

**'A Hebrew from Samaria, not a Jew from Yavneh': Adya  
Gur Horon (1907-1972) and the articulation of Hebrew  
nationalism**

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**Abstract**

This study analyses the intellectual output of Adya Gur Horon (Adolphe Gourevitch, 1907-1972), a Ukrainian-born, Russian-speaking, French-educated ideologue of modern Hebrew nationalism, and one of the founding fathers of the anti-Zionist ideology known as "Canaanism", whose heyday was mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century Israel. The dissertation's starting point is that if the "Canaanites" (otherwise the Young Hebrews) declared themselves to be above all a national movement independent of, and opposed to, Zionism, they should be analysed as such. In treating "Canaanite" support for the existence of an indigenous Hebrew nation in Palestine/Israel as equally legitimate as the Zionist defence of the Jews' national character (both ultimately constituting "imagined communities"), this work comes to the conclusion that the movement should indeed be classified as a fully-fledged alternative to Zionism; not a radical variation of the latter, but rather a rival national ideology.

My chief assertion is that the key to a proper understanding of "Canaanism" is Horon's unique vision of the ancient Hebrew past, which constitutes the "Canaanite" foundational myth that stands in sharp contradiction to its Zionist counterpart. Furthermore, I demonstrate that Zionism and "Canaanism" are incompatible not only because they differ over history, but also because some of the basic socio-political notions they employ, such as national identity or nation-formation, are discordant. A methodology such as this has never before been applied to the "Canaanite" ideology, since most of those who have studied the movement treat "Canaanism" either as an artistic avant-garde or as a fringe variation of Zionism.

This study demonstrates that, despite being sidelined by most researchers of "Canaanism", Adya Horon is beyond doubt the leading figure of the "Canaanite" movement. I believe that only by giving due weight to the divergence in national historiographies between "Canaanism" and Zionism can we grasp the former's independence from the latter, both intellectually and politically, without negating "Canaanism's" complex relationship with Zionism and the sometimes significant overlaps between the two. The dissertation makes systematic use of many newly discovered materials, including Horon's writings from the early 1930s to the early 1970s (some of them extremely rare), as well as his private archive. My study thus sits at the intersection of three fields of academic enquiry: nationalism studies; language-based area studies; and historiographical discourse analysis.

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1. Introduction

The Young Hebrews' movement is one of the most intriguing phenomena in the Israeli political and cultural scene of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. From its emergence in the late 1930s till its termination in the mid-1970s, it animated Israeli social discourse by laying bare some of the profoundest issues and paradoxes of Israeli identity and demanding answers to questions left open by Israel's official state ideology, Zionism. "Canaanism", as it became commonly known, was one of the most serious challenges Zionism had to contend with, even, and perhaps particularly, after its pre-1948 rivals, traditional Judaism, anti-Zionist Jewish nationalism (such as Bundism and territorialism) and assimilationism, ceased being real alternative to the project of Jewish statehood in Palestine<sup>1</sup>. Unlike the ideologies and movements listed above, "Canaanism" was not yet another Jewish rival to Zionism, which declared itself relevant to Jewry at large. On the contrary, the challenge posed to Zionism by the Young Hebrews was of an *indigenous* kind: "Canaanism" spoke in the name of a putative Hebrew-speaking non-Jewish national community native to Palestine/Israel that demanded that Zionism withdraw from the land perceived by it as the coveted area of its realization.

The Young Hebrews framed their anti-Zionist outlook in wider terms of a struggle between modernity and pre-modernity. They professed a typical modernist opinion that the most advanced and suitable social arrangement for the 20<sup>th</sup> century was national state-sovereignty, hailed as the universal modern principle (Ben-Ezer

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<sup>1</sup> For a valuable (though somewhat outdated and biased) review of Zionism's relations with its rivals, see: Avni & Shimoni 1990.

1986:246). A secular, territorial-linguistic national identity, free from any pre-modern inhibitions (religious, confessional, tribal, etc.), was the ideal pursued by the Young Hebrews in Israel. A harmonious correlation between socio-political outlook, territorial identification with the Hebrew homeland (whose scope was much larger than the State of Israel), secular national identity, and secular open culture whose means of expression would be the modern Hebrew language – such was the Young Hebrews' ultimate aim.

The Young Hebrews posited themselves as the "liberation movement" of the Hebrew nation, which, they believed, had been forming in Ottoman Palestine since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, they defined their adversaries as those ideologies and political arrangements that, in their view, upheld either pre-modern anti- or sub-national outlooks or cosmopolitan supra-national outlooks. In effect, the Young Hebrews rejected *both* Zionism *and* Pan-Arabism as falsely pretending to be national liberation ideologies, whose usage of nationalist rhetoric they described as insincere and even fraudulent. These ideologies, the Young Hebrews insisted, spoke in the name of *non-national communities*, organized according to pre-modern tribal-religious principles: the Jews and the Arabs. The Young Hebrews therefore did not vie with Zionism or Arab nationalism for the hearts and minds of Jews or Arabs; rather, they aimed to *supplant* and assimilate these communities within the modern Hebrew nation.

Although the Young Hebrews stated their principles and objectives openly, the question of what exactly *is* "Canaanism" seems to perplex many of its observers and students. Several answers have been suggested, dating from the Young Hebrews' emergence in early 1940s up to the present: a national movement; a fringe political

underground; Zionism-ad-extremum; an artistic avant-garde; a "heresy and fantasy" (Shavit 1987). Subscribing to any of these answers is bound to identify the researcher with a particular stance regarding Israeli politics and identity, whose topicality reaches far beyond the academic question of "correctly" determining the nature of the Young Hebrews' ideology. As a matter of fact, the challenges raised by "Canaanism" seem to have outlived the ideology itself; hence the emotive reaction it still seems to evoke.

Nevertheless, one cannot escape this concern if one is to commit oneself to a candid analysis of "Canaanism". The present work suggests that if the Young Hebrews declared themselves to be above all a nationalist movement, *they should be analysed as such*. It seems elementary to base the analysis of any phenomenon upon the terms set by it, checking its claims against the relevant frame of reference and remaining cautious of methodological frameworks that contradict (either implicitly or explicitly) the phenomenon's declared essentials. On the other hand, the researcher must not take these essentials at face value at the expense of a sound critical approach. Keeping this balance is always a tough task; it is particularly tough in the context of this research, deeply interlocked as it is with 20<sup>th</sup>-century and contemporary Middle Eastern politics.

And so, is "Canaanism" a genuine nationalism? I believe it is, not simply because the Young Hebrews *claimed* it was, but because their ideology and activity *proved* it was. Moreover, consultation of scholarly literature on nationalism provides support for such an assertion in a generic framework. To cite only one example, Herman van der Wusten's conditions for the emergence of a nationalist movement appear to conform

to the circumstances that gave rise to the Young Hebrews. Der Wusten (1988:193-194) states that in order for a nationalist ideology and movement to form

[...] there should be some nationalist doctrine accepted by a social movement, that is potentially active or in full action, and considers this to be the first item on its agenda. The movement may still be extremely small compared to the size of its claimed nation. But in order to be socially relevant it should be seen as relevant by others, as an adversary or an ally... The leading unit contains people who have internalized the nationalist doctrine and are inclined and able to act accordingly. They may be ideological activists drawn from the intelligentsia... An image of the nation is necessary... The nation as an image must have some roots in historical reality... There must be a sense of urgency.

It is my assertion that the Young Hebrews met most of the criteria laid out above: they possessed an active nationalist doctrine that they prioritized over their artistic and literary activity (despite their being better known for the latter); the image of the Hebrew nation articulated by them contradicted Jewish and Pan-Arabist nationalist imagery; "Canaanite" writings incessantly emphasized the urgency of defeating Zionism and Pan-Arabism if the Hebrews were ever to become sovereign; never constituting a mass movement, "Canaanism" functioned largely as a circle of radical intellectuals and artists whose ideology was seen as an inspiration by a wider circle of supporters and as a menace by the mainstream Israeli intelligentsia and political establishment; the Young Hebrews possessed a detailed political plan for the *future*, a dissecting socio-political and cultural analysis of the *present*, and a highly developed vision of the *past*, recent and ancient alike. It is this last element in particular that seems to hold the key to the question of what *exactly* made "Canaanism" so different ideationally and politically from Zionism and Pan-Arabism.

What makes national ideologies distinct, especially if they operate on the same terrain and direct their call to the same people (in the present case, Palestine/Israel and the

Hebrew-speaking *Yishuv*)? This work asserts that the essential difference between Zionism, Pan-Arabism and "Canaanism" lies in the *basically divergent visions of the past* promulgated by the three ideologies, a divergence that subsequently becomes the source of political disagreements regarding the present and the future. To rephrase it in a formulaic form: if a disagreement obtains with respect to the past, a disagreement will most probably obtain with respect to the present and the future. Certainly, such core disagreements do not nullify per se any overlaps that may exist between the different ideologies struggling in the same temporal or geographical space. Rather, these overlaps, however crucial they might be, must not be allowed to obfuscate the fact that the *intellectual roots* of the contending ideologies are essentially distinct. In the present context, the intellectual, political, and even personal affinities between "Canaanites" and Zionists this work takes into account must not lead one to conclude that the ideologies they subscribed to sprang from the same source and thus constituted two variations of the same basic principle. The core principles underpinning Zionism, Pan-Arabism, and "Canaanism" are *different* because their approaches to the usefulness of history in modern politics are incompatible.

This is then the proper moment to introduce the main protagonist of this research: Adya Gur Horon, who was born in Kiev in 1907 as Adolphe Gourevitch and died in Tel Aviv in 1972. Unlike most Young Hebrews, Horon was neither a man of letters nor an artist: he thus stands out among the "Canaanites" as the only non-"bohemian" among the group that founded the movement<sup>2</sup>. Horon was a scholar of the ancient Middle East by education and training; indeed, his participation in the deciphering of

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<sup>2</sup> There were other Young Hebrews (either supporters or direct participants) who had not left any artistic output, but their role and involvement in "Canaanism" was either secondary or late.

the Canaanite literary epics of Ugarit early in his career had a crucial bearing on his conceptualization of the cultural-historical processes in the ancient Levant. It was he who produced the "Canaanite" vision of the ancient Hebrew past, by suggesting a *subversive secular reading* of the Bible that went against the most essential premises of both Jewish and Zionist historiographies. Horon thus provided a *foundational myth* for the anti-Zionist Hebrew nationalism.

The following chapters are dedicated to a thorough analysis of Horon's oeuvre, historiographical and political alike. It is this work's assertion that without realizing that Horon was the central figure of the "Canaanite" movement due to his *intellectual* contribution to it (as opposed to his practical participation, which was quite limited), it is impossible to grasp the exact nature of the differences between "Canaanism", Zionism, and Pan-Arabism. If one chooses to concentrate on the heated political disputes between the Young Hebrews and Zionists at the expense of Horon's difficult and sometimes murky discussions of ancient Hebrew history (and therefore ignore the political conclusions stemming from them) one cannot but reach the easy, though entirely erroneous, conclusion that the Young Hebrews simply developed the secularist tenets of Zionism to their logical extreme<sup>3</sup>.

This means that Adya Gur Horon was *the* Hebrew national historian, which raises at least two principal questions. First, how could a Ukrainian-born Jew, who settled in Israel only late in life, and whose mother tongue was not Hebrew, claim to be an authentic advocate of the Hebrew national cause? Second, what implications for the

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<sup>3</sup> For such opinions, see: Porat 1989:269, 342, 371-372. They were sometimes expressed by some Young Hebrews, but I believe this was more an ironic comment on Zionism's innate weaknesses than on the nature of "Canaanism".

validity of Horon's research do his own explicit admissions carry (Alraïd 1931h:6; Ben-Shlomo 1949; Horon 2000:345) that his studies were meant to serve this cause?

The first question, I believe, is actually less complicated than it seems. It assumes that in order to *advocate* a cause one must *live* it, an assumption I find entirely arbitrary (though it has its rhetorical merits: in fact, Horon became an easy prey for Israeli commentators who ridiculed his calls for a Hebrew national revolution while living abroad [*Davar* 1951; 1952]). History shows that this was not universally the case, as demonstrated by Finnish nationalism, which was pioneered by Swedish-speakers (Hobsbawm 1994:179; Kennedy & Suny 1999:29). Or, to look closer to our context, Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, as well as some of Pan-Arabism's leaders, such as Sati al-Husri, were nurtured in a cultural-linguistic reality very remote from the factual circumstances of the societies they wished to turn to nations. As Max Weber observes (1994:22): "The especially radical nationalists are often of foreign descent", a fact that does not inherently invalidate their activity. Horon was not unique in this respect: in Gramscian terms (which will be explained later), Horon was "Canaanism's" *organic* intellectual, whose vantage point was largely *extrinsic* to the Hebrew nation-formation he advocated.

The second issue undoubtedly requires deeper reflection. Certainly, a connection between an ideology and scholarly research (especially when made explicit) is bound to call into question the research's validity against the standards of academic enquiry (Ben-Rafael 2002). The debate surrounding the relations between knowledge, power, and socio-political standpoint is vast and lies beyond the confines of the present

work<sup>4</sup>; it will be expanded somewhat in chapter 2, which will suggest that socio-political biases expressed by researchers do not *by themselves* nullify any merits their academic work might possess. Moreover, it will be argued that an acknowledgement of the inextricable connection between the claims forwarded by a researcher and the social and biographical context in which s/he is active is an *inherent* characteristic of modern scholarship.

Horon's academic writings are rarely politically frank: this was noted even by observers not sympathetic to "Canaanism" (Bareli 2003:119-120). Nonetheless, the question of whether his scholarly findings could be judged on their own merit, given his public role as an anti-Zionist nationalist intellectual, was raised repeatedly: researchers of "Canaanism" such as Ron Kuzar (2001:207) and Yehoshua Porat (1999) argued that, ultimately, the historiography underpinning the Young Hebrews' ideology stood on solid foundations. Some Israeli scholars of antiquity, like Haim Rabin (Evron 1984:20) and Israel Efal (Sheleg 2000:49), also believed that Horon's scholarship was "legitimate", though Efal warned against drawing "too far-reaching political conclusions" from ancient history. The most articulate attempt to "absolve" Horon from the possible accusation of extra-scholarly tendentiousness was undertaken by the archaeologist Hanan Eshel (2000), who in an introduction to Horon's most recent posthumous publication asserted that the discoveries made after Horon's death verified his findings positively. However, the fact that Horon's posthumous editors felt it necessary to add such an introduction betrays their continuing unease regarding this issue.

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of this topic within this research's geo-historical context, see: Eyal 2006; Silberstein 1999.

It is not the present work's intent to pass any judgment upon the scholarly soundness of Horon's findings in ancient Hebrew history: the establishment of his studies' "truth value" is far beyond my competence. My aim is to analyse *exclusively* his oeuvre's function as the Hebrew national foundational myth. The present work contends that the use made by the Young Hebrews of Horon's historical studies is by itself no more or less legitimate than the use made by Zionism of Jewish history. This is because the "Canaanite" support for an existence of an indigenous Hebrew national identity in Palestine/Israel is as justifiable as the Zionist defence of the Jews' national character (both Hebrews and Jews ultimately constituting "imagined communities"). It is hoped that this position will help to avoid the pitfalls of taking sides in the rivalry between the Jewish and Hebrew national movements. While it *is* assumed here that the "Canaanite" thesis of the existence of a separate Hebrew national identity is fundamentally correct (as is evidenced by a large body of non-"Canaanite" literature), it does not mean that one ought to accept as infallible the Young Hebrews' ideas regarding the cultural and political directions this nation should take. In fact, the Israeli-Hebrew nation at large rejected the "Canaanite" platform overwhelmingly, for reasons that will be explored in the concluding chapter of this work.

The central points of disparity between "Canaanism" and Zionism, understanding of which form the basic condition for a methodologically solid analysis of the Young Hebrews' ideology, can be summed up thus. Firstly, the two ideologies' *visions of the past* were fundamentally irreconcilable (and, in consequence, so were their standpoints regarding the present and the future). Secondly, there was an essential disagreement regarding the *exact identity* of the nation to which the two ideologies directed their appeal: as will be observed below, the Hebrew nation of the

"Canaanites" was *far from corresponding* to the Jewish nation of the Zionists.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the respective ideologies' *concepts of a national identity and nation-formation* were deeply incompatible. These essential differences are the methodological basis of my work.

This study is thus located at the intersection of three fields of academic enquiry: nationalism studies; language-based area studies (focusing on mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Palestine/Israel, with some forays into the larger Middle East); and historiographical discourse analysis that explores the relations between a vision of the past and modern politics. The next section of this chapter will offer an analysis of the literature pertinent to the Young Hebrews and Horon in particular, examining both the place allocated to Horon in its discussion of Hebrew nationalism and the way this literature conceptualizes the entire movement. Closing this chapter will be an overview of Horon's life, highlighting not only his lifetime achievement as the ideologue of "Canaanism" but also other endeavours such as his role in the shaping of the Israeli marine force or his attempts to forge a "minorities union" across the Middle East to resist what he regarded as the Sunni-Pan-Arabist onslaught on the region's native communities.

Chapter 2 will offer a theoretical introduction, discussing in general terms the multifarious relations between nationalism and history-writing, archaeology, and the sociology of nationalist intelligentsia, thus contextualizing Horon's output generically. Next, chapters 3 and 4 will present an extensive discussion of Horon's own oeuvre. The analysis of his historical studies will be placed ahead of an examination of his political statements, to enable the drawing of parallels between Horon's historiography and his political opinions, even when no such connection is made

explicit by him. A comparative fifth chapter will then follow, discussing at length the similarities and dissimilarities between "Canaanism" re-conceptualized as a nationalist movement and Zionism, and also between "Canaanism" and other national-territorial ideologies in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Middle East (such as "Pharaonism" in Egypt and "Phoenicianism" in Lebanon) in order to locate Horon's thought in a wider regional perspective. The conclusion (chapter 6) will attempt to assess the reasons for "Canaanism's" ultimate failure to secure a mass following. It will argue that the Young Hebrews' determinist approach and lack of sensitivity to the intricacies of the emergent Hebrew-Israeli identity were accountable for the growing discrepancy between their ideology and the national society they purported to lead. At the same time it will make the claim that in the struggle between Zionism and the indigenous alternative to it the last word has not yet been said.

*A note on names and terminology*

After 1959 my protagonist's legal name was Adya Gur. He rarely used his original name (Adolphe Gourevitch), but often resorted to a play on various combinations of his adopted name, combining it with his most famous pseudonym, Horon: Adya Gur, A. G. Horon, Adya G. Horon, Adolphe G. Horon, AdiaG, AGH, etc. Another pseudonym, whose usage seems to have been limited to the 1930s, was Alraïd. For the sake of clarity and consistency I opted to use throughout this dissertation the most common versions of Gourevitch's pseudonym, Adya Horon or Adya Gur Horon. For the same reason the Young Hebrews' founder and leader is referred to as Yonatan Ratosh (a poetic pseudonym that he also used in his political writings) instead of his true name, which underwent transformations from Uriel Heilperin to Halperin and then to Shelah. Finally, the movement founded and led by Horon and Ratosh is

referred to both as the Young Hebrews (their original self-designation) and the "Canaanites". The latter will be consistently put in quotation marks to signify its initially pejorative meaning and to differentiate them from the historical Canaanites.

Any translations from original languages (Russian and Hebrew), unless stated otherwise, are my own. Likewise, in direct citations, unless stated otherwise, all emphases are original.

## 1.2. Literature review

As stated in the preceding section, unless Horon's historiography is defined as the *central element* of the Young Hebrews' ideology – the element that made this ideology *nationalistically anti-Zionist* – "Canaanism" is doomed to misinterpretation. And yet the bulk of the rather meagre scholarly literature devoted to the Young Hebrews has paid Horon little, if any, attention. As will be detailed below, in most cases he is presented as someone who at some point greatly influenced the "Canaanite" movement's actual founder and leader, the poet and political thinker Yonatan Ratosh, before vanishing from the narrative, as if his role in the ideology's formation was limited to one fateful meeting in the late 1930s. Likewise, the literature devoted to the right-wing Zionist-Revisionist movement provides us with some data regarding Horon's early political activity within its ranks but ends with his resignation from it in the second half of the 1930s. The biographical section included in this chapter aims to bridge this gap by presenting Horon's various achievements as different staging posts on a single biographical-intellectual trek.

One could say that Horon shares part of the "blame" for his relative obscurity. Having settled in Israel in the late 1950s, two decades after the establishment of the "Canaanite" movement, he missed the opportunity to be actively involved in it. Furthermore, being neither an artist nor a writer, he did not enjoy the personal connections developed by the other Young Hebrews or their sympathy and support, as relations between the movement's members were generally strained. Horon was the first Young Hebrew to die in 1972, and the remaining "Canaanites" did little to uphold his legacy, citing the ideological differences that existed between themselves and Horon, mostly pertaining to ancient Hebrew history (Porat 1989; Margalit Shinar

[Horon's daughter] email, 9.11.2009). Other possible reasons for Horon's being nearly forgotten are his perfectionism, which resulted in far fewer publications than might have been expected from a person of his stature; his reluctance to compromise, particularly on principal matters; his lack of team-work skills; his lack of talent for political activity; and finally, to cite his daughter (Shinar email, 9.11.2009), "a strange lack of personal ambition – or the loss thereof pretty early in his life"<sup>5</sup>.

Horon was a versatile writer who moved between several genres: academic scholarship, popular scholarly essays, and political journalism, though he blurred the borders between them more than once. Starting with a series of articles in the early 1930s published in the Russian-language Zionist-Revisionist press – a seemingly innocent tour into ancient Hebrew history that, read with hindsight, can now be identified as the first exposure of a historiographical approach later to become "Canaanite" – and ending with his posthumous publications, Horon's entire life was dedicated to the construction of a narrative that would refute the Jewish and Zionist visions of history and offer a positive alternative to what he regarded as Zionism's suicidal course. His last posthumous publication, the book *Kedem vaerev* (Horon 2000), which was chiefly based on his writings from the 1960s and 1970s, elicited very limited response in the Israeli press: aside from two newspaper articles, which failed to engage genuinely with Horon's ideas (Cordova 2000; Sheleg 2000), it was met with almost total silence, and nowadays is found with difficulty in libraries and second-hand bookshops – proving that even relatively recent literature can be consigned to oblivion if judged to be iconoclastic.

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<sup>5</sup> See: Jabotinsky 1980:128; Porat 1989:263, 364; Ratosh 1986:300-309; Shinar 2000:14.

