek.

<sup>9</sup> One manifestation of this differential process of absorption was the lack of academic interest in the implications of immigration on European-Jewish immigrants. It was not until the 1980s that academia (and Israeli society at large) realised that this process had left its scars not only on Arab-Jewish immigrants, but also on European ones (see, Yablonka 1999).

### Appropriating educational authority

The transitional government, which was in power from the declaration of independence to the first general elections in January 1949, did not appoint a Minister of Education (Zameret 1997a, 40). At first, it seemed as if the state took no interest in education, and that the pre-statehood educational arrangements, which conferred upon the political parties autonomy in education, would remain intact. This, however, was not the case. In September 1949, with the legislation of the Compulsory Educational Act, it turned out that although the overall structure of education had not changed, the state became sovereign and authoritative in the educational sphere.

This change was first evidenced in two decisions that the transitional government had reached soon after its inception, regarding the extension of the power of the Zionist Education Committee to provide educational services within the Jewish sector (Swirski 1999, 101), and about the recognition of the ultra-orthodox educational system of *Agudat-yisrael* as a fourth autonomous stream within this system (Zameret 1997a, 30).<sup>10</sup> These two decisions, seemingly a manifestation of the state's lack of educational authority, in fact only emphasised its sovereign power to confer upon these institutions the authority to provide educational services. Similarly, when the Jewish Agency withdrew from the immigrant camps, the fast-growing influx of immigrants compelled the state to seek alternative solutions to meet their educational needs (Hacohen 1994a). These changes had been formalised in the 1949 CEA that, by definition, had made education the business of the state, but which also 'legalised' the operation of the *stream system*. Nonetheless, these changes brought about the transformation of the educational order, and eventually led to the legislation of the 1953 State Educational Act. This, however, did not happen before the state established its relationship to Arab education and sought to resolve the 'struggle over education', which ensued from the continuation of the *stream system*.

### Separate, but unequal: Arab education and political control

In the aftermath of the 1948 war, Arab-Palestinians constituted only a small minority of some 11 percent of the population of the newly founded Jewish state (see Table 3-1). As a result of the transition to statehood, and in light of the UN resolution, the Arab minority was granted full citizenship rights, including the right to education. This implied that if the Israeli government wished to accommodate its democratic posture with its Jewish national identity, and yet to continue its exclusionary practices vis-à-vis the Arabs – as it did – it had to re-draw the boundary between Arabs and Jews internally (see also Lustick 1980, 61-62). In this

<sup>10</sup> This decision was also one manifestation of the growing rift within *Mapai* between its state-affiliated leadership and those educational functionaries that held positions in the party apparatus and in the *Histadrut* educational stream. The latter thought that the ultra-orthodox educational system should be incorporated in the existing *stream system* as part of the religious-Zionist (*Mizrahi*) stream (Zameret 1997a, 27-40). Yet, the party's leadership, whose main concern was to not engender political conflicts, made the final decision.

context, the developments in the educational arena were not merely a reflection of state power, but, more importantly, education itself had turned out to be a means of delineating social boundaries, and hence in exercising state control over the Arab minority.

With the transition to statehood, the Arab minority was not incorporated into a common educational system, nor were they entrusted with educational autonomy. The retaining of the *stream system*, as inscribed by the 1949 Compulsory Education Act, implied the extension of the educational arrangements of the Zionist *yishuv* into statehood, and thus precluded the possibility of Arab educational autonomy. Concomitantly, the imposition of Military Administration upon this minority circumscribed the potential equality that was embodied in their full legal status as citizens. Thus, although the 1949 CEA was equally applicable to the Arab population, it remained by and large ineffective (Al-Haj 1995, 61; Lustick 1980; Smooha 1978).<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, a clear policy towards Arab education was not yet formed. In early 1949, the Jewish director of Arab education wrote to the Minister of Education: “in my opinion, we may hope that by removing the differences between us and them [the Arabs], or by minimising them, we could diminish the dissimilarities that stem from our different viewpoints, and hence increase the prospects for peaceful life.” Subsequently, he presented the view of the director of Muslim Affairs in the Ministry of Religions, a view that later became the official policy of the state towards its non-Jewish citizens:

We should retreat from the idea of an Arab minority. [...] We are not facing one Arab problem but multiple problems of various ethnic and national groups, we should solve each separately, *[we should] emphasise and develop the contradictions between the various types [of identities] and thus weaken their Arabness*. In this way they will forget that they are Arabs and know that they are Israelis of different kinds. (cited in Swirski 1990, 60-61; *italics added*).

Under the condition of the 1949 CEA, which retained the *stream system* and thus revealed the preference for Jewish exclusivity over civic inclusion, the educational system had been re-organised and re-segregated between Arabs and Jews, as well as between the Arabs themselves: Christians, Muslims and Druze. The character of the ‘new’ system was determined by, and for the interests of, Jews alone, as was reflected in the slow development of education in the Arab sector, but also, and maybe more importantly, in the fact that although education was universal, there was no place, under the new educational order, either for Jewish-Arab egalitarianism, or for substantial educational autonomy for the

<sup>11</sup> This was, partly, a result of the division of educational authority between the state and the local authorities. Arab authorities, unlike Jewish ones, did not employ the teachers and the government imposed an ‘education tax’, in fact, a poll tax, on Arab citizens. Thus, the Arab authorities did not enjoy autonomy in maintaining their school system and, moreover, this implied that, unlike Jewish children, Arab children did not enjoy free education (for further discussion see AL-Haj 1995, 63-64).

Arabs.<sup>12</sup> In fact, with the transition to statehood, the very existence of a state became determinative in regard to the fate of education, and hence of future social relations.

Thus, the 1949 CEA, which defined the contours of the new educational order and pointed to the gradual centralisation and consolidation of educational authority within the state, also attested to the limits of the state's commitment to the notion of 'education for all'.

Apparently, education spread unevenly not only between Arabs and Jews, but also amongst Jews. This legislation, and primarily the continuation of the *stream system*, created a multiform educational sphere that, eventually, failed to contain its own tensions and contradictions. Soon, the pressure to re-organise the system re-emerged, mainly because the existing arrangements posed a threat to the stability of the social order. When the educational order was re-structured, it turned out that segregation was a feature of the Israeli educational policy not only towards its non-Jewish minorities, but also towards its (non-European) Jewish subjects.

### **"THE CHARM OF THE STATE": THE 'STRUGGLE OVER EDUCATION'**

Two of the principles of the *stream system* appeared problematic once the *yishuv* had turned into a sovereign polity: educational autonomy and the principle of self-definition. The former, because it granted the political parties control over education, and hence reinforced their autonomy vis-à-vis the state; the latter, since under the condition of non-selective immigration the immigrants would no longer be controlled, and this posed a threat to both the state and the political parties that feared for its political consequences. Soon, this problematic erupted in a struggle over the structure and content of education, but more potently, over its control. These principles, however, were first challenged before the Great Immigration, in an affair that seemed to encapsulate both the *problematique* of, and the reasoning behind, the 'struggle over education'.

#### **Autonomy and control in religious education**

In the early 1940s, in light of the Zionist 'turn to the Orient', the two 'ideological' educational streams within the *yishuv* came into conflict over the education of Yemenite immigrant children. This dispute was not prolonged, and in fact it eventually died out of its

<sup>12</sup> This attitude reflected not only the national dispute between the two peoples, but also the Zionist paternalistic and Orientalist perception of non-Europeans, be they Jews or Arabs. In fact, the Zionist language of modernisation enabled it to justify a discriminatory policy towards these two groups. The low level of education in the Arab sector was attributed not to the state's failure to provide adequate educational resources, but to the Arabs' own failure to modernise. The state has been presented, e.g. in newspapers articles, as being truly committed to rescue them from their primitive existence. This attitude was evinced in the way Arab education had been presented to the outside. Thus, J. Ben-Or (1954), an associate-director at the Ministry of Education, presented the state's efforts to raise the level of Arab education, while giving no indication of the existence of martial law in the Arab-populated areas (see also, Huebener 1954, 351). In an Israeli journal, however, he and an official advisor on Arab affairs noted the lack of "common values of Israeli nationality" as one problem that affected Arab education (Ben-Or and Shalmon 1957, 93). On the various aspects of the discriminatory measures taken by the state towards Arab education see, Mar'i (1978), Al-Haj (1995).

own accord, and yet, as it pertained to the monopoly of the *Mizrahi* educational stream over religious education, it was paradigmatic in several ways. First, it showed the significance of education under the condition of ‘non-selective’ immigration (see Chapter 4), and, particularly, how it engendered fierce competition between the political parties over the education of the immigrant children. Second, it pointed to the *stream system* as a structural setting that facilitated this competition, hence to its likely drawbacks once the need to centrally control education arose. Thirdly, as a result of this affair, the Labour educational stream sought to re-adjust itself, and was thus willing to forsake its ‘ideological purity’ and prepare itself for the absorption of immigrants who were not pre indoctrinated within its institutions. Finally, this conflict demonstrated the link between religiosity and nationalism, and it further entrenched religiosity in the practice of education, even amongst the non-religious sectors. Not less important, this affair also signified the entrenchment of religiosity and ethnicity in the state.

In 1943-44, the Labour stream opened special classes for the Yemenite workers’ children who arrived to the country at that time (Don-Yehia 1998, 102). This initiative did not pass unnoticed within both the Labour and the *Mizrahi* educational streams. The debate within *Mapai* focused on ideology, that is, on the appropriateness of this ‘religious turn’. In response, one of the party’s leaders, justifying these classes, contended that it intended to allow the stream “to penetrate populations other than those of the ‘liberated’ [i.e., non-religious] strata” (LA IV-215-2-24, 22.1.1945). Eventually, The General Assembly of the Labour educational stream accepted a principled decision:

Zionist-Socialist education does not preclude the possibility of introducing a religious variant in its education for those parents, and in those settlements, who require it. Hence, neither the *Histadrut* nor the Centre for Education [its educational executive] should see themselves as exempt from constructing such schools. (LA IV-215-2-24, 22.1.1945).

This, however, only increased the opposition of the *Mizrahi* educational stream, which saw this as a threat to its monopoly in the provision of religious education. Grounding its position in the 1920 London agreement, it sought to impair the allocation of JA funds for these new classes.<sup>13</sup> Thus, two principles of the *yishuv*’s educational order were put into conflict: the principle of self-definition, which in the view of the Labour stream determined that parents, “even if they were religious”, had the right to chose the appropriate education for their children (LA IV-215-2-24, 22.1.1945); and, the principle of educational autonomy, that in the view of the *Mizrahi* stream, implied their absolute monopoly in religious education.

<sup>13</sup> The Labour stream demanded that the new classes for Yemenite children, that were opened in Jerusalem, Tiberias, Haifa and other smaller settlements, would be financed by the JA, and not only by the *Histadrut* (LA IV-215-2-24, 14-15.11.1944). The *Mizrahi* rejected this position (LA IV-215-2-24, 22.1.1945). For a discussion of this conflict see, Zameret (1993, 13-18) and Don-Yehia (1998, 101-103).

Notably, this conflict did not last, due to the ending of the influx of immigrants, the lack of co-ordinated political opposition between the Zionist and anti-Zionist religious parties (Zameret 1993, 18; Don-Yehia 1998, 103), and mainly, because the Labour movement could not afford the damage that this conflict would have on its political alliance with the religious parties. Indeed, some eighteen months later, the General Council of the Centre for Education [*moetzet ha-meshakim*] approved a decision on the principled right of the Labour stream to offer religious education. Still, the final version of this decision employed a milder tone and omitted all particular reference to the religious issue or to the Zionist-religious *Mizrahi* movement. The final decision read as follows [in brackets: the omissions from the original decision; additions are underlined]:

The council [categorically rejects the argument that all religious education should be supervised solely by the *Mizrahi* party.] determines that the Labour stream – the representative of the general Labour movement – reserves the right to allow, within its framework, education for all strata within the workers' population in accordance with the parents' will. [Never was it determined that the *Mizrahi* party holds the sole right over religious education.]<sup>14</sup>

A few years later, this principled position had been materialised. The *Histadrut* founded a sub-stream, known as 'the religious labourer educational stream' (*Ha-oved ha-dati*), that, on the one hand, would be responsive to the peculiar needs of the immigrants, mainly the more religiously observant amongst the *mizrahi* newcomers, and on the other, would be loyal to the Labour movement.<sup>15</sup> This stream grew immensely within a few years once immigration had begun: from several hundreds of pupils in early 1948 to some 4,500 in 1951 (Zameret 1997a, 126; 1991). Its main constituency was the new immigrants who were settled by the government in the periphery in settlements that were allocated to the various Zionist political parties. This created an identification between the educational stream in each settlement and its political patron (Swirski 1990, 40). The Labour stream thus benefited from this policy by making *Mapai*'s political power a leverage for increasing its hold on the immigrants, mainly, the *mizrahi* immigrants, who were thus forced to join its religious educational sub-stream.

In light of these developments, it becomes clear why the *Histadrut*, as well as *Mapai*'s machinery, were interested in the continuation of the *stream system*. For *Mapai*, that was already the dominant power in the Zionist political arena (Horowitz and Lissak 1978, 48; Shapiro 1977; 1984; Shalev 1992), immigration could turn into a source of either threat or strength (Bernstein 1981, 35). Expanding the Labour educational stream seemed both a way and an opportunity to mobilise the new immigrants' support and to control them.

<sup>14</sup> Both versions of this decision appear in the Labour movement Archive (LA IV-215-2-24, 6-7.5.1946).

<sup>15</sup> Educationalists of the Labour stream explicitly stated that, "we established religious schools for immigrants from the Near Orient" (LA IV-215-1669, 7.12.1950).

The religious parties struggled to retain the *stream system* not because they believed in a notion of a plural society, but for fear that this would entail the loss of their political autonomy. Their main concern was to ensure their political status and social control over a distinctive part of the population – the religious sector (Don-Yehia 1977, 487). The tendency of the state to centralise power, in contrast to the earlier decentralised organisation of power, and the fact that non-religious parties dominated the ruling coalition, made the religious leadership believe that they were going to pay the price of statehood (compare, Don-Yehia 1977, 486). Thus, it was not surprising to see the Zionist and anti-Zionist religious parties in one parliamentary front in the first general elections.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the fierce competition over autonomy and monopoly in religious education had made the Zionist-religious parties reluctant to accept another religious educational stream. This, eventually, only strengthened the government's interest in de-partyfing education (Zameret 1997a, 182-183).

### **Geography and Demography in education**

One clear consequence of the transition to statehood was the de-facto consolidation of three distinctive educational arenas, each one of them operating according to different rules and practices, being subject to different methods of control, and geographically and demographically distinctive from the other:

1. *The Palestinian arena* was created by the strict separation between Arab and Hebrew education, which was made possible since most of the Palestinians were living in specific, designated areas that could be easily isolated from the rest of society. The control of the army over their education reinforced the perception of the non-Jewish minority as merely a security problem (Lustick 1980, 146; Al-Haj 1995, 120). This regime, needless to say, only emphasised the exclusion of the Palestinians from society, and the irrelevance of their will or position, in the eyes of the Jewish sector, to any debate regarding the structure or content of education.
2. The *yishuv*, which now designated the places where the veteran, mostly *ashkenazi* Jewish sector concentrated, constituted another distinctive educational arena. There, where the *stream system* remained effective, education was provided by the political parties, and parents could determine the desired educational stream for their children. This arena was thus characterised by a fierce competition between the various educational streams, which now also included the ultra-orthodox stream, over control and hegemony by seeking to attract children to their own educational institutions.

<sup>16</sup> The ultra-orthodox parties, needless to say, favoured the *stream system* over a national unified system, for it would allow them to retain their autonomy vis-à-vis the state. The Zionist-religious parties, in contrast, had a more complex relationship with the state, at least because of their political involvement in its institutions. This made their position more vulnerable in the overall political context.

3. *The immigrant camps* constituted the last educational arena. At first, the status of the camps was ex-territorial and education was provided by the Jewish Agency, and not by the state that, *de-jure*, was not responsible for the education of immigrant children. When the state did assume responsibility for education in the camps, it still refrained from implementing there the principles that ruled in the rest of the country, and banned the political parties from operating there. Instead, a uniform curriculum was set up and parents could not enjoy what other parents did, namely, the right to make a choice regarding their children's education. The camps – which were geographically isolated, and demographically distinct – thus created an educational arena that was characteristically *mizrahi* in its ethnic composition, and in which its inhabitants lacked both the powers and means to participate in the determination of the shape and content of education.

These distinctive arenas developed not as a result of a particular intentional policy decision, but as a result of those structural contingencies and differential practices that were employed by the state political elite, its bureaucracy, and the political parties. Yet, geography and demography turned out to be major factors in the further consolidation of a differential educational system. This, in turn, reinforced, and rendered politically meaningful, the boundaries between those groups. In other words, the particular pattern of dispersal of the Israeli population, at that time, enabled the state political elite and others to draw social boundaries according to the peculiar habitat and cultural characteristics of the various social groups. The overlap between these geographic and demographic characteristics made it possible, once this educational order came to crisis, to link specific educational values with a specific ethnic group, and, eventually, to institutionalise these relations within the emerging state educational system.

### **The struggle over education in the immigrant camps**

These demographic-spatial features also brought about the crisis in education. While they reinforced the tendency to leave Arab education beyond the scope of interest (or sight) of either the Zionist political parties or the state, they also made the disparity between the veterans' and the newcomers' arenas salient, and eventually, intolerable. In particular, the unstable conditions in the latter arena were, in the eyes of each of the political parties, an opportunity to tip the status quo to its side. Or, at least, so they thought. This led, eventually, to a two-dimensional crisis that varied with the specific issue in question (Don-Yehia 1977, 464).

On the institutional level, the issue at stake was the centralisation of educational authority within the state, hence, the state's interest in the de-partyfication of education. The threat to end the educational autonomy of the political parties cut across partisan lines and it thus put all parties, including those represented in the government, in conflict with the state political elite and its bureaucracy. On the political level, the conflict stemmed from the competition

between the political parties over the support of the electorate. Education, as it had been since the *yishuv* period, was a main channel for political mobilisation and indoctrination, and the massive influx of non-affiliated immigrants only encouraged the political parties to double their efforts in that direction. Obviously, this struggle was conducted along partisan lines and, primarily, it put *Mapai* in conflict with the rest of the political parties. But not only that, it also deepened the rift within this party between those who sought to strengthen the party's machinery and those who preferred to control its autonomous power. Eventually, it was the multiform nature of this struggle that allowed the state political elite to seize the opportunity and gain control over education.

Two developments that became salient following the transition to statehood underlay the 'struggle over education': **a)** the expansion of the Labour educational stream (Table 6-1), and, **b)** the expansion of state-controlled education in the immigrant camps. These developments reflected and further strengthened the dominance of the ruling party *Mapai* (Shapiro 1977), and thus generated fears among the other political parties of the growing political power of this party. In mid-1949, when the religious parties demanded that immigrant children be given religious education, these fears turned into an all-out struggle over the structure of education.

**Table 6-1**  
**The development of the Hebrew educational stream system, 1948-1953**  
 (number of pupils; in parentheses, index of growth)

	1948/49	1949/50	1950/51	1951/52	1952/53
Total	104,524 (100)	107,314 (103)	138,111 (132)	176,167 (169)	222,285 (213)
Labour	31,612 (100)	30,184 (95)	46,795 (148)	72,810 (230)	101,132 (320)
General	47,371 (100)	54,153 (114)	59,670 (126)	63,829 (135)	73,845 (156)
<i>Mizrahi</i>	25,541 (100)	22,977 (90)	31,646 (124)	39,528 (155)	47,308 (185)

Source: Zameret 1997a, 258, 260-1.

Note: These figures include children in nurseries, elementary and secondary schools.

### The Great Immigration and education: the question of The Uniform Education

At first, the transition to statehood did not change the balance between the political parties in the educational sphere. It was, as had happened before, the arrival of new immigrants, who were not politically affiliated, that engendered a fierce struggle between them.<sup>17</sup> Immediately

<sup>17</sup> In the early 1940s a crisis between the Zionist parties and the religious and ultra-orthodox parties broke out in an affair known as 'The children of Teheran' affair. These children were refugees who fled Europe during the Holocaust. In the absence of parental guidance, the self-definition principle could not be implemented, and the parties fought over the proportional measure according to which these children would be split among the various streams (Zameret 1993). This 'political paternalism' has not disappeared over the years. To this very day, Jewish

after the declaration of independence, and with the arrival of the first waves of immigrants, education was not a matter of dispute. The immigrants' absorption was not centrally conducted and they were dispersed, mostly by their own means, around the country, primarily in the deserted settlements and houses of the expelled Palestinians. Between May and December 1948, some 103,000 immigrants, mostly European refugees, arrived and were absorbed in this way (Hacohen 1994a, 82, 327; Yablonka 1997, 44-46). These immigrants, mostly adults and elderly persons, were practically absorbed within the existing social structure and, in terms of educational absorption, there was no particular need to expand the schools or allocate more classrooms or teachers (Zameret 1997a, 45).

This changed by mid-1949, when the demand for housing exceeded supply and the growing influx of immigrants had to be controlled and managed. The Jewish Agency constructed immigrant absorption camps in deserted British army barracks to allow for the state to temporarily accommodate immigrants until a solution could be found (Bernstein 1981, 28; Hacohen 1994a, 79-80). This temporary solution turned into a social problem as soon as the number of residents in the camps increased and as the period of residence in them grew longer. In early 1949, there were some 28,000 immigrants in the camps and this number grew to 60,000 in the middle of that year, and to almost 100,000 by its end. By then, the average period of residence in the camps had lengthened to 12 weeks, compared to 4-6 weeks at the beginning of the year (Hacohen 1994a, 82). The longer the period of residence became, the more the proportion of Jewish immigrants from the Arab and Muslim countries in those camps grew (*ibid.* 298-299). During this period, the question of educational provision in the camps became more acute and significant.

The education of children in the immigrant camps was, at first, under the responsibility of the Jewish Agency. When this responsibility was transferred to the state, it was the Department for Cultural Absorption, and not the state's Education Department, that undertook to provide education in the camps.<sup>18</sup> This department eventually created a schooling network with its own curriculum, known, due to its supposedly non-ideological content, as 'The Uniform Education' (Zameret 1997a, 101-108). By 1950, this network encompassed some 142 classrooms and around 6,000 pupils, about half of the child population in the camps (*ibid.* 69; Swirski 1999, 171). Soon, this expansion made this department subject to political opposition, and it was attacked for being ideological and partisan. Indeed, in spite of its non-affiliated position, most of the department's functionaries

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children who immigrate by themselves (in the 1970s, many of them were from Arab countries), or even children from families with a weak background (as in the case of Ethiopian Jews and Jews from the Asian Soviet republics in the 1990s) are sent to boarding schools that are affiliated to the Zionist-religious movement.

<sup>18</sup> Although it was part of the government, this department's operation was carried out autonomously. The director of the Education Department testified later that he was not aware of the need to provide education in the camps, or that the JA was facing difficulties in this respect (Dagan 1986, 14; Segev 1984, 188; Zameret 1997a). Odd as it may sound, this was possible given the disorganisation of public services at the time.

were affiliated to *Mapai*, and its curriculum was influenced by this party's conception of Zionism (Zameret 1997a, 101-105). Still, it would be more accurate to say that the department was committed to promote the interests of the state, rather than those of a particular political party (compare, *ibid.* 101). Thus was made explicit, for example, by the department's director, in his testimony before the Fromkin commission (see below), while explaining the department's approach toward the Yemenite immigrants:

What is the bridge on which we shall reach the Yemenites and they shall reach us? [...] I say that the charm of the state is that bridge. We should not ignore the fact that we are all strangers to them. [...] I approach them and the state is what I say. And then, I do not sense that there is a barrier that stands between them and me. [...] The bridge of the state is the only one [...] and it is in its power to make the Yemenite Jews citizens of this state. (cited in Zameret 1993, 180).