On his death in 1972, Horon left a vast legacy of published and unpublished materials – a short book, numerous articles, lectures, chapters, encyclopaedia entries, drafts, maps, letters, etc., an output spanning four decades and four languages: Russian, French, English, and Hebrew. Most of Horon's published work was placed in obscure and low-circulation tribunes; as a result, even materials that in theory should be generally available have yet to be absorbed into the research. Some of Horon's unpublished papers are kept in the Jabotinsky Institute archive in Tel Aviv; some were preserved by his acquaintances. However, the bulk of Horon's legacy is found in his private archive, kept by his daughter, and has never before been exposed to a researcher. The thorough exploration of its riches still awaits an opportunity; this dissertation makes only limited use of materials from Horon's estate, in an attempt to redress, to a small extent at least, the imbalance between Horon's factual prominence in "Canaanism" and the acknowledgement thereof, an imbalance that, as will be argued in a moment, had harmful effects on the scholarly literature relating to "Canaanism".

A striking correlation can be observed between the attention given to Horon in any particular discussion of the Young Hebrews and the author's general stance towards their ideology. The smaller the place allocated to Horon's historiography, the more adamant the writer usually is about the intrinsic link between Zionism and "Canaanism", and the easier it is to reduce the latter to an artistic avant-garde. For instance, an article published as late as in 2011 asserted that Yonatan Ratosh was "the main ideologist" of the Young Hebrews (Werczberger 2011:278), thus failing to distinguish between the intellectual and the practical contribution to the movement. On the other hand, observers who were at some point personally involved in Zionist-

Revisionist or "Canaanite" activity (or both) assert more readily that the movement was above all political and that its political ideology was intrinsically connected to its historiography (Avneri 1969; Evron 1988; 1995; *Hakarat heavar* 1969). Non-Israeli scholars of "Canaanism" (Hofmann 2011; Jacobson 1987:296) are also more willing to emphasise the movement's political-nationalist nature. Nonetheless, most Israeli and foreign Jewish scholars prefer in many cases to concentrate mostly (and sometimes exclusively) on the Young Hebrews' artistic output at the expense of their politics<sup>6</sup>.

I believe that these scholars' reluctance to engage thoroughly with the Young Hebrews' politics is related to the problem pointed to above: that such engagement would inexorably bring to the surface painful questions regarding Israeli identity, its relationship with the Jewish Diaspora, and even the legitimacy of Zionism. Such discussion, in consequence, might lead the scholar to expose her/his standpoint on the "burning issues" of the Israeli socio-political agenda, especially if it is based on the admission that Zionism was not the only option for political and cultural self-definition available to Israelis, thus subverting Zionist teleology. That such "peril" was well apprehended by Israeli intellectuals almost immediately after the emergence of "Canaanism" is evidenced by the sometimes extremely brutal forms taken by the journalistic debate surrounding the movement (Porat 1989:258-261, 301-306), and which the present review chooses to overlook, since it can safely be assumed that newspaper and journal articles mentioning the "Canaanites" now number in their

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<sup>6</sup> To cite only a handful of examples: Gertz & Weisbrod 1986; Laor 2009:259-281; Libes 1993; Rabin 1999; Shavit 1974. This tendency hails back to the days of the Young Hebrews' activity (see: Teller 1953:189).

thousands, most of them having only an indirect bearing on the issue under discussion<sup>7</sup>.

However, this presumed lack of intellectual integrity is by itself not a satisfactory explanation for the glaring discrepancy between "Canaanism's" stated goals and principles, and its image in the scholarly literature. There must be a deeper cause for this state of things; I tend to attribute it to the lingering (and as will be shown immediately, highly detrimental) influence of the Israeli literary critic Baruch Kurzweil's (1965:270-300) seminal essay on the Young Hebrews, published in 1952–1953<sup>8</sup>. Kurzweil, who had a traditional upbringing and trained as a rabbi, placed "Canaanism" within the larger framework of a process that, according to him, Jewish thought and letters had been undergoing since the age of the *Haskalah* (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries), and which resulted in the emergence of what he called "the anti-vocational" current in Jewish literature. As asserted by Kurzweil, this current reflected the rejection of Judaism's innate moral vocation by the secularized Jewish intelligentsia, which had had to adapt to modern values ever since traditional values and religious outlook ceased supplying it with existential certainty. Kurzweil's approach to Jewish history was highly pessimistic: while acknowledging that the Enlightenment, nationalism, secularization, and Zionism were historically inevitable, he regarded them as highly injurious to traditional Jewish culture, which could not survive the onslaught of modernity. This culture's place was taken, Kurzweil writes,

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<sup>7</sup> For examples of journalistic attacks on the Young Hebrews, see: Amir 1991:56; Bergmann 1949:12; Laor 2009:242-247; Ohana 2008:99-100, 128; Porat 1989:302, 370.

<sup>8</sup> A previous attempt by Kurzweil to tackle "Canaanite" thinking is dated to 1947-1948 (Kurzweil 1948). There is also an abridged English version of his large essay (Kurzweil 1953), which I will be referring to further.

by the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, which heralded a scholastic-secular approach to issues that had previously operated within, and were inseparable from, the sacral-moral sphere. For Kurzweil, the "scientificization" of Judaism meant that its spiritual heritage was now being studied in the same way as an anatomist dissects a cadaver, except that the anatomist does not pretend to resurrect the corpse, while Jewish studies ascribed to themselves the role of a direct and legitimate continuation of the Jewish heritage. Kurzweil, who regarded Biblical philology and studies of Judaism as a false substitute for traditional Jewish values and fiercely opposed the claim of Jewish studies to take over from Judaism, concluded that Jewish culture was destroying itself from within. In a way, he considered Zionism, one of the outcomes of traditional Judaism's collapse, a tormented attempt to *destroy* Judaism and to *preserve* it in a transformed shape simultaneously. "If one plays the game of secular nationalism, one must not be affrighted by its consequences", he noted melancholically (Kurzweil 1953:11-12)<sup>9</sup>.

The Young Hebrews' ideology was for Kurzweil merely a radical expression of the anti-vocational tendency; thus, the "Canaanites" were mere epigones of the Jewish Enlightenment and only historical ignorance precluded them from realizing this. "The 'Young Hebrews'", Kurzweil claimed (1953:8, 9), "in their attempt to establish a 'Hebrew Ideology', are involved, to a degree they hardly suspect, in a complex of phenomena characteristic of Jewish thought in modern times; ...from an ideological viewpoint, the 'Canaanites' constitute an Israeli variation of a well known Jewish *Galuth* phenomenon". He diagnosed their outspoken secularism as deriving from the

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<sup>9</sup> For Kurzweil's thought in general, see: Ben-Ezer 1986:209-222; Kurzweil 1965, 1969; Miron 1984:60-62; Piterberg 2008:179-185.

philosophical concept of a "nation's spirit", whereby every nation possesses a collective desire to survive, expressed in a unique cultural or social structure of values, norms, and behaviour. In the case of the Jewish people, the Jewish secularists regarded traditional Judaism as the expression of their "nation's spirit" in pre-modern times. However, with the advent of modernity, this tool could be discarded and replaced by a newer one – an ideology of a national revival. Kurzweil devoted a series of essays to the refutation of this idea, pointing to the Zionist thinker Ahad-Haam as the main exponent of the concept that the Jewish religion was secondary to the Jewish "survival drive"; in a dialectical feat he managed to link "Canaanite" anti-Zionism with the ideas of the founder of spiritual Zionism.

The ancient Hebrew myth that constituted the core of the Young Hebrews' historiography was treated by Kurzweil as an exemplification of a cultural degradation, relying on Johan Huizinga's insight that cultures die when *logos* (the rational element) succumbs to the *mythos* (the irrational):

But when logic and logos – a religio-moral base – cease to determine men's views, they pin their hopes on myth... The "Young Hebrews" are not the first to put their faith in the renewal of myth. As a matter of fact, theirs is a belated discovery. For over a century, the world has been suffering from various returns to the mythical. Thus far, the flights to the realm of the mythical have brought mankind nothing but disaster. One may assume that the "Young Hebrews" have yet to learn this sad chapter of European thought. One quotation from Huyzinga [sic] will suffice: "The process of barbarization occurs when myth displaces logos in the life of an ancient culture". This playing with myth is unfailing evidence of confused thought. He who opposes Judaism in the name of modern progressive thought places himself in questionable position when he seeks to prove his sense for practical reality by argument borrowed from myth (Kurzweil 1953:9).

In Kurzweil's reasoning, the Young Hebrews were the Jewish culture's unknowing executioners in the name of an ideology donning a nativist robe, though inspired by

the *Haskalah*, that is, by purely Jewish Diaspora values! Their success and advance correlated to the Jewish culture's agony; Kurzweil, who assumed Cassandra's role, believed that "Canaanism" pointed the way to which the entire Israeli secular culture was heading<sup>10</sup>.

It is wholly unsurprising that the Young Hebrews utterly rejected Kurzweil's line of thought, lampooning his methodology as a "Jewish scalpel in a Hebrew problem" (Laor 2009:292). Many years afterwards, the Young Hebrew Aharon Amir (1997:111) described Kurzweil (quite accurately, one must admit) as being "tormented by the demise of some Jewish historical existence". Other opponents of Kurzweil (not necessarily supportive of "Canaanism") pointed out that his approach was reductionist or exaggerated the "threat" to Jewish culture. It seems however that the most glaring fault in Kurzweil's otherwise outstanding analysis of the Young Hebrews is the internal contradiction hidden within. Kurzweil contrasted modern Jewish intellectuals, for whom secularized Jewish identity was only one option among several and who were educated enough to make their choice, to the Young Hebrews, who never had to face such a predicament. Kurzweil admitted openly that the rising generation of young Hebrew writers in Israel were born into a reality devoid of sanctity and never needed to tackle the previous generation's existential dilemma. In fact, they were quite ignorant of it; a secular-territorial identity was a natural frame of identification for them: "The present generation... is far removed both by education and experience from that full-bodied Jewish life... Products of an environment, radically different in both a positive and negative sense, the 'Young Hebrews'

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<sup>10</sup> For the background of Kurzweil's interest in "Canaanism", see: Ben-Ezer 1986:215; Laor 2009:282-295; Porat 1989:267-269.

transform the theoretical negation of *Galuth* Judaism into *living reality*" (Kurzweil 1953:11, second emphasis mine).

This meant that the anti-vocational current in contemporary Hebrew letters was no longer a matter of intellectual exercise, but an expression of reality: in effect, Kurzweil admitted that the post-Jewish identity was *authentic*. This admission, in my opinion, brings down his entire argument, for how can one be at one and the same time a native Hebrew and an enlightened Jew struggling to release himself from his "vocation"? Kurzweil's proposed remedy – an enhanced education to bridge the gap between the Jewish heritage and the new Hebrew culture – hardly seems an adequate solution to this inconsistency in his thesis.

Kurzweil's paradox-play, encapsulated in his formula of "a literature that furiously negates what it seeks to renew in another form" (Kurzweil 1953:12), can be discerned, in one form or another, in most opinions regarding "Canaanism" as an extreme manifestation of Zionism. Even such a perceptive writer as Boas Evron, who had a "Canaanite" episode in his youth, is not entirely free of Kurzweil's paradigm when he writes that the "Canaanite" myth-creation was a continuation of trends left undeveloped by Zionism, as they could result in Zionism's self-annihilation (Evron 1988:351-373; 1995:205-222). The eager acceptance of Kurzweil's thesis – that those pretending to be Hebrews were actually Jews – by many commentators on "Canaanism", aside from disclosing their incomprehension of the ideology's basics, shows how deeply Zionism's principles are entrenched in the scholarly community. These principles can be presently summarized as follows: a) Jewish identity is inviolable and inherited throughout the ages, which means that b) national identity is (for Jews) a matter of fate rather than of choice. Since most Young Hebrews were

born to Jewish parents in the Diaspora (and professed Zionism in their youth), it was therefore "inconceivable" that they could no longer be Jews, ergo "Hebrew nation" was just a fabrication – while "Jewish nation", by implication, was somehow not. This major interpretative failure, which also characterizes authors whose works recognize that the Young Hebrews' movement was a fact of politics more than of art or literature<sup>11</sup>, is a manifestation of the so-called "category error" – that is, the application of certain analytical categories to a reality utterly incompatible with them. In the words of sociologist Anthony Cohen (1993:40, 73):

[People] place their own interpretative constructions upon other people's experiences and frequently confuse the two... What passes as understanding is often based on interpretation, and the interpretation is generally accomplished by reconstructing other people's behavior as if it was our own... when other people use words which we use, we interpret their intended meaning by assuming that it corresponds to ours.

A possible source, or inspiration, for this category error (aside from Kurzweil's grief over the hypothetical obliteration of Jewish heritage by modernity, which was far from being shared by the Zionist critics of "Canaanism") is the philosophy of history developed by the prominent Jewish-Zionist thinker Gerschom Scholem. It was Scholem who coined the antinomic phrase "the violation of the Torah is its fulfilment", whereby the formal "shell" must be discarded in order to reach the "essence". He used it to describe the pseudo-messianic drive of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Sabbateanism, inherited first by 18<sup>th</sup>-century Hasidism and then by 19<sup>th</sup>-century Zionism, in accordance with the Zionist teleology that posited Jewish nationalism as

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<sup>11</sup> For example, a collection of articles examining *Jewish* anti-Zionism includes a whole section about the Young Hebrews, with no questions raised about the appropriateness of such inclusion (Avni & Shimoni 1990:327-350). This drawback proved, unfortunately, quite vivid: as late as in 1999 it was claimed that "Canaanism" was inherently connected to Zionism (Rabin 1999:119-121, 130-131).

the pinnacle of Jewish history<sup>12</sup>. It seems to me that the statement that "Canaanism" constitutes the extreme form of Zionism rises from a similar logic, as if "the violation of Zionism" was "its true fulfilment", meaning that the "violators", regardless of their declared principles, remained Jews nonetheless. Such logic, I believe, is *inherently* foreign to the Young Hebrews, and it is only ironic that Kurzweil, who attacked Gerschom Scholem especially severely (Kurzweil 1969:97-240; Ohana 2008:266-272), resorted to a similar kind of reasoning when dealing with them.

The most ardent exponent of Kurzweil's paradigm is Yaacov Shavit (1984b; 1987), who, despite his involvement in "Canaanite" activity in the 1960s (Amir 1997:109), produced one of the most unsympathetic treatments ever meted upon the Young Hebrews. While opposition to "Canaanism" is undoubtedly a legitimate and reasonable stance per se, one would expect the critic not to fall into the trap of category error by claiming to "know better" than the Young Hebrews who they "really" were. Shavit (1984b:7) apparently "knows":

I regard the "Canaanite" idea as a chapter in the history of the development of Jewish historical thought and national consciousness in the modern age. My claim is that "Canaanism" is a radical development of options created by modern historiography's interpretation of the Israelites' ancient history... This is not a "native", spontaneous, autochthonous, "natural" experience and a territorial-national consciousness that gradually comes into being as a result of a new life in a new land. This is a historical-national consciousness based on historical pre-assumptions, which could result only from the emergence of an image of an ancient historical past.

And, finally: "Canaanism can be viewed as a throwback to certain ideas current at the beginning of the [20<sup>th</sup>] century on the margins of Zionist ideology" (Shavit 1987:122).

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<sup>12</sup> For more exhaustive comments on Scholem's thought, see: Ohana 2008:258-266; 2012:90-95; Piterberg 2008:155-191.

Shavit (1987:78) is certainly correct in observing that a historical vision of the past is a pre-condition for the emergence of a political vision of the present/future, but the thrust of his analysis directly contradicts the Young Hebrews' basic tenets, thus calling into question his entire methodology. For Shavit, who concentrated on the intellectual-theoretical aspect of the "Canaanite" idea at the expense of the movement's actual development, the ideology of Hebrew nationalism did not reflect any authentic native sentiments but was limited to an intellectual game played by two Jewish right-wing intellectuals, Adya Horon and Yonatan Ratosh, in late 1930s' France, whence they apparently took their "fascist" inspiration. Furthermore, Shavit (1984b:13, 68-69; 1987:77) labels Horon's historiography as "false" and "speculative", without betraying any sensitivity to the fact that the same accusation can be directed at Zionist historiography, which developed, according to Shavit's own method, from the same source: modern historiographical interpretation of Jewish antiquity.

Shavit's Hebrew book (1984b) was received very coldly by people associated with the Young Hebrews such as Aharon Amir (1997:107-112) or Boas Evron (1984). Both pointed to Shavit's inadequate methodology and his extremely careless treatment of facts, names, and dates. Their criticism was apparently internalized by Shavit, since in the English version of his research (1987) he toned down some of the more manifest anti-"Canaanite" motifs and added new and valuable factual material. This internalization remained nevertheless incomplete, as he carried over from the Hebrew original some Kurzweilian assumptions and factual errors. One thus gets the impression from Shavit's books that he wrote them with a pre-prepared thesis, aiming

to "expose" the Young Hebrews as "self-hating" Jews; however, his only achievement was to expose himself as an incompetent researcher.

An incomparably more balanced and sensitive study of the Young Hebrews is James Diamond's (1986) *Homeland or Holy Land?*, which appeared almost simultaneously with Shavit's second book (both were stimulated by the rekindled interest in "Canaanism" after Ratosh's death in 1981). It was welcomed by Aharon Amir (1997:102), who pointed out that it expressed succinctly the main problems the Young Hebrews had to tackle<sup>13</sup>, despite being founded on fewer materials than Shavit's study and devoting only scant space to Horon (Diamond 1986:34-38, 148-149). Diamond perceptively observes that "Canaanism" was above all a political ideology, describing in detail the movement's development over the years and tracking the correlation between historical processes and shifts in the Young Hebrews' ideological position. This, however, led him to a wholly mistaken conclusion that the Young Hebrews' vision of the past was secondary to their politics (Diamond 1986:5, 67)<sup>14</sup>, failing to evaluate the crucial role of a foundational myth in nationalist ideologies. That nationalism is a modern phenomenon does not mean that it is devoid of historical depth.

The source of this approach can be easily identified if one recalls that Diamond's book was a direct continuation of his previous study of Baruch Kurzweil (Diamond 1986:ix-xi), who described "Canaanite" historiography as "a quasi-historical view

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<sup>13</sup> It is not my intention to imply that a study's value should be judged solely according to its reception by its protagonists; however, the latter seems to me a reliable indicator of the researcher's ability to penetrate the studied phenomenon's internal logic.

<sup>14</sup> This claim was repeated many years later in the newest analysis of "Canaanism" (Hofmann 2011:280).

based on the *absolutization of the present*" (Kurzweil 1953:7, emphasis mine), thereby betraying his absolute lack of understanding of the phenomenon of nationalism and its relationship with history-writing. Kurzweil's paradigm is strongly present in Diamond's book, which opens with a discussion of Zionism's most acute dilemma – whether it was a continuation of Judaism or a revolt against it (Diamond 1986:9-23) – implying that the emergence of the Young Hebrews' ideology was just another attempt at resolving this dialectic. Yet Diamond's most valuable observation was that with the demise of organized "Canaanism" in 1953, the ideology was diffused into Israeli social and cultural life, resulting in a latent existence "below the surface" as an element of the Israelis' collective subconscious, so to say (Diamond 1986:4, 6, 46, 77, 139)<sup>15</sup>. This is a very precious insight, clarifying much in Israeli society's attitude to the Young Hebrews. It explains why they continue to elicit both enmity and admiration, and may also explain why the "Canaanite" theme keeps recurring in so many writings exploring Israeli identity, such as the huge project undertaken by David Ohana (2008, 2012) to dissect what he describes as Israel's "core mythical narratives".

A somewhat untypical piece of research, which refrains from deciding whether the Young Hebrews were first of all a political movement or an artistic avant-garde, is Yehoshua Porat's (1989) extensive biography of the movement's founder and leader Yonatan Ratosh. It is untypical on another count as well: it offers plenty of data on Horon (Porat took the trouble of interviewing Horon's widow and also had access to some of his unpublished materials), though chiefly framed in the context of the latter's

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<sup>15</sup> Yaacov Shavit (1987:162) made a somewhat similar observation: "The answers [the "Canaanite" idea] gave were rejected, the problems and questions it raised continue to exist".

influence on Ratosh. However, the relations between the two became Porat's Achilles' heel: keen to find "Canaanite" motifs in his protagonist's writings and utterances as early as possible, Porat (1989:142-143, 153-156, 390-391) argues that Horon's role in Ratosh's intellectual formation was essentially limited to clarifying and sharpening pre-existing notions and ideas. At this point Porat contradicts his own hero, since Ratosh himself (1982:12-15) famously described his meeting with Horon as a "liberating shock". Porat explains this as a deliberate exaggeration by Ratosh, who allegedly wanted to demonstrate how great the personal shift he underwent from radical Zionist to Young Hebrew was. Apart from belittling Horon's role in the formation of "Canaanism", such an interpretation does injustice to Ratosh's ego and misses the fact that the words about the "liberating shock" were uttered only after Horon's death<sup>16</sup>.

After the 1980s, scholarly interest in the Young Hebrews largely waned. The newest addition to the still scarce body of academic literature is Klaus Hofmann's article (2011), which is notable mainly for its laconic admission that Horon was the true author of the ideology (Hofmann 2011:274). Another noteworthy contribution is the linguist Ron Kuzar's book about Hebrew language-planning, which contains a very detailed chapter on the Young Hebrews' ideology and their linguistic politics (Kuzar 2001:197-277). Not only does it tackle a neglected aspect of "Canaanism", it also turns the spotlight on the lesser known Young Hebrews, Uzzi Ornan and Svi Rin

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<sup>16</sup> This is not the only case of Porat's somewhat lax treatment of evidence: he also asserts (Porat 1989:153) that Horon's deep dislike toward Charles de Gaulle amounted to a pro-Vichy stance, apparently "natural" for a person reared intellectually in the radical margins of Europe's interbellum right-wing. This was angrily refuted by Horon's eldest daughter (Sen 2000), and, as our later discussion will show, such a position was indeed inconceivable for Horon, who was inspired first and foremost by the French liberal model of the national state.

(both of whom were Yonatan Ratosh's younger brothers). However, even Kuzar failed to engage with the most forgotten figure of the "Canaanite" movement, Adya Gur Horon. It is therefore high time to complete the picture of the emergence and development of Hebrew nationalism, which will hopefully be the first step in an intellectually engaging and captivating voyage to uncover the numerous facets of Israeli indigenous opposition to Zionism.

### 1.3. From Kiev to Ramat Aviv via Paris and New York: Horon's life

#### *Childhood and youth (1907-1940)*

Adolphe Gourevitch was born in 1907 in a country house near Kiev, the youngest son of Arie Noah (Leon) Gourevitch, a land merchant of the first guild who owned extensive lands in the Brest-Litovsk province of the Russian Empire and was therefore released from most of the limitations placed on Jews by the Czarist "Pale of Settlement" legislation. He lived a long life, born between 1861 and 1865 (Amir 2000:19; Shinar email, 8.11.2009) and dying in New York in 1957. Adolphe's mother, Rachel Gourevitch, fell ill with pleurisy when he was five years old and died on 31 December, 1914. She would however leave a lasting mark on her son's life for, unlike her husband whom the evidence shows to have been a rich ignoramus, she was well-educated and, alone in her assimilated family, professed Zionist views. It was she who hired a "melamed" to home-school Adolphe in the Hebrew language and Jewish traditions, and although the teacher proved to be incompetent, Horon claimed that as a teenager he rediscovered the beauty of the Bible.

Once widowed, Leon Gourevitch decided to liquidate his businesses in Russia and the whole family immigrated to Lausanne in Switzerland, where they spent the entire First World War, moving afterwards to Italy. In 1924, immediately after Horon finished his high-school studies in Turin (acquiring extensive knowledge in languages and classics), the family relocated to France. There they remained until the Second World War as stateless persons, since in 1917 they ceased being subjects of the Russian Empire. One of the most important acquaintances formed by Horon at that time was Boris Souvarine, a Kievan Jew like himself. Having been a communist

activist in his youth, Souvarine subsequently rose to fame as one of Stalinism's earliest socialist critics<sup>17</sup>.

In the early 1920s, Russian emigrants escaping the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and subsequent civil war flocked to Germany and France. Simultaneously, Berlin and Paris witnessed lively Zionist activity and animated debates, particularly between the socialist camp and the liberal-secular Revisionists. The Gourevitches, like most assimilated high-class Russian Jews who fled the revolution, functioned in an ambiguous reality: on the one hand, they belonged to the so-called "White" (anti-Bolshevik) Russian emigration and participated in its blossoming cultural and political life, despite the presence of strong anti-Semitic tendencies within it, while on the other hand they fully partook in Jewish and Zionist activity. The attitude of assimilated Russian Jews to traditional Jewry was highly complex, mixing fascination, repulsion, inferiority complex (caused by the latter's seeming "naturalness" regarding their heritage) along with a sentiment of cultural superiority. Embracing Zionism was for many assimilated Jews a way of compensating for the loss of roots they had experienced: nobody personified this identity crisis better than the founder and leader of Revisionism, Zeev Jabotinsky, who portrayed it masterfully in his 1936 novel *The Five* (Jabotinsky nd)<sup>18</sup>. To a large extent, class differences were accountable for this approach, as can be observed in the case of the Gourevitches, who owned lands inhabited by village-dwelling traditional Jews having little in common with their urban Russophone landlords.

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<sup>17</sup> On Souvarine, see: *Critique social* (2008).

<sup>18</sup> See also: Amir 2000:19, 25; Porat 1989:121, 132.

Between 1924 and 1928 Horon was busy perfecting his knowledge of Hebrew. Having abandoned an attempt to immigrate to Palestine in the late 1920s, he entered the Sorbonne, majoring in Semitic philology and literature, and graduating in 1935-1936<sup>19</sup>. Afterwards Horon studied at the *École pratique des hautes études*, taking courses in the comparative history of religions, sociology, and mathematics. It was during his studies that Horon discovered his calling: having studied under Victor Bérard, Adolphe Lods and Charles Virolleaud, the French luminaries of Biblical criticism and Oriental sciences, he gradually internalized their approach to the history of ancient Levant, which questioned the established truths of the Hebrew Scripture. Virolleaud became especially significant in Horon's formation, since, as the recently-retired head of the antiquities department in the French mandate of Syria, he required a Hebrew philologist to help him to decipher the pre-Biblical Canaanite epics discovered in 1929 in the Syrian port of Ras ash-Shamra (ancient Ugarit). Horon's friend from Revisionist circles in those days, Binyamin Lubotzky (later Eliav)<sup>20</sup>, recollected in the early 1960s Horon's excitement at the discovery of an ancient cultural universe so closely affined to Biblical Hebrew history and heritage:

I recall this youngster... walking with me for many nights in the streets of Paris in order to relate this great discovery of the Semitic "Hebrew" pantheon found in Ugarit and to tell me that this was the expansion of our historical consciousness; and to explain to me that it was the Phoenicians and their colonies who founded the later Jewish Diaspora... Our historical consciousness must from now on base itself on the Ugarit

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<sup>19</sup> Yehoshua Porat (1989:132) adds that Horon began drafting his doctoral dissertation after graduation, but never finished it due to WWII.

<sup>20</sup> During the 1940s Eliav moved to the Labour Zionist camp, taking a centrist stand in the MAPAI party, and, after 1967, moderated his views to the extent that he began voicing opinions associated with the left (see: Eliav 1990).

mythology, literature, and characters – no less than the Bible and the Jewish history (*Hakarat heavar* 1969:141-142)<sup>21</sup>.

Because Horon was stateless and therefore formally unable to take a paid job at a state institution like the Sorbonne, whatever contribution he had made to the study of the Ugarit epics remained un-credited. However, he was able to summarize the knowledge of the ancient Levant he had gathered at the feet of Virolleaud in a series of articles entitled *On History*, which he published in the Revisionist Russian-language newspaper *Rassviet* (*The Dawn*) under the Arabic pen-name Alraïd ("The Scout") in 1931-1932<sup>22</sup>. This was the first appearance of a historiography that soon became the foundation of the Young Hebrews' ideology<sup>23</sup>, and, to understand it properly, it is significant to point to its beginnings in a popular-scholarly exposition of a new approach to ancient history published in the Russian-Zionist press of 1930s' France. Allegedly, Binyamin Lubotzky was so excited by *On History* that he proposed to expand it into a four-volume book intended for distribution among the branches of the Revisionist Beitar youth movement in order to educate its members in a "national" fashion (Ben-Yerucham 1973:152; Porat 1989:128; Shavit 1984a:171; 1984b:55). If such idea was indeed approved by the Beitar leadership, then its readiness to endorse

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<sup>21</sup> Eliav never mentions Horon by name in his narrative and seems to treat the "Canaanite" idea extremely negatively, though he himself fell for a time under its influence (Porat 1989:157; Shavit 1984b:83).

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of the *On History* series, see chapter 3 and also Porat 1989:124-125; Shavit 1984a:164-167; 1984b:74-81; 1987:80-85.

<sup>23</sup> For the meaning of the Ugarit discovery for contemporary Middle Eastern nationalist ideologies, see: Miller 2004:165; Porat 1989:121-123, 139-142; Shavit 1984b:46-47, 87-89, 232-233; 1987:85-86, 92-95.

a historiography that had the potential to overthrow the Zionist one speaks volumes about the movement's cultural and political orientation at this time<sup>24</sup>.

Horon's involvement with right-wing Revisionist Zionism dates almost from his relocation to France (reportedly, one of his motives for engaging in Zionist activity was an anti-Semitic slur hurled at him by a fellow Russian émigré at the age of fourteen [Amir 2000:19])<sup>25</sup>. Back in 1926, he was one of the initiators of a worldwide Revisionist youth movement that later adopted the name Beitar (Eliav 1990:34). One of his closest colleagues was Zeev Jabotinsky's son Eri, who has left a tender description of Horon in his memoirs, characterizing him as a person devoted to the idea that any political activity must above all possess a firm intellectual base, which made Horon somewhat weak on the practical side and averse to compromises (Jabotinsky 1980:127-138). Horon became a frequent visitor to Jabotinsky's house, and through his marriage to the Revisionist activist Ada Steinberg joined the Jabotinsky family<sup>26</sup>. As someone particularly close to the leader of the Revisionist movement, he has left us a valuable testimony of Zeev Jabotinsky's composition of the Beitar anthem, which includes the famous words "With blood and sweat there shall arise a race, proud, generous, and cruel", and to which Horon himself

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<sup>24</sup> For additional details on Horon's early life, see: Amir 2000:17-21; Horon 1967:40; Horon 1976c:212; Porat 1989:120-124; Shavit 1987:26, 85; Shinar email, 8.11.2009.

<sup>25</sup> A story passed on in Horon's family tells that at the same age he experienced a mystical revelation that defined his lifelong passion for Hebrew revival (for details, see: Amir 2000:20; Shinar email, 8.11.2009).

<sup>26</sup> Horon's mother-in-law was Zeev Jabotinsky's sister-in-law by a second marriage (Jabotinsky 1980:138; Porat 1989:121).

contributed a rhyme (Gourevitch 1961:594-595; Horon 1959:354-355; Katz 1993:863-864; Miron 2004:246).

Horon swiftly ascended through the Revisionist hierarchy. In October 1928 he co-founded the Paris Beitar branch and headed Beitar France until 1930, when he became Zeev Jabotinsky's private secretary. In 1932 he co-organized the worldwide Beitar sports competition in southern France, which, if we are to believe Eri Jabotinsky, was meant as a rehearsal for a future rebellion against the British rule in Palestine. Here Jabotinsky the younger attempted to fly a glider and Horon coined the Hebrew term for it (*daon*). Horon went on to serve as a secretary of the Revisionist Tel-Hai Fund, established to buttress the Revisionist activities financially and to break the Jewish National Fund's monopoly over the flow of resources in Zionism, which co-financed the Beitar maritime school in Italy and the Revisionist aviation club in Palestine. In March 1934 Horon was promoted to be technical secretary of the Beitar world leadership before its offices were relocated to London in 1938, with his main duty being the development of the movement's naval ideology and training programmes. Supplementing his income with non-party work, Horon successively became an arts dealer, a reporter for the *Paris soir* newspaper, and a translator of foreign radio dispatches for the French ministry of communications (Ben-Yerucham 1969:45, 159, 359; 1973:148; 1975:556-558, 688-689, 886-888; Gourevitch 1961:582; Horon 1959:332; Jabotinsky 1949a; Jabotinsky 1980:130-133, 152-153; Porat 1989:128, 132-133).

Horon's most notable activity in his Revisionist days was the *Rodey Gal* ("Lords of the Waves") movement, which he established in the early 1930s almost single-handedly, with the help of only a small group of colleagues. This Paris-based

movement aspired to provide nautical training for young nationally-minded Jews, who were intended to form the core of the future Jewish state's army and fleet. Horon based the *Rodey Gal* ideology on an original socio-historical concept: he suggested that the ancient Hebrews were the earliest and most prominent seafarers in the Mediterranean and beyond. Furthermore, having calculated that 4.2 million out of the 17 million Jews then alive resided in countries with access to the sea, he concluded that they were historically and socially inclined towards nautical activity. Thus he called for a renewal of this tradition to reclaim the Hebrew naval glory. *Rodey Gal* put out three editions of a journal titled *Le Cran – Revue juive d'action et de jeunesse* (*A Jewish review of action and youth*<sup>27</sup>), organized training activities on the southern coast of France, and founded a group of followers in the Beitar North-African stronghold of Tunisia<sup>28</sup>. The boldest plan formulated by *Rodey Gal*, aptly designated "Courage", like its journal (for which Horon coined another Hebrew neologism, *teuza*, besides authoring the movement's anthem), was to conquer the Tiran Island at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba as a beachhead to invade Palestine from the Red Sea. Preliminary geographical research was undertaken, but the plans were abandoned quite quickly and by 1932 *Rodey Gal* was defunct (Amir 2000:22-23; Ben-Yerucham 1969:308-309, 362; Halpern 1961:63; Jabotinsky 1949b; Jabotinsky 1980:128, 130-131; Miller 2004:164; Porat 1989:126-127).

Yehoshua Porat (1989:127) claims that the Beitar leadership was quite suspicious of *Rodey Gal*, since its independent status was believed to rival Beitar's attempts at

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<sup>27</sup> "Le cran" is a naval technical term, but also means "courage" in French.

<sup>28</sup> There was another *Rodey Gal* group established in Latvia in 1933, but it had nothing in common with Horon's organization and the identity in names was probably coincidental (Halpern 1961:222).

nautical training. The Beitar chiefs overrode Zeev Jabotinsky's proposal at the 1931 Danzig world Beitar convention to send formal congratulations to Horon for his *Rodey Gal* endeavour and a few years later Beitar established its own maritime school in the Italian harbour of Civitavecchia (where an Italian naval school had been operating since 1923). The school made some use of materials prepared by *Rodey Gal*, such as the *Le Cran* journal and the textbook *Manuel nautique élémentaire* (*Elementary naval manual*), one of whose authors was Horon<sup>29</sup>.

Horon's advance through the ranks of the Revisionist movement was cut short in September 1935, at the Vienna founding congress of the New Zionist Organization, established after the Revisionists' withdrawal from the socialist-led World Zionist Organization. Wishing to expand the new body as much as possible, Zeev Jabotinsky proposed an alliance with the religious-Zionist "Mizrahi" party that forced him to compromise on some of his secular-liberal principles. This caused uproar among some of the more outspoken Revisionist secularists, who openly defied their leader. Horon spoke at the congress against the proposal, demonstrating his determinist approach to history by arguing that an alliance with the religious amounted to a backward step in relation to the rules of historical development, since organized religion was regressive and anti-national. Acknowledging Judaism's role as the keeper of the Jewish "national flame", Horon denied at the same time that he adhered to a religion that had now become a hindrance to the Jewish national reawakening, concluding his speech with words that later became famous: "I am not a Jew from Yavneh, but a Hebrew from Samaria!". Such a declaration meant that Horon's

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<sup>29</sup> On the Beitar naval school in Civitavecchia, see: Ben-Yerucham 1969:361-362; 1973:169-172; 1975:421-427, 553-556, 680-688, 778-781, 885-886; Halpern 1961:104-221; Kaplan 2005b:155-158; Porat 1989:127.

objection to an alliance with the religious was grounded in deeper considerations than plain secularism: one might identify here an *ideological* attack on Zionism. What Horon perceived at the Vienna congress was a divergence between his concept of Jewish national revival and that of Jabotinsky.

Eleven delegates eventually voted against the alliance with the religious party, and it was under their pressure that one of the stated aims of the New Zionist Organization's charter was changed from "to make the sacred values of the Torah ruling in the national life" to "to root in" those values (Amir 2000:23-24; Ben-Yerucham 1975:513-518<sup>30</sup>; Jabotinsky 1980:131-132; Katz 1993:942-943; Porat 1989:128-131; Schechtman 1961:287; Shechtman 1959:28).

How did Horon's "insubordination" affect his relations with Zeev Jabotinsky? Eri Jabotinsky (1980:133, 137) describes Horon as one of the few "from whom [Z. Jabotinsky] was willing to suffer constantly... cruel critique", realizing that Horon was "the most educated among his disciples, as well as the most far-sighted". The younger Jabotinsky (1980:127, 137-138) refrains from determining whether some of his father's ideas were formed under Horon's influence, but leaves this possibility open (as for himself, he leaves no doubt regarding his intellectual indebtedness to Horon). Be that as it may, the 1935 congress signified a deep break between the two, exacerbating the discord dating from the *On History* series in 1931-1932. Back then, Jabotinsky saw it necessary to react to Horon's attack on Jewish historiography, both satirically and seriously. The satire he published in July 1931 entitled "Canaan's mythology" was a friendly parody that portrayed Horon's studies as an attempt to

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<sup>30</sup> Notably, this is the only place in this Beitar chronicle that Horon is mentioned as the ideologue of "Canaanism".

create a Hebrew equivalent of the Olympic pantheon. A few months later he reflected again upon Horon's historiography in an article entitled "Israel and Carthage".

Jabotinsky declared that he was ready to accept Horon's over-all interpretation of ancient Hebrew history but remained wary of some of its components that he deemed too "radical" and remote from standard Jewish historiography. These reservations Jabotinsky expressed more fully in a letter sent to Horon in December 1938 (Jabotinsky 1980:134-135) that contained both admiration of his intellectual prowess as well as doubts regarding his historiographical innovations and their possible consequences<sup>31</sup>.

Was Jabotinsky aware that Horon's musings on history could grow into a rival political platform? It is difficult to answer this question unambiguously, though I believe it tends to the affirmative. Jabotinsky attempted to persuade Horon personally to withdraw his opposition to the pact with the religious Zionists, citing tactical considerations and his belief that in a few decades Judaism would anyway become obsolete; when Horon refused, he bade him farewell saying "go on *your own way*, as your conscience dictates, though you shall always have my esteem". Immediately after the Vienna congress Jabotinsky admitted that he was hurt by Horon's objection, and, what is more telling, stated that Horon's words were "a tune from a *wholly different opera*", tacitly disclosing his awareness that Horon's intellectual development was bound to lead him away from Zionism. Nevertheless, Jabotinsky remained sympathetic to him, referring to Horon as late as 1938 as one of the "dreamers" of the renaissance of Hebrew seafaring (Amir 2000:24; Halpern 1961:213;

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<sup>31</sup> See also: Amir 2000:24-25; Jabotinsky 1980:127-128, 133; Porat 1989:125-126; Shavit 1984a:170-171; 1984b:56-58; 1987:28-29.

Jabotinsky 1980:132; Porat 1989:130; Shavit 1987:29; Shechtman 1959:28). As for Horon, his withdrawal from Revisionism did not alter his profound estimation and reverence for Jabotinsky, as he admitted to Eri Jabotinsky almost three decades later (Jabotinsky 1980:137-138).

Released from party obligations, Horon was free to pursue his own course. His main activity in the late 1930s concentrated on the "Shem" club, which he had founded back in 1934 with colleagues from *Rodey Gal* and Boris Souvarine. The club essentially functioned as a discussion society of geopolitics and history on the margins of radical Zionism and was the main medium through which Horon disseminated his views before the Second World War. In 1938 it organized a series of ten historical lectures given by Horon to the Salonikan Jews' society in Paris (subsequently printed under the title *Canaan et les Hébreux* [*Canaan and the Hebrews*]), and, a year later, four lectures on geopolitics, then published under the title *Perspectives du mouvement national hébreu* (*Perspectives of the Hebrew national movement*). This was to be Horon's last publication before the Second World War, if one does not count the journal *Shem: Revue d'action hébraïque* (*Shem: a Hebrew action review*), which developed further the ideas expressed by Horon at the Vienna congress and in *On History*, issued by the "Shem" club on the eve of the war (Amir 2000:25-26; Jabotinsky 1980:133, 135-136; Porat 1989:132-133, 149-153).

With most of Horon's 1930s publications unavailable at the present moment, it is impossible to determine whether his opinions at that stage were already anti-Zionist. At this time, most probably, Horon's stance hardly amounted to a full renunciation of his Jewish identity; rather, his continuing enthrallment with ancient Hebrew history helped him to redefine it in far-reaching terms. Like many assimilated Jews, Horon

regarded Zionism's historical calling to be the grave-digger of traditional Judaism, to which by that time he had identified an alternative not only in the *future* but also in the *past* (though he never defined himself strictly as a non-believer [Jabotinsky 1980:131; Porat 1989:130; Shinar email, 8.11.2009, 16.11.2009]). Eri Jabotinsky (1980:132; Diamond 1986:36) asserted that by the 1935 Vienna congress Horon had come to regard Zionism as an ambiguous and insufficient answer to the Jewish question, since in his opinion it lacked proper historiographical grounding. Horon subsequently radicalized his views, as evidenced by his statement in *Shem* that "the birth of a new nation should not be hidden behind a Jewish veil, as part of an attempt to convince the whole world that finally something Jewish was happening in Palestine at a time when... something Hebrew was occurring in Canaan". Yet Porat (and also Binyamin Eliav) argue that the "Shem" club's criticism of Zionism did not amount to a total withdrawal from the ideological fold. The journal *Shem* discussed extensively the chances of transforming dispersed Jews into territorialized Hebrews, which indicates its radically Zionist outlook; radical enough to move Shavit (1984b:90-91; 1987:46-47), Porat (1989:123, 134-135, 151-154) and Eliav (*Hakarat heavar* 1969:143) to condemn Horon for his alleged right-wing extremism, attributed to the influence of the French pro-fascist right. Eliav went as far as accusing Horon of authoring "memoranda expressing sympathy towards the Axis states" (Eliav 1990:138)<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> A "Shem" participant who understood well in advance the implications of Horon's ideas (and therefore withdrew from the club) was the radical Revisionist Wolfgang von Weisl, who is quoted as saying: "At first I had thought they wanted to fool the Arabs, so I supported them, but then I realized that they wanted to fool the Jews!" (Avneri 1969:147).

Despite being short-lived, the "Shem" club left a lasting impact on Israeli politics and social discourse. The journal produced by the club deeply impressed a young Revisionist in Mandatory Palestine, Josef Ostermann, who reviewed it enthusiastically in 1941. As it turned out, this was the first step in Ostermann's long voyage beyond the limits of Zionism under the adopted name Uri Avneri, which ended up in his formulating an ideology that combined radical-left anti-Zionism with a staunch nationalist outlook<sup>33</sup>. Another Revisionist whose opinions underwent profound transformation following his meeting with Horon in Paris in spring 1938 was the poet Yonatan Ratosh, who had by that time acquired a reputation as a radical political thinker on the Zionist right. The two men had first been introduced to each other by Chaim Avravaya, a member of *Rodey Gal*<sup>34</sup>, in the early 1930s. They corresponded sporadically throughout the decade (Amir 2000:23; Porat 1989:31, 120, 135, 419), but it was their close cooperation and intellectual dialogue in the late 1930s that created the ideology known thereafter as "Canaanism". Ratosh's knowledge of French at that time was rather passive; therefore, his input into *Shem* journal was, if at all, limited. However, it was the fusion of Horon's geopolitical doctrine based on rigorous historical research (Ratosh described it as "articulated") with Ratosh's disdain for Britain and Zionism, along with his highly-developed sentiment of nativeness to Palestine, that resulted in the creation of a nationalist alternative to Zionism. It is close to impossible to discern exactly each of the two men's respective contributions to the

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<sup>33</sup> On *Shem*'s influence on Avneri, see: Diamond 1986:43; Er'el 2006:26-28; Porat 1989:182. On Avneri's politics and its convoluted relation to "Canaanism", see: Avneri 1969:145-180; 1977; Diamond 1986:93-95, 150-151, 161; Er'el 2006:13-36; Ohana 2008:123-124; Porat 1989:182-184, 307-310; Shavit 1984b:145-154; 1987:135-146, 148-153; Shinar email, 11.11.2009.