There were, nonetheless, other reasons for the abolition of 'The Uniform Education' than its alleged political affiliation. After the legislation of the 1949 Compulsory Education Act, the very existence of this network seemed to violate the law for two reasons: first, as long as The Uniform Education operated in the camps it implied that compulsory education was not fully implemented there, since the Department of Education was not even taking responsibility for the content of education; second, it prevented the educational streams from operating in the camps. This was not only a violation of the law, which authorised the streams to provide education for the whole of the population, but it was also opposed to the political parties' interests. These violations, however, did not prevent the government from turning a blind eye to the difficulties in providing education in the camps (Dagan 1986, 14). In fact, it is reasonable to assume that Ben-Gurion was not keen to stop the expansion of this system since this coincided with the government's interest in abolishing the *stream system* and introducing 'national' education instead. It was then not before the break out of the crisis that the opposition to the Department's illegal operation grew, and this opposition came, when it did, from the religious parties that had become discontented with the situation in the immigrants' camps.

### **The break out of the crisis**

In the first general elections in January 1949, education had not been a political issue (Zameret 1997a, 147), and *Mapai* and the religious *Mizrahi* party ratified their coalition agreement without any specific reference to this question (Don-Yehia 1977, 482). The education of the immigrants, and more specifically their religious education, turned into a significant political issue in mid-1949 when the composition of the immigration had changed (about half of the immigrants were from Asia or Africa) and the number of children among them grew extensively (see Table 4-1).<sup>19</sup> Only then did the religious parties, both ultra-

<sup>19</sup> The immigrants from Asia and Africa were younger than those from Europe and America: the median age for each group in the years 1948-51 was 20 and 31.8, respectively (Schmeltz, Dellapergola and Avner 1991, Table

orthodox and orthodox, realise the political opportunity this immigration presented and seek to capitalise on the discontent of the mostly Yemenite Jews with the imposition of non-religious education in the camps. This triggered the ‘struggle over education’.

The first signs of the crisis appeared already in December 1948, when the director of the *Mizrahi* educational stream called for “finding a way to obtain something of the influx of immigration for *Mizrahi* education” (cited in Zameret 1997a, 147). Yet, the party’s leadership did nothing in this direction. At the time, the anti-Zionist ultra-orthodox parties were sending yeshiva students to the camps to mobilise the discontented Yemenite Jews against the Zionist absorbing institutions. This soon resulted in violent clashes between yeshiva students and camp residents, who demanded religious education, and Zionist officials who sought to maintain the existing order in the camps. Not long afterwards, these confrontations hit the front pages, not only of the ultra-orthodox newspapers in Israel, but also of world Jewry (Zameret 1997a, 148).

The government, apparently well aware of the increasing complaints about incidents of anti-religious coercion in the camps, remained indifferent. When these accusations spread beyond the state’s boundaries, reaching American Jewry, the government was put in a vulnerable position. More specifically, the reports on the anti-democratic practice of government officials toward Jewish immigrants could damage the state’s democratic posture and imperil the government’s ability to gain moral and financial support from both world Jewry and Western countries. At this point, the Zionist-religious *Mizrahi* movement – that had previously feared endangering its position in the ruling coalition by publicly accusing the government of anti-religious acts (Don-Yehia 1977, 486) – joined the campaign. The two prominent members of the ruling coalition, *Mapai* and *Mizrahi*, thus became engaged in this conflict, and the pressure to resolve it grew.

In January 1950, the government set up a judicial commission of inquiry, headed by judge Gad Fromkin, to enquire into the conditions of education in the immigrant camps (Kafka 1990, 82; Zameret 1997a, 149). The commission investigated most of those who were engaged in education in the camps, from the Minister of Education downwards, and confirmed in its conclusions the accusations about the anti-religious practices of the Department for Cultural Absorption – from cutting children’s side-curls to forcing or tempting them to be rid of their religious practices. It also criticised the religious parties for their intervention in the camps for the sake of political power.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, the

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9, p. 131). Also, the size of *mizrahi* families became a matter of political concern. In many occasions, both the text and the subtext of the absorbing institutions referred to this and called for programmes that would train young *mizrahi* women to become ‘better’ (i.e., ‘rational’) mothers (e.g., Adler 1969, 29). Apparently, a contradictory message was conveyed: on the one hand, modernisation implied downsizing the family, while on the other, the state rhetorically encouraged large families, and later even offered extended child-support allowance for larger families (Swirski 1999, 155).

<sup>20</sup> The commission’s report appears in Zameret (1993).

commission's conclusions, that seemed to be too even-handed, did not make any difference. At least not to Ben-Gurion, who apparently did not wait for the investigation to be concluded.

In February 1950, two weeks after the commission began its work, Ben-Gurion ratified an agreement – reached by the *Mapai* Minister of Education and Minister M. S. Shapira, head of the parliamentary religious front – on the education of *mizrahi* children in the camps. *Mapai* agreed that *mizrahi* children, up to the age of 17, would receive religious education, on the condition that this education would be provided not only by the Zionist and the ultra-orthodox religious streams, but also by the *Histadrut*-controlled religious-Labour stream (Zameret 1997a, 150). The board of *Mapai* did not approve this agreement, which implied the extension of the division between religious and non-religious education into the camps, mainly because of its implications for the possibility to retain the *stream system*.

This position made explicit the tension within *Mapai* between the party's state-affiliated functionaries and elite, who favoured the strengthening of the state educational apparatus, and those members whose political power rested within the party, and who preferred the retention of the *stream system*.<sup>21</sup> The fear within *Mapai*'s machinery that the days of the *stream system* were numbered was evidenced as soon as the commission was set up. Pinchas Lavon, secretary-general of the *Histadrut* and a prominent member of *Mapai*, opposed the very composition of the Fromkin Commission because he suspected that Ben-Gurion intentionally appointed only one member of *Mapai*, against two from the religious front, in order to bring the existing educational order to an end and to abolish the *stream system* (Kafkay 1990, 83; Zameret 1993, 53-55). This fear was exacerbated by Ben-Gurion's complacence regarding the expansion of state-controlled education in the immigrant camps. This development contradicted *Mapai*'s interests and was perceived counterproductive in terms of the opportunity to gain political power and to extend the party's influence over society, and over the immigrants in particular.

In March 1950, a new political agreement was reached. This agreement, which was also validated in parliament, conferred responsibility for education in the camps upon the Department of Education, and stated that in those camps where Yemenite Jews were the majority, children would receive religious education. A committee of four supervisors, representing the four religious streams (including the now weakened religious-Labour stream, see below), was set up to determine camp religious education's curriculum. In the other camps, it was agreed, there would be an option to receive either religious or non-religious education (Zameret 1997a, 152-153). This agreement, which confirmed the monopoly of state education in the camps, was critical for the ensuing developments in two main ways. First, by extending and institutionalising the division between religious and non-

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the minutes of *Mapai*'s Central Committee on this issue (LA IV-215-1-1692, 11.3.1951).

religious education, it gave the religious parties leverage in claiming autonomous control over religious education. Second, and more importantly, by making ethnic origin a criterion for determining who would receive religious education, it practically entrenched ethnicity in education and linked it to religiosity. These principles soon underpinned the new state-controlled educational order.

This agreement dissolved the tensions over the main issue that concerned the religious parties for a while, namely the secularisation of society (Zameret 1997a, 165). Yet, not only did it fail to resolve the basic contradictions of the existing order, it created new ones. Particularly, by re-approving the educational autonomy of the religious parties, this agreement intensified the calls within *Mapai* and *Mapam*, which controlled the Labour educational stream, for the strengthening of the *stream system*. At the same time, greater state control in education reinforced the demand to abolish this system, a demand that was made explicit by the liberal General Zionists Party, and was supported by the ruling party's state functionaries. Soon, the conflict over education re-emerged, and the need to dissociate it from the political parties became urgent.

#### Ben-Gurion and the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*

There is a tendency in mainstream historiography to ascribe to David Ben-Gurion, who was identified with the project of *Mamlakhtiyut*, a crucial role in the developments that led to the institutionalisation of *Mamlakhtiyut* in education. This inclination, I argue, that manifested itself in one academic debate over Ben-Gurion's position regarding the Labour-religious educational stream, a debate that also sheds light on his position on the Fromkin commission, is both historically and theoretically misleading. Kafkafy (1995) argues that Ben-Gurion intentionally set up the commission in a way that favoured the position of the religious parties over that of *Mapai*. This, she claims, was intended not to empower the religious parties, but to disempower the Labour educational stream and to weaken *Mapai*'s ally and rival, *Mapam*. It was, she continues, a part of Ben-Gurion's anti-*Mapam* politics that stemmed from his disapproval of the latter's socialist, pro-Soviet ideological stance. Thus, the rapid growth of the Labour-religious stream had been used as a means to manipulate both the religious parties and *Mapai* to agree to the abolition of the *stream system*. Zameret (1997b), who presents a pro-Ben-Gurion position, argues that Ben-Gurion's intention was to dismantle both the Labour and the religious streams. This, according to Zameret (1997a, 311 n. 91), was consistent with his opposition to separate religious education. Thus, from the 1930s, Ben-Gurion was ideologically committed to the idea of *Mamlakhtiyut*, in education as in other domains, which, in Zameret's view, refutes Kafkafy's insinuation of political manipulation. Both positions, I propose, fall short of explaining the actual developments, in the case of the demise of the Labour-religious stream and in the case of the Fromkin commission. Whereas Kafkafy's position is more in accord with the analysis offered here, in

that it emphasises the political, and not the ideological motivation behind Ben-Gurion's, hence the government's, action, it still offers too intentionalist an interpretation of these events. Thus, Kafkafy ascribes to Ben-Gurion her own hindsight regarding the way things eventually developed. Furthermore, both explanations ignore the interest of the state in monopolising educational authority, and hence in the abolition of educational autonomy, whether religious or 'ideological' (as was the case of *Mapam*). This brings me back to the final stage in the abolition of the *stream system*, and to its replacement with state education, which, in contrast to both views, did not put an end to the role of either religion or ideology in education.

### THE TRANSITION TO STATE-SPONSORED EDUCATION

When it became clear that the existing arrangements would not suffice to ease the tension between the political parties themselves, and between them and the state, the government sought ways to accelerate its efforts to transform the educational system and introduce state education. More precisely, the state sought to de-partyfy education and thus to partially de-politicise it. This process had in fact begun in mid-1949, soon after the Ministry of Education was established, when its bureaucracy practically neutralised the Managing Committee, and thus de-facto appropriated from the political parties the power and authority to determine, or even supervise, the content of education (Don-Yehia 1977, 483; LA IV-215-1201, 21.12.1950). This, nonetheless, did not discourage the educational streams from seeking power and control. The persisting conflicts over educational autonomy and the political control of the immigrants continued to press upon the state, and made its interest in centralising the educational system more urgent. Equally, the expansion of *Mapai*'s educational control in both the *yishuv* and the immigrant camps, made the other parties more suspicious of its intentions, and so interested in transforming the educational order.

One party that consistently supported the idea of a unified, state-controlled educational system throughout the *yishuv* period was the liberal General Zionists party. This party, the least institutionalised of the *yishuv*'s political parties, loosely controlled the largest General educational stream. Ideologically, this party's liberal platform contradicted the very notion of 'ideological education', and, particularly, the collectivistic tendencies of both Labour and *Mizrahi* education (Rieger 1940a, 33). The transition to statehood provided this party with an opportunity to materialise its platform, but it also generated the rapid expansion of the Labour stream. This made the General Zionists fear that state education would enable *Mapai* to increase its (dominant) political power and influence (Don-Yehia 1977, 468). When the conditions had changed, the General Zionists Party was a 'natural' ally for the transformation to state education.

The main rival to *Mapai*'s leadership on the issue of state education was *Mapam*, its ally in the Labour educational stream. *Mapam* was the second largest party in the *Histadrut* and, in ideological terms, more collectivist and less state-oriented than *Mapai*.<sup>22</sup> The distinctive position of *Mapam* had made education a significant tool for fostering both its ideology and adherents and, in this sense, similarly to the religious parties, it viewed the *stream system* as a source of power (Swirski 1990, 41). The dissolution of the Labour stream, therefore, could have greater and worse consequences for *Mapam* than for its partner *Mapai*. Thus, the ideological rivalry between the two parties notwithstanding, the future of *Mapam* as a political party was also at stake. For *Mapam*, the loss of autonomy in education could mean – and indeed this became the case – its continuous decline within the Labour movement against the strengthening *Mapai*. The fact that *Mapam* was an ally and a rival to *Mapai* only made the struggle more difficult to handle (see also, Zameret 1997a, 200-210).

### **The abolition of the pre-statehood stream system**

The agreement of March 1950 regarding education in the immigrant camps did not last for long. In this year, the government had changed its absorption policy and many of the immigrants were transferred from the camps into a new type of settlement, the transitory camp (*ma'bara*), that unlike the former, were built in the outskirts of the cities and were under the control of the local municipalities and not the state. The state, therefore, was no longer responsible for providing the immigrants with their basic needs. On the contrary, the inhabitants of the transitory camps could, and should, have sought employment in the free labour market. Politically, this entailed a greater degree of manoeuvrability for the political parties, and mainly *Mapai*, which controlled the state bureaucracy. Various economic and political considerations account for this change in the absorption method (Bernstein 1981, 28-29; Hacohen 1994a, 204-206); one of its implications was that it re-opened the question of education.

Geography and demography again came to play a significant role in the subsequent developments in education. The move to the transitory camps changed one of the conditions that previously made the agreement on education possible, namely, the existence of spatial boundaries that determined who were the subjects of governmental policy. In the transitory camps it became impossible to determine which camp was a 'Yemenites' camp' and what kind of education should have been carried out there (Zameret 1997a, 176). In September 1950, *Mapai* and the religious parties re-approved the agreement on the division of education

<sup>22</sup> In a letter to *Mapai*'s Central Committee (LA IV-215-1-1692, 11.3.1951), which convened to discuss the question of state education, Ben-Gurion plainly argued against the *stream system*: "not one of us could send his children to a school of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir* unless he wishes his child to be educated for Russian [read: Soviet] [intellectual] annihilation." More generally, *Mapam*'s (see Glossary) pro-socialist, secular orientation was opposed to *Mapai*'s state-orientation, and particularly, its political alliance with the Jewish religious parties. This conflict was also revealed by struggle over the dissolution of the *Palmach* paramilitary unit, which was under *Mapam*'s political control (Peri 1983, 52-53).

and applied it to the transitory camps, but by then, *Mapai*'s apparatus was less inclined to implement it (ibid. 178-180). In January 1951, the attacks of the religious front on the government increased, and the PM, in response, confronted them with the right of the Labour stream to provide religious education (ibid. 180; Kafkafy 1990, 54). The tension between the parties had reached another peak and, in February 1951, the PM declared the *Knesset*'s vote on educational issues as a vote of confidence. *Mapam* and most of the religious MKs voted with the opposition and the government lost its parliamentary majority (Zameret 1997a, 183). New general elections were called and took place in July 1951.

The crisis in education, apparently, was not the only issue on the political agenda at that time. The government, to meet its budgetary constraints in light of the absorption of the immigration, initiated in March 1949 a food-rationing policy known as the Austerity Regime (Gross 1990, 75). This regime, which was in fact an egalitarian economic measure against the rising price level, was meant to facilitate the inflow of immigration and its absorption. Yet, it directly affected the well being of the veteran population and its standard of living (ibid. 75-77). This increased the tension between the veterans and both the newcomers and the ruling *Mapai* party (Gross 1995, 236). The middle class opposition to this policy soon manifested itself in the flourishing of a black market, to which the state failed to respond.

Another challenge to the government's legitimacy came from the lower echelon of society, as the immigrants became unsatisfied with the conditions in the camps. The lack of employment, combined with the low standard of living, created tensions that, occasionally, erupted into violence. Moreover, inhabitants of the camps were demanding to move from one camp to another in search of employment or family reunion. This had made both governmental and JA officials fear that this unrest would develop into a violent uprising. Some of them even conceived of the situation in terms of a revolt (Hacohen 1994a, 291-296; Bernstein 1981, 35). Soon, both challenges were translated into a shift in the vote of the electorate.

In the 1951 general elections *Mapai* kept its dominant position winning 45 of the 120 *Knesset* seats, and the religious parties kept their power, winning 15 seats (see Appendix C). The significant shift of vote was registered among the veteran middle class, which increased the power of the General Zionists from seven to twenty seats.<sup>23</sup> Following these elections a unique and one-time coalition was formed, a coalition that brought the core of the veteran sector and the three strongest segments of the *yishuv* – the organised Labour party, the Zionist religious, and the bourgeois *ashkenazi* sectors – into one government (Swirski 1990,

<sup>23</sup> This shift was already evidenced in the 1950 municipal elections, when the urban middle class increased the power of the General Zionists over that of *Mapai* in many major cities (Shapiro Y. 1984, 138-139). Notably, the success of the General Zionists party in the general elections was unique; thereafter, this party was in decline and in 1965 it merged with the nationalist *Herut* party. In this context, this shift must be understood not in ideological terms, but as manifestation of the middle class's interest in a more liberal, hence less egalitarian, economic policy (see, Shapiro Y. 1984 131; Shapiro and Grinberg 1988; Levy 1997, 29).

40).<sup>24</sup> These three parties, in spite of their ideological antagonism, had found two mutual interests – strengthening the state and reassuring the *ashkenazi* middle class that future state policies would be favourable to them.

*Mapai*, as the dominant party, was interested in creating the state apparatus as its power base. In this respect, *Mapai* dissociated itself from *Mapam* (Swirski 1990, 41). For the Zionist religious parties, whose constituency never exceeded some 10-15 percent of the population and did not control any other resources of power, the state could be the only source of political power. The General Zionists party, which saw ideological education as antithetical to a liberal, individualistic order, was interested in strengthening the state as a means to counterbalance the collectivistic tendency of the *Histadrut* and *Mapai*. It was, then, the coinciding interests of these three parties that put them into one coalition that favoured the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* and, moreover, had the capacity to materialise this notion politically and economically.

The economic crisis was resolved by freeing the market from its egalitarian practices. The state introduced several regulations and mechanisms that created the grounds for a more liberalised economy and for subsidising the emerging middle class (Carmi and Rosenfeld 1993; Grinberg 1991; Gross 1995, 234). The agreement on the ‘nationalisation’, or better statization, of the educational system resolved the crisis in education (Zameret 1997a, 227). In this context, *Mamlakhtiyut* turned out to be the solution for the political crisis, not its cause.

### The 1953 State Educational Act

These developments led to an agreement on the principles of state education, and so to the passing in 1953 of the State Educational Act. This marked the final abolition of the *yishuv*’s *stream system* and ended the ‘struggle over education’, thus setting the grounds for a new social order based, presumably, on the principles of universalism and state monopoly in education. However, instead of creating one common school system, the new system turned out to be no less divisive and segregated than the old one. Thus, the Ministry of Education was, following this Act, comprised of four departments, each of them oriented towards a different constituency:

- 1) Hebrew general education (*khinukh mamlakhti*);
- 2) Hebrew (Jewish) religious education (*khinukh mamlakhti-dati*);
- 3) Arab education; and
- 4) recognised-unofficial education.

<sup>24</sup> Two parties were excluded from this coalition: the Zionist-leftist *Mapam* party that professed an anti-statist approach, and the nationalist revisionist *Herut* party that was also excluded from the *yishuv*’s political order. These two parties forcefully opposed the statist approach of the ruling *Mapai*.

The main schooling system was that of the Hebrew general education, which was based on the merging of the *yishuv*'s General educational stream and the urban schools of the Labour stream. Within this framework, the *kibbutz* movement, one a part of the Labour stream, held on to its educational autonomy (Kleinberger 1969, 129-130; Swirski 1999, 103-104). The Hebrew religious schools, on the other hand, remained under the direct control of the Zionist-religious parties, although their administration became a part of the Ministry of Education. The Arab school system, although separated from the Hebrew one, was not autonomous, and until the 1970s, it was run by a special Jewish advisor, affiliated to the government's advisor on Arab affairs (Al-Haj 1995, 64). The fourth department in the new ministry was formed in order to meet the needs of the ultra-orthodox sector, which has retained its educational autonomy ever since. This department also catered to the needs of the Christian communities that retained their own curricular autonomy (which also served as a policy of 'divide-and-rule' within the Arab sector), and, more generally, to the needs of other schools that could operate practically as private schools. Thus, the ideological division of education was replaced by what seemed to be a functional one. Still, I propose, this was not the only characteristic of this new educational order.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I asked how the *yishuv*'s educational order has been transformed into a state-oriented order and, more pertinently, how the particularistic features of the old order could be accommodated with those of a sovereign modern state? If, for a moment, it seemed that the transition to statehood would result in a totally different educational system, these expectations were shattered by the reality of statehood. It was all the more ironic that the new educational order was grounded in the same particularistic features as the old one. The state indeed gained monopolistic control over education, and, yet, education remained nationally separated and in parts autonomously controlled by political parties, primarily in the religious sector and in the *kibbutz* movement. Above all, the new order remained oriented towards the needs of the strongest, i.e., the veteran *ashkenazi* sector, and, in this sense, not only did it reinforce the Eurocentric character of society, but it also left the new educational system as particularistic and ethnicised as before.

"It is in the specific national forms of state-formation, of which educational development is a part, that the key to the uneven and distinctive development of education systems lies." (Green 1990, 77). In this contention, Green seeks to place the understanding of the particular features of specific educational systems in the context of state-formation, and, in particular, to account for the variance between countries, despite the fact that various systems share the same principles of 'modern education'. These common principles were already acknowledged by those educationalists who discussed, in the 'interim period', the future of education, which had made them aware that the 'transition to statehood' would require the

transformation of the ‘old’ order. What they failed to understand, however, was the extent of this required transformation, and the particular pattern that it would take. This failure resonates in the academic debate over the transition to statehood, and, in particular, over the meaning of *Mamlakhtiyut* in education.

The struggle to abolish the *stream system* and to establish state supremacy in education has been commonly explained from two opposing perspectives. One, an idealistic approach, represented by Zameret (1997a), is couched in the mainstream functionalist Israeli sociology, and tends to take *Mamlakhtiyut* at face value, as an expression of the Zionist vision of national homogeneity, and as a manifestation of the universality of the state. The other, critical perspective, whose main proponent is Swirski (1999), tends to under-value the ideals of *Mamlakhtiyut*, mainly because of its exclusively Jewish presuppositions, and to see this notion in terms of an ideological artefact. In this sense, the main aim of this struggle was to secure the upper position of the ruling *Mapai* elite in the state. From both perspectives, nonetheless, the transition was seen as critical for the ensuing development of education, and hence for social relations.

Although I do not share Zameret’s perspective, ideologically or theoretically, his study of the processes that led to the abolition of the *stream system* is significant in two main respects. First, Zameret argues that throughout these crises in education, between 1949 and 1951, the educational policy changed from ‘melting pot’ to ‘cultural pluralism’ (Zameret 1997a, 6). This transition, however, was not smooth and this implied that the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* was not adequately implemented. This resulted in the widening of the conflict between the non-religious and religious segments of society, that, *inter alia*, deepened the rupture between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* Jews (ibid. 252-253). Yet, the question of how these two schisms, the religious and the ethnic, came to be one, remained beyond explanation.