<sup>34</sup> Avravaya became later a prominent translator of French literature into Hebrew, and, as hinted by Aharon Amir (2000:23), an agent of the Israeli intelligence.

final shape of the ideology; as stated by Eri Jabotinsky (1980:130), "it is difficult to say where the one's ideas end and the other's ideas begin". Most sources agree that it was Horon who taught Ratosh his version of Hebrew history and enlightened him on the "Jewish question", while Ratosh introduced into the "Shem" club a wider geographical outlook that eventually developed into the notion of the "Land of Kedem" (see chapter 3), as well as his ideas regarding the Arabs' collective identity as non-national (Jabotinsky 1980:130; Porat 1989:132, 150; Ratosh 1986:303-304; Shinar email, 11.11.2009)<sup>35</sup>. Many years afterwards Ratosh described his acquaintance with Horon as a "liberating shock", likening it to a formative, even "Paulinian", experience (Amir 2000:26-27; Diamond 1986:34, 37-38; Porat 1989:142-143, 153-156, 390-391; Ratosh 1982:12-15; 1986:23, 28; Shavit 1984b:63-66; 1987:43-46).

Another significant acquaintance formed by Horon in the late 1930s was Avraham Stern, a senior member of the ETZEL Revisionist underground in Palestine, who in the summer of 1940 split from it to form a resistance movement independent of Jabotinsky (subsequently known as the LEHI). Porat reports a tripartite meeting that took place in Paris in 1939 between Horon, Ratosh, and Stern, at which Horon insisted on the formulation of a detailed plan for the shape of the future Hebrew state. And although Stern ultimately rejected Horon's ideas, Eri Jabotinsky suggests that an

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<sup>35</sup> There is some controversy regarding the exact extent of this mutual influence, as both Eri Jabotinsky (1980:130) and Porat (1989:74-75, 81, 89-91, 111, 136-142) claim that before their decisive meeting both Horon and Ratosh had already been expressing ideas that are recognized as the other's particular contribution to "Canaanism".

intellectual lineage linking Horon, Ratosh, and Stern exists nonetheless (Jabotinsky 1980:130; Porat 1989:205-206, 209)<sup>36</sup>.

*War and America (1940-1959)*

All these relations came to an abrupt end in September 1939, when Horon was drafted into the French army engineering corps (despite not being a French citizen) and Ratosh returned to Palestine. There he founded the "Committee for the Consolidation of the Hebrew Youth", the earliest among several incarnations of the "Canaanite" movement that began advocating the ideas assimilated by him in Paris, though with some modifications, which would ultimately cause a deep rift between him and Horon<sup>37</sup>. Back in France, Horon was meanwhile suspected of being a "Soviet spy" (probably due to his proficiency in Russian that his interrogators somehow linked to the operations of the Soviet secret police on French soil in the late 1930s), which led to his court-martial and near-execution. After release he was sent to an officers' training camp in Versailles, but saw no combat due to France's swift capitulation. He then evacuated his family to Nice and, after the Vichy regime refused his application for citizenship, managed, thanks to Boris Souvarine's intervention, to obtain American visas for the whole family from the Emergency Rescue Committee, a body established under the auspices of Eleanor Roosevelt with the specific purpose of saving Europe's intellectuals and artists from the Nazis (Horn 2012; Renaud 2005).

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<sup>36</sup> *Shem* was apparently one of the last documents Stern consulted before being shot dead by the British police in Tel Aviv in February 1942 (Tamir 2011:376).

<sup>37</sup> For the Committee's activities during the early years of WWII, see: Porat 1989:186-203, 237-239.

In 1940 the Gourevitch family settled in New York (Jabotinsky 1980:135; Porat 1989:156; Sen 2000; Shinar email, 8.11.2009). While in the US, Horon continued to correspond with his colleagues in the "Shem" club, who carried on underground activities during the Vichy regime until their leader, Leon Jossua (who had headed the Salonikan Jews' society in Paris before the war), was arrested and deported to his death in 1943. Horon's daughter relates that shortly after the war her father suffered a nervous breakdown, overwhelmed by the horror of the Holocaust; one might assume that one of its causes was his wartime correspondence with Jossua and fellow "Shem" member Georges Blumberg (Giladi 1963; Jabotinsky 1980:135-136; Porat 1989:157, 421; Shinar email, 8.11.2009).

Horon's most noteworthy activity during the war was his involvement in the work of the ETZEL delegation to the United States, which became (partly under Horon's influence) a body quite independent from the underground ETZEL in Palestine, to the point of bitter enmity<sup>38</sup>. This way Horon renewed cooperation with his colleagues from the Paris period, who, under the leadership of Hillel Kook (using the alias of Peter Bergson), went on to establish several Jewish advocacy lobbies that superseded each other during the war and afterwards, changing titles, aims, and sometimes strategies, such as "The Committee for a Jewish Army", "The Free Palestine Committee", or "The Emergency Committee for the Rescue of European Jews". The body Horon was most heavily involved in was "The Hebrew Committee for the Liberation of the Nation", created in 1944, when the ETZEL delegation reoriented its priorities towards a political struggle for Hebrew independence in Palestine once

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<sup>38</sup> Uri Avneri (1969:148) even claimed that the *raison d'être* of the American ETZEL delegation was to form a nucleus of a future Hebrew government-in-exile.

Germany's defeat became imminent. It was allegedly Horon who suggested the adjective "Hebrew" for the Committee's name, reflecting his understanding that the national struggle waged by it would be essentially different from the humanitarian struggle on behalf of European Jews (another motive was the desire to avoid the "double loyalty" trap threatening American Jews should the Committee speak in the name of Jewish national aspirations). The differentiation between Hebrews and Jews as adopted by the Committee was generally in accordance with the ideas Horon developed in the late 1930s (but not with those of Ratosh [1982:170-171]), though this did not prevent a fierce quarrel between Horon and Kook, caused by disagreements over financial matters: "they were at daggers drawn since then", says Horon's daughter (Shinar email, 8.11.2009). Much later Hillel Kook financially supported some of the Young Hebrews' activities despite Ratosh's avoidance of direct cooperation with him at the insistence of Horon (Porat 1989:264, 345).

"The Hebrew Committee for the Liberation of the Nation" aided from overseas the ETZEL and LEHI undergrounds in Palestine and contributed to the legal defence expenses at the Cairo trial of the two LEHI members who, in November 1944, had assassinated the British minister of state in the Middle East, Lord Moyne (one of the assassins, Eliyahu Beth-Tzuri, was a devout "Canaanite"). During the early post-war years Horon's pre-1939 French contacts proved especially valuable, since it was due to them that the Committee managed to expand its activities to Europe<sup>39</sup>. It provided shelter to ETZEL and LEHI members who escaped from the British internment camps in Eritrea, and financed the purchase of weaponry for the ETZEL during the 1948

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<sup>39</sup> At the same time, it did not cut off its relations with the Zionist mainstream: in 1946 the Committee sent a delegation to the Zionist congress in Basel.

Israel's independence war. This was sent to Palestine aboard the ill-fated ship *Altalena*, shelled on the orders of David Ben-Gurion who was apprehensive of a possible "parallel army" to the recently-established Israel Defence Forces<sup>40</sup>. One might thus observe that it was partially due to Horon that the newly-established state of Israel nearly slipped into civil war.

Apart from his Committee activities, Horon was kept busy providing materially for his family mainly by translation work and public lectures on history and politics. He was not drafted into the US army for medical reasons (also, possibly, due to his harsh criticism of the French military in his unpublished memoir from the early 1940s [Shinar email, 8.11.2009]), and also failed to obtain a stable academic position. For a couple of years he worked as a lecturer in Semitic linguistics and ancient history in the New School for Social Research and in the expatriate French higher education institution, *École libre des hautes études*. Around 1947 he was appointed head of the Semitic languages department of the United Nations translation agency, but quit this post after two years in order to move to Israel, against the best advice of his wife (Ben-Shlomo 1949; Horon 1970, back cover; Jabotinsky 1949a; Shinar email, 8.11.2009).

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<sup>40</sup> For Hillel Kook (Peter Bergson) and the activity of the ETZEL delegation to the United States during the 1940s, see: Bergson 1944, 1946; Halpern 1961:276; Jabotinsky 1980:136, 157-163; Kook 2012; Miller 2004:166-168; Penkower 2011; Porat 1989:156, 264-265; Shavit 1984b:103-105; 1987:68-71; Shechtman 1959:270 (who reports a clandestine meeting between Horon and ETZEL leader Menachem Begin in January 1947); Tydor Baumel 1995; Weinschel 1944; Yalin-Mor 1975:249-250, 382; Zeevi 1944; Shinar email, 8.11.2009. For an ideological manifesto of "The Hebrew Committee for the Liberation of the Nation" (which illustrates the differences between its platform and "Canaanism"), see: Shavit 1984b:191-201.

"Their stay in Israel was a disaster", says his daughter (Shinar email, 8.11.2009).

Arriving in May 1949, Horon found himself in constrained circumstances. The country was poor, with few job offerings for a person of an education and political background like his own (not only a former Revisionist, but also a foreigner to the right-wing Herut party establishment in Israel, which eyed the Bergson group activities with great suspicion). Moreover, he did not find a common language with fellow Young Hebrews, whose experiences and opinions differed from his own, and preferred to cooperate with Eri Jabotinsky, who formed a "Canaanite"-like discussion society in Haifa, the "Kedem Club". Jabotinsky was the person who offered him the greatest help, securing for him employment as a scientific secretary to *Vaad Halashon* (the Language Committee, a precursor to the modern-day Academy of the Hebrew Language), where he edited and prepared for publication Zeev Jabotinsky's Hebrew study manual *Taryag milim* (613 words). At the same time Horon assumed the editorial supervision of the prehistory section of the editorial board of the *Encyclopaedia Hebraica* and authored several entries on prehistoric topics in the *Encyclopaedia* (AGH 1950a; 1950b; 1950c; 1952a; 1952b; 1953a; 1953b; notably, this was as far as Horon's historiography had ever got to Israeli mainstream scholarship). However, his reluctance to submit to the discipline of encyclopaedia-writing and disagreements with other members of the editorial board (especially with the strictly observant Yeshiyahu Leibowitz, about whom Horon stated angrily that "rabbis were editing [my] words") led to the termination of his association with the *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*. In early 1950 Horon fell ill with rheumatic fever and, following the advice of his doctor, returned to the United States, which, as his daughter puts it, "was one of the lowest points of [his] life: a kind of admission of

defeat" (Ben-Shlomo 1949; Gourevitch 1961:584, 599; Horon 1959:362; Jabotinsky 1980:136; Porat 1989:262-263; Shinar email, 8.11.2009).

The 1950s are the least known, though probably the most intriguing, period in Horon's life. He expanded the horizons of his scholarly and political activity, which, in the post-1948 circumstances, acquired a somewhat paradoxical flavour. Remaining strongly opposed to Israeli politics and state ideology in a "Canaanite" fashion, Horon nevertheless advocated Israel's cause among possible allies whose geopolitical interests he regarded as close or even similar to Israel's, possibly with the hope that such cooperation would trigger an internal reform in Israel. He also did not lose touch with the Young Hebrews; on the contrary, with Horon and Ratosh now physically out of each other's way, they rediscovered their ability to work fruitfully together. From late 1950 Horon's articles began appearing in the "Canaanite" journal *Alef*. Moreover, Horon consulted the Young Hebrews on geopolitical matters (Porat 1989:249-250, 263-266). In 1952 Ratosh's middle brother, Gamliel Heilperin (Svi Rin), joined Horon in the United States, but the two did not manage to forge any meaningful cooperation (Uzzi Ornan, personal communication, April 2012). Horon assisted the veteran Revisionist Joseph Schechtman in producing Zeev Jabotinsky's extensive biography (both its Hebrew and English versions), for which he supplied information about Jabotinsky's linguistic and literary activities, translated some of his poetry from Russian and Italian (Schechtman 1956:7-8; 1961:536-545; Shechtman 1959:320), and contributed a whole chapter on Jabotinsky as a man of letters<sup>41</sup>. Another relationship

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<sup>41</sup> Incidentally, the choice of this topic helped to cover up the political disagreements Horon had with Jabotinsky.

that Horon maintained was with Boris Souvarine, to whose journal, *Le Contrat Social*, he occasionally contributed.

True to his principle that any political action must be grounded in thorough historical and geopolitical knowledge, Horon initiated the establishment of the "Asia Institute", affiliated with Columbia University in New York, where from 1951 to 1953 he served as an associate professor, though his daughter describes this position as "unstable" and "rogue" (Shinar email, 8.11.2009). On the explicitly political side, Horon was involved in the "Levant Club", which gathered together liberal-minded nationalists from Lebanon and Israel and advocated a geopolitical alliance between the two states as a counterweight to Pan-Arabism and Zionism (Eri Jabotinsky acted simultaneously along similar lines in Israel). The "Levant Club" produced several memoranda and larger publications during the 1950s, in which Horon took part as well, sometimes under his own and sometimes under assumed names (Horon 1958:411; 1970, back cover; Jabotinsky 1980:136; Porat 1989:264; Shinar email, 8.11.2009, 15.11.2009).

One of Horon's most noteworthy efforts in this period was the attempt to advance the Israeli-French alliance (especially in some of the Herut party circles), which led Horon to support France during the Algerian war of independence. His contribution to the French war effort, which he regarded as an attempt to repel Pan-Arabism and Soviet imperialist ambitions, was, as usual, intellectual. Using French-sounding aliases, Horon authored several articles for the French settler population in Algeria and their supporters in mainland France, and also wrote an extensive analysis of the

Pan-Arabist ideology for French governing circles<sup>42</sup>. In return, the French consul in New York funded a quarterly publication that Horon edited in the late 1950s and which constituted a mouthpiece for the French cause in Algeria. These funds, his daughter says, allowed the Gourevitch family to return to Israel in 1958-1959, this time permanently (Porat 1989:264; Shinar email, 7.11.2009, 15.11.2009).

*Last years in Israel (1959-1972)*

As they had a decade earlier, Horon's unorthodox views on history and politics obstructed his academic advance in Israel, which forced him to look for income chiefly from translations and public lectures. In the early 1960s Horon was one of the founders of the Israel Program for Scientific Translations (which later grew into the *Keter* publishing house), whose purpose was to supply employment for the influx of highly-qualified immigrants from Eastern Europe in translating scientific works mostly from Russian into English. Initially Horon was put in charge of the geology and geography department, but after suffering a massive stroke in 1961 that confined him to his home, he gave up all his managerial duties and concentrated solely on translation. The best-known book he produced in this capacity was the translation of a Soviet history of ancient Arabia (Belyaev 1969)<sup>43</sup>, which was received quite coolly by the Western academic community (Chejne 1972; von Grunebaum 1970; Lapidus 1971; Madelung 1972; Yaari 1970). Other tasks Horon undertook during this time

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<sup>42</sup> To those he might have had access through his acquaintance with the French governor of Algeria in 1955-1956, Jacques Soustelle (whom Avneri [1969:171] described as a "fascist" in an attempt to denigrate Horon and to disassociate himself from the latter's influences).

<sup>43</sup> Other titles either translated or edited by Horon were Carlo Levi, *Fear of freedom*, and Gilbert & Colette Charles-Picard, *Daily life in Carthage* (Horon 1970:165; Shinar email, 8.11.2009).

were, one might assume, less to his taste due to their pro-Zionist bent, such as translating entries from English into Russian for *The shorter Jewish Encyclopaedia*, which eventually started to appear in 1976, four years after Horon's death (*Elektronnaya evreiskaia entziklopediia*; Horon 1970, back cover; Shinar email, 8.11.2009, 9.11.2009, 15.11.2009). Furthermore, Horon followed with some sympathy the "Black Panthers" protest movement in the early 1970s, as he believed it might undermine the Israeli system of ethno-social discrimination.

The other central element of Horon's life in his last decade was his relations with the Young Hebrews, especially with Yonatan Ratosh. Initially Horon became closer to the "Club for Hebrew thought" led by Aharon Amir in the mid-1960s independently of Ratosh, with whom Amir was in a protracted conflict. It was Amir who pushed Horon to commit systematically to writing his historical researches, which resulted in *A world in Hebrew outlook* series of articles, published in 1965-1966 in the *Keshet* journal edited by Amir and to which Ratosh reacted negatively<sup>44</sup>. However, Horon, who was dissatisfied with Amir's propensity to compromise on principal issues and insisted on winning Ratosh back, soon realized that a cooperation with the latter would be more fruitful in the long run, because, as his daughter puts it, "when push came to shove, Ratosh was a great intellect, and Amir a mediocre one". This, of course, does not mean that the relations between Horon and Ratosh became any less stormy, despite their now close and frequent meetings. To cite Margalit Shinar again: "[Horon] would walk about the house shouting that [Ratosh] was impossible, a devil... I heard my father repeat again and again: 'this man is draining me. He picks my

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<sup>44</sup> A glimpse of the disagreements (both personal and ideological) between Ratosh and Horon might be gained by consulting Ratosh's long letter to Horon from January 1967 (Ratosh 1986:300-309).

brains, he picks my brains, but I let him: he is a genius who turns the pickings into extraordinary poetry". What *did* change was Ratosh's attitude to Horon, who gained recognition as the former's equal in the formulation of the Young Hebrews' ideology and as an intellectual counterpart. Ratosh even asked Horon to review the draft of his booklet *1967 – and what afterwards?* (Ratosh 1967), incorporating most of his comments and insights into the final version. He also relied on Horon's studies in his own analysis of the ancient Hebrew history, published in 1971, and accepted Horon's insistence on adopting the designation "Canaanites" instead of "The Young Hebrews". The circle established by Ratosh, "The club for Hebrew guidance" (a rival organization to Amir's club), invited Horon to deliver lectures on politics and history that were posthumously reproduced in the "Canaanite" anthology *From victory to defeat* (Ratosh 1976). Horon also participated in the "Canaanite" periodic *Alef*, which was restarted in 1967, with his last publication there dated to May 1972. In 1970 Horon published the booklet *Eretz-Hakedem (The Land of Kedem)* (Horon 1970), a short and accessible review of his main ideas in historiography and politics, which was suggested to him by the Young Hebrews' sympathizer Esra Sohar (an army doctor, later IDF's chief medical officer and one of the pioneers of the ecology movement in Israel) and which Horon's own daughter describes as "wild and megalomaniac", attributing this to Sohar's insistence on a pamphlet form (Porat 1989:334-340, 343-348, 364, 368; Shinar email, 9.11.2009, 11.11.2009, 13.11.2009, 15.11.2009, 28.11.2009).

When Horon died in September 1972, the Young Hebrews paid him a tribute in a memorial announcement in *Haaretz*, and, apart from including some of his writings in *From victory to defeat*, dedicated the entire anthology to his memory (Ratosh 1976:3,

345-346). In accordance with his wishes, Horon was interred in the old cemetery of the northern Israeli settlement of Rosh Pina, which allowed secular burials.

His tombstone (fig. 1) reads Adya Gur, the name he officially bore since returning to Israel in 1959, having shortened the surname Gourevitch to a Hebrew-sounding form. The name "Adya" originates in the Russian diminutive of his true name, *Adia*, as he was referred to by his family and the Russian-speaking Revisionists in Paris (moreover, his daughter attests that since the 1920s, with the rise of Hitler in European politics, his friends began to call him teasingly "the second Adolf", which strengthened his dislike to his given name), and he subsequently adopted it in a version found in the Bible. As for "Horon", this was a nickname coined probably by Eri Jabotinsky, a humorous homage to his friend's lifelong passion with ancient symbolism, which recalled the apparent physical similarity between him and Hor, the Egyptian falcon god (originally a totem of the pharaohs, which in the Canaanite context figures in several ethnonyms and toponyms, as well as in the name of the Canaanite vengeance deity Horon). It is difficult to tell when Horon adopted this pseudonym, which became his most recognizable (apart from "Alraïd"), but it certainly happened during the 1930s, since one of his articles in *Shem* (1939) was signed by "Ami-Horon" (Amir 2000:18; Porat 1989:120, 150; Shinar email, 7.11.2009)<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the Egyptian/Canaanite deity Hor/Horus/Horon and its derivatives, see: Albright 1936; 1941; Darshan 2009:149-150; Gray 1949; Horon 1964a:180; 1976b:227; 2000:167-168, 172, 175, 298.



**Figure 1: Adya Horon's grave. The writing states: Adya Gur, son of Arie Noah Gourevitch, 1907-1972. HORON. He who uncovered the history of the Land of the Hebrews and envisioned the Kedem Union and the Hebrew Peace. The image is of the eagle totem Hor (source: Wikipedia).**

## Chapter 2

### 2.1. The intellectual origins of nationalist historiography

In order to assess as fully as possible Adya Gur Horon's role and function as the Hebrew national historian, his oeuvre must be placed within two different contexts: not only the biographical, to which the previous chapter was devoted, but also the generic. The latter will discuss some basic notions related to historiography, archaeological research (particularly salient in Horon's field of specialty, ancient history), and the role played by scholars of history and archaeology, both within and without academia, in bringing about a synthesis of historical research and modern nationalist ideology. It is assumed here that in modernity a "marriage" between history-writing and national identity became possible that was different from any such combinations in previous epochs. This chapter will present a defence of this assumption.

For our present purposes, "History" will carry a double, though overlapping, meaning: on the one hand, a research discipline that studies the past (recalling the Greek word's original meaning of "enquiry" [Burrow 2009:xiii]); on the other, a discourse, a way of representing bygone reality, with possible implications for the present.

"Historiography", following Daniel Woolf (2007:71-73), would carry a triple meaning: the committing of past events to writing; the development of this activity throughout the ages; and the system of values and ideas that informs it. The final term that we are concerned with here, "Nationalism", would signify a complex set of ideas, whose basic principles were summarized by one of its most prominent scholars, Anthony Smith (1999:102), as follows:

1. The world is divided into nations, each with its own character and destiny;
2. The nation is the sole source of political power, and loyalty to it overrides all other loyalties;
3. Everyone must belong to a nation, if everyone is to be truly free;
4. To realize themselves, nations must be autonomous;
5. Nations must be free and secure if there is to be peace and justice in the world.

Smith's definition, as we can see, focuses on the national idea's intellectual-theoretical aspect. Nationalism, however, is not limited to ideological preaching but has a multitude of expressions in many aspects of reality; moreover, its meanings rarely remain the same in different times and places. The following definition of nationalism (Portugali 1988:155), which complements Smith's, offers an insight into its political nature, demonstrating along the way the determinist vocabulary that the national idea utilizes:

1. Humanity is naturally divided into nations. 2. Nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained. 3. The only legitimate type of government is a national self-government. 4. The primary condition of global freedom and harmony is the strengthening of the nation-state. 5. For freedom and self-realization, people must identify with a nation. 6. Loyalty to the nation-state overrides other loyalties. 7. The nation-state's supreme and sole obligation is towards its co-nationals. 8. Nations can only be fulfilled in their own territory, with their own state and government. 9. The nation-state – the unity of people, territory and government – is the genuine unit within and through which people conduct their social, economic and cultural affairs.

Both definitions, the theoretical and the political, point to a certain difficulty in bringing history-writing and nationalism under the same roof: the former obviously deals with the past, while nationalism's thrust is normally directed towards the present and the future. The tight connection between the two, though by no means "natural", exists nonetheless, and what makes its existence possible is, in my opinion, the notion

of "historicism": a contested term, with meanings that are sometimes contradictory and sometimes overlapping. Generally speaking, "historicism" refers to an organizing principle of historical enquiry, which imbues it with an overall sense: what Burrow (2009:460) calls "the hand of God in unique historical configurations of events and forces". Various approaches to historicism describe it as a contingency-based attitude to history, whereby the past "can only be considered historically on its own terms and according to its own unique development" (Olsen 2011:200); or, on the contrary, as an almost teleological method that stipulates that the historian can recover from the past rules of historical development that make it possible to predict the future with a measure of confidence (Hawkins 2011:379-383)<sup>46</sup>. For now, I prefer to rely on a more flexible definition of historicism, suggested by Mark Bevir and Alexander Motyl, which is by-and-large a variation of Olsen's definition. For Bevir (2012:657, 658), historicism means that "explanations of ideas, texts, actions, and practices should rely on historical narratives, not appeals to formal classifications, correlations, systems, or models", since "human life consists solely of a flux of activity without any basis in a formal structure or teleological movement". Motyl (1999b:45) argues that historicism assumes that history is evolving according to its own intrinsic laws and logic, which can be discovered, described, and analysed. Both definitions, though not identical, agree that historicism incorporates the principle that facts can be properly understood only by learning how they came to be; ergo, the present can be explained only by the past. Subsequently, the present might be reshaped according to a particular set of

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<sup>46</sup> Stefan Berger (2001:28-29) explains the contradictions in these definitions as arising from a linguistic conflation of "historism" (which corresponds to the first definition) and "historicism" (which corresponds to the second). The distinction between the two, Berger says, is observed in German, but not in English.

ideas drawn from historical knowledge. John Coakley (2004:531-532) details the various uses to which historiography can be put: consolidation of political structures and state regimes; support of political struggles, whether for or against a particular social arrangement; support of various territorial claims; finally, mobilization for a continued struggle after defeat.

An ideology that can particularly support such uses is nationalism, which, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century has been one of the most popular propositions regarding the desired form of social life. Nationalist thinkers and ideologues realized that in order to make the present and the future describable and operationable in ideological terms, the past must first be conceptualized according to those terms. And, while a certain degree of deliberate manipulation of history is undoubtedly necessary for the formation of a nationalist ideology, the ensuing discussion will argue that an ideologised past can be effective as a political tool only insofar as it is accepted as *plausible*.

The intellectual sources of the national idea can be traced to certain currents of European philosophy, which, after leaving the ivory tower in Europe, spread over to other continents by conquest, commerce, and intellectual exchange<sup>47</sup>. Two names from the pantheon of European philosophy are most intimately (but not exclusively) linked to the emergence of historicism and, consequently, nationalism. These are Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Neither of them was nationalist in the modern-day sense of the term; however,

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<sup>47</sup> Nationalism's spread was not characterized exclusively by a centrifugal dynamic with Europe at its core, as shown by Benedict Anderson (1991:47-65), who stresses the importance of the American liberation wars of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to the growth of nationalism.

these thinkers initiated certain trends in the philosophy of time that were adopted by the ideologues of nationalism.

The temporal philosophy that this dissertation deals with separates history into two layers: one is the material setting in which humanity passes its factual existence; the other is the immaterial domain in which universal cosmic rules are perceived to be shaped and set in motion. In pre-modernity, the former was pictured as a revolving wheel: from morning till evening, from birth to death, each day, person and generation anew (so-called "short time", to follow David Ohana [2008; 2012]). The latter was regarded as being independent of materiality and as acting according to the principles of an eternal truth found at the core of the universe (Ohana's "long time"). The pre-modern time-concept was intrinsically apolitical: as depicted by Reinhart Koselleck (1985), it did not accommodate the notion that humans could partake in the shaping of their history by their own autonomous will. Rather, it saw humanity as being thrown to the mercy of larger cosmic (or divine) powers:

The peasant world... lived within the cycle of nature... the everyday world was marked by what the nature brought... the expectations cultivated in this peasant-artisan world... subsisted entirely on the experiences of their predecessors, experiences which in turn became those of their successors. If anything changed, then it changed so slowly and in such a long-term fashion that the rent between previous experience and an expectation to be newly disclosed did not undermine the traditional world. This almost seamless transference of earlier experiences into coming expectations cannot be said to be true of all strata in exactly the same way... As long as the Christian doctrine of the Final Days set an immovable limit to the horizon of expectation (roughly speaking, until the mid-seventeenth century), the future remained bound to the past (Koselleck 1985:276-277).

Thus, in pre-modernity the expectation of an imminent messianic-eschatological occurrence gave rise to the feeling that the universe was reborn every day anew (the

original meaning of "revolution", according to Koselleck [1985:39-54, 79]), enhancing the cyclical time concept. The world was perceived as following established patterns, with no possible changes to rip open the seamed and repetitive flow of time. Particular historical stages were usually delineated by astronomic cycles or dynastic sequences of inheritance or overthrow (with each usurping dynasty imitating the behaviour of its predecessor).

The pre-modern time-concept started to disintegrate roughly in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, says Koselleck (1985:246), when "time [became] no longer simply the medium in which all histories [took] place; it gain[ed] a historical quality. Consequently, history no longer occur[ed] in, but through, time. Time [became] a dynamic and historical force in its own right". This new stage possessed several key characteristics, the chief of which was the perception that time was constantly absorbing a growing number of elements and accelerating towards a certain end, which was transferred from the sphere of divine eschatology to the sphere of material reality. Humans became conscious of living within a changing stream of time, with each historical stage *distinct* from the previous and the successive, thus being "new" and constituting a transitory stage between past and future. Historical events came to be felt as contingent and context-dependent, which meant that the past no longer supplied humankind with ideal typologies and sources for analogies. Simply put, the past ceased being a source of wisdom, because "all future would be different from the past, and better" (Koselleck 1985:280). The future became open-ended; prediction superseded prophecy, stripping the clerical classes of their prerogative as the depositaries of eschatological expectation and redemption. The newly-emergent concept of "progress" assumed that temporal horizons were ambiguous and the choice

between possible futures lay in the hands of human agents (whose capability to shape their fate was nonetheless acknowledged to be more limited than god's pre-ordained teleology) (Koselleck 1985). It is then that the positivist methodological discourse gradually became the common basis of a "sound" scholarship, as depicted by Jonathan Friedman (1992:850):

1. The Truth is singular. There is but one true version of the past.
2. The past consists of an arbitrarily chosen segment of a temporal continuum ending with the present moment.
3. The structure attributed to this past is the product of a specific kind of research carried out by those competent in the field.
4. This structure is objective and corresponds to proposition 1, that is, it is singular.
5. All other structures or interpretations attributed to the past are, by implication, ideological in the sense of misrepresentations.

Herder's domain of enquiry was the "short time", the material time experienced tangibly by humans (Herder 1993:38-58, 63-77). He argued that to the extent that every human being was unique, yet related to fellow humans, to the same extent each human society was particular and possessed its own innate authentic essence, without losing the inherent traits tying it to the rest of humankind. This essence, Herder wrote, was shaped over the ages as a cumulative effect of historical developments and the geophysical conditions within which a given society functioned. In order to decipher the society's essence, one had to master its language (Herder insisted that any reality possessed its own linguistic expression) and devote her/himself to the study of the society's past, keeping in mind that each society had its own particular history and its own ways of conceptualizing it – a clearly historicist proposition. Furthermore, Herder added, the society's essence was not rigid, but gradually changing with each historical age. Hence, every age should be studied on its own account by applying critical methodology, and analogies must be drawn extremely cautiously. Herder's

philosophy rejected the concept of an inherent progress, since in his method no society was intrinsically superior to another. In fact, Herder claimed, some ancient societies could be much more sophisticated and spiritually advanced than certain societies of (Herder's) present (Breuilly 1994:104-108; Bunge 1993:9-10, 12-19; Chowars 1998:661-662; Hayes 1927; Hutchinson 1994:123; Rejwan 1999:31). And whereas Herderian-like ideas had been elaborated a full century before by Giambattista Vico (1668-1744; Avis 1986:149-150, 156), it was Herder who stressed that each society's essence is expressed in the most adequate way in a *state* of its own (Hayes 1927:719-720, 727)

Hegel's interest, on the contrary, lay in what we described above as the "long time" (Chowars 1998:662; Hegel 1956:1-110; Duara 1995:4, 17-20, 87). In the present context, Hegel is particularly significant due to his adaptation of the "long time" concept to the modern rationalist outlook. Before Hegel, the universe was generally depicted as a playground of divine powers (humanity being accorded varying degrees of freedom), with the age of gods and ancient heroes located in the irretrievably lost "golden" period when the "long time" and the "short time" converged and humans had access to the universe's essential truths. The only hope of a return to that age was invested in eschatology, that is, in messianic redemption that held the promise of a moral rebirth permitting once again the fusion of the two temporal domains. What Hegel proposed was in fact a surrogate eschatology, picturing the flow of history as the voyage of the human reason towards the attainment of complete self-consciousness ("the Absolute"). Reason was described by Hegel as an intrinsic attribute of all humanity, which assumed various forms in various societies, with full self-consciousness tantamount to complete freedom, spiritual and material alike. The

redemption, according to Hegel, would thus come from *within* humanity, with no recourse to a god-sent messianic figure.

Hegel's philosophy made use of the concept of *diachronic linear time* – time moving from the past through the present to the future (characterized by Walter Benjamin [1992] as "homogeneous, empty time" waiting to be filled by the actions of the history's protagonists). Closer to his own reality, Hegel stipulated that the more intricate and voluntary a society's self-organization is, the freer and more self-conscious is its "Spirit of Reason", expressed through the society's spiritual constitution and activity. Eventually, Hegel implied, full liberty would mean full political sovereignty. This way, the Hegelian Absolute becomes popular self-determination – only a step short from declaring it *national*. John Burrow (2009:458-459) describes how it eventually happened in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century:

But as, after the 1813-1814 "war of liberation", the concept of the nation became increasingly politicized, the "Idea of the State" was gathered into the thought world of Romanticism; the State as conceived by Fichte and Hegel – as the embodiment of ethical life, a spiritual agent – became, in the metaphysical technical term derived from Herder, not just a machine but a historical "Individuality", the complement of Herder's concept of the Nation, also a unique Individuality. The two concepts achieved a kind of fusion in the idea of the nation state.

In this perspective, Herder's and Hegel's thought is inherently *modern*: it was their fusion that enabled, first, the transition from a pre-modern to a modern concept of time and, second, its politicization in the form of a nationalist ideology. As we have seen, Herder's philosophy was based on the parallel between the uniqueness of the individual human being's fate and the fate of the society, while Hegel's philosophy pictured humankind as endowed with a single vocation of carrying the "Spirit of Reason" towards complete self-consciousness. Nationalism borrowed from Hegel the

struggle towards self-realization, applying it to Herder's idea of the uniqueness of cultures and societies. A synthesis was attained between these seemingly contradictory temporal philosophies by raising the "short time" to the value level reserved for the "long time". With the widening appeal of the national idea during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, each modern national community was imagined to be culturally and historically distinct, possessing its own particular path of development.

Simultaneously, an "eternal" vocation and fate were ascribed to it, whose realization was conceptualized as the achievement of a sovereign national state. A secular, modernized, rational, national state became synonymous with freedom in the nationalist discourse (Berger 2007a:9-12; 2007b:34; Breuilly 2009:9-10; Duara 1995:27-28)<sup>48</sup>. As Anthony Smith (1994:153) observes, modernity switched the roles between the teleological message and its carrier. Whereas the pre-modern outlook treated society as the passive carrier of a sacred message and a purpose eternal and independent of its carrying agent, modernity turned human society (and, particularly, the prospective nation) into its own agent of redemption. Pre-modern top-down teleology became in modernity a bottom-up one, concludes Smith.

One of the central implications of the transformation outlined above was what might be called an *anthropologization* of the nation; namely, the attribution of a single person's characteristics to a whole national society: "nations", writes Craig Calhoun (1997:44), "are... commonly understood as... being individuals – both in the literal sense of being indivisible, and metaphorically as singular beings that move through

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<sup>48</sup> While pre-modernity undoubtedly witnessed widespread struggles for freedom, I assume that they differed from modern nationalism by a) preserving the sacral outlook, thus b) avoiding a mixture between "long time" and "short time", and c) avoiding mass politics in the modern sense (that every member of the community is inherently free and entitled to shape his/her own fate).

history as ordinary people move through their biographical life courses". The *anthropologized* nation was described as being endowed with a common and unique will and vocation, which it strived to realize during its "lifetime". It was also imagined as a single body, no part of which could be detached. On a somewhat less symbolic plane, the nation was articulated in a language of kinship, becoming a "family" in the nationalist parlance. Finally, it was imagined as moving from youth through maturity to decline, much as a human being lives his/her life from birth to death (Alonso 1988:40; Berger 2007b:54; Hroch 1993:15)<sup>49</sup>.

The second significant implication for nationalism was a profound reform in periodization, meaning the organization of time, which had seemed endless and seamless, into separate blocks ("ages"), which could then be tied in a logical sequence. Periodization reflects the human need to seek a unifying idea in order to bestow sense upon a past that would otherwise seem illogical and chaotic; the modern rationalist outlook answered this perennial need by inheriting the periodization imperative from the pre-modern sacral outlook but replacing its teleology of redemption by god with redemption by humans.

One of the most popular methods of periodization, dating according to Donald Kelley (2007) from the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, was the triad Past-Present-Future, which became in the modernist discourse Antiquity-Middle Ages-Modernity<sup>50</sup>. Hegel's idea of the "Spirit of Reason's" progress – this darling of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This idea of an analogy between the one and the many hails back to the Middle Ages (Avis 1986:3; Kelley 2007:18), but then it was probably lacking any nationalist connotations.

<sup>50</sup> John Burrow (2009:416) attributes the division between Antiquity, Middle Ages and Modernity to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century German scholar Christoph Keller (Cellarius).

and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' positivist political ideologies – attached moral value to time's three dimensions: the movement towards the "Absolute" made the present axiologically superior to the past, and the future axiologically superior to the present. "Modernity" and "rationality" became identical with secularism, and humanity's advancement from "dark" primitivism towards rational modernity became a pervasive historiographical paradigm from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Kimmerling 1998:62-63). With the advent of post-1789 mass politics (that largely inspired Hegel), the struggle for the "bright future" of national sovereignty became real.

Historiography followed these developments closely. The entry into modernity and the ensuing transformation of the time-concept placed new challenges before history-writing, which, if they were to be answered, demanded a fresh methodology. The classical method inherited from antiquity, of reporting the "truth" in a "pure" form as much as possible, no longer satisfied modernity's needs. The loss of confidence in the unbroken flow of time, the appearance of ambiguous future horizons, and the destruction of the past's archetypal nature resulted in the realization that any perception of historical events was deeply influenced by the circumstances surrounding the person committing these events to writing. Contemporary geographical, chronological, and social contexts were acknowledged as legitimate factors in shaping the historian's understanding of the past; with each coming age, new experiences were formed, new questions were posed and, accordingly, the perception of the past was reconsidered and history was studied and written anew. The historian's aim was redefined as striking the balance between the imperative to produce true statements about the past and these statements' inherent relativity. In fact, modern historiography *qua* modern is relative by its very nature, argues

Koselleck, pointing to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century German scholar Johann Chladni (Chladenius) as the one who made "positional commitment" a "presupposition of historical knowledge"<sup>51</sup>. This also allowed the introduction of comparative analysis into social and historical sciences, since different standpoints regarding different events and different cultures became legitimate (Koselleck 1985:130-155, 248, 254, 281-282; Rowe 1965).

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<sup>51</sup> To be more exact, Chladenius redefined historical methodology, which, until his time, considered anything that happened beyond the reach of two to three generations as "ancient history", since no living witnesses remained of the narrated events. Chladenius realized that this meant that the limit of "ancient history" was constantly moving upwards, making *any* history dependent upon a particular standpoint in time and place, thus necessarily "partisan". This legitimized the pursuit of the past's "essence" instead of reporting the bare facts. As a result, eyewitness testimony lost its significance for historiography and temporal distance from the described events came to be considered an advantage (Koselleck 1985:135-140, 152, 240, 249-250). One might learn from this that a relatively obscure European scholar was the forerunner of the present-day academic "post-modernism", making the apostles of "relativity" epigones of 18<sup>th</sup>-century historiographical truisms.

## 2.2. The "golden age" myth

The periodization adopted by nationalist ideologues, the sources of which were briefly discussed in the previous section, introduced into the nationalist discourse the key concept of a *golden age*. This age is normally imagined as the time when the nation's true "essence", to use a Herderian term, was freely and fully expressed and the nation lived in accordance with its nature and potential (hence the adjective "golden"). John Coakley (2004:546-547) characterizes the "golden age" as consisting of three essential components, not all of them sharing equal weight in each national historiography: political and/or military greatness; cultural or social greatness; literary greatness, evidenced by the rediscovery (or, sometimes, fabrication) of ancient epic works. Usually, the "golden age", if dated at all, is located in a very distant past. It is then purportedly followed by demise (a "Middle Ages" of sorts), when the nation is subject to oppression of various kinds – dispersal, foreign occupation, loss of native culture, internal decay, etc. – and its "essence" can no longer be realized (Coakley 2004:548). The triad is then completed by renewal or renaissance ("modernity"), when the nation re-emerging from its "long age of darkness" recaptures its bygone glory and re-establishes itself as an active participant in history, by fighting an external oppressor, re-winning internal unity, or both (Coakley 2004:548-550). The nation becomes a phoenix, following the pattern of glory acquired at birth – glory lost – glory regained.

The idea that the nation is simultaneously deeply anchored in antiquity and re-emerging as young and energetic is apparently contradictory; it also ties in a single knot two basically distinct categories, "national self-determination" and "modernity". In fact, this key paradigm of nationalist historiography is *mythic*, a term calling for

further exploration. Is myth incompatible with history-writing? Surely, if we take "myth" in its colloquial meaning of "fictive/unbelievable story", we must admit that historiography, even partisan, must be free of it (this is the position indirectly taken by M. Finley, when he argues [1990:58] that scrutiny into the constituting elements of nationalist historiography might actually undermine it). However, looking deeper into the term's different meanings and connotations, we find a lot in common between myth and history-writing. Percy Cohen (1969:338), for instance, defines myth in several partly-overlapping categories: an expression of the human unconsciousness; a way of explaining reality; a symbolic statement about reality; a way to coalesce societies; a way to legitimate particular social realities; a symbolic expression of the social structure; a structurally constructed web of motives. Although for Cohen (1969:337) myth constitutes a narrative of origins imbued with sacred quality (which "standard" historiography, one is led to understand, should be free of), he also points to similarities between the two. Myth, he says (Cohen 1969:349-352), is akin to historiography by being first and foremost a *narrative*: it arranges a series of events in a logical diachronic chain, permitting thereby the anchoring of the present in the past. Cohen (1969:352) states that "In so far as... history... allows some scope to fantasy, tends to interpret the past in such a way as to anchor the present in a series of significant events, and acquires a sacred character, it has some of the qualities of myth".

Other scholars reach analogous conclusions: myth is, to cite Anthony Cohen (1993:99), "an expression of the way in which people cognitively map past, present and future". This mapping entails a *selection* of facts woven into the historiographical narrative (Lévi-Strauss 1966:256-258); therefore, both myth-makers and

historiographers expose their source material to *creative* treatment. Yael Zerubavel (1995:6, emphasis mine) writes that "...the selection and organization of a vast array of chronicled facts into a narrative form requires a response to concerns that are essentially *literary and poetic*". The same idea is expressed by Paul Ricoeur, who argued that both fiction- and history-writing deal with a plot structure and operate within the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future (Valdés 1991:105-106, 116). Rebecca Collins (2003) and Mark Hearn (2007:104) argue in a similar vein that the polarization between myth-making and history-writing is groundless, since the two share several key traits: both require a degree of generalization; both require a degree of interpretation; both use story-telling devices; both attribute moral and sacral values to chosen events of the past in order to serve the shifting needs of the present.

The most articulate defence of this standpoint is offered by Reinhart Koselleck (1985:128, 214-216; also Burrow 2009:475-478), who argues that the modern attitude to history demands that the historian pays closer attention to the essential qualities of the historical narrative rather than to the plain facts. This, in turn, entails an aestheticization of the historical narrative by *belles-lettres* means; at the same time, authors of fiction have to win their public by convincingly emulating historical reality. Both have "to distill from... history its meaningful unity" (Koselleck 1985:214). In fact, Koselleck makes the point that the introduction of mythical narrative structures into historiography is an *essential characteristic* of modern history-writing.

I will argue that the chief significance of the golden age myth in nationalist historiography is the role it fulfils as a "foundational myth", that is, a myth that

reaffirm[s] cultural values and assumptions, consolidate[s] identity, create[s] community, mobilize[s] sentiments, validate[s] social exclusions and inclusions and endorse[s] a society's self-image – all with reference to a past which is presented as historic, but which is invariably largely or wholly mythic (O'Connor 2009:159).

The functional tasks performed by foundational myths in nationalism are these:

[The golden age myth] provides a people that may be suffering from socio-economic and cultural deprivation with a self-validating image of former greatness... Second, it implies a political project for the future that is entirely compatible with the nationalist agenda: the re-establishment of national freedom and unity are seen as prerequisites to the re-establishment of the golden age (Coakley 2004:546).