The second significance of this study lies in the way in which it reproduces the idealistic conception of *Mamlakhtiyut*. This is salient in Zameret’s disregard of the Arabs, and in that he presumes that an account of the history of education in Israel can be made without a single reference to Arab education. Not less important, however, is Zameret’s insistence on presupposing the idea of *Mamlakhtiyut* to its practice, and, particularly, on seeing it as an emblem of state universalism (at least vis-à-vis its Jewish citizens). Thus, Zameret fails to see that *Mamlakhtiyut* engendered the linkage between ‘religiosity’ and ‘ethnicity’, and hence that it could not serve, as he suggests, as a solution to the ‘ethno-religious problem’.

Swirski, on the other hand, is less concerned with the malfunction of *Mamlakhtiyut*, than he is with the failure of the state to develop, compared to the USA for example, a common Israeli school. Thus, he contends, the main result of the transition to statehood was that state education was “carved up in a new way” (Swirski 1999, 104), and that the “politics of carving up”, an inheritance of the *yishuv*, put *Mapai* in “a position to control the new state’s

education system, and to cut the largest piece for itself.” (ibid. 101). The condition of statehood thus enabled the veterans to carve the new system in their own way (or, shape), yet, he concludes, the battle for *Mamlakhtiyut* in education, unlike that in the military, was unsuccessful. This was mainly because state schools “did not play the role of ‘Israelizers’ of the new immigrants” (ibid. 109). This function was kept for the army.

This explanation, however, is deficient in two main ways. First, it tends to presuppose the ‘ethnic’ differences between *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* Jews, and thus to see these categories as fixed and self-evident. In this respect, Swirski misses what Zameret has observed, namely the collapse of the ethnic and religious schisms as early as in the struggle over state education. Second, by claiming that the struggle for *Mamlakhtiyut* was unsuccessful, Swirski implicitly accept Zameret’s position, namely, that at least for the Jewish sector, this notion had the merits that could have made state education a path to social equality. He, thus, unintentionally, dissociates the ideology of *Mamlakhtiyut* from its practice, which, from his theoretical perspective, means abandoning this concept altogether.

*Mamlakhtiyut*, however, was not unsuccessful. Its success, first and foremost, was seen in that it enabled the state to establish itself as the supreme power in education, and in society at large, and thus brought the *yishuv*’s educational order to an end. It was, in this sense, the universality of this notion, against the desire of the political parties to hold on to the principles of the *stream system*, that had made it powerful, and a legitimate basis for this transformation. By the same token, the nationalistic aspect of this notion ensured that the appropriation of social functions from the societal forces would not jeopardise the efforts, or desire, of the state to keep this process exclusively Jewish. It thus determined that the boundary of citizenship would not coincide with the national one. This, however, was not really a matter of debate or dispute, despite the calls during the ‘interim period’ that the Arab question should be resolved differently. The powers of this concept, I propose, rested elsewhere.

The significant aspect of *Mamlakhtiyut* was that it did not lay the grounds for a universal educational system. In fact, I argue, it even prevented the Hebrew educational system from developing in this direction. Apparently, not only did *Mamlakhtiyut* imply that the debate over the future of education remain confined to the Jewish sector, it also ensured that it would be conducted solely by the Zionist political parties, and for the benefit of their constituency – the veteran *ashkenazi* sector. In this context, the state had to satisfy these parties that the abolition of the *stream system* would not result in their loss of political power, but rather the contrary. Thus, the main thrust behind the ‘struggle over education’ was the need to accommodate the interest of the state in monopolising education with that of *Mapai* and the Zionist-religious parties to gain control over the immigrants, and thus to ensure their political power. It was the conflict between these interests that gave rise to

‘ethnicity’, which re-appeared as a means to pacify the political parties whenever either the Labour or the *Mizrahi* streams feared that state monopoly might endanger their own grip on the immigrants.

Eventually, the ‘struggle over education’ resulted in a new educational order. Yet, the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*, contrary to what Zameret suggests, implied that education was never fully secularised. Its *problematique*, however, was not that it offered parents a single choice between ‘secular’ and ‘orthodox-religious’ education (Zameret 1997a, 252), but that it determined, for mere political reasons, that *mizrahi* children would be tracked to the latter (Swirski 1999, 117). This entailed the continuation of the educational autonomy of the Zionist-religious stream (contrary to the principles of de-partyfication), and that *mizrahi* children would be segregated from *ashkenazi* ones and enjoy a lower level of education (Schwarzwald 1984; 1990, 71 cf.). The failure to develop a common (Hebrew) school was not a result of the failure to bridge the gap between religious and non-religious, but a consequence of these parties’ ability to overcome their ideological differences in order to ensure their control over the immigrants.

This tracking, however, was not the only feature of the new order. While *mizrahi* children were taking their place in state religious schools (*mamlakhi-dati*), the non-religious state school (*mamlakhti*) was practically constructed as a middle class school, and the *ashkenazi* sector as its ‘natural’ constituency. In the context of the rapid process of proletarianisation of *mizrahi* newcomers, the school system became characterised by a clear (though not formal) ethno-class division. Hence, the relegation of *mizrahi* children to religious schools only increased their distance from the hegemonic Zionist discourse, and strengthened the identification of this population as both non-modern and ‘second-class’ Zionists. Yet, the incorporation of *mizrahi* Jews, though limited, into a distinctive Jewish educational system also ensured that *mizrahi* Jews would discard their Arab culture, and that, in light of the parallel proletarianisation of the Arab minority, the meeting of Arabs and Arab-Jews in the labour market would not result in political co-operation. The non-secularisation of the educational system thus proved to be a means to keep society fragmented and segmented along both ethno-national and ethnic lines.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FROM “EGALITARIANISM” TO “COMPENSATION”:

### THE MAKING OF ‘ETHNIC THINKING’, 1953-1959

The legislation of the 1953 SEA, which marked the institutionalisation of *Mamlakhiyut* in education, indeed ensured the abolition of the *stream system*, and the end of the pre-state educational order. Still, state education conformed to the old educational order by keeping a strict division between Arab and Hebrew education, and by institutionalising the religious/non-religious sub-division of the latter. The reproduction of the old order within the framework of the state, nevertheless, corresponded to the interest of the state in monopolising education, as well as in ensuring its exclusivist Zionist character. This thus created a universal educational order, albeit a limited one. State education became compatible with the changing of the social order. At the core of this order stood the state-made middle class, which brought about the new educational order, and thus proved the ethnic character of this change. In this sense, the structure of state education reproduced the predominance of the veteran, *ashkenazi* sector against the marginality of both *mizrahi* Jews and the Arab minority in the state. Not less important, it also reinforced the mutual interdependence between the state and the dominant *ashkenazi* sector.

It was not surprising, then, that ‘ethnic politics’ continued to play a significant role in the educational sphere. In the following years, the changing educational policy, and the expansion of education, reflected the existence of an ‘ethnic thinking’ that shaped the uneven spread of education. This thinking, or mindset, I argue following Grosvenor (1997, 185), underlay the identification of *mizrahi* children as ‘alien’ and in need of special educational measures, and it was due to its prevalence that the educational arena became so crucial in shaping and entrenching ethnic relations in Israel.

In the course of the 1950s and 1960s, education policy underwent a three-phased shift, conventionally depicted in the historiography of Israeli education as a shift from ‘egalitarianism’, through ‘compensatory education’, to ‘integration’. This transformation is mostly seen and explained in terms of a linear progress which reflects a growing concern for the educational needs of *mizrahi* children (Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 50; Schmida 1987, 163-165). Concurrently, the educational system underwent a structural re-organisation,

characterised by a diversification of educational routes that facilitated and reflected the expansion of post-elementary education. These two seemingly separate processes culminated in the 1968 Educational Reform Programme (hereafter, the Reform), and to a lesser degree, they were also reflected in the 1975 reform in Arab education. The purpose of the following analysis is to explore these processes in relation to each other, and to examine their significance for the changing conception of the 'ethnic problem', and moreover, to the construction of the ethnic categories.

My argument, more specifically, is that although the changing educational policy has shown a gradually increasing awareness of the 'ethnic problem', and hence a growing interest in diminishing the educational gap between *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* children, this change also redrew and reproduced the boundary between these two sectors. Furthermore, the transition from one policy to another, I argue, was neither as linear as depicted, nor independent of the structural re-organisation of the school system.

The following two chapters deal with these changes in the educational policy and with the expansion and re-structuring of post-elementary education. In Chapter Seven I focus on the period of 'egalitarianism' and the dispute over the uniform curriculum, and on the shift to 'compensatory education'. Its aim is to explain why and when the educational predicament of *mizrahi* children became a political concern for the Zionist establishment. Thus, already prior to statehood, and in relation to the 'turn to the Orient', the Zionist establishment sought to explain scholastic gaps in terms of 'cultural differences'. This perspective dominated throughout the period of 'egalitarianism' and was reinforced by the shift to a policy of 'compensatory education'. These policies, I argue, thus entrenched a conception of *mizrahi* children as 'problematic', a conception that remained intact when the state sought, by means of a policy of desegregation, or integration, to remedy it. This shift, that marked a qualitative change in the conception of the 'ethnic problem', and hence in social relations, is the subject matter of Chapter Eight.

### **IDENTIFYING THE 'ETHNIC PROBLEM'**

Until the early 1940s, the Zionist establishment had shown little concern for the social and educational predicament of *mizrahi* Jews. This had changed in relation to the Zionist 'turn to the Orient' (see Chapter 4), when its greater institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the *yishuv*'s political parties enabled it to develop its own policy and methods of absorption and education. This change was evidenced in a growing awareness among teachers and educationalists of the problem of the educational gap, and primarily, of the low rates of attendance amongst *mizrahi* children. The growing need to attend to these problems soon manifested itself in the articulation of a scientific approach to the 'ethnic problem'. This scientific approach, which identified the problem of *mizrahi* children as a 'cultural problem',

served to ensure the vested interest of the Zionist establishment in the favourable position of the veteran *ashkenazi* sector. As a result, the educational policy towards *mizrahi* children was based on, as much as it reinforced, a conception of the *mizrahi* home as the locus of the 'ethnic problem', and the school as its supposed remedy.

The first signs of concern about *mizrahi* children's education appeared in 1937, when a group of teachers in Jerusalem convened to discuss the predicament of children who remained outside the formal Zionist educational system. In their meeting, Dr. Eliezer Rieger of the Department of Education stated that the *yishuv*'s educational system was turning down hundreds of children each year for lack of places and budget. According to his statistics, in Jerusalem alone, some 1,500 children aged 6-12 did not attend any school, about 700 were in Christian Missionary schools and some 1,000 acquired only basic writing and reading skills in *Kuttabs* (15.12.1937).<sup>1</sup> In a letter, dated 22.2.1938, to Prof. David Yalin – president of The Society for the Expansion of Education in Jerusalem – Dr. Rieger quoted the figure of 1,600 *mizrahi* children (and an estimate of 400 *ashkenazi*) in the 7-13 age group who had never attended any school. The Society's interest in the state of education was evident in yet another letter, from the same date, in which Yalin sought donations for the opening of classes for these children. Notwithstanding these efforts (that, characteristically for the *yishuv*, originated within civil society), the change in approach to the absorption and education of non-European Jews did not occur until the overall political environment had changed.

One expression of this change was the publication in 1947 of Eisenstadt's *Introduction* (see above Chapter 1). In light of the Zionist 'turn to the Orient', this monograph, which in fact consolidated data from various studies that were conducted during the 1940s, showed an attempt to offer a sociological approach to what by then had already been understood as the 'ethnic problem'. Eisenstadt, it should be recalled, employed, implicitly and explicitly, a terminology of antagonism between (European) Western civilisation and (Oriental) primitivism. This encounter formed the paradigmatic explanatory framework for the conditions of, and motivations for, *mizrahi* Jews' immigration, as well as for their impoverished social existence (Eisenstadt 1947, 7-10). This, he proclaimed, was also the reason for the educational predicament of *mizrahi* children that was characterised by (ibid. 21):

- 1) dropout at a young age,
- 2) substantial lagging behind in scholastic achievements,
- 3) a lower rate of school attendance compared to *ashkenazi* children,
- 4) a high rate of attendance in informal schools (*Kuttabs* and *talmudei-torah*), and

<sup>1</sup> All references in this paragraph are from the Zionist Archive (ZA J17-231). For additional sources, see Rieger (1940b, 125); Frankenstein (1947, 148); and also, Appendix A.

5) significant level of attendance in Christian missionary schools.

The *mizrahi* children's failure to incorporate into the 'new' (modern) schools had been attributed to the lack of appropriate conditions for learning at home, but also, and more significantly, to their inability to adapt to the teaching methods of the new, modern schools (ibid. 22-23; Ortar and Frankenstein 1953, 292-295). This point was drawn from

Frankenstein's psychological writings on the primitive mentality and on the psychic character of *mizrahi* children who, in contrast to *ashkenazi* children, lacked the capacity of abstraction (Frankenstein 1953a, 28). Frankenstein, who in the 1950s became a prominent proponent of the psychological approach to the 'ethnic problem', employed uncritically the dichotomous distinction between Modernism and Primitivism, or West and East.<sup>2</sup> In one passage, offering a method for 'teaching abstract thinking to Oriental children', he and Ortar contended:

We, who have been brought up in a way that has accustomed us to abstract thinking, are apt to forget that children who have been brought up in the spirit of a different culture are not accustomed to think in 'our' way – and then we wonder at their inadequate social adjustment or at their limited achievements. (Ortar and Frankenstein 1953, 295).

Thus, despite his seemingly empathic position, Frankenstein actually constructed the *mizrahi* home and culture as the origin of *mizrahi* children's failure at school and in society at large.<sup>3</sup> Eisenstadt, employing similar distinctions, explained the relation between this mentality of the *mizrahi* home and the children's failure at school:

The teaching methods, the intellectual concepts, the subjects and matters studied at school are, in most cases, completely incompatible with their parents' conceptions of life. [...] On the other hand, the schools on their part are not creating the educational bridge between the children's conceptions and ways of behaviour at home and the teaching and social guidance they receive at school. (Eisenstadt 1947, 23)

This, he went on, is not only a problem of the integrated, or *ashkenazi* dominated schools, rather "even those schools in which the majority, if not all, of the pupils are *mizrahi*, are not seeking new ways and [they] follow the abstract education methods." (ibid.). Yet, this critical stance towards the 'new' schools only reinforced his argument regarding the gap between home and school. This argument restated that *mizrahi* children are different and designated the school as the locus and the agent of re-socialisation.

<sup>2</sup> In 1951-52, *Megamot*, the Israeli Journal of Behavioural Studies, initiated a debate on the 'ethnic problem', Frankenstein (1951) wrote the leading article "On the problem of Ethnic Differences", which was followed by a series of responses. This debate was partly re-published in English in Frankenstein (1953b).

<sup>3</sup> Swirski (1990, 133) contends that: "Eventually, Frankenstein had a role in the field of education similar to that of the sociologists of modernisation in sociology. He contributed to the camouflage of the formation of class reality with a 'cultural' explanation." (For his critique, see Swirski 1990, 107-133).

In Eisenstadt's view, many families had taken their children out of school not only for economic reasons (i.e., to support the family financially), but also "because of the inferior status of formal education in the social needs of the parents." (Eisenstadt 1947, 24). In some cases, children had left schools against their parents' wishes because of "their own will to enjoy instantaneously the privileges that can be bought for money and that usually serve them as a symbol of broader and more convenient social needs." (ibid.; Eisenstadt 1950, 213; compare: Willis 1977, 39). This perception of the '*mizrahi* home' as the main cause of those children's failure at school dominated the establishment's approach towards the 'ethnic problem' and became, later, a justification for many interventionist policies that it undertook.

### **The dispute over the 'uniform curriculum'**

The magnitude and diversity of the immigration following independence made the need for a single, state-controlled educational system all the more pertinent. The absorption of immigration, like the state effort to gain control over society, was underpinned by the then prevailing nation-building doctrine of the 'melting pot', which was adapted from the experience of the USA and embodied in the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*. This policy was based on the assumption that national homogeneity implies the eradication of all cultural differences between the various (cultural) groups that compose the national collectivity (Eisenstadt 1969, 6-7; Yadlin 1969, 32; Dahan and Levy 2000, 421). A uniform curriculum was seen, in this context, as a means for achieving this goal and, especially, for instilling in the newcomers the values of 'society' (Dagan 1986, 43-44; Zameret 1997a, 112-115). The melting pot policy was thus deemed, in contrast to its rhetoric which illustrated the process of absorption as designed to bring about the 'fusion of the exiles', as being aimed at acculturation, that is, at assimilating the newcomers in the existing, dominant culture. Not less significantly, one of its main goals was to de-ideologise the existing educational order, thus allowing for the notion of statehood to override other conceptions that were seen as partisan and particularistic.

The melting pot policy prevailed throughout the first decade after independence, and was manifested in two types of demands: one, to adapt the methods of teaching to the peculiar cultural features of the (*mizrahi*) newcomers, and, second, to culturally transform the newcomers. In these two respects, a more accurate scrutiny would paint this policy as aimed at assimilating the new immigrants, and particularly the non-Europeans, within the allegedly Westernised culture of the veteran *yishuv* (Eisenstadt 1969, 12; Yadlin 1969, 32; Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 22). This was conspicuously evident in the lack of any particular reference to the needs of the new immigrants or to their cultural background in the existing curriculum in the early 1950s (Yadlin 1969, 33; Dagan 1986, 43; Swirski 1999, 166-168). Prof. B. Z. Dinburg (Dinur), the third Minister of Education, was the most prominent proponent of the

notion of a uniform curriculum. In a programmatic lecture on the need for a new national curriculum, he proclaimed that:

We are today facing two major problems: the '*fusion* of the exiles', and educating the people to be politically responsible citizens of an independent state. The composition of our pupil population has also been significantly transformed. These two [problems] compel us to make many alterations in the curriculum, in all subjects, and particularly in the humanities, [...] in both organisation and methods (Dinur 1952, 107).

Thus defined, the purpose of the new curriculum, and of education at large, was to address two main tasks: the creation of a homogeneous national (Jewish) collective, and the making of Israeli citizenry. Remarkably, this was immediately followed by a comment on the changing composition of the Jewish population. By juxtaposing the 'tasks' and this latter remark, Dinur explicitly expressed the very way in which the 'problem' of immigration had been perceived. He was not speaking of an abstract immigrant population, but referring to those immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries whose integration and absorption within the Jewish society were conceived of as a problem. It was with this burden that the Zionist ministers of education felt they had to deal.

The peculiar features, cultural and ideological, of the Oriental immigrants were used as a justification not only for curricular changes, but also for re-structuring education itself. A few years later, Minister of Education Zalman Arrane, speaking before the Supreme Council of Immigrants of the Oriental Countries and Yemen, claimed that the 'cultural background' of *mizrahi* immigrants was the reason for deciding on nine years of free, compulsory elementary education. More potently, he made explicit how this conception of the gap between the 'home' and the school overshadowed the very conditions under which those children entered the educational system:

What happens now is that there are children who had not entered school organically [from first grade], but [went] straight to the fourth, fifth grades etc. [Furthermore], we cannot escape it, for this is a fact, and it would be ridiculous to regard it as an insult; we have reached the conclusion that we should try giving these immigrant-children a conception of the gap between the school and their home, *because amongst the ashkenazi ethnic groups, school is the continuation of home, or the opposite – home is the continuation of the school.* (SA G/5598/104, 14.8.1958; *italics* added).

Notwithstanding these remarks – expressing, as they did, a fear of the 'encounter with the Orient' – the reasons for the 1949 Compulsory Education Act, as well as the impetus to change the curriculum, lay with the state itself. More precisely, they stemmed from a genuine interest in breaking with the educational patterns that had prevailed during the pre-statehood era. This interest was, on one level, an interest of the state that sought to diminish, if not eliminate, the capacity of the educational streams, thereby the political parties, to

determine their own educational goals by maintaining curricular autonomy. On another level, it ensued from the transformation of society itself and, primarily, from the interest of the emerging middle class in re-structuring education, and in creating new educational opportunities for their children. The state thus found itself in between two needs: to control the socialisation of the newcomers as loyal members of the national collective, and, to re-structure the educational system and comply with the needs of the new middle class without destabilizing the social and political order (Eisenstadt 1969, 11-13; Adler 1969, 24-31). A uniform curriculum, in this context, was a means to achieve both goals and thus make education relevant to the construction of a notion of Israeli nationhood and citizenship. In his programmatic lecture, Minister Dinur explained:

If before [statehood] the purpose of the humanistic studies had been to incorporate the pupil as a member of the Jewish public - a member who knows his needs, aspirations and problems, and [who is] ready to carry out his duty to this public, and also to implant in his heart the national sentiment and worldview, [...] and thus to link the younger generation in an organic mental unity to the Israeli nation – then, for the Israeli citizen this will not suffice. The child, the future citizen, should be educated towards full spiritual identification with the state, to be loyal to it, concerned with its security, safety and prosperity; he should be educated to see himself as the bearer of the state, since the concept of democracy means that each citizen should and must say *l'état c'est moi* and carry out this responsibility each and every day. (Dinur 1952, 109).

The debate on the implementation of a uniform curriculum dates back to the 1920s and to the dispute over the very existence of the *stream system*. The curricular autonomy of the various political parties (especially the Labour and the religious parties) was not overwhelmingly perceived as a positive development (e.g., Nardi 1934, 82). In fact, as early as in 1925, a group of teachers and educators organised to propose a uniform curriculum, based on the ideals of the 'Zionist pioneer' (Sitton 1998, 144). This group – that brought under one roof (sponsored by the Jewish National Fund<sup>4</sup>) teachers, headmasters and educators from all ideological strands – succeeded in penetrating some two-thirds of the Hebrew schools in Palestine, and offering a curriculum that emphasised basic Zionist values of colonisation and national revival, and thus created the basis for a uniform curriculum (ibid. 151-155). Menachem Ussishkin, chair of the JNF, who opposed from the beginning the idea of separate educational streams, explained the goals of a uniform curriculum while warning against the foundation of the Labour stream: "we have an ideal to create in *Eretz-yisrael* a single, unified nation, and all [of us] aspire for centralisation, and to distance [ourselves from]

<sup>4</sup> The Jewish National Fund (JNF) was the land-purchasing and developing body of the WZO, and the educational programme that was thus developed sought to emphasise its centrality in the Zionist national redemption project. The main factor allowing its sponsorship of the programme was that this body enjoyed an *a-political* status amongst the various factions of the Jewish-Zionist society (Sitton 1998, 149).

separatist and differentiating elements.” (Cited in Sitton 1998, 148). The JNF was also involved in establishing Hebrew schools in the Jewish communities in Europe, and in proliferating Zionist ideals through them (*ibid.*). Among the people involved in this initiative was Professor for Jewish History, B. Z. Dinburg (Dinur) (*ibid.* 163).

With the transition to statehood, many of those educators who were previously involved in this initiative became the educational bureaucrats and policy-makers of the new state’s Ministry of Education. The opportunity to materialise their vision came when Dinur was appointed a Minister of Education, and especially in light of the successful struggle to abolish the *stream system* (Sitton 1998, 163). By the end of Dinur’s term in office, a new curriculum had been written and, with the passing of the 1953 SEA, the state was in (almost) full control over the determination of its content.<sup>5</sup>

From this position, the need to acculturate the non-European immigrants became all the more pertinent. It required, however, some changes that would make the new curriculum more compatible with the needs and, especially the cultural background, of the new immigrants. It was in this context, that Dinur’s Orientalist and paternalistic perspective towards the immigrants became critical.

In his lecture, Dinur argued for the diversification of the sources used for teaching literature and history, as well as for the introduction of “classic works of art of *all generations and all tribes of the Jewish people*” (Dinur 1952, 107; *italics* added). This new curriculum, he concluded, would form the norm for all schools; anticipating opposition, he said:

There are those who argue that the heterogeneity of our country’s population does not allow one common curriculum. I dispute this argument: if we wish to assimilate the various currents of immigration and fuse them into one national-cultural body – we ought to have a norm. If we want that our elementary school will be a melting pot for the exiles – it ought to be strong, stable, and not insecure and lacking [fixed] patterns. The forms [and] the content should be crystallised and compelling, and uniform to the maximal degree. In case there are weaker classes in certain schools – the degree of their lagging behind would be measured against this minimal curriculum, but since the curriculum would be minimal – it could be common for all average children in the state. [...]

The real adjustment of teaching to the needs of the weak strata in the country should be done not only in the domain of the minimal curriculum, but also in **its provision**, in the domain of teaching methods. [...] The minimal curriculum should be one and decisive, since it reflects

<sup>5</sup> Already in 1949, in parallel to the legislation of the CEA, it was determined by law that the Department of Education in the Ministry of Education was the only body authorised to approve textbooks and other books for schools and that the schools were required to use no other books or study material (Sitton 1998, 166). Nonetheless, the Ministry was not consistent in implementing this law, especially in regard to the independent ultra-orthodox school system.

the standard to which we aspire to bring all the children of Israel, of all strata and all exiles. (Dinur 1952, 110).

This demand for cultural transformation was, in Dinur's view, the key for equality in education, and it stemmed, according to Dagan (1986, 58), from his elitist upbringing and education in Europe. This was indeed evidenced in his paternalistic attitude towards the immigrants. In one passage Dinur spoke of the *mizrahi* immigrants as,

representatives of a special world that lacks the depth of the Hassidic [i.e., Jewish-European] world, the foundations of Hebrew enlightenment, or the influence of the Wisdom of Israel. All of the new history of Israel that created the social and cultural image of modern Israel [...] indeed passed by them, but not through them. (cited in Dagan 1986, 81).

In this view of the 'ethnic problem', Dinur was not exceptional at his time. The solution to the 'ethnic gap' was to bridge the conceived cultural gap between the 'representatives of a special world' and the world of enlightenment. This conception was what made the rhetoric of the 'fusion of exiles' a guise for a policy of acculturation, and moreover, a policy of cultural domination.

The nature of the debate over the new curriculum was misleading, however. Despite its seemingly egalitarian rhetoric, the main concern of its initiators was not the needs of the new immigrants, but rather the urgent need to adapt to the new conditions of statehood. In this context, the diagnosis of the *mizrahi* 'educational problem' as a cultural problem concealed the, by then, well-known fact that what those children lacked was proper schooling and teaching. First of all, their prime problem was that they were illiterate in spoken and written Hebrew. As a result, many of them entered classes lower than their age group and failed to catch up with the prescribed reading material. Also, only some half of the children population in the immigrant and transit camps enjoyed regular education (Zameret 1997a, 69), and those who did, suffered from the low and inadequate level of teachers and teaching (Stahl 1957, 179; Dagan 1986, 22-23; Swirski 1999, 171-172), as well as from teachers' prejudice (Stahl 1979, 82-90). Much of the schooling and education in the camps was provided by the army and by soldier-teachers who lacked experience and proper training (Swirski 1999, 165). Above all, the poverty in the camps entailed that many parents could not afford to send their children to school because they could not provide them with adequate clothing and footwear, or that they lacked proper study conditions at home (Dagan 1986, 21).

These harsh conditions, nonetheless, did not equally affect the veteran *yishuv*. The shortage in teachers and the low level of the newly recruited teachers, for example, had not reached the schools of the veteran *ashkenazi* population that was taught by the few qualified teachers. An official in the Ministry of Education expressed this by saying that, "we sinned in the education of children in the transit camps. Even those happy children who were absorbed in school, receive only teachers [...] from the weaklings of the country" (cited in Dagan 1986,

22). Similarly, classes in some camps were of 70-90 pupils, and in some of the new immigrants' settlements there was not even a single teacher, whereas in a nearby veteran *kibbutz*, for example, there were 13 teachers to 200 pupils (Dagan 1986, 22).<sup>6</sup>

In sum, Dinur's days as Minister of Education represent the heyday of the melting pot policy. The ideal of national uniformity and cohesiveness, it was thought, was achievable through the implementation of a simplistic principle of equality. In education, this meant the application of a uniform curriculum and the equal provision of educational resources (Dagan 1986, 63). In this view, which equated Israeli citizenship to Jewish nationalism, a uniform curriculum was seen as the basis for a common sense of nationhood that would serve as an equalizer for the Jewish people of Israel (Iram and Schmida 1998, 124). That this perspective manifested a complete omission of the Arab minority from the Israeli citizenry constituted only a minor problem in terms of state legitimacy. Yet, its actual educational outcomes contradicted optimistic assumptions regarding the Jewish segment of society. Criticism from within the educational apparatus came early (Dagan 1986, 81-82). Thus, for example, A. Simon, the Ministry's supervisor in the Southern District, investigated children's achievements in his district and found severe gaps between immigrants' and veterans' performance in first and second grades (Simon 1957, 347-353). Nonetheless, the Ministry's administration declined his proposals for differential learning programmes that would confront the problem (Dagan 1986, 64). They preferred to hold on to the policy of 'equality in inputs' in spite of the growing evidence of the low scholastic achievements of immigrants, and despite the cumulative research of educators and researchers who examined the school system.<sup>7</sup> Soon the problem arose and the educational policy had to be changed.

## LOCATING THE PROBLEM: CHANGES IN EDUCATION POLICY

### From 'Egalitarianism' to 'Compensatory Education'

Zalman Arrane's coming into office as Minister of Education, in 1955, marked a change in education policy. He admitted that the 'slogan of equality' had been a burden on the immigrant children's education (Dagan 1986, 58). Explaining the predicament of elementary education during the first decade, Arrane referred to the factors that he considered pertinent

<sup>6</sup> This disparity was echoed in a discussion held at the education council of one *kibbutz* movement on the question of regional schools ("Discussion in The Education Council of the *Ichud*", JEA 1961).

<sup>7</sup> A report - sent from the department of education of the municipality of Beer-Sheba, a Southern immigrant town, to the Ministry of Education in anticipation for the transition to state education - indicated the declining proportion of *mizrahi* children from some 70% in the first grade to 56% in the eighth grade. The annual rate of dropouts, in a population that was mainly *mizrahi*, was around 30% for each cohort (SA GL/1071/1391, 27.5.1953). Similar figures were brought up in a meeting of teachers in southern immigrant settlements (LA IV-215-1-1638, 8-9 May 1953). More on the academic and professional criticism of education policy, see, Dagan (1986, 77), Adler (1969, 18-19), Eisenstadt (1969, 10), Stahl (1957, 179), Adar (1956), Peled E. (1984, 361), Iram and Schmida (1998, 124).

to its low level; many of them were attributed to the living conditions of the new immigrants, but some also to the features of the system itself:

Elementary education had suffered because of several factors: the poor living conditions of many of the children's parents; the difficulties of transition between languages, and particularly the opposition between the Hebrew language used at school and the foreign one used at home; the entrance of tens of thousands of pupils to classes lower than their age group and to classes in which the level of knowledge is higher than their own; the severe lack of qualified teachers and of buildings for schooling; the lack of uniformity in the curriculum in the first years; the experimental period of the national, uniform curriculum; the lack of distinction in teaching methods despite the difference between children; the lack of administrative know-how in controlling the expanding system; and other factors on which I shall not elaborate here. (Arrane 1971, 33).

Evidently, from 1955 onwards, there was a greater concern regarding the educational and scholastic gaps between *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* children, and several methods to confront this problem were raised within the Ministry of Education. Although only a few were actually implemented at the time, the Ministry adopted a general policy of 'compensatory action' directed to promote the scholastic achievements of impoverished children (Adler 1969, 24-26; Swirski 1990, 104-107; Iram and Schmida 1998, 111). This required a method of identifying those who were in need of government support. Since the overall approach to the problem had not changed, and it was still conceived of as a cultural problem, ethnic origin has become the major criterion for such a definition. Thus, the criteria by which a school (and not a pupil) qualified for special support were the rate of pupils of African and Asian origin, the physical conditions of the school, the rate of qualified teachers and headmasters, and a high probability that the majority of the pupil population would fail to achieve a minimal score on a national aptitude test (Minkowich et. al. 1982, 16; Adler 1984, 33; Dagan 1986, 59-60). The 'compensatory education' policy engendered, in the early 1960s, several 'enrichment programmes', based on the definition of pupils in need of special care (*teunitipu'ach*) (Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 43-48; Adler 1984, 32). All of these resulted, eventually, in the designation of children of *mizrahi* origin as *a priori* lacking the elementary capacity to be included in Israeli society as equals (Swirski 1990, 96-97).

Moshe Smilansky – a professor of education at the Hebrew University and an advisor to Minister Arrane – produced the most articulated opposition to Dinur's policy of 'formal equality'. In 1957, *Megamot* – the leading Hebrew journal for social science at the time – dedicated an issue to Smilansky's report to the Minister of Education on the structure of education and its social implications. The purpose of the report, which cited numerous studies on the state of education, was to examine "the influence of the structure and posture of the post-elementary educational system on the development of our society" (Smilansky

1957, 229). More specifically, Smilansky sought to examine "to what degree the existing social gap [between *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* Jews] is maintained, increased or decreased, by the influence of the school and by the general policy of the Ministry of Education" (ibid.). Characterising the condition of inequality in Israeli society, Smilansky (1957, 230-231) explained:

The capacity to overcome this inequality is dependent upon the will of society to act, deliberately, to achieve a social and economic balance: to promote in a pre-planned manner the educationally- and economically-deprived groups through education. [...] The demand for such pre-planned action opposes *inter alia* a fundamentally accepted tenet of our society, the principle of 'formal equality', and replaces it with the concept of 'real', or 'true equality'. The concept of 'equality in education' had been interpreted here, as in many other countries, in a limited and unjustified manner as 'equal education for all'. But equal opportunity means in many cases – **that different types of children are deprived of the education that is required in their current condition and which would be a real training for their future.** (emphasis in original).

In other words, Smilansky employed the conception of 'equal opportunity' against that of 'formal equality', as he designated the previous policy. Accordingly: "any attempt to offer a uniform curriculum for those two types of children [those who continue their studies to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and those who dropout to the labour market by the end of the elementary level, GL] in the name of equality, implies that [the latter's] immediate needs would not be satisfied and – in the long run – their further deprivation." (Smilansky 1957, 231; see also, Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 52-55). Another point that he sought to emphasise was that "we ought to abandon the educational philosophy of those who are not willing to accept the new reality of heterogeneous population and diverse economy. [...] It is time to change our perspective and act **to constantly adapt the educational absorption frameworks** to the new needs of the newcomers." (Smilansky 1957, 231; emphasis in the original).

Was Smilansky's demand for 'compensatory education' indeed an adaptation of the educational system to the immigrants needs? Arguably, this question has more than one answer. The more obvious one is that Smilansky was a modernist, and as such he probably truly believed in the role of education in developing a modern, democratic society and, hence, as beneficial for the *mizrahi* immigrants themselves (e.g., Smilansky 1957, 252). For this reason, as well as for economic reasons (ibid. 247-248), he emphasised that a larger segment of the *mizrahi* population should achieve Higher Education, and thus change the unfavourable balance between them and *ashkenazi* Jews in trade and in higher administrative and bureaucratic positions (ibid. 239-240). Nonetheless, Smilansky had a more burning agenda:

The need to replace formal equality with real equality [...] has its particular importance in the sphere of interethnic relations. The groups that are currently educationally and socially deprived – for historical reasons tied to the conditions in their homelands – encompass mainly the Oriental groups; doing nothing to expand their education and promote it by special means implies leaving the social situation intact. The danger of this situation is, notably, the overlapping of ethnic affiliation and socio-economic status. (Ibid. 231).<sup>8</sup>

Apparently, this position was well entrenched in the hegemonic, Zionist paradigmatic conventions regarding the *mizrahi* immigrants, and even more important, in the interests of the state itself. The fear of ethnic unrest, let alone conflict (see, Yadlin 1969, 33; Iram and Schmida 1998, 112), coupled with the concern for creating a better qualified labour-force, led Smilansky to propose a policy that had far reaching implications for the development of ethnic relations in Israel. In this respect, the policy of compensatory education should be judged by its outcomes rather than by its explicit intentions. While this policy might have been more adequate from the immigrants' point of view, its significance lay in that it conformed to the interests of the state in neutralising the conflictual antagonism between immigrants and veterans, and in adjusting the educational system to the imperatives of an industrialised state. Its implications for the evolution of the 'ethnic gap', nonetheless, were critical.

### **'Compensatory Education': Assumptions and Practices**

During the period of 'compensatory education' (1958-67), the ministry designed and implemented several enrichment programmes for the disadvantaged (Smilansky 1979, 67; Iram and Schmida 1998, 113-114); the most significant of these were the opening of pre-vocational classes and vocational tracks (Kahane and Starr 1989, 64; Yonah and Saporta forthcoming), and the opening of boarding schools for 'gifted disadvantaged' *mizrahi* pupils (Adler 1969, 25). These programmes aimed to improve the educational opportunities for *mizrahi* children, yet, in fact, they only reinforced the segregated pattern of the social integration of *mizrahi* Jews. Moreover, these programmes, that prevented the opening of academic tracks in the Development Towns and the poor neighbourhoods, and thus uprooted the stronger strata of children from their home environments, turned out to be an obstacle for the development of stable *mizrahi* communities.

These two seemingly separate programmes, in fact, complemented each other: whereas the expansion of vocational education was designed to address the masses (e.g., Iram and Schmida 1998, 49), the notion behind the Boarding School Fostering Project was of an elitist character (Adler 1969, 26). The demand to expand vocational education was not unique to

<sup>8</sup> A similar fear was raised in a later debate at the Ministry of Education on the re-organisation of the school system, where the implications of the introduction of selection mechanisms for ethnic unrest were discussed (SA GL/1743/104 5.12.1961).

Smilansky's educational vision, and it had already been dealt with for more than a decade when he became the Minister's educational advisor (e.g., Rieger et. al. 1945). Yet, it was in his time that the conditions were ripe for the implementation of this programme for two main reasons: first, Israel's economy was undergoing an enhanced process of industrialisation and, second, the immigration from Arab and Muslim countries provided the state with an abundant reservoir of potential workers (see Chapter 4). The expansion of vocational education, in light of the expansion of post-elementary education, was, in Smilansky's view, an important component in the re-organisation of education for both social and economic reasons (Smilansky 1957, 257-284; Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 78-81; see also Iram and Schmida 1998, 50). In relation to this, however, Smilansky (1957, 252) emphasised that,

the continuation of education does not mean the continuation of secondary academic education. The decisive majority of those youngsters, who are currently outside any educational framework, will be absorbed in various [educational] frameworks, mainly vocational (including agricultural) and education for manual work.

Vocational education was thus seen as the way to organise the inevitable expansion of education, whilst maintaining academic secondary education as a path to higher education for the few.<sup>9</sup> But, more importantly, as Iram and Schmida claim (1998, 49),

The reason for the unproportional [sic.] growth of vocational education was rooted in the understanding, which prevailed in the middle 1950s, that a traditional academic education was apparently inappropriate for a larger number of youth from Oriental and lower socio-economic backgrounds, and unsuccessful in providing them with the avenues for upward social and occupational mobility.

The tracking of *mizrahi* children to vocational education was, then, one determinative factor in the further segregation of *mizrahi* Jews insofar as it determined their limited educational and career opportunities. The parallel development of several fostering programmes only reinforced the above understanding, that is, the conception that *mizrahi* children are different. This was evidenced in the assumptions that underlay the programme with which Smilansky is most identified – The Boarding School Fostering for the Gifted Disadvantaged Project (hereafter, BSFP). This project lay the grounds for the transition from compensatory education to a policy of integration.

The BSFP, initiated in 1961, had been a part of an overall approach of fostering a select group of the disadvantaged – those in the upper third in ability ratings.<sup>10</sup> The underlying

<sup>9</sup> The balance between vocational and academic tracks was the subject matter of probably most discussions at the Ministry. The fear was that too many would choose academic education (see, e.g., SA GL/1743/104 18.12.1961; and also, Iram and Schmida 1998, 112).

<sup>10</sup> The other two major projects of this kind were the regional enrichment centres where disadvantaged children received afternoon and summer classes, and the experimental project, led by Carl Frankenstein, of the Hebrew University affiliated high school (Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 81). The latter project, which still exists today, is

assumptions of this particular project were both sociological and psychological. Sociologically, the reason for inability was conceived of as being social rather than hereditary, hence cultural disadvantage could be rehabilitated (Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 99); psychologically, it was thought that “adolescence is a particularly suitable time for fostering activities” (ibid. 102), consequently, “an *emotional crisis* may be a positive factor which *can be intensified and used* as a pedagogic-therapeutic tool.” (ibid. 100; *italics* added). Another assumption was that “in an open society like Israeli society, it is both allowed and required to raise intentionally the level of aspirations of youth of disadvantaged background” (Nevo and Smilnaky 1972, 27; Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 97-105). It is at the implementation of the latter that the whole project was directed.

In practice, this project entailed that the chosen children, the majority of them from *mizrahi* origin, would be separated from their home environment and transferred to boarding schools and homes whereby they, allegedly, would enjoy a better educational environment. A great effort was put into this project, which included a detailed selection procedure through the children’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade at elementary school (Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 119-123), and the making of the necessary physical conditions for the advancement of this project, including the construction of designated boarding schools (ibid. 124; and also SA GL/1743/104, 5.12.1961). In light of this endeavour to offer better opportunities for *mizrahi* children, the assumptions of this project, and of fostering at large, need closer examination.

The project’s point of departure was that “those in the upper academic third of predominantly disadvantaged neighbourhood schools, are average or below average in terms of national ability and achievement norms; if not provided with special support in development of cognitive abilities, cultural enrichment and preparation for expectations of the secondary academic school, their chances for succeeding would be very limited.” (Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 81-82). Thus, as they admit elsewhere<sup>11</sup>, the designation of these children as ‘gifted’ was not objective, but rather a means for taking them out of their home environment – that is, from their impoverished, anti-intellectual schools and neighbourhoods (ibid. 82) – and placing them where “they would associate with peers and tutors to form an alternative ‘reference group’ – motivated to perceive themselves as ‘gifted’ and not disadvantaged, learn to role-play accordingly, receive the necessary support and be

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based on an opposing principle to that of the BSFP. In Frankenstein’s view, selected disadvantaged *mizrahi* children should be taught in separate classes and instilled with their missing cognitive capacities (see also, Ortar and Frankenstein 1953).

<sup>11</sup> In one follow-up report, Nevo and Smilansky (1972, 27) explicitly stated that: “This assumption [that since this group of pupils has experienced some success it has not yet lost faith and is still possessed of achievement motivation] was the grounds for defining those students *pretentiously* as ‘gifted’ and their placement in schools where the reference group is made mainly of children of well-off strata. The initiators of the project assumed that if the child, his parents and teachers, were told that according to aptitude tests and the evaluation of educators, he is ‘gifted’ [...] this would lay the emotional ground for confronting anticipated crises and nurturing the motivation for achievement.” [*italics* added]. Note that the authors themselves use the term *gifted* in inverted commas.

accountable according to their potentialities.” (ibid.; and also, Smilansky, Burg and Krieger 1966, 11-13).

Finally, this project was significant because it revealed the assumptions that guided the political thinking about education and modernisation at the time, as well as the nature of the educational policy. Notably, the designers of this project, and of educational policy in general, were led to think, by understanding modernisation as being necessarily progressive, that if the educational gap was a social problem, then, taking the necessary steps and providing the required conditions might alter the fortunes of poorly educated children. This, in itself, was not a problematic presupposition. Yet, the solutions that it yielded, given that they were accompanied by an essentialist conception of the *mizrahi* home as the source of the problem, were harmful. Thus, in spite of recognising the below average level of education in the periphery (e.g., Nevo and Smilansky 1972, 27), the project re-confirmed the conception that had already been revealed in the dispute over the curriculum, namely that these children’s cultural background and homes lacked the required cognitive and affective stimulation for succeeding in schools. This, coupled with psychological presuppositions regarding the effect of modernisation on ‘non-modern’ populations, was seen as a good enough justification for an interventionist policy aimed at bypassing the hindrances to their modernisation. In other words, disconnecting the (more capable) children from their homes was conceived as a means to enable them to fulfil their potentiality and to achieve the scholastic level that they deserved (Smilansky, Burg and Krieger 1966, 13). These chosen few were taken away from their homes and towns in order to return as ‘re-formed’ Israelis, that is, assimilated in the dominant (*ashkenazi*?) cultural environment. This attempt at making the *mizrahi* communities a better educational and social environment had failed, mainly because it did not eliminate the educational gap between them and the well-off environment. Although this failure has not been studied yet, in recent years it reflects in the memories of some graduates, who feel that the project’s “intention was to disconnect them from their home culture in order to coercively instil in them the *ashkenazi* Israeli culture. Its cost was detachment from their roots, their families, [...] without the ability to truly become Israeli.”<sup>12</sup>

These reservations notwithstanding, this project was, as were other enrichment and fostering programmes, appealing from the state’s point of view because it offered a ‘solution’ that conformed to the state’s reluctance to strengthen *mizrahi* Jews as a collective, but rather only as individuals. This rationale resonated in most, if not all, of the educational reforms designed to address the ‘ethnic gap’.

<sup>12</sup> This citation is taken from a newspaper article (Katz 2001), on a recent documentary on four graduates of the BSFP (“The Gifted”, director: Yochi Dadon-Spiegl, 2001). This experience was also underpinning a fiction film, *Sh’chur*, written by one graduate, and which questions the price these children paid for getting better education (for a debate on this film, see the weekly supplement of *Ha’aretz* 3.2.1995).

## CONCLUSION

There is a linking thread between Smilansky's academic and political work and the way in which the 'ethnic problem' has been identified and defined in the academic work of Frankenstein and Eisenstadt, and between them and the Ministry of Education's policy toward 'the gap'. This gap, which was alternately perceived as 'educational', 'ethnic' or 'social', constituted a problem because its very existence undermined the nationalist-egalitarian self-image of the Zionist state. No less real was the 'gap' between the egalitarian rhetoric on educational opportunities and the segregationist practices of the state. This discrepancy became explicable by pointing to the *mizrahi* 'home' as the locus whereby the 'gap' had developed. Apparently, this served as a justification for the lower educational achievements of *mizrahi* children and, more importantly, as a means to render the state not responsible for the development of the gap. By shifting the debate to the 'sphere of the cultural', both researchers and politicians inclined to overlook more concrete reasons for the evolution of the gap, such as the need to create differential educational paths, and the lack of proper conditions for study in the periphery. This, I propose, accounts for the development of an 'ethnic thinking', accordingly social and educational problems became explicable in 'ethnic' terms. Paradoxically, while this thinking established that the state was not responsible for the origin of the gap, it made its apparatus pivotal in determining educational goals, and in undertaking educational reforms, and thus made the state responsible for closing the gap.