Kennedy and Suny (1999:2-3) have broken down the production of foundational myths, or, more broadly, of national images of the past, into several key objectives: an attempt to uncover the nation's "spirit", "essence", and corresponding "destiny"; a formulation of the language by which the national idea is elaborated, represented and reproduced; an intermediation between the masses and modernity, mobilizing the people to an idea; finally, a reinforcement of the intellectuals' own social status.

Several scholars, John Coakley, Anthony Smith, and Steven Knapp among them, have proposed typologies of foundational myths, which divide them into two broadly-defined types that share common basic structural characteristics such as an origin in a particular time and place, a lost golden age, and a teleology of its recreation. The first type advocates a biological connection between the members of the nation and their presumed ancestors who lived during the golden age; this is therefore a myth of descent and the acquisition of certain collective faculties and desires through blood-link. The second type stipulates an ideological connection between "ancestors" and "heirs", drawing inspiration from past examples with no factual biological connection between the "fathers" and their "sons" that can be ascertained or defended. Smith

(1984:292-297; 1999:57-68, 264) calls the first type *biological* and the second type *ideological*, paralleling Knapp's (1989:129) dichotomy of myths of *continuity* as opposed to myths of *analogy*, and Coakley's (2004:542-545) myths of *biological descent* versus myths of *cultural affinity*. Coakley's neat typology (one is tempted to say: all too neat) places the golden age myth in a wider framework of correlations between the nationalist historiography's functions and the types of myths it employs for each function:

...nationalist historiography will fill one or more of five types of function: *definition* of the conceptual boundaries of the nation [fulfilled by myth of origin]; *reinforcement* of a sense of pride in national achievements [fulfilled by myth of golden age]; capacity to promote *commiseration* over unjust suffering that justifies compensation [fulfilled by myth of the "dark Middle Ages"]; *legitimization* of the current national struggle by reference to its roots in the past [fulfilled by myth of renewed struggle]; and *inspiration* regarding the bright future of the nation [fulfilled by myth of national vocation, which exposes the nation's teleological purpose] (Coakley 2004:541, 550-553)<sup>52</sup>.

Mary Matossian (1994:221-223) observes that the golden age can generally be pictured in two ways: the first portrays a glorious imperial past, when the nation was strong both culturally and politically; the other resorts to an image of a pristine agrarian age of "national purity", before some intervention that "corrupted" the "natural" flow of history. Yet Matossian also notices a basic problem characterizing these two depictions of the past: the "glorious" image is usually incompatible with the

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<sup>52</sup> For similar observations, see: Hutchinson 1994:123; Kedourie 1994:208.

society's geopolitical and cultural weakness in the present, while the "pristine" image is at odds with the conditions of industrial modernity<sup>53</sup>.

These typologies suggest that nationalist ideologues do not usually postulate a *factual* re-enactment of the golden age. Rather, a reconstruction of *certain* elements of the past deemed desirable for the conditions of the present and the future, in a different historical (and sometimes geographical) setting, is aspired to. The golden age provides nationalists with cultural and moral examples more often than with examples of social, juridical, or political organization to be actually emulated. Smith (1999:263, emphasis mine) points out that the standards of the golden age "define an ideal, which is not so much to be resurrected... as to be *recreated in modern terms*". A similar idea is expressed by Steven Knapp (1989:130), who argues that the nationalists' *contemporary* needs dictate the criteria according to which the elements of the golden age are selected for the nationalist historiography:

If an event in the past merely *resembles* one in the present, it may indeed provide us with 'symbolic resources' – ways of representing our present values and intentions so as to shape and motivate our present actions. But in that case our sense of what is symbolically useful in the past will depend on our present sense of what matters, and the values represented by what we borrow from the past will only be the ones we already have. Aspects of the past that fail to match up with our present dispositions will necessarily seem irrelevant.

This means that the "golden" past is *projected* by nationalist ideologues into the "golden" future, thereby attempting to solve the contradiction between the nation's simultaneous "ancientness" and "youth". The foundational myth, as we can see,

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<sup>53</sup> Matossian applies her analysis to third-world national movements, hence her emphasis on the weakness of the struggling colonial and post-colonial societies, but I believe that her insights are useful for analysing nationalist thinking in general.

though set in the *past*, is always a *contemporary* element: nationalists subordinate the past to the present/future, though it is never a one-way road. Rather, as Prasenjit Duara (1995:69-74) claims, the nationalist time-concept presumes an interdependency between past, present, and future. When elements of the past are organized into a coherent and logical narrative (which becomes a teleological morality tale in nationalism), all three temporal dimensions are remoulded in the human imagination in a reciprocal dynamic. However, this presents us with another peculiarity of nationalist thinking: since the past in one way or another always lies ahead, nationalism attempts in effect to marry the linear-teleological concept of time with the cyclical concept of time, mutually exclusive as they are (this is also quite risky, for it implies that after the "golden future" of national sovereignty is finally reached, another epoch of decline would unavoidably set in).

Smith (1999:59-60) argues that in the formation of a foundational myth for numerically or geographically large communities (such as emerging nations) unsubstantiated claims and even outright forgeries can proliferate, since the chances are slim that these communities' supposed common denominator will be based on a verifiable historical reality. This means that the elements used for the construction of the foundational myth are usually torn out of their historical context and retroactively assigned values other than those they might have originally carried, as noted by Percy Cohen (1969:351)<sup>54</sup>: "For whatever reasons myths were originally invented, they were subsequently used as a vehicle for communicating or just expressing a number of things for which they may never have been intended".

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<sup>54</sup> Also by Calhoun 1997:51; Duara 1995:88; Tololyan 1999:95-98.

We must keep in mind, though, that the scholarly questionability of national foundational myths does not weaken their effectiveness as cohesive devices, since, as explained above, their significance is mainly *symbolic*. Although nationalist ideologues may truly believe in the correctness of their version of history (Cohen 1992:83) and, to make a myth effective, it undoubtedly has to carry some resemblance to "truth" (Collins 2003:342), the socio-political importance of nationalist myths lies not in their veracity but in their mobilizing power. When myths attain a considerable following, they are often perceived and acted upon as facts: "from an anthropological perspective, myths that are believed become social facts" (O'Connor 2009:159)<sup>55</sup>. Walker Connor (2004:45) grounds this observation in a wider insight, whereby "identity does not draw its sustenance from facts but from perceptions; not from chronological/factual history but from sentient/felt history". This "falsity" of national myths is thus not only irrelevant to the vitality of nationalism; it may even possess a positive aspect, since, as argued by Leszek Kołakowski (1992:56, cited at: Calhoun 1997:52), "Self-deception is a necessary part of life, both in the individual and in the nation; it provides us all with moral safety", though Kołakowski does not specify whether he means willing or unconscious self-deception.

In light of the above, one of foundational myths' basic tasks can be defined as providing a sense of stability in a relentlessly changing world. Uri Ram (2011:25) asserts that "Nationalist history preserves existential meaning and sense of belonging in the desecrated and disenchanting world of modernity", soothing the fear of the coming unknown, which became commonplace in the age of modern secularism,

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<sup>55</sup> See also: Armstrong 1994:145; Burke 1989; Calhoun 1997:34; Cohen 1993:99; Collins 2003:345, 351; Connor 1994:80.

when faith in the afterlife and redemption could no longer adequately cope with humanity's existential fears. This is where the eschatological nature of nationalism becomes most outspoken: a nation is destined to outlive those constituting it at any given moment (Anderson 1988:23-24; Duara 1995:28-29; Smith 1999:61-63); conceptualized this way, a modern phenomenon paradoxically becomes an antidote to modernity's inherent instability.

Writing history means committing things to memory; it is therefore dependent on others' memory to supply its source material. Memory, whether personal or collective, rarely preserves events in their "pure" form. Indeed, collective memory (a notion coined by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs) is socially "performative" – that is, by bringing together fragmented personal memories into a unity that lends them a broader sense, it helps a group in establishing its own identity. The past turns this way into a social construction answering the community's present needs<sup>56</sup>.

Consequently, formulating a national past is as much about *remembering* as it is about *forgetting*, whether deliberately or unwillingly. Though, as Calhoun (1997:30) says, "...historical research shows noteworthy continuities between modern national cultures and their antecedents", certain elements of the past will always be favoured over others, depending on the social, cultural, and political setting in which the national idea is taking root. Duara (1995) argues that the process and method of picking those elements is what *actually* delimitates national identity: mental borders

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<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of Halbwachs' "collective memory", see: Connerton 1989:36-38; Funkenstein 1989:9-10; Hutton 1988:313-315; Macmillan 2009:47-48; Nsoudou 2009:204; Werczberger 2011:275; Zerubavel 1995:4-9. Halbwachs distinguished between collective memory, which he described as socially biased, and academic historiography, which, according to him, needed to be immunized from contextual biases by methodological meticulousness. Later researchers cast doubt upon this all-too-confident dichotomy (see next section and Hutton 1988:312, 316-317).

are hardened around some of the elements, while those excluded from the national historical narrative remain floating in the collective cognitive space. Societies and nations, Duara adds, differ from each other by their method of selection and arrangement of their past's building blocks. This process, however, can never be complete, since elements of memory are usually more intricate than what the nationalist ideologues would wish them to be<sup>57</sup>.

The ultimate effect of this symbolic brick-laying is the creation of what Yael Zerubavel (1995:6, 7) has termed a "master commemorative narrative", meaning "a broader view of history, a basic 'story line' that is culturally constructed and provides the group members with a general notion of their shared past", which "focuses on the group's distinct social identity and highlights its historical development. In this sense it contributes to the formation of the nation, portraying it as a unified group moving through history". Though every nation lays claim to its own master commemorative narrative, we must not assume that they are inherently incompatible. When certain elements of history and identity are shared by more than one community, we may speak of a "liminal area" between various identities, that is, an area where identities (sometimes in declared antagonism) share and mix to various extents equivalent sets of symbols, myths, temporal visions, social values, modes of behaviour, language codes, etc., etc. This might result in an enrichment of the various cultures participating in this multi-faceted interaction, making national identities more complex and multi-layered (Cohen 1993:115-118; Eyal 2005:13-14; 2006:7-8). An opposite process, however, is possible too: divergent commemorative narratives and

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<sup>57</sup> See also: Breuilly 2009:7-9; Burke 1989:108-110; Cohen 1993:99; Macmillan 2009; Smith 1999:176-178; Suny & Kennedy 1999a:383-384.

symbolic systems may emerge within a single society, giving rise to competing visions for the same national identity<sup>58</sup>. Usually, Anthony Smith claims, nations would tolerate such pluralism, as long as the basic discursive framework of nationhood is preserved; in such cases these disagreements may in the longer run even augment the nation's identity. However, such situations are often ripe with potential conflict, and in some cases bloodshed may even ensue (Breuilly 2009:17-19; Burke 1989:107; Connerton 1989:3; Duara 1995:10-16, 66; Smith 1999:71, 86-87, 263; Wellings 2009:275)<sup>59</sup>.

The above discussion should, it is hoped, have cast some light upon the incredible attractiveness of the national idea, which has perplexed so many clerics and Marxists: namely, its irrational element. Since what matters for most nationalists is not the facts per se but their effectiveness as a mobilizing tool (based on their believability), national solidarity can engage mass emotions more readily than other forms of solidarity, which rely on a more scrupulous and rational analysis of reality (such as class solidarity). This is why the nation is usually described as a *gemeinschaft* – a community of sentiment rather than of rational calculation (Tololyan 1999:85).

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<sup>58</sup> Recall the discussion in chapter 1 regarding the differences in visions of the past that dictate differences between visions of the present and the future within the bounds of the same community.

<sup>59</sup> For an example of rival national visions for the same nation in the Ukrainian context, see: Himka 1999; for a similar phenomenon in the French context, see: Dietler 1994.

### 2.3. Geophysical space and archaeology in nationalism

It is widely acknowledged that nationalism possesses a strong territorial imperative, which engages with its temporal aspect in a reciprocal dynamic. "National chronologies", says Ana María Alonso (1988:41, emphases mine), "establish both a *historical* right to a specific *territory* and a *territorial* right to a particular *history*... The nation appropriates the totality of the history enacted in its territory... Territory and history are the privileged political spaces within which nations are imagined and through which 'sovereignty' is constructed"<sup>60</sup>. Nationalist appropriation of geographical space is studied in greater detail by Bruce Cauthen (2007:301):

Through a collective and profound identification with the landscape, the ethnic group appropriates topographical features such as rivers and mountains as essential and distinctive components of the community itself. And, as this is the same ground tread upon by heroic ancestors, and the terrain on which they accomplished great deeds, as well as the eternal earth which cradles their remains – the land assumes an even more emotive dimension. It is the corporate contemplation of the ethnoscape which incorporates the natural environment into the genealogical continuum and thereby unites community and homeland in the trans-historical bonds of organic interaction<sup>61</sup>.

The bonds described by Cauthen are created by transposing national values *from* the nation *onto* its territory. The land in nationalist imagination becomes a memory box, consisting of tombs, memorials, statues, and other material works that carry the national values forward in time and express the national character of the community inhabiting the land. And whereas Steven Grosby (2007:99-102) emphasizes that such function is inseparable from the *continuity* aspect in nationalist geography, Neil Asher

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<sup>60</sup> For similar observations, see: Brow 1990:3; Kaiser 1995:107.

<sup>61</sup> See also: Johnston, Knight & Kofman 1988:14.

Silberman (1995:249-250) argues that a strong territorial imperative also characterizes societies whose attachment to their territory is relatively novel, such as the USA or Israel. This raises a larger question of the possible *replacement* of a national patrimony with another by mass migrations or invasions, which certainly merits further exploration but will not be pursued at the present moment. Places that are identified with the present nation's ancestors, whether factual or mythical, become *sanctified* (in Mircea Eliade's terms [Ohana 2012:30]) or *mythologized* (to use Paul Cohen's definition [1992:83]), coming to "express or represent... meanings which are attributed to them by culture", in the words of Baruch Kimmerling (1983:214). A previously mundane territory comes, in nationalism, to give meaning to the human being's entire universe, physical as well as spiritual, by utilizing the religious symbolism of a "Holy" or a "Promised" Land (Alonso 1994:383; Anderson 1988:18-26; Cohen 1969:350-351; Conversi 2007:20; Johnston, Knight & Kofman 1988:3-5, 7, 14; Smith 1999:149-159, 269-271). This allows us to define nationalist geography as *axiological*, that is, value-laden.

Nationalist axiological geography functions in a dualist fashion, as explained by James Anderson (1986): it sets the nation's lower border (meaning the minimal physical dispersion of a community in order to constitute a nation) and its upper border (a nation cannot be dispersed over too large a territory; otherwise, its identity might dissolve)<sup>62</sup>. "[Nationalism] as a territorial form of ideology", Anderson (1986:219) asserts, "is... two-faced with respect to space: looking inward, it seeks to unify the nation and its constituent territory; looking outward, it tends to divide one nation and territory from another". Thus, nationalist geography is both *inclusive* from

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<sup>62</sup> See also: Alonso 1994:382.

within and *exclusive* from without<sup>63</sup>. However, its inclusiveness is *not* homogenizing, as it does not stem the emergence of fierce internal controversies, whose intensity is usually dependent upon the political and religious tensions prevailing in the region:

...geographical space is not a material entity, a real-existing parcel of soil and water through which the group refracts and manipulates its self-image, but rather a discursive subject of the national imagination. As such, it is open to the same internal contestation, manipulation and debate as all other aspects of the identity structure. Thus, while all members of a given national community may believe they possess a homeland in common, they commonly identify it in different ways, using very different boundaries. And while all can agree that their nationhood involves some sort of emplacement in and connection to geographical space, the specific nature and meaning of these roots can be understood in very different ways (Bassin 2007:143; see also: Hamilakis & Yalouri 1999:131; Silberman 1995:258; 1997:64).

"A discourse of the national imagination" requires its own lexicon. Yael Zerubavel (1995:142) argues that it is expressed more in physical performance and ritual than in writing, since the significance of the land and the material symbols for the national community is demonstrated more adequately in a visual, even bodily form<sup>64</sup>. Rituals are complemented by non-physical semiotic language: Ana María Alonso (1994:382-384) points to the botanical symbolism as a central motive used by nationalist axiological geography. Whereas in nationalist historiography the nation is likened to a person (see section 2.1), in nationalist geography it is presented as a tree. A tree's roots are secured firmly in the ground while its branches reach the sky; hence (the nationalist argument goes), the desired future can be reached only by relying on the

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<sup>63</sup> As expressed, for instance, in the tension between Arab nationalism's strong centralizing tendencies and the Arabic-speakers' tremendous geographic dispersion.

<sup>64</sup> Zerubavel's examples from Israel are the hitch-hiking to Masada and the commemorative ceremonies at Tel Hai, both of which constitute identity-forging and identity-augmenting rituals; see table at Zerubavel 1995:143.

nation's cultural and historical heritage. The botanical symbolism transforms the nation's teleological movement from the past through the present to the future into an upward movement from the roots through the trunk to the highest branches.

Moreover, the tree symbol evokes the idea of kinship (utilizing the metaphor "genealogical tree"), making the entire nation a generously expanded "family"; finally, such symbolism puts yet another claim on authenticity, expressed in the nationalist imagery by the picture of the toiling peasant living in harmony with nature (recall Matossian's second type of the golden age as a "pure" agrarian past).

Sometimes it also serves as a declaration of cultural uniqueness, if a particular plant or tree is identified with a particular country and, implicitly, with the nation inhabiting it (cactus for Israel; cedar for Lebanon; maple for Canada, etc.).

Miroslav Hroch (1993:15) draws attention to two complementary aspects of nationalist geography: the perception of the space presently occupied by the nation (where, according to Hroch, an ideal of spatial homogeneity, meaning one nation in one land organized in a unitary state whose borders conform to the nation's territorial dispersion, is pursued but rarely achieved), and the image of the historical space that was reputedly occupied by the nation during its golden age. The historical space (the "large place", to use David Ohana's [2012:29] terminology) is often pictured as wider than the modern national space (the "small place"), thus introducing inconsistency between past and present in nationalist historiography. This inconsistency can possibly be contained by irredentist aspirations (that may not necessarily be bellicose towards the neighbour occupying parts of the nation's putative historical homeland). They are more often than not expressed in symbolic rather than outright political terms, though when an opportunity arises to capture the coveted territories, force

might as well be used (Israel's 1967 territorial gains constitute an example; for the sources of Israeli pre-1967 irredentism and the symbolic discourse that developed around it, see: Kimmerling 1983:225-226; Ohana 2008:207-233; 2012:101-130).

One of the tools employed to express irredentism is mapping, which the literature at our disposal (Alonso 1994:382; Anderson 1991:170-178; Kohl 1998:240) describes as the translation of nationalist conceptualization of space into the language of accessible symbols. Maps are often drawn with more than academic concerns in mind: by establishing visible borders (if only upon paper) between "us" and "them" they assist in the formation of the national collective identity and in anchoring it in a defined geophysical space. Maps that point to national "heritage" sites, demonstrate language dispersion, or show stages of historical development beyond the present state's boundaries may contribute to the maintenance of irredentist desires.

The question we ought to tackle now is what role geophysical space plays in accessing the golden age and making it available for nationalist ideologues?

Historians subscribing to, or advocating a, nationalist idea require source material to weave their commemorative narrative. This material can be divided into roughly two departments: the literary (chronicles, researches, historical fiction, ancient epics, etc., normally available in archives and libraries) and the tangible (the actual remains of past ages, uncovered and described by archaeologists)<sup>65</sup>. We must therefore direct now our attention to the part performed by archaeologists, directly or indirectly (otherwise: willingly or unwillingly) in the formation of nationalist historiographies.

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<sup>65</sup> The two obviously overlap: ancient writings are uncovered in archaeological excavations, hence the existence of such disciplines as papyrology, epigraphy, and codicology, which study the material side of literary remains.

Numerous authors (Díaz-Andreu 2001; Dietler 1994:597-599; Fowler 1987; Kohl 1998; Kohl & Fawcett 1995b; Meskell 1998; Parkins 1997) have claimed that the archaeologists' work is no less significant than the historiographers' for the formulation of nationalist historiography, though, as argued by Díaz-Andreu on a different occasion (1995:40), this significance becomes more marked in nationalism that espouses a myth of continuity rather than a myth of analogy. In such cases, nationalist archaeology may adopt the so-called "culture-historical approach", by which Abu el-Haj (2001:3) means reading the nation's origins out of the archaeological evidence. We must not forget, though, that the interdependence between interpretation of past relics and contemporary needs predates nationalism (Trigger 1995:266-267); nationalist archaeology is only one of several types of politicized scholarship that has developed and become institutionalized in the modern age, with the advent of the linear time-concept and the historicist outlook (Johnsen & Olsen 1992:421-422; Kohl & Fawcett 1995a:11-12; Silberman 1995:254-255; Trigger 1984:356).

Trigger (1984:358-368) suggests a generalized (by his own admission) division of modern archaeology into three broad types: the colonialist, which legitimized conquests by European powers outside Europe; the imperialist, which portrayed European civilization as the teleological "point of absolute" to which the entire humanity was unavoidably moving; and the nationalist, which was preoccupied with empowering society's own collective identity. A special type of colonialist archaeology is the Biblical one, which began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a religiously-driven project (Glock 1985; Silberman 1991; 1995:255; 1998) but, having subsequently undergone secularization, was appropriated by Zionism and turned into

the nationalist type (Abu el-Haj 2001:15; Elon 1997; Shavit 1997:50, 53-56; Silberman 1991:79-81; 1997:65-69). In post-colonial Third World countries nationalist archaeology became a weapon against colonial archaeology, which portrayed the "natives" as "static" and devoid of proper history (meaning history in which they were the agent-masters). Neil Asher Silberman calls this type of post-colonial archaeology "archaeology of protest" (Díaz-Andreu 2001:434-436; Silberman 1991:84; 1995:256-257, 261).

Nationalist archaeology's salience is, clearly, a function of nationalism's pre-eminence in the last few centuries; to cite Philipp Kohl and Clare Fawcett (1995a:9):

...nationalism has influenced the kinds of questions archaeologists have been willing to ask and the sorts of data they have collected since it became a political force in Europe and other parts of the world... Since its inception, archaeology has been deeply involved in nationalist enterprises, above all in the construction of national identities.