This 'ethnic thinking' was first evidenced when the educational predicament of *mizrahi* children became a matter of political concern, especially in those scientific attempts at explaining the poor educational and social existence of these children. Thus, prior to the Great Immigration, the cultural characteristics of the anticipated Arab-Jewish immigrants were seen as constituting a problem for an otherwise smooth process of modernisation and nation-building. In this view, *mizrahi* Jews were depicted as being essentially non-modern and, to a certain degree, non-Zionist. Both the Zionist political elite and the political parties shared this view, which was reinforced by the growing competition over the control of these immigrants. At this point, 'religion' came to play a crucial role in designating these immigrants as 'different'. Apparently, 'religion' did not bar the Zionist political parties from co-operating in the 'struggle over education', and yet, it came to be seen as impeding the inclusion of *mizrahi* Jews as equal members in society. In other words, it was not the religiosity of *mizrahi* Jews that had made them different, but the need to categorise them as different that rendered their religious practices a reason for their marginality. This emerging interlink between ethnicity, religiosity, and education stood at the core of the ensuing social relations.

This portrayal of *mizrahi* Jews as requiring special measures in order to become Israelis, or Zionists, or still more, modern, was entrenched by both academics and politicians, who engineered interventionist educational policies aimed at minimising the ‘gap’ (Eisenstadt 1950, 211; Ortal and Frankenstein 1953, 293-295; Ortal 1953, 271; Smilansky, Burg and Krieger 1966, 13; Yadlin 1969, 33). These policies, couched in Eurocentric and Orientalist terms, underscored the conception of the gap between the *mizrahi* home and the school as being at the core of the ‘*mizrahi* problem’. This only reinforced the identification of ethnic origin with scholastic capacity. It was not surprising, given these presuppositions, to find that while the level of education among first generation immigrants from the Arab countries varied, this variance disappeared within one generation (Khazzoom unpublished; Amit n.d.). In this respect, the very policies that had allegedly been designed to ‘close the gap’, may equally be seen as its perpetrator. The conception of the inadequacy of the *mizrahi* home was so strong and well entrenched, that neither the resistance of the immigrants themselves, nor the critique of educationalists could have changed it.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, the educational policy in the first decade attested to the development of ‘ethnic thinking’ according to which *mizrahi* ethnic identity became identified and defined as ‘a problem’. This thinking underlay an education policy that, instead of confronting the inadequate educational conditions in the *mizrahi* periphery, sought to compensate for them, either by specific pedagogical tools, or by displacing (some of the) children and relocating them in what was perceived as a better educational environment. Eventually, these measures only reinforced a conception of *mizrahi* Jews as being essentially different, and thus legitimised state intervention. This formed the grounds, in the next decade, for another shift in education policy, the shift to a policy of integration. This initiative, the *integration plan*, was based on the same rationale that underlay the BSFP, yet, at this stage it was decided, or thought to be best, to apply it to all children, and not only to a chosen few. The *integration plan* came into life in connection to the expansion and the diversification of post-elementary education, which also reflected the limits of ‘ethnic thinking’. This thinking, as will be shown in the next chapter, apparently not only generated the identification of *mizrahi* Jews as ‘different’, but also the designation of *ashkenazi* as a social group.

<sup>13</sup> There is still little evidence on the immigrants’ opposition, but see Yonah and Saporta (forthcoming). For ‘more established’ opposition: Stahl (1957); Dagan (1986); on patterns of resistance: Herman (1995, 108-109).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### EDUCATIONAL REFORMS, CITIZENSHIP, AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES, 1959-1968

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The structural and curricular developments in education, from the period of the *yishuv* through statehood, engendered, as I argued, an ethnically-segregated educational system and an ‘ethnic thinking’ that apparently not only reproduced social inequalities, but also reinforced the role of education in generating these inequalities. The outburst, in 1959, of the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, cast a shadow on the project of *Mamlakhiyut*, and, particularly, on the effort to make education a path for social change. At this point, the legitimacy of the social order was at stake and the need for an ethnic-neutral educational policy became essential. Against this backdrop, the shift to a policy of integration intertwined with a more profound transformation in the relationship between state and society, which was based on the principles of a liberal, market-oriented society.

The transfer of control over education, from the semi-voluntaristic *yishuv* to the state, engendered various processes of expansion and extension at all levels of education (Swirski 1999, 165). While no particular group disputed the necessity of expansion at the elementary level, the nature of the expansion of post-elementary education was a matter of more complex considerations and positions. The extension of post-elementary education developed from the need to diversify the educational system and to create different paths that would accord with the new needs of the state and the economy (Smilansky 1957; Swirski and Shoshan 1985, 23-24). Still, not less significant were the demands of various social segments in creating new educational opportunities for their children (Levi 1987, 16-20; Ish-Shalom and Schmida 1993, 60). Thus, the pressure to expand post-elementary education turned out to be characteristically ethnic. On the one hand, the emerging *ashkenazi* middle class saw it as an opportunity to retain its favourable position by securing for their children better academic education, thus making them a qualified reservoir of bureaucrats, managers and other white-collar professionals prepared to occupy those various positions that became available. On the other hand, the increasing pressure for inclusiveness, coming from the lower *mizrahi* strata that was previously excluded from post-elementary education, was

channelled to low-skilled professions by their tracking to the newly opened vocational schools.

This contradictory relationship between an exclusivistic pressure to enhance academic education for the few, and an inclusivistic call to extend post-elementary education to the many, stood at the core of the ensuing developments. It required the expansion of secondary education, while at the same time, entailing that this would be accompanied by the development of several mechanisms of selection based on the formation of distinct educational paths for children of different (ethnic and national) backgrounds (Shavit 1984, 211-212; Swirski 1999, 175-176; Ish-Shalom and Schmida 1993, 60). The changes in education policy, from the early 1950s to the initiation of the 1968 Educational Reform Programme, thus reflected a critical transformation not only in the structure of education, but more importantly, in social relations. This transformation was based on a growing orientation towards individual achievement as the organising principle of education and, concomitantly, on the creation and further entrenchment of internal (ethnic) boundaries. This latter development, I argue, was a consequence of the prevalence of 'ethnic thinking', but equally it led to a change in this thinking. More specifically, while the transition from 'egalitarianism' to 'compensatory education' was based on identifying *mizrahi* Jews as a distinctive socio-cultural group (requiring various pedagogical measures aimed at 'transforming' this group alone), the shift to 'integration' was qualitatively different. Although it did not mark a change in the conception of the educational problem as an ethnic problem, this new policy involved the identification of the *ashkenazi* sector as a similarly distinctive group. 'Integration' was thus a notion that encapsulated and brought about the re-definition of the relationship between state and society. In particular, the 1968 Educational Reform Programme showed the growing importance of citizenship in defining social relations, hence the transition to a social order based on the 'rolling back' of the state, and equally important, on the formation of 'privatised' particularistic social identities. This, however, only exacerbated the uneven expansion of education.

### **FROM 'MELTING POT' TO 'CULTURAL PLURALISM'**

One sign of change in the government's interventionist educational policy of the 1950s was the retreat from the policy of melting pot as the main tool for the absorption and re-socialisation of immigration. In 1966, speaking to a conference on the 'fusion of the exiles' at the Hebrew University, the deputy Minister of Education, Aharon Yadlin, publicly renounced this policy:

It seems to me that in the educational system we have reached, for the first time, an important conclusion of a general validity: there will be no real 'fusion of the exiles' unless we manage the absorption process and the rooting [of the immigrants] in the country as a reciprocal

process. That is, the teacher and the instructor (as well as the political apparatchik and the commander in the army), who contribute their share to the guidance of the new immigration, are not just benefactors and givers; they have to develop the opposite stance too, the willingness to receive and adopt the precious merits in which the tribes of Israel, which lack technological and scientific knowledge but not the values of culture, excel. [...]

The assumption regarding the need for the ‘melting pot’, [...] in the imposition of certain, uniform values on all the tribes of Israel, will end up only in unnecessary tension and explosion. Although I do not favour *cultural pluralism* as a final goal, I do think that it is important for the *transitional period* in order to ease the mutual adjustment of all segments of the population. We should consider the making of a new cultural synthesis as an ideal. But, the key for a proper fusion, to a meaningful synthesis, is education, from early age, to *inter-cultural understanding*. Education towards the fusion of the tribes means imparting a sense of confidence to pupils of the new immigration in their new situation, without them viewing it as total opposition to their own environment and culture. (Yadlin 1969, 33-34; *italics added*).

This speech – made as part of an overall reassessment of the absorption of immigration project – marked the abandonment of the notion of assimilation, that is, the effort to achieve national cohesion by eradicating the cultural features of the various social groups. It thus paved the way for a new approach based on an acknowledgment of the heterogeneity of society. In the educational sphere, this implied the end of the period of ‘compensatory education’ and a re-organisation of education on new principles encapsulated in a new notion, ‘integration’.<sup>1</sup> This speech thus manifested a conceptual change that undermined the foundations of the ‘Zionist revolution’. Taken on face value, it implied the retreat from a conception of cultural hierarchy, and a recognition of the equal contribution of the various (Jewish) segments to a new, ‘synthesised’ national identity. Yet, its proximity to the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt and its relation to the expansion of education and, particularly, to the re-organisation of the post-elementary level, rendered the picture more complex.

The call for ‘inter-cultural understanding’, as Yadlin himself made clear, did not imply that the ideal of ‘one nation’ should be discarded. Many academics and politicians, who participated in various debates on the cultural makeup of the nation, reiterated that the ideal remained one: “the fusion of the various communities [*edot*] into one Israeli nation” (Stahl 1984, 389). Furthermore, the conception of Western supremacy was prevalent even amongst those who favoured ‘cultural pluralism’, if only for a transitory period. In one such debate,

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, a similar shift occurred in Britain in the very same year when Roy Jenkins, addressing the issue of immigration, observed that Britain was moving to a new era of the second-generation immigrant. Integration, he said, “is perhaps a rather loose word. I do not regard it as meaning the loss, by immigrants, of their own national characteristics and culture. I do not think that we need in this country a ‘melting pot’, which will turn everybody out in a common mould [...] I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. This is the goal.” (Cited in Grosvenor 1997, 55-56).

conducted in the literature magazine *Keshet* under the title “Ethnic Snobbism”, one participant wrote: “The misfortune of *mizrahi* Jews is that in the debate on ‘what to give and what to take’ they hold an inferior position, since they have nothing valuable to offer in terms of modern culture. Therefore, they should abandon their demand to retain their own culture and folklore, because they thus contribute to the perseverance of estrangement and of the split within the nation.” (cited in Stahl 1984, 390). Other speakers were not that blunt, and although they did not share this view, they saw it as dominating the *ashkenazi* sector’s public opinion (ibid.).

The transition to ‘cultural pluralism’ materialised some ten years later, symbolically but not accidentally, with the demise of *Mapai*’s power. The Ministry of Education initiated the incorporation into the curriculum of the study of the ‘heritage of the Oriental Communities’ (Stahl 1984, 392), which marked the symbolic acknowledgement of the cultural distinctiveness of *mizrahi* Jews. Yet, the emphasis on the folkloristic aspects of this heritage was, as feared, negative and harmful, and as nothing but “a sweet candy for the deprived” (ibid. 391). In this respect, the new rhetoric did not imply a change in the conception of cultural hierarchy. Still, the new spirit of cultural pluralism was implicated in a more profound development.

The *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, despite its class-based motives, was articulated in cultural-ethnic terminology. By employing the same terminology that state officials were using in order to segregate and marginalise them, the protest thus manifested a grassroots response to the cultural marginalisation of *mizrahi* Jews.<sup>2</sup> This was, in the view of the commission that was set up to investigate it, “a sign of alarm which warns us that there is no place for complacency, that we have not yet reached the end of the national effort, and that there is a need for a critical change in the overall inter-ethnic relations in the state.” (Etzioni 1959, 20). The commission’s report emphasised the uniqueness of this event and sought to separate the protesters from the *mizrahi* immigrants as a group, and thus expressed a fear of the crystallisation of a *mizrahi* ethnic identity. Indeed, it was in this respect that this event marked the beginning of a new era.

Yadlin’s pluralistic manifesto was in fact a major official recognition of what was already acknowledged in public discourse following *Wadi-Salib*, namely, of the existence of the ‘first-’, or ‘good-old Israel’, identified with the veteran *yishuv* and with the *ashkenazi* segment at large, and the ‘second Israel’ that was composed of lower class *mizrahi* newcomers. The transition from ‘melting pot’ to ‘cultural pluralism’ was thus a precursor to

<sup>2</sup> For earlier manifestations of a counter-hegemonic ‘*mizrahi*’ identity, see Mutzafi-Haller (1999). Notably, although the protest was manifested in a clearly ‘secular’ language, at that time, as the findings of an ethnographic study of *Shas* show (Lion 1999, 10-12, 210-214), one can already discern the beginnings of an ultra-orthodox-*sephardi* consciousness. In 1961, the rabbinical figures who would later also lead *Shas* founded a yeshiva high school, and used a language of resistance against the melting pot policy.

‘integration’, that is, to the replacement of the principles of assimilation with a recognition, reluctant and implicit as it may have been, in the multiplicity of Israeli identities. This was an expression of the re-positioning of the state vis-à-vis society, which was a necessary condition for the *integration plan*. The retreat from the melting pot policy, as well as the change in policy towards Arab education (see below on the 1975 reform), implied that the state would no longer be fully identified with the veteran, dominant *ashkenazi* sector, and that from now on it should equally represent the needs and interests, hence the cultural manifestations, of other sectors. Following *Wadi-Salib*, the state indeed lost the monopoly in making ‘ethnicity’ a tool in shaping its policy vis-à-vis *mizrahi* Jews, who now claimed their equal citizenship rights in ethnic terms. Yet, it had not forsaken its alliance with the dominant sector. This alliance determined the particular pattern in which the re-structuring of the school system coincided with the changes in education policy, and although it reproduced the favourable position of the *ashkenazi* managerial class, it also paved the way for the privatisation of culture and memory in the 1990s (see Ram 1999b).

### THE EXPANSION OF POST-ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

During the *yishuv* period, post-elementary education was a privilege of the few. The Zionist movement, wishing to maintain its educational autonomy (hence, its reluctance to receive additional funding from the British Government: Nardi 1934, 85; Kleinberger 1969, 33; Rieger 1951, 24), concentrated its efforts and resources at the elementary level, thus leaving post-elementary education limited and making it a gatekeeper to higher education rather than a path for social mobility. The question of its expansion was deferred until after statehood (Ish-Shalom and Schmida 1993, 62), and was placed on the political agenda when B. Z. Dinburg (Dinur) was appointed Minister of Education.

The idea to re-structure education dates back to 1920 when Dinur proposed joining the seventh and eighth grades of elementary school to secondary school which would thereby, he claimed, raise the academic achievements of graduates of post-elementary education (Levi 1987, 33). At the time, post-elementary education was offered in two structurally different ways: one, based on the German model of the Gymnasium, consisted of a four-year preparatory school and eight-year secondary school; the more popular structure, however, was of eight-year elementary school and an optional two- to four-year secondary school (Nardi 1934, 24-25; Ben-Yehouda 1973, 6-7; Levi 1987, 33; Ish-Shalom and Schmida 1993, 61-62). This dual structure, which resembled the Central European model (e.g., Green 1990, 16, 122), thus served, separately, the needs of the elite and the rest of society. It offered the former education leading to academic professionalism, whereas most of the population enjoyed only elementary education, known as ‘popular education’ (Swirski 1990, 140). The only exception was the *kibbutz* movement, where children enjoyed a full 12-years schooling, albeit not resulting in a matriculation certificate (Kleinberger 1969, 34). The school system

in the urban areas thus bore a distinctive class character to which the composition of secondary education attested (see below, footnote 5). Moreover, most of these schools were privately owned and maintained by parental fees, and only after 1942 did the National Committee provide partial stipends towards tuition fees.

While the academic track remained exclusive throughout the *yishuv* period, vocational education hardly constituted an alternative for post-elementary education. In the Jewish sector, vocational education was limited in scale and run by philanthropic and public organisations; in 1944/45, there were only 16 ill-equipped vocational schools in which some 1,600 children studied (Kleinberger 1969, 33-34; Nardi 1945, 93-94; Rieger et. al. 1945). The same was true for the Arab sector. The significant increase in the level of education amongst Arabs was mostly attributed to the elementary level.<sup>3</sup> In 1948/49, only 14 (fourteen!) Arab pupils were attending the single secondary school in Nazareth, the major Arab city (Al-Haj 1995, 87)<sup>4</sup>, and there was not even one vocational school for the Arab minority (see Appendix B). Against this backdrop, the transition to statehood, which gave rise to the notion of 'education for all', implied a profound re-organisation of the structure of post-elementary education.

### **The debate over the expansion of secondary education**

The 1949 Compulsory Education Act showed an undisputed commitment to the notion of 'education for all'. Yet, with respect to the expansion of post-elementary education, this notion was not received uncritically, and, paradoxically, even amongst those who were bound to benefit from it. This expansion generated two types of responses: one, manifested in the position of the *Teachers' Federation*, reflected an opposition to the specific pattern of this expansion based on its implications for equal opportunities in education; the other, made by former leaders of the Labour educational stream, was based on a fear that this would hinder the continuation of ideological education.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, in both cases the opposition was not to the idea of post-elementary education, but to the principles of individualism and meritocracy that underpinned this development.

The question of whether 'post-elementary education for all' should indeed be a 'national goal' was mainly contested by educators from the Labour educational stream, who remained

<sup>3</sup> Mar'i indicates this development as a part of the need to prepare urban manpower for clerical and civil service positions in the British Government, nonetheless he does not indicate the scope of this increase in secondary education (Mar'i 1978, 14).

<sup>4</sup> This figure presumably excludes children in private, church-owned institutions. However, the ratio between children in elementary level attending private and public schools was, in 1948/49, 1:2 respectively (CBS 1997, table 22.9, pp. 501-2). In a survey, conducted by Al-Haj (1995, 97), it turned out that for the 1954 birth cohort the private school was an alternative in the transition from elementary to secondary education; some 30 percent of the pupils in this level were found in private schools.

<sup>5</sup> E. Rieger, Director-General of the Ministry of Education, and a long-time supporter of the expansion of post-elementary education, criticised the Labour movement for their objection to the extension of secondary education during the *yishuv*, and attested to the class character of the dual system in a symposium, held in Jerusalem on 27.11.1951 (see, Proceedings 1952).

committed to the idealistic conception of the new Israeli man, the pioneer (Kafkafy 1991, 44-49). In this view, education for agriculture and work was seen as equal, and even preferable, to academic education, as it fulfilled the student's both material and ideological needs. Thus, one opponent of the expansion of academic education argued that parents who prefer academic education to agricultural and vocational education, that is, over 'education for pioneering', were wrong, because they failed "to identify the interest of their children with that of the state" (*Davar* 3.7.1959). In other words, the objection to academic education stemmed from the fear that this would undermine the collectivistic, ideological character of society, and thus would promote notions of individualism. An opposing view, published in the same place, called for 'secondary education for all' in the name of the modernisation and the productivisation of society.

A similar manifestation of this debate was the conflict that evolved within *The Teachers' Federation* itself, which resulted in the secession of the high school teachers and in them forming their own union. Notwithstanding personal and organisational concerns, which included the demand of high school teachers for differential rewards for their academic credentials and the fear of *The Teachers' Federation* of losing its collective bargaining power (Swirski 1999, 187), this conflict was also a matter of principle. Whereas *The Teachers' Federation* favoured universal and equal education, the new Union of High School Teachers represented a position in favour of the further stratification of secondary education grounded in a rhetoric of individualism and meritocracy. Nonetheless, the hold of the more egalitarian position was diminishing, and as became clearer later, with the struggle over the Reform, *The Teachers' Federation* remained the only organised body that expressed a principled opposition to the Reform for its harmful implications for social equality (Levi 1987, 30; Swirski 1999, 193). The pressure to expand and diversify secondary education was eventually stronger than these ideological objections.

### **Comprehensiveness and diversification**

In 1952, when the conflict over the statization of education had reached its conclusion, Minister Dinur turned to deal with the implementation of state education, and with the restructuring of secondary education (SA GL/1071/139, 14.12.1952). Two issues were pertinent: **a)** the extension of free education and the (high) cost of post-elementary education; and **b)** the structure and the diversification of the school system. Dinur appointed Y. Goldschmidt, Director for Religious Education in the ministry, as head of the first public committee to examine the former issue. The committee recommended the extension of free education beyond the age of 14, as mandated by the 1949 CEA, and, *inter alia*, suggested that secondary education be diversified (Ish-Shalom and Schmida 1993, 64). In 1956, following another committee headed by Judge Tzelner, the Ministry initiated a scaled fees system conditioned upon an aptitude test, known in Hebrew as *Seker*, conducted at the 8<sup>th</sup>

grade.<sup>6</sup> This committee also proposed the expansion of secondary education, primarily in the periphery. The Ministry adopted the recommendation to diversify the school system and, combined with other initiatives for offering new ‘vocational’ subjects in the curriculum, this paved the way for a new type of school – the Comprehensive High School (CHS).<sup>7</sup>

The beginnings of the CHS nevertheless were not in any official decision, but rather in local initiatives originating in the periphery. The first eleven schools that were established on the principles of comprehensiveness were founded as early as 1953 in peripheral towns, following parental demand for post-elementary education for their children (Ish-Shalom and Schmida 1993, 66; Iram and Schmida 1998, 42). Only a decade later, in 1963, another committee headed by Prof. M. Smilansky proposed the CHS – that is, “a school that includes several tracks and levels” – as “an institution that would encompass most of the pupils in the development towns who wish to pursue secondary education” (cited from the committee’s report in Ish-Shalon and Schmida 1993, 70). Minister Arrane approved the committee’s recommendations and announced his intention to establish eleven more CHSs in the periphery (Arrane 1971, 53-54). Within the next five years, by the time the government had also approved the Reform, the notion of CHS had been strengthened and institutionalised (Ish-Shalon and Schmida 1993, 66-67). Concomitantly, a special effort was made to design a curriculum that would meet the needs of the CHS, and the Israel Education Foundation was founded with the express purpose of raising funds in the Diaspora for the establishment of more schools (ibid. 79). In Israel, as in other industrialised countries, the notion of ‘secondary education for all’ was deeply connected to the development of the CHS (ibid. 65; Swirski 1999, 181). Its specificity, however, lay in the peculiarity of the Israeli state expansion and in the demographic and spatial features of the absorption of immigration (see Chapter 4).

From the beginning, vocational education has been seen as a means to extend post-elementary education to the lower *mizrahi* strata (Peled E. 1976, xxxvi; Shavit 1984, 212; Kahane and Starr 1989, 64; Swirski 1999, 181; Yogeved Ayalon 1991, 209; Iram and Schmida 1998, 58). Although it was neither an easy, nor inexpensive solution, it became essential from the state’s point of view given the challenges of nation-building and state-

<sup>6</sup> The *Seker* (lit. survey) was enacted in 1955 as a selection mechanism that determined who would be accepted to secondary school and, more significantly, their eligibility for reduced fees (Levy A. 1994, 13). Following the considerable number of failures among *mizrahi* children, the Ministry decided on two norms, A and B, that were designed to allow these children to continue on to secondary school (Loveluck 1966, 7; Adler 1969, 24-25; Smilansky and Nevo 1979, 44). Thus, norm-A referred to a score of 80-100 percent, whereas norm-B to 60-80 percent in the test. In 1957, for example, 16.8 percent of children of Asian and African origin reached norm-A, compared to 43 percent of children of European and American origin; in norm-B the rates were 19.4 and 24.9, respectively (Yogeved 1973, 163). Notably, those children who were directed to vocational tracks were fully exempted from tuition fees.