And further:

Historically, archaeologists have helped underwrite many nationalist programs, according historical significance to visible material remains within a national territory... They are still playing this role throughout many areas of the world (Kohl 1998:225).

David Potter (1968:34-59) argues that even historiography that is not explicitly nationalist assumes that humanity is inherently divided into nations, by which he implies that in modernity the nationalist worldview has become so pervasive that it functions even on the subconscious level<sup>66</sup>. In a similar vein, Kohl and Fawcett (1995a:4) state that "the borders of contemporary nation-states necessarily influence the tradition of archaeological research, and archaeologists who naturalize them may

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<sup>66</sup> See also: Kennedy & Suny 1999:13. For this argument in greater detail, see next section.

consciously or unconsciously appropriate another culture area's prehistoric past". In spite of this, archaeology cannot be seen as an easy ally to nationalism. First and foremost, the involvement of archaeologists in the advocacy of nationalism does not *necessarily* mean that their research will be biased. Kohl and Fawcett are particularly alert to the moral ambiguity of a scholarship reliant to a large extent on state subsidies (as the case is with archaeology), with the state often pursuing its own, extra-scholarly objectives. While they warn that "...archaeologists in the service of the state frequently have manipulated archaeological remains to justify the ownership of land claimed to have been held 'from time immemorial' or to support policies of domination and control over neighboring peoples" (Kohl & Fawcett 1995a:5), they call to acknowledge the reciprocal dependency of state/national interests and archaeological research as a fact of reality, which is to be contended with (Kohl & Fawcett 1995a:3-6, 8, 12-13). A reference to scholarly conscience is applied to:

...archaeologists need to be aware of the political implications of their work and be sensitive to the contemporary social setting of their studies of the remote past. They need to recognize and articulate the limits to which the archaeological record can be pushed when identifying prehistoric ethnic groups and the territories they once occupied. Finally, they can distinguish between archaeological and historical reconstructions affecting a people... and governmental state policies affecting those people. In good conscience, one can admit a potentially damaging archaeological reconstruction as the most plausible and objective interpretation of the evidence and then condemn the state policy that bends and distorts that reconstruction for its own questionable political purposes (Kohl & Fawcett 1995a:8-9)<sup>67</sup>.

The authors note that archaeology sets limits on the nationalist interpretation of the past due to the *materiality* of the uncovered artefacts: these, insofar as they are

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<sup>67</sup> See also: Fowler 1987; Kohl & Tsetskhladze 1995:161.

intelligible, cannot be manipulated at random<sup>68</sup>. A tension therefore exists between the *materiality* and the *symbolism* of archaeological remains and artefacts: the more extensive archaeology's discoveries are and the more refined and developed its methods and tools become, the more efficiently they can "act as constraints upon the imagination of the archaeologist" (Trigger 1995:275). However, another aspect of this very materiality makes artefacts extremely attractive for nationalism: namely, their greater accessibility to the wide public in comparison with the more abstract and sophisticated nationalist historical narratives (given that the artefacts are recognized as *such*; that is, they are relatively-well preserved and professionally interpreted). While a tombstone, a stela, or an ancient shrine cannot be turned into what they demonstrably are not, their power lies in the *emotional* value that can be attached to them, as described by Kohl (1998:240):

Archaeological sites become national monuments... their artifacts are stored and displayed in national museums and constitute an invaluable part of the national patrimony, a heritage that becomes more and more broadly defined; both sites and artifacts frequently are incorporated into state regalia as symbols appearing on national flags, currency, and stamps or memorialized in patriotic songs and national anthems.

Hence, despite the arguably limited usefulness of archaeology to nationalism, the advantages proposed by the former to the latter usually outweigh the possible disadvantages (Kohl 1998:239; Parkins 1997:452; Smith 1999:176). What, then, are some of the ways these advantages are exploited? The answer is outlined in general terms by Bruce Trigger (1995:272):

The main impact of nationalism has been to influence the questions about the past that archaeologists are prepared to ask or not to ask and

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<sup>68</sup> Artefacts less easily identified, especially pre-historical ones, are more vulnerable to nationalist abuse (Kohl & Fawcett 1995a:13).

the amount of evidence that is required to sustain a particular position. On the positive side, nationalistic archaeology has stimulated asking questions about local cultural configurations and ethnicity that evolutionary and colonially oriented archaeologists did not consider worthwhile. On the negative side, it has encouraged the misinterpretation of archaeological data for political purposes and ignoring equally important aspects of human history.

Trigger (1995:265-266), as well as other authors (Abu el-Haj 2001:9-10, 13-14; Kaiser 1995:99), admits that archaeological research is influenced both by the social and cultural conditions defining its context and by the researchers' own system of concepts and interpretive tools, which are formed to a large extent by contemporary reality. One of its possible effects is the deployment of modern ethnonyms and toponyms in relation to ancient cultures and societies, thus creating (sometimes without ulterior motives) the impression that the modern society living in the same territory is the direct descendant of its ancient counterpart, enhancing the former's political claims (Silberman 1995:253; Wailes & Zoll 1995:23). These claims can then be turned against the nation's rivals, as archaeological findings might stimulate a dispute as to whose nation's "forerunners" were more "advanced" or "superior" in terms of cultural and technological achievements (Kaiser 1995:113; Wailes & Zoll 1995:23-25, 32-34). Speaking more generally, nationalist archaeology lends credibility to nationalist historiography by its stronger claim to objectivity, which stems from the physical availability of its source material: as argued by Hamilakis and Yalouri (1999:126), the removal of ancient artefacts from the sphere of legend to the sphere of national history "activates" ancient legends as part of national commemorative narratives. Additionally, archaeology helps to fill in the gaps in historical knowledge by freeing it to a certain extent from dependency upon literary sources. Finally, archaeology permits nationalists to push the nation's origins as far

back in time as possible by crossing the border between history and prehistory. Thus, the master commemorative narrative – a causal chain of events, which presents those events as steps on the road to the national present/future – can be extended much farther into the past<sup>69</sup>.

In conclusion, historiography and geography complement each other within certain visionary forms of national self-realization. Both confer similar sets of values upon time and space; both delineate "us" from "them" by choosing particular elements of the past for the national commemorative narrative and by defining the spatial limits of the nation; both use congruous symbolic lexicons to represent the nation (the nation as a person/tree); both apply to temporal and physical space a teleological idea of a linear movement towards the future/the top; both engage with aesthetic questions of proper storytelling in order to make their cause compelling (Silberman 1995:252-253). Above all, both nationalist geography and historiography maintain a differentiation between the profane and the mythical, the secular and the teleological: in the "small place" the "short time" prevails, while the "large place" can exist only in the "long time" continuum. In the nationalist ideal future the "small" and the "large", the "short" and the "long" will become one again, as it presumably obtained during the golden age, when the secrets of the cosmic order were accessible to mortals.

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<sup>69</sup> A significant role can also be played by genetics and biology, which, if mobilized to the nationalist cause (and given that the nationalist ideology is of the "biological" type), would "prove" direct lineage between ancient tribesmen and modern nation (or, ironically, demolish the nationalists' claim to unbroken continuity [Coakley 2004:543]). However, their role in establishing nationalist historiography is beyond the scope of the present work.

#### 2.4. National agents of history, historical agents of nation

Who is the chief agent of nationalist historiography? Who is entitled to give meaning to historical and archaeological findings? Strictly speaking, since every human being can remember, anyone can be a "historian" (this is what Alexander Motyl [1999a] possibly implies when he insists on the "irrelevance" of elites to the preservation of national culture). Not everyone, however, can be a *historiographer*, for history-writing presumes a certain level of self-consciousness. The past must not only be accessed by memory, it should be understood and interpreted as well: "...access to the past must be... a hermeneutic of both understanding and explanation", says Duara (1995:19). Only then appropriately interpreted past becomes, in Alonso's (1988:40) words, "an ideology of history", which is "central to the symbolic constitution of social groups and to the creation of national solidarities".

The people entrusted with the task of creating ideologies of history are *intellectuals*. An intellectual, according to Edward Said (1994b:9, cited at: Kennedy & Suny 1999:14), is "an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public". Seymour Lipset (1963:333, cited at: Kennedy & Suny 1999:2) defines intellectuals more broadly as "those who create, distribute and apply culture", or "persons who, occupationally, are involved chiefly in the production of ideas" (cited at: Brym 1980:12). Such an occupation, notes Robert Brym (1980:11), could only emerge in the modern era, which increased the demand for skilled workers and managers, enabled the proliferation of social discussion venues, and released men of letters from feudal patronage. Moreover, it was the modern "acceleration" of time, as defined by Reinhart Koselleck (see section 2.1), that made intellectuals into reflective

observers of reality (of the past and of the present alike) (Koselleck 1985:130-155, 281-282). At this stage, therefore, we must try to find out how intellectual activity advances the national message and what implications this might have on the intellectuals' social standing.

The classical scholar Moses Finley tied the rise of historiography in ancient Greece to the emergence of the Greek city-states (the *poleis*). Previously, he claimed, Greek philosophers separated the study of human nature, which belonged to the domain of poetry, from the study of human events, which were left to the chronicles.

Accordingly, poetry was regarded as superior to history-writing, since only the former was believed to express and defend a moral cause. The "short" material time was therefore not of particular interest in Greek culture before Herodotus (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE); however, says Finley, its importance rose along with the rise of the *poleis*. The value system of the *poleis* held that public-political activity was the noblest of all activities; this demanded an analysis of the past in a *non-poetic* way that would present the city-states' emergence as a justifiable historical necessity. The "short time" was thus endowed with teleology, borrowed from the "long time" of the poetic myth, foreshadowing a similar process that would take place in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Herder's and Hegel's historiosophy was appropriated by nationalism (Finley 1990:11-30)<sup>70</sup>. The complex relation between historiography and present cultural and ideological needs is thus a phenomenon old as history-writing itself (though certainly more outspoken in modernity), as corroborated by Finley (1990:76): "It is a

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<sup>70</sup> Curiously, Finley says (1990:30-33), this development resulted in the opposite extreme: since interest was now focused on the "short time", the bulk of the historiographical output of antiquity and the Middle Ages was chronicles, which documented the present and became historical sources only retroactively (this opinion is opposed by Burrow [2009:171-172]).

commonplace that every historian's notion (conscious or subconscious) of his function is based on both the social and political situation in his world and the literary and moral tradition he has inherited"<sup>71</sup>. While Amos Funkenstein (1989:15-16) insists that back in the 12<sup>th</sup> century European theological thought had already discovered the importance of context, he admits that this viewpoint could become pervasive only with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century professionalization of history-writing. As argued above, such acknowledgment of the intellectuals' reliance on socio-political context does not nullify the value of their output (and, in Koselleck's opinion, actually enhances it). Funkenstein (1989:22) observes quite accurately that "The fact that the historian is always influenced by the 'point of view' of his time and place, from which he cannot detach himself completely, does not *necessarily* preclude historical understanding".

What makes nationalist historiography *uniquely* modern is the parallel emergence of nationalism as a political ideology and the professionalization of historical and archaeological studies, a process that reached its pinnacle in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Burrow 2009:453-457, 462-466; Díaz-Andreu 2001:431-433). At the same time, the institutionalization of archaeology released it from the grip of the so-called Renaissance paradigm, whereby only "classical" heritage (meaning ancient Greece and Rome) could serve as a legitimizing device for politics. Margarita Díaz-Andreu (2001:430-436) shows how in the age of post-1789 mass politics classical archaeology was challenged by "particularist" archaeological pursuits for the golden age's physical remains in countries inhabited by newly-formed nations<sup>72</sup>. This made

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<sup>71</sup> For similar observations, see: Collins 2003:346; Funkenstein 1989:20, 22, 26; Rejwan 1999:177; Smith 1999:31.

<sup>72</sup> See also: Kohl 1998:227; Parkins 1997:451.

nationalist images of the past credible, as they were now supported by "sound" methodology and clothed in rationalist discourse, and helped to discredit pre-modern historiography, whose chief concern, as argued by Michael Walzer (2003:1), was to produce conformism in conditions of stark social inequality. Nationalist political programmes adopted scholarly jargon, allowing their futurist manifestos to appear as drawn from "objective reality" buttressed by scholarship. This is how Stefan Berger (2009:34) sums up this development:

The professionalization and the nationalization of historical writing are parallel processes, which are intimately related... the process of history-writing itself was connected to the emergence of nationhoods and nation states. History was to a large extent the history of nation formation. The nation was the telos of history and through "scientific" history-writing, historians could provide objective foundations for their respective nations<sup>73</sup>.

In modern nationalist historiography, writes Prasenjit Duara (1995:4, emphasis mine),

...the nation appears as the newly realized, sovereign subject of History embodying a moral and political force that has overcome dynasties, aristocracies, and ruling priests and mandarins, who are seen to represent merely themselves historically. In contrast to them, the nation is a collective historical subject poised to realize its destiny in a modern future. This narrative... depicts not only nationalist histories, but *underpins much modern historiography*, both popular and professional.

Nation and national state became the main protagonists of historical research, so that even an ostensibly non-nationalist historiography perpetuated this state of affairs by concentrating methodologically on the nation as its area of enquiry (Woolf 2007).

David Potter (1968:35) suggests that

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<sup>73</sup> See also: Berger 2007b:32-46; Breuilly 2009; Calhoun 1997:51; Duara 1995:21-22; Eley 1981:96-99; Hutchinson 1994:123; Kennedy & Suny 1999:2, 25-27; Smith 1999:24, 31.

Just as the rise of nationalism has been the major political development of modern times, so attention to the national group, rather than to... other groupings, has accordingly become perhaps the major focus of modern historians... even historians who realize that exaggerated nationalism is one of the greatest evils of the modern world still are very prone to conceive of the structure of the world in terms of national units.

Potter proceeds to untangle the web of relations between nationalist thinking and historiography. Nationalism's main influence on academic research, Potter says, is expressed in the penetration of the former's underlying values and assumptions into the latter: as a result, historians researching a nation might accept as given that this nation (not necessarily their own), or its statehood, are inherently legitimate and can thus demand supreme loyalty overriding all other loyalties, whether they are compatible with it or not. The historian's moral judgment can be thus adversely affected, primarily by blurring the sometimes-forgotten distinction between the nation as a cultural-historical community and the state as a political structure (Potter 1968:34-59, 68). Kohl and Fawcett (1995a:17) warn likewise: "Pre-historians, above all, should realize that nation-states are not natural or immutable entities but forms of political organization which have developed during a specific and, for that matter, fairly recent historical period".

This is not to suggest that nationalist intellectuals are merely pawns of the political current that happens to prevail in their lifetime. On the contrary, it is accepted that they are active participants in its shaping and that their input can be quite decisive. Paul Connerton (1989:16) observes that "...in constructing a canon of historical research, [the intellectuals] are at the same time participating in the formation of a

political identity and giving shape to the memory of a particular culture"<sup>74</sup>. Suny and Kennedy expand on this point:

A national intellectual is a *social actor* whose claim to distinction rests primarily on his/her claim to cultural competence and whose social consequence is indirect, through the use of their symbolic products as resources in other activities constructing the nation, whether through history, poetry, or organizing pamphlets (Suny & Kennedy 1999a:402-403)<sup>75</sup>.

These statements constitute an intervention in a much larger debate regarding the relationship between intellectual activity and the intellectuals' position in their society. The issue has been picked up by numerous authors, such as Robert Brym (1980), Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens (2002), and George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi (1979), whose dissident essay on the Hungarian intelligentsia in the conditions of 1970s' Soviet-style "socialism" yielded a harsh indictment of the intellectuals' role in maintaining and perpetuating oppressive regimes. They also offer more wide-ranging insights regarding the social dynamic of intellectual practice:

Intellectuals... are the monopolistic proprietors of knowledge which society accepts as having cross-contextual validity and which it uses to orient its members... if... we want to know what intellectual status is in a given society we must look for that point in its structure at which society accords material rewards and authority over others solely on the grounds that those having such status are monopolistic proprietors of the kind of knowledge described above... an individual does not lose his intellectual status... if he employs intellectual knowledge in a manner that deviates from, or even directly flouts the values of his society. In that case his intellectual status is indicated not by the rewards accorded

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<sup>74</sup> Connerton was referring to the great German 19<sup>th</sup>-century anti-revolutionary historians, but I believe his insight has wider validity.

<sup>75</sup> See also: Brass 1994; Breuille 2009:14-15; Kennedy 1999:349; Kennedy & Suny 1999; Kohl 1998:240-241; Smith 1999:84-85; Suny & Kennedy 1999a:393; Verdery 1999:303-307; Weber 1994:25.

him but by the severity of the sanctions brought against him (Konrád & Szelényi 1979:32).

The last point is particularly relevant in our context. It is untrue, Brym asserts, that a direct relationship necessarily exists between power and intellectual competence; rather, intellectuals function in an intricate web of relations with non-intellectual, though influential, societal elements (like the military). Intellectuals tend to align themselves, Brym's argument goes, with those classes that provide them with the best opportunities to integrate into the society's economic fabric. Though this does not always mean the ruling classes (Brym 1980:35-42, 48-53, 71), well-integrated intellectuals would normally constitute an elite, that is, a social stratum possessing (or struggling to gain and expand) two kinds of capital: the social and the moral. Social (or technical) capital, writes Katherine Verdery (1999:303-307), reflecting to some extent Konrád's and Szelényi's observations, is gained by mastering certain techniques, procedures, and competencies, claiming expert access to them and in consequence attaining public posts in the public domain or in academia. Moral capital, conversely, is acquired by being *publicly acknowledged* as a member of the intelligentsia, a popular teacher or a preacher, or even a political leader, through "defining certain values as correct and upholding them" (Verdery 1999:304), through the formulation of moral or political programmes, or even through personal example (for instance, when the struggle entails oppression and suffering).

It often happens that moral capital is won at the expense of social capital and vice versa. Since, as asserted above, nations habitually become areas of disagreement over the historical and symbolical resources employed in their building, we can expect this disagreement to determine to a significant extent the intellectuals' social status. Thus, intellectuals who pursue their national vision with greater success, sometimes with the

aid of state tools, rise to the position of elites (given that the state enjoys popular legitimacy, which is not always the case). Those intellectuals who fail to gain a major following by keeping a critical distance from the establishment, avoiding state tools (whether the state encourages intellectual debate or not), or being denied access to them, become counter-elites who challenge the dominant wisdom regarding their nation (Brym 1980:17-18; Coakley 2004:535-540; Zerubavel 1995:10-12). Counter-elites are, to use Brym's (1980:30) terminology, *malintegrated*: lacking the full extent of resources available to "integrated" intellectuals, they become radicalized and seek alternative bases of power "outside the *purview* of authorities". This is how Brym (1980:25) explains his typology of integrated/malintegrated intellectuals:

Malintegration – economic and/or political – is... a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of a radical intelligentsia. In addition to being malintegrated, intellectuals must, if they are to become and remain radicals, have the *power* to do something about their discontent; intellectuals who are *déclassé*, or who are divorced from existing authority structures, are likely to become sectarians, or disillusioned, apathetic and even apolitical persons rather quickly unless they possess the political resources necessary to translate their ire into action.

Brym's claim is echoed by Hroch (1993:11, emphasis mine), who states that "...if we analyze the occupations of the patriots, we will arrive at the conclusion that national agitation appealed most readily to those within the non-dominant ethnic group who *enjoyed the best channels of [social] communication*".

Risking a generalization, it might be suggested that when a direct relationship between moral and social capital is established – that is, when national intellectuals are both recognized as intellectuals and enjoy the associated material benefits – they constitute an elite. When this relationship is inverted, those intellectuals come to form a counter-elite that constructs independent or semi-independent power bases. To cite

Robert Brym (1980:72) again: "If the rate and level of intellectual radicalism vary inversely with the degree to which intellectuals are occupationally and politically integrated in dominant classes and groups, then they vary proportionately with the size, level of social organization and access to resources of both radical intellectual groups themselves, and other, radical groups which can sustain them".

Intellectual counter-elites can be also defined as "teleological elites", that is, elites for whom "the conduct of politics and intellectual life, as well as their place in these, [is] defined first and foremost in terms of the pursuit and defense of certain *values*, rather than the mastery and institutionalization of certain *procedures*" (Verdery 1999:303).

The notion of teleological elites seems to fit the Gramscian model of "organic intellectuals", that is, intellectuals who challenge the ideological and societal status-quo from a position of relative social weakness as advocates of the newly-emergent classes. This is how Gramsci described the "organicity" of counter-elite intellectuals:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields (cited at: Kurzman & Owens 2002:66).

As stated above, "organic" intellectuals tend to produce more radical academic, social, and political proposals, since they are not tied up by hegemony, which, according to Gramsci, demands a certain moderation of position. Moderation, he says, characterizes so-called "traditional" intellectuals, whose organic bond is to the older dominant classes and who therefore struggle to preserve traditional social

stratification<sup>76</sup>. Gramsci sees intellectuals as *related* to various social classes, but not constituting a class of their own (a position apparently shared by Brym [1980:68]); other viewpoints regarding intellectuals as social actors place them either as a *class by themselves* (a position elaborated by the French thinker Julien Benda), or, conversely, *not a class* at all<sup>77</sup>. The latter position is attributed to Karl Mannheim, and, despite its obvious weaknesses (at its extreme, Brym warns [1980:56-57], one can conclude that there is no link whatsoever between intellectual standpoint and social standing), it still enjoys some popularity, as is evidenced by Konrád's and Szelényi's (1979:67-85) remarks that in capitalist societies intellectuals are swallowed up either by the upper classes or the proletariat.

Finally, we must point out that nationalist intellectuals, if they wish to realize their proposals, require an audience attentive to their message. This audience, however, may be quite limited or altogether absent; in which case nationalist intellectuals must engage in educating their public, aiming to create a nationally-minded citizenry.

Miroslav Hroch (1993:6-7, 9-10; also Eley 1981:100-103) has worked out a three-phase model displaying how intellectual attention to one's society's own past can evolve into a nationalist movement. With phase A, says Hroch, a few intellectuals (who may not even have any nationalist objectives in mind) rediscover and reappraise their society's historical heritage. Phase B arrives when the previous phase's

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<sup>76</sup> For more on Gramsci's concepts of "organic/traditional" intellectuals and "hegemony", see: Brym 1980:59; Hart 1999:177-178; Kimmerling 1998:49; Kuzar 2001:217; Liwerant 1990:201. Some observers have noted that though "traditional" intellectual elites historically predate teleological "organic" counter-elites, at present both operate with modern nationalist vocabulary (Anderson 1988:23; Berger 2009:40).