<sup>7</sup> Ish-Shalom and Schmida (1993, 65) point to the initiative of the Hebrew University affiliated High School to offer new non-academic, subjects in the curriculum, as signifying the acceptance of the idea of comprehensiveness.

formation. First, curricular diversification was an indispensable aspect of the economic development of the state to become both bureaucratic and industrialised. Second, universal secondary education became vital to the state's effort to build up legitimacy and social stability: on the one hand, the veterans, who formed the power base for the ruling elite, saw it as a path for the development of their own occupational opportunities; while on the other, the ruling elite feared that the lack of educational opportunities would cause instability given the poor educational predicament of the *mizrahi* lower class.<sup>8</sup> Minister Arrane, speaking in 1958 before high schools headmasters, had made this point clearly:

Talking about the 'fusion of the exiles' will be nothing but empty phraseology if we fail to incorporate the youth of the 'in-gathering of the exiles' into the post-elementary educational institutions; moreover, if we fail, we thus place with our own hands a social time-bomb in the state. If we fail, we shall waste the most precious property of the state – an important and large part of the young generation.

This line of thinking guided us when we lay the foundations for scaled [high school] tuition fees; when we established norm-B in the national aptitude test [*Seker*]; when we organised special study-groups for pupils in norm-B; when we declared the establishment of pre-secondary education classes for immigrant-children who were not included in either norm A or B. [...]

This line of thinking is guiding us in our search for a way to establish a two-year post-elementary school, with or without vocational track, for all of those pupils who could not, or will not, study for a full four years. (Arrane 1971, 28).

Indeed, it was this line of thinking, or put more bluntly, this 'ethnic fear', that led policy makers, long before these ethnic feelings materialised in the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, to track children of *mizrahi* origin to the lower echelons of the educational system. One major policy initiative that created this 'ethnic division of schooling' was the opening of pre-vocational classes in the poor neighbourhoods and the Development Towns.

### **Pre-vocational education: entrenching ethnic segregation**

The expansion of post-elementary education, and particularly of the CHS, was driven by an emerging demand for inclusion, which was premised on universalistic and egalitarian conceptions and bore significant implications for the legitimacy of the social order. This pressure was not overlooked and, indeed, from the mid 1950s, the notion of 'post-elementary education for all' underpinned education policy. One initiative that lay the grounds for the extension of this notion was the introduction of pre-vocational classes.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, in 1968/69, some 80% of the 14-17 year-olds who neither study nor work were *mizrahi*; only 64% of *mizrahi* children, compared to 88% of Israeli born and *ashkenazi*, were at school (Habib 1974, 34).

Speaking before the Supreme Council of Immigrants of the Oriental Countries and Yemen, Minister Arrane talked about the pre-vocational classes (at elementary schools):

We did not find these classes for children of the Oriental communities in particular, and I would have thought the whole thing as a total failure if we would have divided [children] in two: those will go out to work, and those to study. There is no foundation for all of this talking about an intelligentsia that is allegedly not working. I recall that not long ago, when we were looking for an intelligent man, we found him among the working strata.

In the same breath, he went on to say:

We usually open up the pre-vocational classes for the socially backward strata, not only in the immigrants' settlements, but also in Tel-Aviv and Haifa. However, I think that towards 1960 [school-year], there will be a widespread network of two- and three-year vocational schools in order to expand the opportunities for these social strata. (SA G/5598/104, 14.8.1958).

The pre-vocational classes, which were located in the poor *mizrahi* neighbourhoods and in the Development Towns, thus became the engine behind the meteoric expansion of vocational education in Israel (Yonah and Saporta forthcoming; see Appendix B, Table B-2). The issue at point, however, was not only expansion. The Ministry was equally concerned about 'who would attend these schools'? In one discussion of the managing board of the Ministry of Education on the expansion and re-structuring of post-elementary education, Minister Abba Ebban said: "If we reach [the stage of] planning, we will be able to determine *who* and *how many* of the pupils will undergo either vocational or academic education." (SA GL/1743/104, 18.12.1961; *italics* added). Equally, the Ministry was concerned with the public conception of 'post-elementary education for all' as meaning 'academic education for all'. At a later date, Minister Arrane expressed this view, saying: "in the public perception, post-elementary education is mostly conceived as [standing for] academic education, and there is no greater mistake than this. It is now more than seven years since we set our policy: accordingly half of the children in the post-elementary education will study in academic schools, and the other half in vocational, agricultural and maritime schools. We are now close to reaching this goal." (SA G/5598, File No. 2, 4.2.1969).<sup>9</sup>

The fear that the opening up of post-elementary education would generate 'a stampede to the high schools' underlay the deliberations held at the various levels of the Ministry throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Levi 1987, 15-16; Swirski 1990, 140-141; Yonah and Saporta forthcoming). Thus, the main concern was keeping secondary education selective (see, e.g., a discussion at the Ministry, SA GL/1743/104 5.12.1961). Minister Arrane emphasised this

<sup>9</sup> There was a certain degree of cynicism in these various expressions. First, when Minister Ebban had made his assertion, it was already clear from the project of pre-vocational classes (which was at its peak), who would go where. Second, while talking of a 50:50 division, Minister Arrane was rationalising the existing reality. On various occasions, he quoted a figure of 25-30 percent for academic tracks.

point in his address to the Supreme Council of Immigrants of the Oriental Countries and Yemen, by comparing the situation in Israel to Europe:

In academic education, that is secondary education, amongst all people only 25-30 percent of the pupils are apt for academic schools. This is to say, that this is what the Almighty wants, that in each people [...] only some are capable of going through those 4-5 years and hold the [social] position [which is appropriate] to their educational level. It is not the case that everybody is capable – neither amongst the *ashkenazi* nor amongst the immigrants from the Muslim countries. It is not an ethnic question.

But the answer was ethnic indeed. The solution, as Smilansky's 1957 report has shown, was diversification and tracking. As Meir Avigad, the director in charge of technological (vocational) education at the Ministry, put it later: "Vocational education not only trains [pupils] for vocation, it is also a solution to [the demand for] 'post-elementary education for all'" (SA G/5598/3, 29.12.1969). It was, then, under the specific conditions of the expansion of post-elementary education, and particularly, in light of the development of vocational education in the framework of the CHS, that 'diversification' coincided with 'tracking', and that this process became evidently ethnic (Shavit 1990, 117; Yonah and Saporta forthcoming).

The extension of vocational educational to the periphery, mainly through the expansion of the CHS, had made this type of school most identified with post-elementary education in the DTs and the poor neighbourhoods of the cities (Leon 1988, 16-18).<sup>10</sup> According to Y. Leon, who in the 1970s was the director of the department for post-elementary education at the Ministry of Education and had written a doctoral dissertation on the development of the CHS, this initiative expressed, and was motivated by, the centre's conception of the periphery and its population as objects for political mobilisation (*ibid.* 12). In retrospect, Leon claims that the CHS developed and operated according to achievement-oriented pedagogical considerations, and not for the implementation of collective goals such as the policy of population dispersal (*ibid.* 16). The CHS contributed considerably to the extension of schooling among *mizrahi* children and to the equalisation of the rate of high school graduates between the centre and the periphery.<sup>11</sup> Still, it also played a significant role in

<sup>10</sup> It is noteworthy that vocational tracks within the framework of CHS existed in the peripheral areas, as well as in the largest cities. However, these schools varied in the length and quality of education that they offered. Thus, vocational education in the central and well-off areas was composed of a four-year track and was characterised by the more prestigious, theory-based subjects that it offered, while in the periphery the most prevalent format was of two- to three-year tracks comprised of low-level subjects (see, Shavit 1984, 211; Leon 1988, 54-55). Also, the selection within the CHSs themselves bore a significantly ethnic character, with *ashkenazi* children following more prestigious tracks than *mizrahi* children (Leon 1988, 57). Kahane and Starr (1989, 69) note that despite the greater emphasis on theory-based subjects (e.g., electronics, electricity, textiles), the largest number of vocational students is still concentrated in metal work and machinery programmes. Given the greater share of *mizrahi* students in vocational tracks, this shift to a theory-based curriculum has badly affected these students.

<sup>11</sup> By 1980, the mean years of schooling among *mizrahi* children (among 14-24 year-olds) reached 10.7 in the DTs compared to 11.0 in the central urban centres; among *ashkenazi* children the means were 10.5 and 11.5,

creating differential educational paths within the DTs and in encouraging the more capable to seek academic education outside their hometowns (*ibid.* 18, 46-47). This ‘split’, among other things (see, Iram and Schmida 1998, 56-60), caused the CHS to be identified with vocationalism rather than being substantially comprehensive, and vocationalism became a synonym for low-level education. This equally reinforced the evolving ‘ethnic division of education’, which the Reform, and particularly the *integration plan*, were designed to dismantle.

### THE 1968 EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME

Both the expansion of post-elementary education and the re-structuring of the school system, and the changes in education policy from ‘egalitarianism’ to ‘cultural pluralism’, culminated in July 1968, when the government and the *Knesset* adopted the Educational Reform Programme. Until then, most schooling was based on 8-years elementary education and an optional 4-years academic secondary education, or 1- to 4-years of vocational education. The Reform was based on a model of a 6-year elementary school, 3-year intermediate school and 3-year high school. The programme’s other component was known as the *integration plan*, namely, a policy of desegregation consisting of the mixing of children of different origin and socio-economic backgrounds in the new intermediate school. The tracking to either academic or vocational education was thus deferred to the high school level.

Although desegregation was not its main cause, the Reform became most identified with the *integration plan*. Soon, this plan appeared as the flagship of the education policy, the most salient effort of the state to overcome socio-political problems by educational means. Nonetheless, its connection to the re-structuring of the school system was not self-evident, mainly because these plans were underpinned by seemingly opposing rationales. The re-organisation of the school system was a response to the expansion of post-elementary education and, particularly, to the demand to better adapt the academic high school to the occupational needs of the expanding middle class, as well as to the similarly growing need for educated human-power in the industry. This entailed the diversification and the hierarchisation of schooling.

In contrast, the *integration plan* was premised on an egalitarian notion – to offer better educational opportunities for pupils of lower class background, who were lagging behind in their educational and scholastic achievements (Amir, Sharan and Ben-Ari 1984, 4). The tension between these two rationales was obvious (Levi 1987, 89, 95), hence two questions required explanation: why did these two plans intertwine and come into being as one

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respectively (Leon 1988, 69). The rate of high school graduates was 26.8% in the DTs and 27% in other urban localities (*ibid.* 17). The share of vocational secondary education increased between 1948/49 and 1971/72 from 19.6% to 45.3% (Appendix B, Table B-2).

‘package deal’? And, what was the significance of this for the development of the educational system, and hence social relations?

Historically, the idea of the structural reform preceded that of integration (Adler 1984, 39; Blass and Amir 1984, 68-69; Levi 1987, 102; Swirski 1990, 143-144). In fact, “when the parliamentary commission for examining Israel’s educational structure began its work, integration was *not* the central issue.” (Blass and Amir 1984, 67; *italics* in original). Yet, the common explanation for the relationship between these two elements was mostly an instrumental one. Thus, for example, Blass and Amir (1984, 87) claim:

Although [these issues are] not exclusively linked – in essence or in content – [...] it seems to us that the simultaneous development of these two topics, which of course was not coincidental, [...] contributed to the advancement of each and to their interrelation both in theory and in practice. Support for the concept of integration served the supporters of [the structural] reform as a counterbalance to the opposition and doubts expressed by those who opposed other aspects of the reform, whereas the overt and latent opposition of parents to integration in the junior high school could be overcome with the aid of massive investment in these new schools – in both construction and equipment, curricula and teachers.

Another exploration of the decision-making process that led to the Reform emphasises that educational officials complied with the demand of underprivileged groups of parents for further participation in the educational system and for integration only when they were certain that the structural reform would be accepted. The *integration plan* was, from the standpoint of the initiators of the structural reform, a central element in making the latter attractive: “social integration, in the sense of ‘fusion of the exiles’, has this enchanting effect on both the public and the leadership” (Levi 1987, 103).

Following these observations and argumentation, Swirski (1999, 193) contends that:

Ethnic integration had never been the major preoccupation of the planners of the *reforma* [the re-structuring of the school system]. It was only as a political reaction [to parents’ demand for integration] that [Minister of Education] Arrane began emphasizing [integration] as a major goal of the *reforma*. In fact, integration was to become the identifying label of the entire restructuring program, changing the elitist image of the *reforma* in its wake. Integration gave Arrane and his political and academic partners the aura of fighters for social progress.

While I do not reject these explanations, it seems that on their own they fall short of accounting for the complexity of this interrelation. In other words, although it was rightly argued that the *integration plan* served to publicly promote the re-structuring of the school system, and thus to advance the needs of the middle class while forfeiting those of the weaker strata, it cannot be presumed that this plan was deliberately designed to do so. Blass and Amir, I propose, offer too idealistic an explanation of integration becoming ‘a goal in

itself' within the Ministry of Education. Levi and Swirski, on the other hand, suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that there was nothing short of a hoax in tying the two plans together. A more structural explanation would suggest that while neither explanation is completely wrong, both fail to account for the role of 'integration', hence ethnicity, in the development of education policy. More importantly, they fall short of explaining the role of 'integration' in perpetuating 'ethnic relations' in Israel.

### **The elusive nature of the notion of Integration**

The main effort of the various historiographies of the Reform has been concentrated on the attempt to bridge the conceptual and historical gap between the two, seemingly contradictory, rationales of the structural reform and the *integration plan*. In the eyes of Blass and Amir, the way to resolve this contradiction was to examine the ideological commitment of policy-makers to the idea of national unity. Swirski, in contrast, saw the Reform as driven by the economic interest of the middle class in the structural reform, whereas the *integration plan* was explained as 'purely' a political act. The failure to see the economic reasoning behind integration, however, left his explanation wanting: first, since he could not see the interest of *mizrahi* Jews in integration, and, second, because this left his political economy approach confined within the 'official' view, which was based on blurring the meaning of this notion (Levi 1987, 40). The elusive nature of the notion of integration, I argue, concealed the principles of individualism and meritocracy that underlay both the structural reform and the *integration plan*. This explains the success of the *integration plan*, a success that ought to be measured not against growing ethnic differences, but rather by the power of this notion in bringing about and legitimising a new, liberal social order.

The interconnectedness between the structural reform and integration was made explicit in several appearances of state officials. Thus, speaking in 1967 before a partisan forum of *Mapai*, Minister Arrane explained the reasons for, and the goals of, the Reform:

When I am asked what the major problems that the educational system has to face, my answer is: how to diminish the existing gap between the quality and the quantity of the manpower required for the development of the state, the country and society, and what is the educational system doing, or responsible for? How to stop the existing dropout from the educational system, a relatively low dropout in elementary education, but rather high in post-elementary level, and extensively high in higher education? How to diminish, as soon as possible, the ethnic gap in education, which is wide to a serious degree? How to adapt, quickly and efficiently, the educational system to the diversified child population, and how to expand the national and social education of the young generation? (Goldberg 1967, 6).

Arrane, who was the most important political proponent of the Reform, did not consider the structural reform and the *integration plan* as separate issues. As is made clear here, and elsewhere, the persistence of the 'gap' – again be it defined as ethnic or educational – was a

crucial consideration for policy-making. Yet, Arrane saw its elimination as being directly related to the advancement of the structural reform, and particularly to the diversification of the curriculum and the expansion of post-elementary education. Integration was meant to tie these two issues together. If this was a cynical position, and it was, such a claim still needs further elaboration than the one offered by Swirski. Integration, it should be noted, was not only seen, or presented, as an interest of the state, but was also considered by many *mizrahi* parents to be a desirable goal. This, however, did not necessarily imply that integration meant the same for both sides.

One manifestation of the parents' point of view was in a "sharply worded leaflet", which marked, according to Blass and Amir (1984, 73), the changing conception of the idea of integration (see also, Klein and Eshel 1980). In this leaflet, sent in 1967 by parents of *mizrahi* origin in two poor neighbourhoods of Jerusalem to the Ministry of Education, these parents wrote:

We will not forfeit our children's education [...] The education of our children is entrusted to schools the level of which is among the worst in the city [...] What this means is that when our children grow up they will become unskilled labourers in the State of Israel. (Cited in Blass and Amir 1984, 73).

These accusations were followed by a demand to re-draw school districts in a way that would enable their children to enrol in the elementary school of the adjacent affluent neighbourhood, and later in the prestigious academic high schools (Klein and Eshel 1980, 13-15; Blass and Amir 1984, 73; Swirski 1999, 193). This call reached the Ministry of Education during the work of the parliamentary committee on the structure of education, and was attended to by appointing a special committee that discussed its pros and cons in light of the Coleman study on desegregation in the USA (Klein and Eshel 1980, 17; see also Levi 1987, 94-96). In Blass and Amir's view, the Ministry consequently adopted a more active policy of integration at the elementary level (Blass and Amir 1984, 73-74). This development, they claim, marked the transition of the notion of integration in education from being abstract and 'visionary' to becoming "a national-social goal in itself". Nonetheless, by that time, the Ministry was pre-occupied with the implementation of the Reform and was reluctant to open another front of integration at the elementary level (Blass and Amir 1984, 75).<sup>12</sup>

Integration at the elementary level never materialised as a concrete educational policy, partly because of the structural sub-division and geographical segregation of education. But, the idea of integration at the intermediate school, which became a part of the Reform, did not

<sup>12</sup> This specific struggle in Jerusalem eventually led to 'experimental' integration programme in these two neighbourhoods. Klein and Eshel (1980), who followed this project closely, offer a somewhat more critical analysis of the programme. They claim that the Ministry officials who were assigned to run this project were sceptical and remained distanced from its daily operation (Klein and Eshel 1980, 16-18).

gain much support either. Blass and Amir (1984, 75), both from the Ministry of Education, insist that “important groups within the Ministry [...] viewed integration as a major and central part of the Ministry’s activity”, and by the end of 1971, found “a positive approach toward integration emerging at the highest levels of the Ministry”. Yet, their approach, which I defined above as idealistic, ignores not only the actual rejection of integration, as illustrated in their own study, but also the fact that even when integration became ‘a goal in itself’, its meaning remained vague (Eshel and Klein 1984, 135; Levi 1987, 92-94; Blass and Amir 1984, 68).

Already at the stage of its approval, it turned out that quite a few segments in Jewish society strongly opposed the *integration plan* and were not bound to adopt it. Both the *kibbutz* movement and the *ashkenazi* ultra-orthodox sector, who retained educational autonomy, rejected it on what seemed to be ideological grounds. The former refused to integrate with the neighbouring DTs and *moshavim* in regional schools, explaining that educational autonomy in the *kibbutz* was essential for the further nurturing of its unique ideological stance (Adler 1984, 41; Swirski 1999, 194). Practically, this meant the further segregation, hence the growing resentment, between the DTs and the *moshavim* (mainly *mizrahim*) and *kibbutzim* (mainly *ashkenazim*), whose children thus remained isolated from their *mizrahi* surroundings.<sup>13</sup> The ultra-orthodox ‘independent education’ received a ministerial dispensation from both the Reform and the *integration plan* (Swirski 1999, 194). Integration was also challenged by groups of parents who feared that it would hamper the educational standards in their children’s schools (Blass and Amir 1984, 76-77; Halper, Shokeid and Weingrod 1984, 49). Ironically, Swirski (1999, 194) writes, integration “soon proved to be the major obstacle to [the reform’s] implementation.” The Reform was never legislated and the decision over whether to adopt it or not was relegated to the local educational authorities.<sup>14</sup>

This resistance notwithstanding, the failure of integration was inscribed in its practice. In the parliamentary committee’s recommendations, which formed the grounds for the appointment of the ‘Central Committee for the Implementation of the Reform’, integration appeared as a vague and abstract goal, whose aims remained confused and confusing (Levi 1987, 96-99). But even when the argument was given that integration would be a means to narrow the scholastic gap, this, claims Levi, was never the intention of the plan. The committee’s

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly enough, after the *Likud* came to power, *mizrahi* parents in the DTs were expressing different views about the idea of integration. While some still believed that it was in the best of the child to be sent to the *kibbutz*’s school, or to a boarding school, some others thought that this will result in them leaving the towns, and in dislocating them from their natural environment (for this fascinating discussion, see Swirski 1981, 121-124). The issue of mutual regional schools was also raised in the *kibbutz* movement, where some pointed to the consequences of separate schooling to the *kibbutz*’s isolation from its environment (JEA 1961).

<sup>14</sup> Although local authorities were offered financial incentives to adopt the reform, in 1983, only some half of the children was enrolled in reformed schools (Swirski 1999, 195). On the failure to turn the *integration plan* into legislation, see Blass and Amir (1984, 70-73).

attention, he argues, as with other officials in the Ministry, focused solely on integration at the school level, whereas if the goal was to bring down scholastic gaps, integration should have been designed to take place at the class level. In this sense, integration at the school level cannot be seen but as another means for assimilation (see above discussion on Yadlin's approach). Furthermore, integration implies refraining from making homogeneous 'ability groupings' (e.g., Eshel and Klein 1984, 144-145; Swirski 1999, 185-190). The assignment of weak children to ability groupings, Levi argues, worsens the gap because their social status and self-image is directly derived from their grading according to this grouping (Levi 1987, 97). In these two respects, the *integration plan*, which further stigmatised *mizrahi* children as 'culturally deprived', could not have the desired effect of bringing about social, or for that matter, educational change. Yet, this plan emphasised the allegedly universal, achievement-based criteria by which *mizrahi* children were judged, and thus, Levi concludes (1987, 98), strengthened the role of the school in legitimising the division of labour in society and thereby contributed to the reproduction of the existing social order.

This view is further emphasised by the rejection of a simple, linear connection between the structural reform and the 'narrowing of the gap'. Thus, for example, Prof. Y. Prawer, who chaired the first public committee that examined the extension of education, testified before the parliamentary committee that he favoured the structural reform but never thought that this would bring about the narrowing of the scholastic gap (Levi 1987, 98). A similar position was also made by members of the Hebrew University School of Education who supported the reform but warned against "pinning too many hopes on integration" (Swirski 1999, 194; see also, Adler 1969). Arrane made an opposite claim:

The existing academic high schools are selective and many of the children of Asian and African origin, in spite of the provision of the B-norm, are not accepted or absorbed in those schools. Their accumulated lagging behind in educational achievements at the eighth grade was, in most cases, irreversible. The reform, instead, which would move all sixth-graders on to the intermediate school, could move them all forward. (a testimony before the parliamentary committee, cited in Levi 1987, 67).

At this point, I wish to re-pose my questions and ask, first, what was in the notion of integration that had made it such a powerful mechanism for the implementation of the structural reform, and, second, how did keeping its meaning elusive contribute to the intertwining of the two plans at that specific time? Given that both the structural reform and the 'ethnic gap' were on the political agenda long before they converged into one programme, I suggest that both answers, Swirski's and Blass and Amir's, are insufficient. First, they imply a chronological order between the two phenomena that is incongruent with their history. Integration did not simply 'pop up' at a convenient time to be grasped and turned by the political elite into an easily marketed vehicle for the implementation of the

long desired structural reform. Second, it is historically inaccurate to suggest that integration, in its idealistic or ideological forms, did not interest the political elite. Yet, its meaning in public rhetoric did not necessarily coincide with what it meant in practice. This discrepancy accounts for the elusiveness of this concept, and it is to its unravelling that I wish to turn now.

### **Unravelling Integration: achievement and the new social order**

The implications of the transition from ‘compensatory education’ to ‘integration’ went beyond the need to re-produce the social order. At stake, I argue, was the need to re-define this order and render it legitimate. Integration, in this context, was not merely a political act, as Swirski implies. Rather, this notion, by re-defining the relationship between citizenship, nationalism and ethnicity, paved the way for the liberalisation of social relations that, in the 1990s, facilitated the advancement of neo-liberal policies grounded in a ‘politics of identity’.

In a somewhat provocative article, Eshel and Klein quote a review which concluded that: “the common error of this research [on integration] can be stated in six words: Desegregation is not an educational treatment.” And they go on: “it is probably a safe bet to say that in spite of political and ideological wishes, there is no automatic mechanism, no simple and easily employed connection between moving school children around and raising achievement levels.” (Eshel and Klein 1984, 141-142). If desegregation is not an ‘educational treatment’, but rather a political one, it was not accidental that the question of what integration means was never asked, let alone addressed (see also, Klein and Eshel 1980, 2). At best, the implicit answer (which was made explicit only a few years later by an historian of education) was: “the mixing and bringing together of children from different social strata and of different origin in one educational framework – a heterogeneous school and a heterogeneous class” (cited in Levi 1987, 93). In most cases, as exemplified by Blass and Amir (1984, 68-69), the purpose of this mixing together was assumed to be congruent with the Zionist ideological imperative of ‘the fusion of the exiles’.

This was not the impression of Klein and Eshel. In their study of the experimental integration of elementary schools in Jerusalem, they observed that “integration in this project was an ambivalent political act, built less on strong commitment to the idea than on the needs of the moment.” (Klein and Eshel 1980, 17). And the need, at least from the state’s point of view, was, as they imply elsewhere, to find “a rather benign way of handling an issue that is potentially explosive and could, from another point of view, demand more radical forms of change.” (Eshel and Klein 1984, 135). To do that, there was a need in agreement, which was found in the terms and conditions of inclusion:

The least common denominator of agreement [on the definition of inclusion] is that the outsider must be led to change as he is included – thus, the neatness and imperativeness of a mechanism like school integration that seems to deal simultaneously with both social and

personal change. [We] call it a mechanism because it appears to be a rather simple and technical solution that, once put into motion, should almost take care of itself. (Eshel and Klein 1984, 135).

This agreement, that “the outsider must be led to change as he is included”, was one part of the answer, which left the position of the ‘insider’ beyond the scope of the problem. In other words, what these researchers failed to grasp, as did the others, was that the *integration plan*, unlike previous educational interventions, marked a change not only for *mizrahi* Jews, but for society at large. The integrative school became the new grounds for the encounter between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* children, and it was there that both parties had to acquire and accept the new rules of this encounter (Klein and Eshel 1980, 17; Levi 1987, 98). The notion of integration was deemed to mean inclusion and legitimisation grounded in an emerging discourse of meritocracy:

Including people into society is important, but not just any kind of inclusion. Not only must it take the form of an orderly presentation of carrying out a social ideal, but it must also provide for and encourage more personal transformations. One should not just be made a member, but a *certain kind* of member that seems summed up in the word ‘achievement’. (Eshel and Klein 1984, 135; *italics* in origin).

This “concern about achievement on both sides”, i.e., middle class parents and parents from the poor neighbourhoods, Klein and Eshel (1980, 17) argue, brought about a shift “from integration as a political-social issue to an educational one.” This concern alone, however, could not, and indeed did not, render the notion of integration a mechanism of legitimisation. This notion was equally premised on the shift from a policy of assimilation to a policy of ‘cultural pluralism’. This shift entailed that unlike the logic of assimilation, which determined that inclusion meant the destruction of the ‘*mizrahi* home’, under the new conditions there was, or supposedly was, no longer an interest in ‘the gap between the home and the school’. The state thus dissociated itself from the dominant sector, by legitimising a certain degree of cultural autonomy for the various social groups, and, more importantly, this allowed the representation of the state as impartial and universal vis-à-vis society. These two principles, individual achievement and cultural pluralism, became integral, and complementary, to the emerging new social order. Whereas individualism implied full equality, at least in principle, cultural pluralism enabled the state to re-ally with the dominant sector and thus to maintain its favourable position. This was evidenced in the implementation of the *integration plan*.

If we recall the underlying assumptions of the BSFP, and the attribution of *mizrahi* children’s failure at school mainly to the lack of connectedness or continuity between their home and the school, there are two conclusions that can be derived regarding the logic of the *integration plan*. One, is that the main incentive for this programme (similarly to that of the

BSFP) was desegregation, but a very particular pattern of desegregation according to which children of lower backgrounds should be uprooted from their homes and re-planted in what was perceived of as 'a better educational environment'. Second, while these children were required to disconnect from their own environment and adopt the values of the new one, the 'absorbing environment' itself was not expected to integrate those values on which *mizrahi* children were raised (Peled E. 1976, 204-206). Thus, in contradiction to the supposedly cultural openness that the deputy Minister of Education expressed in 1966, the *integration plan* was not a manifested 'reciprocal process' of cultural pluralism, not even for a 'transitional period'.

Stressing the argument further, the changes in education policy did not reflect a re-conceptualisation of what was perceived of as the 'ethnic problem'. Rather, the same reasoning that underlay the educational programmes in the early 1950s, remained valid in the 1960s: the educational gap was explained, in political public discourse as well as in academic scholarship, as stemming from essential 'cultural differences', and the only way to change this was to uproot 'inadequate' cultural traits. In this respect, integration was nothing but a slogan, and in practice "little more than cohabitation of pupils of different classes, or ethno- and nation-classes, under one school roof" (Swirski 1999, 248). This, however, was said in hindsight. The *integration plan* cannot be dismissed so easily, as Swirski suggests, mainly because the notion of integration 'popped up' when people had asked for it, primarily *mizrahi* parents who, like any other migrants elsewhere, sought better education for their children. Moreover, this notion, that underpinned the Reform, was supposed to bring about a new educational and social order. 'Cohabitation' was not its only, or even most important, consequence.

If the *integration plan* was another manifestation and continuation of the 'absorption through cultural assimilation' approach that underlay the 1950s melting pot policy, then its real value was neither its contribution to 'cultural reciprocity', nor its capacity to 'narrow the educational gap'. Its appeal, in contrast, lay in that this notion conformed to the new values of a meritocratic society. Making 'achievement' a common denominator for both well-off *ashkenazi* children and poor *mizrahi* children was, in other words, how the *integration plan*, as an integral part of the structural reform, created a new educational order. Keeping the notion of integration as vague and elusive concealed the fact that this order remained ethnically differentiated.

In this context, Arrane's expectation that the encounter between all children at the intermediate school would prove as a fair mechanism of selection that would elevate all children, regardless of ethnic and class backgrounds, might have been honest, and yet

categorically misleading.<sup>15</sup> This expectation was not ‘innocent’, I argue, not because the Minister, or others, were uninterested in integration as a vision of a homogeneously Jewish national collective, as some critiques suggest, but rather because they were. In other words, it was the interest in emphasising the unity of the Jews as a nation that, contrasted with the non-incorporation of the Arab minority into the Israeli collective, underpinned the notion of integration as a political-educational programme. In this respect, integration was a part of the Zionist political agenda, and the *integration plan* was not, indeed could not, be extended to the Arab minority.

Furthermore, its rhetoric was cynical not because integration appeared on the political agenda, as a seemingly premeditated mechanism that would ease the advancement of the structural reform, but rather because while these officials were ‘talking integration’, they were actually creating ‘ethnic paths’ for education. This was clearly manifested in the opening of the pre-vocational classes in the *mizrahi* neighbourhoods and, generally, in the pattern of the expansion of post-elementary education. Both the *integration plan* and the structural reform were part of these changes, and, in this respect, they turned out not as antagonistic to each other, but as being directed towards the re-definition of the social order on principles of individualism and meritocracy. Still, there was an inherent tension between the effort to create a homogeneous national (Jewish) collective, and the need to re-define the social order in liberal-like terms, which implied strengthening the notion of citizenship as pertaining to social relations in the public sphere. To overcome this tension, the state had to ‘roll back’, and dissociate itself from the particularistic interests of the dominant *ashkenazi* sector. The state, that could not, or was not willing to, forsake its Jewish character by strengthening the notion of citizenship at the expense of nationalism, thus further entrenched the separation between (Israeli) citizenship and (Jewish) nationhood. Against this backdrop, ‘ethnic thinking’ re-appeared. This time, however, this thinking was not simply aimed at defining one group as ‘ethnic’. It rather lay the grounds for the identification of several groups as being culturally distinctive. In a somewhat ironic way, this meant the relegation of cultural affiliations to the ‘private’ sphere, which made them legitimate bases for political organisation. This was clearly illustrated in the reform of Arab education.

## THE REFORM IN ARAB EDUCATION

The changes in education policy did not pass by the Arab minority, although this population was not a part of their audience (e.g., Al-Haj 1995, 81; Swirski 1999, 196). In 1975, however, following the cognisance of officials at the Ministry of Education of the increasing

<sup>15</sup> Many of those who were involved in the programme of pre-vocational classes shared a similar universalistic conception of its goals. However, according to Yonah and Saporta (forthcoming), who conducted the only study of this programme, “the deliberation on the [universalistic] rationales that support pre-vocational education is turned sharply when the question of the cultural character of the Jewish population, and primarily [...] of the immigration from Oriental countries, arises.”

alienation of Arab pupils from the state, the Ministry set out to change the curricula and educational goals for Arab education (see Al-Haj 1995, 139-152). This reform requires a more thorough analysis than can be offered here, yet its significance for the current analysis lies not in that it affected the development of Jewish education, but rather in that its analysis shows in greater clarity how the mechanisms of integration and differentiation work.

The reform in Arab education was tied to the removal of the Military Administration from the Arab populated areas inside the Green Line in 1966, as well as to the re-integration of this population with its co-nationals after the 1967 War. It equally rested on the incorporation of Arabs in the Israeli economy, on the one hand, and the strengthening of the state apparatus, on the other (e.g., Lustick 1980, 238). In this context, the reform attested to the further divorce between practices of citizenship and practices of ethnicity and nationalism in Israel. Paradoxically, this divorce facilitated the deepening of the conception of citizenship in the relationship between the Arab minority and the state, while entrenching cultural segregation between Jews and Arabs.

Two committees attended to the issue of Arab education: one, headed by the deputy Minister of Education A. Yadlin, published its conclusions in 1972; the other, constituted in the framework of an overall policy planning team (see Peled E. 1976), was headed by Dr. Matityahu (Matti) Peled, a retired army general and a professor of Arabic literature who later became renowned for his political activism for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. “The importance of the Yadlin Document”, writes Al-Haj (1995, 140), “lies in the very fact that for the first time wide public attention was given to the uniqueness of Arab education and the need to formulate particular aims for the Arab pupils.” Nonetheless, it was severely criticised by Arab leaders, who claimed that it sought to create a “‘unique Israeli Arab’ divorced from his genuine national and cultural roots” (*ibid.*; see also Mar’i 1978, 53).

This failure to acknowledge the national and cultural roots of the Arab minority, and the problematic of their status as Israeli citizens, underlay the critical stance that the Peled committee took. This committee called upon policy-makers to confront this dilemma and proposed several amendments to the curricula in history, civics, Arabic, Hebrew, and religion (Al-Haj 1995, 142-152). Still, this committee too was criticised for stopping short of recognising the Arabs in Israel as a Palestinian national minority (*ibid.* 143). This was most salient in the final report (Peled E. 1976, 36-38), which defined separate goals for Jewish and Arab education (for an English translation of these goals, see Al-Haj 1995, 142).

By articulating different goals for Arabs and Jews, the report re-asserted the separateness between nationality and citizenship in Israel. It called for basing “[Arab] education on the foundations of Arab culture” and on “encouraging the uniqueness of Israeli Arabs”, but demanded the Arab pupils’ loyalty as citizens of the state. In contrast, Jewish children were supposed to deepen their feeling of belonging on the grounds of the national heritage of the

Jewish people (Al-Haj 1995, 143). This was in line with the tendency to strengthen both the (Jewish) national character of the state and a liberal conception of citizenship (Peled Y. 1992). In relation to education policy, this distinction re-affirmed the exclusion of the Arab minority from the 'projects' of assimilation and integration, yet it showed a different conception of them as citizens.

The 'new' emphasis on Arab culture expressed a recognition of the unique educational needs of this minority. Concomitantly, it re-asserted the supremacy of the Jewish national identity over that of Israeli citizenship, thus re-drawing the boundaries between these two collectives. This, however, had a dual significance: while it re-defined the boundaries between Arabs and Jews in cultural terms, it lay the grounds for the Arabs to claim their equal status as citizens. The condition for granting them equal status, at least from the state's point of view, was the denial of their collective rights, which was expressed in the refusal to confer upon the Arabs the responsibility for their own education, or in the reluctance to recognise of *The Follow-up Committee for Arab Education* as representing the interests of this minority. At best, if Arabs wished to enter society on an equal basis, they had to do so as individuals, not on a collective basis.

This condition marked the limits of the reform and its congruence with the transformation of social relations. Specifically, recognising the Arab minority as a culturally distinctive group did not entail this distinctiveness being an entrance card into full equality in society. By relegating cultural (national) affiliation to the 'private sphere', the state could continue applying differential measures vis-à-vis the Arabs without seeing in them an expression of intentional discrimination. This, in turn, allowed the Arabs to strengthen both their civic and national sense of belonging, and thereby to demand further equality.

## CONCLUSION

The 1968 Reform, and particularly, the shift to 'integration' – unlike the transition from 'egalitarianism' to 'compensatory education' a decade earlier, which showed a little change in the conception of the 'ethnic problem' – led to a qualitative change in ethnic relations. This change, which was based on the re-organisation of the school system and on the *integration plan*, was a precursor to the 'rolling back' of the state, and hence to the re-definition of its relationship with the *ashkenazi* middle class, and the *mizrahi* and Palestinian working class, in terms of a differential discourse of citizenship (Peled 1992; Peled and Shafir 1996). The notion of integration, I argued, rendered this new order legitimate by emphasising the alleged universality of the state, and, concomitantly, reinforcing its exclusionary practices vis-à-vis both Arabs and *mizrahi* Jews. In this sense, 'integration', which turned out to be another manifestation of the ethnicised character of Israeli society, only brought about the deepening of 'ethnic thinking'. In conclusion, I wish to re-assert the

significance of this thinking to the changing nature of social relations, but no less important, to examine how ‘ethnic thinking’ changed in light of the crystallisation of a new social order based on the principles of individualism and meritocracy.

Notably, ‘ethnic thinking’, as an abbreviation for the relegation of all aspects of inequality within the Jewish population to the cultural sphere, underlay the developments in educational policy from the late 1930s to the late 1960s. This thinking manifested itself in the translation of the state’s concern in educational, hence social, gaps into a cultural explanation.

Accordingly, *mizrahi* Jews were identified as ‘alien’ to the surrounding Jewish society, thereby constituting a ‘problem’ for the processes of nation-building and state-formation (compare: Grosvenor 1997, 185). This was evinced in political expressions, as well as in academic scholarship, that portrayed the *mizrahi* home as the source of the ‘ethnic problem’, and Zionism and the state as its ‘solution’.

This conception, however, reflected the structure of power relations following the transition to statehood, namely the identification of the state with the interests of the dominant *ashkenazi* segment of society. This overlap, it will be recalled, was first evinced in the ‘struggle over education’, which was resolved by an alliance between the political parties that represented this sector, which now formed the backbone of the state-made middle class, and the state political elite. Similarly, the changes in education policy in the 1950s, which revealed a growing concern for the deepening of educational and social gaps within Jewish society, did not bring about a change in the conception of *mizrahi* culture, or ‘home’, as the source of these gaps. This changed when it turned out, in the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt, that ‘ethnicity’ was no longer exclusively defined by state policies, but rather formed the grounds for the organisation of *mizrahi* Jews themselves. At stake was the legitimacy of the existing social order. The state, consequently, sought to re-assert its position vis-à-vis the *mizrahi* segment of society, and equally important, vis-à-vis the dominant *ashkenazi* sector.

The state responded to these developments by replacing the principles of assimilation with a conception of a plural society and, by implication, abandoning the conception of a singular national identity in the image of the *ashkenazi* Zionist, in favour of a more ‘synthesised’ approach to the creation of national identity. Yet, the pressure to advance the structural reform in education, which signified also the need to conform to changing economic and political conditions, determined that these changes would remain rhetorical.

In this context, ‘integration’ appeared as a concept that encapsulated, and legitimised, the contours of the new social order. In spite of being deeply embedded in Zionist rhetoric of Jewish unity, practically, it determined that full membership in society was a matter of individual merits, and not ideological commitment. Jews of different (cultural) kinds, and to a limited degree even Arabs, were, accordingly, bound to compete for their self-realisation as equal members in a modern Western-like society. Yet, being limited to Jewish society, the

*integration plan* re-asserted the exclusive Jewish character of the state, and thus determined that the Arabs would remain excluded from this vision of a modern nation-state. Similarly, this programme generated an *ashkenazi* backlash that limited its scope in a way which determined its inability to eradicate the conception of cultural hierarchy that doomed *mizrahi* Jews to marginality within Jewish society.

In sum, the *integration plan*, that was, and still is, the flagship of education policy qua social policy, signified trends of continuity and change in ethnic relations in Israel. On the one hand, it adhered to the same ‘ethnic thinking’ that had designated Jews of Oriental origin as not Zionist enough and not modern enough, and hence as being subject to special measures of socialisation and acculturation (as attested to by the continuance of the various interventions that were created during the ‘compensatory education’ period). On the other hand, by dissociating itself from the immediate interests of the dominant *ashkenazi* sector, practically the state designated this sector as a distinctive social group. These developments created a ‘new ethnic thinking’ based on the tension between the pressure to individualise social relations and the tendency to re-draw ethnic boundaries within society. This ‘new ethnic thinking’ re-appeared in the 1980s in the form of ‘identity politics’, the historical origins of which lie in the aftermath of the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt and in the *integration plan* as the response to the conflict between First- and Second-Israel.

## CONCLUSION

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Introducing this study, I told the story of three contemporary educational alternatives that apparently challenge and undermine the centralised, allegedly homogenised character of state education in Israel. These developments – each showing a growing concern for autonomy and individualism, and simultaneously accompanied by a rise of a conspicuously ethnic discourse on education and politics – reflect current debates, characteristic to Western liberal democracies, on the meaning of universalism and particularism in what seems to be a post-modern social order. These debates revolve around the failure of processes of modernisation, and primarily, the development of a ‘politics of identity’ that challenges a main thrust of political modernism: the formation of integral states and the creation of homogenised national societies. These challenges give rise to a critical discourse that seeks to offer, from both left and right, alternative frameworks of thought for Western liberalism (e.g., MacIntyre 1988; Taylor 1992; Kymlicka 1995). Israeli scholarship has similarly undertaken in recent years to account, from various perspectives, for the failure to construct a modern, Jewish national identity. In conclusion, I wish to integrate the three parts of this dissertation and relate it to current debates regarding education, politics, and the state, thus explaining the meaning of ethnicity in Israeli society.

### I

Throughout this dissertation, I sought to explore the ethnicisation of social relations in Israel from three distinctive, though related, angles. In the first, theoretical part, the analysis focused on the representation of ethnicity and its conceptualisation in Israeli social theory. Notwithstanding other forms of representation, social theory reflected how *mizrahi* ethnicity has been seen, in both the Zionist ideology and public sphere, as ‘a problem’; and as antagonistic to the vision of a homogeneously national collective. The sociology of ethnicity, as has been shown, has had a particular significance for this kind of representation, given its crucial role in defining ethnicity as a subject matter for policy making, and particularly, for

educational policy. Nonetheless, and in light of the changes in ‘ethnic politics’ and in social relations in general, the theorisation of the ‘ethnic problem’ has also been transformed.

Thus, from being defined as a fixed category, relating to *mizrahi* Jews as a distinctive social group, ethnicity came to be understood as a characteristic of social relations at large. This dissertation contributes to this perspective by relating the ethnic phenomenon to the development of the state, and by focusing on the processes of, and conditions for, the ethnicisation of social relations. By looking at ethnicity through the perspective of state-society relations, I came to see it not as a problem, but as a type of relationship that can explain social relations (also, Marx 1998, 19). Most pertinently, ethnicisation plays a part in the practices of inclusion and exclusion that characterise the function of the modern nation-state. Ethnic relations are, therefore, one effect of these practices, which highlight the role of the state in the delineation of social boundaries, and in shaping ethnic (and other) identities.

The second part of the dissertation explores the process of ethnicisation from a political-historical perspective. Focusing on the processes of nation-building and state-formation, I sought to examine how these processes generated a hegemonic Zionist national identity based on the image of the European-Jewish settler/immigrant, and contrasted with that of the non-European one. More importantly, these images were further entrenched because they were rooted in the development of an interest-based interdependence between the *ashkenazi* segment of society, which later became the core element in the Israeli middle class, and the Zionist movement. This has been evidenced in the dual practice of the state that resulted in the uneven expansion of modernisation. On the one hand, the state, and before that the Zionist movement acting in a state-like manner, was concerned to homogenise Jewish-Zionist society and bring it under the control of a single political apparatus. Yet, on the other hand, in order to achieve this particular unity, it in practice emphasised and re-drew internal (ethnic) boundaries.

The alliance between the Zionist movement and the organised European settlers became the axis for the progression of the processes of nation-building and state-formation. No less important, it determined that the modernisation of these settlers would advance at the expense of the excluded, *mizrahi* Jews and Palestinian-Arabs, who were relegated to the ‘non-modernised’ margins of society. Nonetheless, the latter two groups experienced a different pattern of exclusion. The Palestinians, placed at the bottom of the social ladder, were excluded on nationalistic grounds. Thus, although they were granted full citizenship status, they were only able to realise it to a limited extent. In contrast, *mizrahi* Jews, ranked in between the Palestinians and the *ashkenazi* sector, suffered a dual exclusion: ‘from above’, they could not be considered as full members in society since their Oriental predisposition was defined as antagonistic to the hegemonic ideal of the New Israeli; and

‘from below’, they were required to discard their history and culture as these identified them with the Arab culture of the Palestinians.

The third and main part of the dissertation follows the process of ethnicisation from the perspective of the development of an ethnically segregated state-sponsored educational system. Understanding education as an arena where social relations are being structured and entrenched, this analysis reveals the changing patterns of educational segregation, based on place of origin and socio-economic characteristics, from the early beginnings of modern education in the pre-state era to statehood. This theme is further highlighted by focusing on four critical turning points – the opening of the Zionist Palestine Office in 1908, the 1942 ‘Million Plan’, the UN resolution of November 1947, and the *Wadi-Salib* Revolt in 1959 – that mark the evolution of the Zionist movement from a small-scale colonising movement to an industrialised-capitalist state. The transition from one turning point to another reveals the role of education in the creation of a differential, segregated society in which ethnicity constitutes an organising factor of power relations.

The story of the uneven expansion of education renders educational autonomy a crucial factor in determining the political autonomy, hence power, of the various organised sectors of the Zionist *yishuv*. This is only emphasised further when one examines the *mizrahi* social sector that, despite its distinctive social and economic characteristics, lacked similar autonomy. The lack of educational autonomy, I argued, not only denied this sector the same power others had enjoyed, but it also proved useful, from the state’s standpoint, to renounce ethnicity as a platform for (autonomous) political mobilisation. Thus, while educational autonomy was considered legitimate for ‘ideologically’ different (*ashkenazi*) camps, the fact that these arrangements benefited a culturally distinctive group was ignored. In other words, ‘ideological distinctiveness’ served to conceal the ethnic character of educational differentiation, and thus made education a part of what made Israel into an ethnicised society. This process of ethnicisation, I further argued, was entangled in the dialectic between universalism and particularism in the construction of a state-sponsored educational system. In order to bring my argument to a close, I wish to reflect below on this dialectic as it manifests itself in contemporary calls for the re-institutionalisation of *Mamlakhtiyut* in education. These calls, I argue, in both their liberal and conservative interpretations, remain committed to the oppressive aspects of *Mamlakhtiyut* and thus offer no solution from the standpoint of either Palestinian citizens or *mizrahi* Jews.

## II

As has been shown in the Introduction, the Israeli educational system is undergoing an intensive process of privatisation and diversification that crosscuts all levels and spheres of education: from the economic to the pedagogic, and from pre-schools to higher education.

These processes are manifested in the steady increase of private expenditure on education compared to public expenditure (Swirski et. al. 1999); in the ideology of self-administration at the school level (Dahan and Swirski 1993); in the relegation of executive functions from the ministry to private organisations (Swirski 2000h), as in the publishing of curricular textbooks (Sa'ar 1997); and, by the increase of parental involvement in education, either by a policy of parental choice (Dorfman et. al. 1994; Yonah 2000), or by allowing quasi-private schooling which gives parents the power to determine the curriculum and hire teachers by their own means (Dahan and Yonah 1995). More substantially, these transformations are part of a transition towards a liberalised and democratic society, as manifested by the prevalence of the principle of market economy in all spheres of life (Peled and Shafir forthcoming), as well as in the demise of a single collective national memory, and thereby in the rise of alternative collective memories (Ram 1999b, 335-336).

Given these changes, a new discourse of multiculturalism has risen (Mautner, Saguy and Shamir 1998), that casts doubts on the role and place of a centralised educational system, as materialised in the concept of *Hinuch mamlakhti* (National education), in maintaining social solidarity. The emergence of alternatives to state education similarly undermined the existing educational policy, and particularly, the policy of integration. Parallel to this, and in contrast to the demand to acknowledge the multicultural character of Israeli society, there were also calls to re-establish the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* that, even today, has currency in the political-ideological discourse. In this context, the question for future education in Israel relates to the dialectic between universalism and particularism. That is, whether the educational system in its current form functions as a unifying factor, as the proponents of *Mamlakhtiyut* believe, or whether the principles for state education should be grounded in a less particularistic, i.e., 'less Jewish', and more inclusivist framework, which recognises the diversity of Israeli society.

One response to current developments in education, and particularly to the schisms that characterise contemporary social relations, has been offered by Zameret (1997a) in a study on "shaping the education system during the great Aliya", as its subtitle suggests. This study in the historiography of education seeks to describe the chronology of "the crystallisation of the Israeli educational system against the background of the socio-political transformations", but it also aims to address fundamental questions regarding the melting pot policy, the relationship between religious and non-religious and between *ashkenazi* and *mizrahi* Jews (ibid. 17). This study is a self-acclaimed Zionist analysis that seeks to "build a more stable bridge for the future" (ibid. 19), by re-establishing the principles of *Mamlakhtiyut* in education, and in Israeli society at large. In Zameret's opinion, the way to attain this would be to create "a large educational system, that would be appropriate for a traditional-modern [sic.] public, that would bring together rather than untie, [and would] connect Judaism and Modernity and not tear apart and separate the two." (ibid. 253).

Zameret, I argue, offers neither a better conceptual scheme for understanding contemporary Israel, nor a ‘solution’ to the malfunction of education in bringing about social solidarity, for three main reasons. First, being loyal to the spirit of *Mamlakhtiyut*, Zameret fails to problematise the relationship between Jewish and Arab education. Whilst omitting the Arabs from his analysis might be methodologically justified, given his focus on the absorption of (*mizrahi*) Jewish immigrants in the 1950s and on the ‘struggle over education’, this is hardly the case when one seeks to address contemporary social relations. The predicament of the Arab minority has a bearing on social relations that goes beyond the sphere of education (AL-Haj 1998), however, this omission attests to the exclusively Jewish conception of social solidarity which characterises analyses that, in Ram’s (1999b, 329) typology of collective identities in Israel, rest between secular (Zionist) and religious (Neo-Zionist) conceptions of the national identity in terms of further ‘Judaizing’, rather than democratising, it.

Second, although Zameret focuses on the failure to absorb *mizrahi* Jews, as a designated group, within the educational frameworks of the newly founded state, in his view, the axis that determines the discriminatory incorporation of those immigrants is that of religious versus non-religious education. His only criticism of *Mamlakhtiyut* is that it has never been fully implemented and that, as an idea, it was too secularised. It is for this reason that Zameret approves of the enhancement of the teaching of Judaism in (all) state schools and attempts to find the golden mean between notions of ‘ideological secularism’ and ‘religious fundamentalism’. This line of thinking recalls the position of *The Network for the Advancement of Humanistic Education in Israel* (see, Introduction), which also views current schisms as stemming from a *Kulturkampf* between religious and non-religious. Yet, whereas the *Network* calls for the re-implementation of *Mamlakhtiyut* as a secular response to the waves of religious (read: *mizrahi*) fundamentalism, Zameret seeks to de-emphasise this notion’s secular aspects. Both, however, see eye to eye in taking the universal to pertain to Jews alone, and thus fail to conceive of *Mamlakhtiyut* as an ideology and as a contingent historical phenomenon. The return to *Mamlakhtiyut*, in both perspectives, thus implies the erasure of some fifty years of social struggle against the ramifications of the authoritative and non-democratic aspects of this very ideology.

Finally, by collapsing the non-religious vs. religious and the *mizrahi-ashkenazi* schisms into one, Zameret undermines his own analysis of ethnic and racial discrimination against *mizrahi* Jews, who were ‘different’ and weak, for the sake of political power, and thus he also totally misreads the contemporary educational predicament of *mizrahi* Jews. The educational and scholastic gaps between *mizrahi* and *ashkenazi* Jews – manifested in disproportional matriculation rates and higher-education rates (Swirski 2000e; Swirski and Swirski 1997) – and even in the various expressions of ethnic alienation among *mizrahi* children, have not been created by the lack of ‘Jewish studies’ at state schools, or because of a lack of general education at religious state schools, as Zameret’s conclusion implies.

Rather, these gaps stem from the development of an educational system in which ethnicity is a reason for designating children as 'needy' (*teunei tipuach*), or for disproportionately tracking them to vocational education. It is, therefore, because of the structural features of this system, coupled with the development of 'ethnic thinking', that children from poor socio-economic background receive less than adequate education, negatively affecting their educational opportunities.

The return to *Mamlakhtiyut* – in either its liberal version as in the case of *The Network for the Advancement of Humanistic Education*, or in its conservative guise of enhanced study of Judaism, as Zameret proposes – can hardly be seen as a solution to the malfunction of the educational system from the perspective of both *mizrahi* Jews and the Palestinian minority. Zameret, not in so many words, practically offers a communitarian solution based on the function of *Mamlakhtiyut* as an exclusively Jewish discourse of citizenship and solidarity. From an Arab point of view, the inadequacy of this solution needs no further explanation. Nor is this solution satisfactory from a *mizrahi* perspective. This is mainly because calling back *Mamlakhtiyut* ignores its historical role as an ideological mechanism that sought to impose a single narrative on the 'ingathering of the exiles', and hence as a factor in the marginalisation, even silencing, of the collective memories of Jews who were not European. As illustrated above, *Kedma* and *Ma'ayan* set forth, among other things, to amend this by offering an alternative to the hegemonic 'national memory'. In recent years, state schools have steadily lost children to those of the *Ma'ayan*, where the very notion of *Mamlakhtiyut* as a secular, anti-*sephardic* notion is openly defied. For parents of these children, mostly graduates of religious state schools, Zameret's solution may be seen, at best, as too little too late. The *Ma'ayan*, in their view, offers them exactly what the state failed to do, namely 'value education' and, most importantly, recognition.

The liberal version of the return to *Mamlakhtiyut* is similarly deficient. The immediate impetus for the foundation of *The Network* was a decision of the then Minister of Education of the National Religious Party to establish a centre for 'value-education' to be headed by pedagogues from the state-religious educational stream, and concomitantly, to shrink the Unit for Democracy Education (a ministerial initiative of the former liberal *Meretz* minister Shulamit Aloni). The two aims of *The Network* are to form "a lobby to ensure that the State general education system receives autonomous status, parallel to that of the State Religious schools, in order to ensure its liberal, pluralistic character", and, secondly, "to establish an educational network as a roof body for institutions promoting humanistic education in Israel." (see the association's NGO registration protocol, <http://www.givingwisely.org.il/>).

The purposes of the *Network* make its political interest clear within the context of the competition for power and hegemony between religious and non- (or even, anti-) religious segments of Jewish society. This issue recently became salient for the Israeli political

agenda, especially in light of the (still incomplete) pacification of Israel's external relations. In the background of this development was, and still is, the ascendance of *Shas* to power and its growing educational success (see, Introduction). In this context, the movement's aspiration – “to develop and promote educational programs aimed at encouraging general education, scientific thought, and critical perception” – turned out to be a re-drawing of the line between the ‘enlightened’ liberals and the ‘reactionary’ fundamentalists. The *Ma’ayan*, needless to say, represents the latter category in this dichotomy.

The philosophical grounds for this perspective are found in the recent formulation of a liberal multicultural approach to the definition of social relations. Aloni, who focuses on the pedagogical aspects of Humanistic Education, provides us with this perspective's fundamental tenets in the following passage:

The first is philosophical, consisting of a conception of man - men and women – as an autonomous and rational being and a fundamental respect for all humans by virtue of being endowed with freedom of will, rational thinking, moral conscience, imaginative and creative powers. The second tenet is socio-political, consisting of a universal ethics of human equality, reciprocity, and solidarity and a political order of pluralistic, just and humane democracy. The third tenet is pedagogical, consisting in the commitment to assist all individuals to realize and perfect their potentialities and “to enjoy”, in the words of Mortimer Adler, “as fully as possible all the goods that make a human life as good as it can be”. (Aloni 1999; and also 1997)

The individualistic spirit of this conception, which draws from 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal thinking, cannot be mistaken. This is further enhanced by Aloni's appearances before teachers and parents (one of which I attended at my daughters' state school), where the clearest message is one of ‘us’ against ‘them’. This seeming contradiction between a message of inclusiveness and a message of separateness is not accidental, and it also can be found in the philosophy and politics of yet another professor for the philosophy of education, who was the Minister for Immigrant Absorption in Ehud Barak's government (1999-2001), Yael Tamir.

It is not my intention here to explore Tamir's conception of liberal nationalism (Tamir, 1993; for critical assessments see, Lustick 1994; Peled and Brunner 2000). Yet, her distinction between ‘thin’ and ‘thick multiculturalism’ is representative of the limits of tolerance from the perspective of the Israeli liberal camp. ‘Thin multiculturalism’, claims Tamir (1995, 3), characterises societies where two or more liberal cultures reside together, and it leads to an interest-group type of politics. ‘Thick multiculturalism’, in contrast, exists in societies composed of liberal and non-liberal cultures. This, she argues, leads to a *modus vivendi* based on two completely different perspectives: one, liberal, which emphasises respect for other ways of life, and the other, illiberal, which seeks to ensure its continued existence in the framework of the liberal society. For both sides, the solution should be found in a compromise between the liberal group, which should not necessarily adopt a relativistic

perspective but rather acknowledge the limits of its power, and the illiberal group that should agree to such a compromise because it would recognise its inferiority (*ibid.* 12-13).

This philosophy manifests itself more clearly in Tamir's politics and, primarily, in her conception of Israeliness. This conception embodies what Lustick (1994) has identified as "an attempt to square the circle" and reconcile nationalism and liberalism. Tamir, in short, equates Israeliness with Jewishness, and not only that, but with a particular kind of Jewish identity. For Tamir, the formation of a stable liberal society is dependent upon the creation of a homogenised national culture. Unsurprisingly, when she contends for the strengthening of Israeli identity, she means strengthening the Jewishness of this identity. In a recent newspaper article, entitled "The Israeli Revolution" (Tamir 2000), she argued against the government's budget bill saying that: "A massive investment in civic education, in the knowledge of the country, in the teaching of Hebrew and the promotion of Israeli culture, will prove that the government is taking upon itself the lead in strengthening and consolidating society." Nowhere in her article, does Tamir make a reference to the non-Jewish minority as a part of Israeli society. "The conservation of the culture, the identity, and the language", she says, "is a goal which requires massive investment. The Hebrew language should be taught to new immigrants in schools, there is a need to invest in the teaching of Israeli history, culture, and literature. It is necessary to place Israeli identity on the agenda and to try and give it a new meaning, a meaning that would allow the different groups to acquire a feeling of belonging."

But, who are those groups, and what would constitute a sound way of creating such a feeling of belonging? Indeed, the Hebrew language has been instrumental for creating homogeneity among Jews, yet, it concomitantly delineated social boundaries between Jews and Arabs (Kook 2000). The study of geography and history, two powerful methods of instilling in children a sense of patriotism, recently became highly debated issues. Neither Israel's geographic boundaries, nor the contours of the nation (in terms of the capacity to single out its 'history', see Ben-Amos 1995), are any longer uncontested issues. The question, then, remains: what does Tamir, or any other liberal, talk about when they talk about national identity? A clue to this, I suggest, appears in an interview with Tamir following her appointment as a cabinet minister. There it became clear how, for liberal Israelis, their own particular identity has remained transparent, or self-evident. When asked if it is difficult for her, "An Israeli Princess", to live in a new, multicultural Israel, she replied:

No. It is true that while I was touring Israel on political rallies, I developed this yardstick, which I called the "Friendship Song" yardstick [a song written during the 1948 war that has since been identified with the 'mythical pioneering nation-builders' generation]. When I entered a room, I asked myself to how many of those present this song speaks to. I was told that it's a very elitist yardstick. I disagreed. It simply measures the change in society. Because the

number of people for whom this song causes a shiver is shrinking. It doesn't cause shivers for ultra-orthodox, Russian-Jews, Arabs, some of the *mizrahi* Jews, and some of the youngsters. [...] When I hear this song [...] my heart misses a beat. Because that's me. (Shavit 1999).

### III

The fragmentation of the Israeli educational system in the last two decades, as described in the Introduction, has been considered as marking the fragmentation of the national identity and its break-up into an array of particular identities, each seeking to re-structure and re-define the boundaries of Israeliness. The notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*, once a major ideological construct in the making of a homogenised national identity, has seemed to lose its currency. By telling the story of the Israeli educational system in the context of the process of ethnicisation, I sought to turn this picture on its head and show how the effort to universalise the state resulted in delineating particular social boundaries. In this story, the fragmentation of education cannot simply be seen as a result of a failed process of nation-building and state-formation, but as a contingent feature of these very processes. *Mamlakhtiyut* appears as a cause of this fragmentation and not its remedy. I therefore argue that the current attempt to re-institute *Mamlakhtiyut* through education, which is embedded in, and supported by, the prominence of a republican democratic model (Yonah 1999, 416), has grave implications for the effort to render legitimate a democratic social order in Israel.

Indeed, the notion of republican democracy did not underpin the processes of nation-building and state-formation. Rather, it was a model of a homogenised nation-state that underlay these processes and determined its development as a functional democracy and as a Jewish state. The intrinsic contradiction between the two, and the ensuing social conflicts, have recently made the republican democratic model favourable in the eyes of liberal scholars who sought to rebuff critiques of Israeli democracy (Yonah 1999, 426-427, ft. 21; for these critiques see, e.g., Peled 1992; Yiftachel 1999; Kimmerling 1999). The failure of the educational system to tackle this contradiction, that is, to provide the grounds for universality and for the development of a common sense of belonging, attests to the inadequacy of this model. More specifically, the development of ethnically segregated educational paths explains why contemporary social conflicts manifest themselves in disagreement over competing conceptions of the 'common good' and, moreover, why *Mamlakhtiyut* cannot provide a common ground for subsequent deliberation.

In this study, I argued that the explanation for the flourishing of alternative conceptions of 'good' education rests with an understanding of the structure of education, which in itself is properly accounted for by a historical conception of state-society relations. Education turned out to be a mechanism that not only failed to develop and strengthen an equal sense of belonging, but that also served as a structure that exacerbated the ethnicisation of social

relations by creating different paths for different groups based on characteristics of culture and place of origin. This educational segregation, based on the development of ethnic politics as a means to pacify political conflicts that only indirectly bore on education, goes back to the very first phases of the Zionist appropriation of education. Furthermore, it did not change substantially with the transition to statehood, when it was reinforced by the articulation of the notion of *Mamlakhtiyut*. This notion legitimised the particularistic and exclusionary practices of the state towards both the Palestinian minority and *mizrahi* Jews, as well as towards other marginalised groups, such as women and some religious groups (see, Yonah 1999, 416). It thus facilitated the structuring of education as a ‘divide-and-rule’ mechanism. Consequently, it is the development of ‘ethnic thinking’, as a characteristic feature of the discourse of *Mamlakhtiyut*, which explains why and how it was possible to maintain a rhetoric of universalism while concomitantly encouraging particularism, thus making Israel an ethnicised society.

## APPENDIX A

THE *SEPHARDI* LEADERSHIP TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PEEL  
COMMISSION: AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

In 1945 the British government initiated an inquiry into the state of Hebrew education in Palestine. The committee heard the Zionist National Committee but was reluctant to accept another delegation from the Jewish community. The delegates of the *sephardi* community, who prepared a memorandum on the situation of education within the non-*ashkenazi* communities, insisted on appearing before the committee. Their justification for this was, as Eliachar explained, that the *sephardi* community has “no representation in this institution [the Zionist NC] since [it] did not participate in the elections”, and he added, “we are more acquainted with this problem [of school drop-out] since most of these children are from the Oriental (*mizrahi*) community.” (Eliachar 1980, 491). In its memorandum the *sephardi* leadership quoted studies on the rate of dropout and school attendance of *mizrahi/sephardi* children in the early 1940s. According to this data, in 1941 some 2,400 children (300 *ashkenazi* and 2,100 *mizrahi*) in Jerusalem did not attend any school: 800 boys and 1,600 girls (1,400 of them were *mizrahi*). In addition, some 1,900 children were attending low quality institutions of the *mizrahi* community that received no national funding or pedagogic supervision (ibid. 494). In 1944, Bachi and Ben-Yishai estimated that 2,427 children aged 6-14 (14.3% of this age group) did not attend any educational institution in Jerusalem. In Jaffa, the figure was 1,497 and in Tel-Aviv and Jaffa it totalled some 2,000 children. In Haifa the figure was estimated at more than one thousand, and several hundreds in Tiberias. The dropout rate at any stage was distinctly higher for *mizrahi* children and for girls than for boys, as shown in Table A-1.

**Table A-1**  
**School dropout rates in the *yishuv*, 1941**

Continuing at grade	<i>Ashkenazi</i>		<i>Sephardi</i>		<i>Mizrahi</i>	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1	100	100	100	100	100	100
5	82.4	77.6	78.7	77.1	67.9	38.9
8	76.3	54.8	23.4	30.3	17.2	13.1

Source: Eliachar 1980, 495

## APPENDIX B

## THE EXPANSION AND EXTENSION OF EDUCATION

**Table B-1**  
**Students in the Israeli Educational System**

(1948/49-1969/70, selected years, by type and level of school)

Schooling Year	Grand Total	H E B R E W E D U C A T I O N				A R A B E D U C A T I O N
		Total	Non-religious education	Religious education	Ultra-orthodox education	
	(thousands)	(thousands)	(Percentage)			
<u>Elementary Education</u>						
1948/49 <sup>a</sup>	101.1	91.1	Education by streams (see Table B-1A)			10.0
1953/54 <sup>b</sup>	219.1	219.1	68.5	24.4	7.1	
1959/60 <sup>c</sup>	388.5	357.6	66.9	26.5	6.6	30.9
1969/70	441.6	375.5	65.6	27.8	6.6	66.1
<u>Intermediate Education</u>						
1969/70	8.7	7.9	62.5	37.5		787 (individuals)
<u>Secondary Education</u>						
1948/49	10.2	10.2	Education by streams (see Table B-1A)			14
1953/54	32.0	31.2	NA	NA	NA	781
1959/60	59.1	58.1	NA	NA	NA	1,029
1969/70	134.5	129.4	74.4	21.9	3.7	5,092

<sup>a</sup> Data on 1948/49: *SAI* 1997, No. 48, Table 22.9, pp. 501-2.

<sup>b</sup> Data on 1953/54, the first year of the implementation of the 1953 SEA, and on children in secondary school: *SAI*, 1961, No. 12.

<sup>c</sup> Data on 1959/60 and 1969/70: *SAI* 1997, No. 48, Table 22.14, p. 507.

**Table B-1A**  
**Students in the Educational Streams by level of school,**  
**1946/47-1947/48**

	Total	General	Labour	<i>Mizrahi</i>
<u>Elementary schools</u>				
1946/47	64,114	30,440	16,303	17,371
1947/48	67,288	32,104	17,727	17,457
<u>Academic Secondary schools</u>				
1946/47	10,501	8,817	568	1,116
1947/48	10,620	8,243	1,094	1,283
<u>Vocational schools</u>				
1946/47	1,865	823	783	259
1947/48	1,829	806	734	289

Source: The Labour Stream Education Council (LA IV-215-1562, 22.11.1948).

**Table B-2**  
**Students in Hebrew Post-Elementary Education by type of school, 1948/49-1971/72**  
(selected years; in parentheses, by percentage)

Schooling Year	POST-ELEMENTARY EDUCATION			
	Total	Academic	Vocational	Other
1948/49	10,218 (100)	6,411 (62.7)	2,002 (19.6)	1,805 (17.7)
1951/52	24,958 (100)	12,936 (51.8)	4,315 (17.3)	7,707 (30.9)
1959/60	55,142 (100)	24,565 (44.6)	10,167 (18.4)	20,410 (37.0)
1964/65	99,837 (100)	46,661 (46.8)	25,601 (25.6)	27,575 (27.6)
1969/70	129,436 (100)	58,479 (45.2)	49,556 (38.3)	21,401 (16.5)
1971/72	132,488 (100)	54,333 (41.0)	60,039 (45.3)	18,116 (13.7)

Source: Kahane and Starr 1989, 64, Table 1.

## APPENDIX C

## ELECTIONS AND PARTIES, 1949-1969

<i>Knesset</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elections date	25.1.1949	30.7.1951	26.7.1955	3.12.1959	15.8.1961	2.11.1965	28.10.1969
<i>Mapai</i>	46	45	40	47	42	45	
<i>Rafî</i>						10	
<i>Mapam</i>	19	15	9	9	9	8	56
<i>Ahdut</i> <i>Ha'avoda</i>			10	7	8		
<i>Arab Lists (Mapai affiliated)</i>	2	5	5	5	4	4	4
<i>Communist Party (Maki)</i>	4	5	6	3	5	1	1
<i>Rakah</i>						3	3
<i>NRP</i>		10	11	12	12	11	12
<i>Agudath yisrael</i>	16	5	6	6	6	6	6
<i>Herut</i>	14	8	15	17	17		
<i>General Zionists</i>	7	20	13	8		26	26
<i>Progressive (Independent Liberals)</i>	5	4	5	6		5	4
<i>Other lists</i>	7 <sup>a</sup>	3 <sup>b</sup>				1	8
<b>Total seats</b>	120	120	120	120	120	120	120

<sup>a</sup> Thereof 4 Sephardi List, 1 Yemenite Federation; <sup>b</sup> 2 Sephardi List, 1 Yemenite Federation

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LA The Labour Movement Archives, The Lavon Institute, Tel Aviv

ZA The Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem

SA The State of Israel Archives, Jerusalem