<sup>77</sup> For a (largely Occidentocentric) review of these three standpoints throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see: Kurzman & Owens 2002.

intellectual outcome becomes instrumentalised and activated by radical political preachers (either those same intellectuals, or others). Finally, phase C, according to Hroch, follows when phase B's political agitation has grown into a mass movement of adherents of national values and nationalist politics. This activity is fraught with risk, as Kennedy and Suny suggest (1999a:400), since it may end up in a disparity between the elitist and the popular notions of the nation that subsequently curbs the intellectuals' freedom of campaigning and action. Hroch (1993:13) is aware of that: "Typically, the kind of historical thought that [arises] at the beginning of the national movement [is] very different from the sort that develop[s] towards its end"<sup>78</sup>. Articulation of the nation is not only an intellectual trek – it is also an act of social engineering (Duara 1995:91-92; Kennedy & Suny 1999:1), and Massimo d'Azeglio's lament that, having created Italy, Italians must be created (Kohl & Fawcett 1995a:12), was surely heard also beyond the Apennines.

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<sup>78</sup> We can cite as an example the opposition to Theodor Herzl at the sixth Zionist congress in 1903, when he proposed the so-called "Uganda plan". Never before had he faced such an obstacle, which could only have appeared with the expansion of Zionism among the Pale of Settlement Jews, since it was their representatives who voiced the most vociferous objection to the plan.

### Chapter 3

#### 3.1. Who owns a "national outlook"? National identity according to Horon

In the opening paragraphs of the first article in the *On History* series, written at the very outset of his activity as a public intellectual in the early 1930s, Horon established that a "nation does not exist outside its history" (Alraïd 1931h:6). The entire series of articles, which introduced the reader to ancient Hebrew history in the light of the most recent discoveries in Biblical archaeology and philology, was premised on strictly historicist foundations – that in order to shape the future, the past must be understood in advance. Over the years Horon repeatedly made his historicist leanings clear (see examples: Gourevitch 1952:12, 13; Horon 1964b:502). This approach led Yehoshua Porat (1989:134) to conclude that Horon's early historiography viewed national identity as having been shaped by long-term developments rather than by geographic-territorial location<sup>79</sup>. Apparently for Porat, Horon was initially just another Zionist historiographer, differing from his peers only in the distribution of certain emphases.

However, right from its inception, Horon's concept of ethnogenesis (nation-formation) was more complex than this. In April 1931 he wrote that

what is characteristic of our tribe: its language and psychological make-up, was shaped *exclusively* on the soil of a common homeland, - between the Euphrates and the Nile, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Great Desert. And only after these common tongue and psychical make-up had emerged, may we speak of a "Hebrew nation"... (Alraïd 1931f:6, emphasis mine).

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<sup>79</sup> Porat (1989:418) admitted that since he could not read the Russian originals of *On History*, he relied on a summary by Shavit, who also used a translation (Shavit 1984b:9).

We can infer from the above that Horon's early model of ethnogenesis was in fact a mixture of historicism and environmentalism. Porat however is correct in observing that eventually the latter came to dominate Horon's thought. In order to realize how this happened, we must begin by placing Horon's ideas regarding nation-formation in a wider theoretical framework, looking in particular how Horon tackled the question of pre-modern nationhood.

The formation of national identities is contained in a huge body of literature, of which only a non-representative sample was used for the present study (Anderson 1991; Calhoun 1997; Connor 1994; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Hutchinson & Smith 1994; Motyl 1999b; Smith 1999; Suleiman 2003; Suny & Kennedy 1999b). Conceptualizing its subject matter brings into play some congruent dichotomies. Yaser Suleiman (2003:4-9, 20-27) refers to the *cultural* and the *political* concepts of national identity, drawing an implicit parallel between them and *objective* versus *subjective* definitions of a nation, respectively. A nation defined *culturally*, Suleiman states, draws on (ostensibly) *objectively* measured elements that constitute its purported essence over time and space<sup>80</sup>. A cultural nation in most cases is believed to be preceded by a pre-modern ethnic community (that is, a group of presumed or real common ancestry) but is not equivalent to it: the distinction between nation and *ethnie* is central to Anthony Smith's argument, as his following statement shows: "An *ethnie* [is] a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland, and some degree of solidarity" (Smith 1999:13). An *ethnie* becomes a nation, according to

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<sup>80</sup> The most widespread kit of elements is that proposed by Anthony Smith – common territory, historical heritage, culture, legal and economic system – yet variations abound.

Smith, when it produces mass standard culture and legal and economic frameworks, embodied most often in a sovereign state (Smith 1999:230-231).

For the *political* nation defined *subjectively* such subtleties as the vague border between nation and *ethnie* are less important. What matters is the common *will to be* a nation, regardless of empirical grounding; the nation, claim those who subscribe to this concept, *argues itself* into existence. As expressed by Craig Calhoun (1997:5, 99),

Nations cannot be defined effectively by empirical measures... Rather, nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce a collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices...; Nationhood... cannot be defined objectively, prior to political processes, on either cultural or social structural grounds. This is so, crucially, because nations are in part made by nationalism. They exist only when their members understand themselves through the discursive framework of national identity, and they are commonly forged in the struggle carried out by some members of the nation-in-the-making to get others to recognize its genuine nation-ness.

The political nation is described as being formed voluntarily by a chosen identification with a group, which produces its own traditions and rituals, sometimes mindful of their dubious historical basis (as the title *The invention of tradition* by Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983] suggests) but most often not. Such a perspective ascribes a very important role to intellectuals who articulate the principles of nationalism; curiously, as noted by Kurzman and Owens (2002:76), this approach essentially turns Gramsci's notion of "organic intellectuals" upside down: instead of the various classes producing their intellectuals, these are the (national) intellectuals who, as it were, "produce" their own organic class of national-minded citizens<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> For a more thorough discussion of these approaches, see: Conversi 2007.

The binary paradigm presented above is traditionally attributed to Hans Kohn. However, scholars of nationalism currently question this quasi-Manichaeic approach, arguing that its rigidity makes it ineffective and unhelpful (Eley 1981:84-86; Ram 2011:8-9; Weiss 2004:103-104, 111-113). Both supporters of the "cultural/objective" and the "political/subjective" nation agree at the present that national identity in the modern sense cannot be identified before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the liberation wars in the American continent popularized the idea of a conscious, active, and solidary citizenry. At the same time they agree that this identity did not pop up out of nowhere, but utilized pre-existing cultural elements, some of them quite ancient. Suleiman (2003:7) borrows from George Schöpfung the notion of "resonance", defining it as a dialogue between modernity and pre-modernity, whose purpose is to place national identity upon authentic foundations: "Imagination, invention and mythologizing work only to the extent that they can successfully exploit authentic... aspects of the culture of those for whom a particular national identity is being constructed". Similarly, Miroslav Hroch (1993:4) argues that "Intellectuals can 'invent' national communities only if certain objective preconditions for the formation of a nation already exist", and Suny and Kennedy (1999a:383-384) state that

Neither national past nor national language exists before the hard intellectual work of appropriation, selection, distinction, and articulation takes place. That creativity... is neither completely arbitrary nor fatally determined; it is not fabrication from nothing, but from the elements and experiences available to be remembered, recombined, and reorganized into a narrative of a continuous subject, the nation.

This approach is called by Alexander Motyl (1999a) "weak primordialism", meaning that it acknowledges the nation's pre-modern sources but avoids declaring national identity itself a pre-modern phenomenon. Prasenjit Duara (1995:88-90) adds that

there is no reason to assume that pre-modern elements of culture must necessarily lose their vital force in modernity. Values cannot be divided into "outdated" and "new", Duara claims: if they are elastic enough, they can underpin modern nationalism quite effectively. Moreover, both Smith and Duara concur that picturing the nation as a modern phenomenon betrays an essentialist approach. Though ostensibly "free" of nationalist myth-making, this approach, says Smith (1999:47), fabricates its own myth of a lost age of innocence, when nationalism and its horrors were unheard of. Duara (1995:51-56) criticizes it from the opposite angle, arguing that it betrays a teleological mode of thinking, whereby the (nationalist) present is perceived as inherently superior to the (pre-nationalist) past, ignoring the complex and unending dialogue between past and present, which is a primary component of nationalism.

Is it far-fetched to suggest that Horon's synthesis of historicism and environmentalism constituted a usage of the "resonance" method? I hope not, as the following discussion will attempt to show.

Horon employs three different terms in his discussion of Hebrew ethnogenesis that we must follow him in distinguishing: *am*, which means "people", *umma*, and *leom*, which are both normally translated as "nation". Horon claims that all three initially denoted blood-ties, and are therefore partially congruent; the difference between them, he continues, stems from the various kinship levels reflected in each term and their sources. *Am* is explained by him as denoting a patrilineal extended family of cousins linked through their fathers (hence, he adds, the Arabic word for paternal uncle, 'amm)<sup>82</sup>. Conversely, *umma* (which, according to Horon, shares its root with

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<sup>82</sup> Gesenius (1906:766) notes the similarity of roots, but does not identify "paternal uncle" as the etymological source of "people" (*am*).

the Semitic word *emm/umm* – mother<sup>83</sup>) denotes a matrilineal society, and is therefore more ancient. Finally, *leom*, as interpreted by Horon, means a group of people tied by allegiance to an eponymous ancestor who bequeathed his/her name or some feature to the purported descendants (Horon 1966a:133, 140; 2000:145, 152)<sup>84</sup>. Horon's *leom* therefore invokes Smith's *ethnie*, since both are based on imaginary kinship ties. Horon emphasizes that *leom*'s ancestors might be mythical, their origin being pre-historical animal totems that later transmuted into anthropomorphic gods. He lists some of the most significant totems in ancient Hebrew mythology that survived into Judaism as figures in the Biblical narrative, and attaches his interpretation of each: Rachel – a sheep; Judah – a lion; Dan – both lion and snake; Nahor (Abraham's grandfather) – a dolphin (its marine symbolism indicating North-African rather than Mesopotamian origins), etc. Numerous important totems of the Hebrews, Horon says, derive from the cattle family: Jacob is an aurochs; the golden calf is a reminder of an ancient animalistic cult; the chief deity of the ancient Canaanite pantheon, El, is also known as *Shor-El*, the Bull-God; finally, cattle symbolism abounds in Canaanite sacral art (Horon 1966a:140; 1966d:124; 2000:106-107, 145, 152)<sup>85</sup>.

Mindful of the contemporary connotations of the word *leom* (which in Hebrew denotes a modern nation), Horon proposes to use the word *umma* when speaking of a

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<sup>83</sup> Kohler & Baumgartner (1994:62) concur.

<sup>84</sup> Gesenius (1906:522) remains silent on this topic.

<sup>85</sup> Horon adds that the Bull-God was worshipped in West Asia, while North Africa worshipped the Sheep-God (*Ail* in Hebrew, etymologically akin to the word *El* – "god" [see also: Gesenius 1906:17-18, 41-43; Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:40-41, 48-50]). This distinction, he says, has its sources in the differing agricultural conditions of western Asia and northern Africa and later evolved into a myth of origins that defined an ethno-cultural distinction between the Sheep and the Bull Divisions (Horon 1966a:143; 1966d:124-125; 2000:107-108, 155).

pre-modern group united by common characteristics that are currently regarded as nation-forming: "We are in doubt", he says, "whether it is possible to find a common term... for what... is nowadays referred to as a *leom*. When dealing with a distant past it is perhaps better to indicate the difference by using a less modern term, such as *umma* (...here meaning... a wide 'ethnic' unit)" (Horon 1965a:103; 2000:46). Such terminological ambiguity also characterizes Horon's earlier attempt to tackle the question of Hebrew ethnogenesis in the *On History* series. Written in Russian, it employs terms that open up a particular field of references and connotations in the language of origin, not easily transferred either into Hebrew or English. For example, the word *narod*, which is used by Horon very liberally, is normally translated as "people" (*am* is the Hebrew equivalent in Horon's later vocabulary), but may less often denote a modern nationhood. Another term we encounter in *On History* is *narodnost'* ("nationality", or "peoplehood"), to which Horon offers no additional explanation. Nor does he refrain from referring to the ancient Hebrews as a *natziya* ("nation"), which in Russian cannot be divided into modern *leom* and the supposedly pre-modern *umma*. The Latin loanword *natziya* means in Russian precisely "modern nation"; therefore, had the *On History* articles been written in Hebrew, the only correct equivalent would have been *leom*, a term that Horon took care not to apply to the ancient Hebrews in his 1960s' and 1970s' writings<sup>86</sup>. Finally, we should keep in mind the particular circumstances in which *On History* appeared: written in *Russian* for nationally-oriented *Jews* living in interbellum *France*, when nationalist politics were on the rise. These are all implicitly present in the series.

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<sup>86</sup> In fact, the Hebrew translation of one of the *On History* articles, appended to Shavit's book, makes use of the term *leom* and its derivatives (Shavit 1984b:172).

It seems quite clear that Horon accepted as possible the existence of a national, or at least ethnic, identity in antiquity (see next section for a more detailed discussion). His more elaborate definitions of the terms discussed above leave little doubt as to his primordialist-objectivist inclinations: "A nation [*leom*] is a particular relationship between a society and the land it inhabits... *leom* (or *umma* in antiquity) is a relationship between people and their land" (Horon 1965a:102, 103; 2000:46, 47; also Gourevitch 1952:14-15; Horon 1965b:156-157). Elsewhere Horon (2000:33) states that national identity is not "...an arbitrary item, dependent on such or such will". In Horon's reasoning it is not enough to believe in a mythical ancestor, or to simply dwell in a country. The ancestral myth and the group's relation to its native environment must for Horon form a *conscious synthesis* in order for this group to become a *leom/umma* (Horon 1965a:103; 2000:47). Let us examine closer the nature of this synthesis.

Yaser Suleiman (2003:166) recalls

the role of the physical environment in shaping the character of a people... Broadly speaking, the environment delivers this function through the boundaries it provides between regions, the climatic conditions which obtain in each region, the kind of soil each region has, and, finally, its topography. This view is generally dubbed "environmental determinism" in the literature.

Environmental determinism means that particular geophysical units, delimited by natural boundaries (such as seas, mountain ridges, rivers, or deserts), have the power to influence social identity in a way that brings about the development of a sentiment of belonging both to the inhabited land and to the people sharing it. A collective divided from other collectives by geography supposedly coalesces over time to finally

emerge as a national group expressing a unique form of attachment to its land through *culture*.

Yet language, the primary sign of culture, is for Horon not a determining constituent of national identity (by which he dissents from numerous ideologues and theoreticians of nationalism who have observed the intimate link between a nation and its language [Anderson 1991; Suleiman 2003]). Acknowledging the importance of language in shaping national culture, Horon argues that a nation cannot simply be correlated with its speech, stating bluntly that "language by itself is not a national identity card" (Horon 1964b:512). Most nations, Horon claims, are more than monolingual; the choice of language can be dictated by convenience, and not every language spoken by a nation is indeed its *national* language (like English for the Irish). There are nations, he asserts, that regard more than one language as its own (the Swiss, for example), or nations that share their language with other nations (like Anglophone, Hispanophone, or Francophone societies). Finally, some culture-shaping languages perform roles that are demonstratively non-national (such as Latin for Christianity or literary Arabic for Islam) (Gourevitch 1952:14-15; Horon 1965a:106-108; 1966c:160-166; 2000:49-51, 118-123).

With the adoption of environmental determinism, Horon's concept of ethnogenesis did away with racial and biological theories of nation-formation. Horon admits that a nation, though identified with its homeland, does not remain locked into its domain: mass migrations within and without are frequent, races mix and foreign influences are imported to be creatively adapted by the indigenous population. He departs from radical primordialist nationalism by announcing that a "nation is not a casual populace and surely not a biological 'race'... [but]... constitutes the action of the spirit in nature,

a historical-geographical phenomenon..." (Horon 1965a:103, 115; 2000:47, 57); "a nation constitutes a territorial entity, and not a 'racial' or personal attribute" (Gourevitch 1952:15). Hence, any idea of "racial purity" or "genetic preservation" is a fable, an idea we find repeated in several places in Horon's writings. For instance, he claims that "race" is a vague concept that denotes biological traits common to human groups, which change not only genetically but also under environmental influence (Horon 2000:70), and that "racial purity" is impossible in any country not bereft of culture and history (Horon 1970:68).

Let's not forget, though, that for Horon territorial localization is only one component of national identity; however central, it is sometimes not wholly decisive, as the following qualification demonstrates: "We cannot establish universally a doubtless relation between a historical nation [*umma*] and the geographical space wherein it exists... There are even nations for whom geography constituted a step-mother, who nevertheless rose to independence despite the lack of natural borders" (Horon 1965a:104; 2000:48; his reference is to Poland). An element of spirit must be added to the formula; or, in Horon's poetic words (1965a:105; 2000:48), "the nature shall prepare for us a place on Earth – this is Land; but only human history will make it a 'homeland'".

Horon argues that a group unified by identification with its land will develop unique forms of conceptualizing its location, which will give rise to cultural expressions of both belonging and exclusion<sup>87</sup>, and those will play a major part in determining this group's identity. The nation develops a collective conception of its physical universe; that is, a particular cosmology, which Horon terms "national outlook" (*hashkafa*

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<sup>87</sup> Recall the "double-faced" nature of nationalist geography (section 2.3).

*leumit*), takes root. A national outlook emerges in a complex unity of relationships between the nation and its land, expressed by Horon (1965a:103, 104; 2000:47) in the following terms:

A nation in its homeland exists only... in reciprocal relationship, as well as in a relation to the wide world. For the "Land" consists not only of its soil, its mountains, valleys, rivers, but also of the skies above or the sea and its routes... The land's location under the sun, its situation relative to seaways, the relation of the land-dwellers to these natural conditions, the world's influence on the land's population, and the population's influence on the world from within – all these belong to the manifold unity called *leom* (or *umma*)... We can add to the definition of "nation and homeland" as wholeness other participants in this great natural unity: the nature's forces... the sun's rays and the showers, the waters of the sea and ground, the processes of universal history....

Horon's definition of national cosmology renders it *both* anthropocentric and geocentric. It is founded upon a vital and harmonious relationship between the one and the whole: between the single human being and the collective, between the collective and the land, between the land and the universe, in an ever-expanding circle of cultural references. National outlook is impossible without culture, Horon stresses: only when agriculture and arts began emerging did the human species become capable of developing its own cosmology.

But why call this outlook "national"? It is easy to perceive that environmental determinism admits no distinction between modernity and pre-modernity, since the influence of geophysical environment upon society takes place irrespective of historical age. Therefore, *any* group related culturally to its space is in Horon's methodology effectively a nation and hence no other outlook is adequate for it.

Admittedly, there is an element of arbitrariness in this approach; however, rather than manipulating his observations of ancient societies to suit his concept of national

identity, Horon redefines the *latter* to adhere to his historiographical opinions. That is, a modern political concept is drawn from enquiries into the past and not the other way round. In Horon's words: "The existing world does not appear to people (or societies) from a vacuum... but from particular viewpoints upon earth. Therefore, only national outlook constitutes a *true factual* theory" (Horon 1965a:97; 2000:34, emphasis mine). Other outlooks derived from religious or philosophical universal systems, Horon says, are abstract by their very essence and thus constitute merely "pseudo-outlooks". A national outlook grows out of the native soil and shapes a concept of the universe on material grounds – the only grounds known empirically to humans, especially ancients, Horon argues. The material aspect's centrality for the ancient national outlook stemmed from the physical impossibility of beholding the Earth from above, unlike modern cosmography, whose observing eye, Horon writes (2000:36), "floats out there in the outer space, accompanying the Lord of Creation, or like a satellite camera". For the ancients, on the contrary, proximity to the ground was highly tangible, and they viewed their world with their feet firmly set on their land. Correspondingly, national outlook entails a conceptualization of one's own history and geography; it is a unity of time and space viewed from *within* (Horon 1965a:96-97; 2000:33-34).

The Hebrew national outlook was remarkable for Horon because of what he describes as the location of the ancient Hebrews at the centre of the antique universe (fig. 2), and culture's early development in their homeland (see section 3.3). The Hebrews, he says, looked at their country facing the rising sun with their backs to the Mediterranean Sea. In their perspective, east was to the front, west was to the rear,

north was to the left, and south was to the right (fig. 3)<sup>88</sup>. Other contemporary cultures had different dispositions: the Egyptians looked southwards to the sources of the Nile (for them west was to the right and east was to the left), and the Sumerians and Babylonians looked northwards. Horon (2000:38-39) suggests that the origin of these differing outlooks might have been the initial direction of the respective cultures'

spread: the Hebrews spread eastwards, the Egyptians southwards, and the Mesopotamian civilizations northwards. It is the latter's outlook that modern culture eventually adopted, Horon concludes, identifying north quite arbitrarily with the topmost direction.

The Hebrew national outlook gave rise to a plethora of cultural expressions, Horon continues.

Watching the sun circling the area to their right and moving from the front to the back, the Hebrews identified the south as the sun's dwelling,

naming it "the land of Ham" (from the Hebrew *hama*, "sun"; see also:



Figure 2: National outlook – the Hebrew homeland at the heart of the ancient universe (source: Horon 1970:43; all images from Horon's works are reproduced by kind permission of Margalit Shinar).



איור מס' 3:  
ארץ הקדם בראייה עברית: "ימים ואתר שמש ולאום חוף-ים" (כנסי אונרית, 1400 לפנה"ס). העברים פנו אל השמש העולה כשהים מאחוריהם (ומכאן גם שמו "ימים האחרון"); הדרום הוא ימין לאו תימן והצפון משמאל. עפדת המוצא היא מרחו חוף-ים הוא כנען.

Figure 3: National outlook – the Hebrew looks towards the East from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (source: Horon 2000:37).

<sup>88</sup> Hence the Hebrew word for Yemen (*Teyman*), whose root ("ימ") indicates both "south" and "right" (Horon 2000:228, 291, 294; Gesenius 1906:412).

Gesenius 1906:326; Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:325). To the north (left) was the "land of Japheth", behind whose mountain-peaks the sun "hid" at night. In-between lay the land of the "sons of Shem" (which Horon interprets as "aristocrats", that is, "those who carry names", unlike the nameless commoners<sup>89</sup>), which, despite its intermediary position, was closer to the Hamitic geographic-astronomic circle, due to its location in the sun area (fig. 4). Another cosmological division cited by Horon as originating in the national outlook was the division between "red" and "white" domains. The "Red" (*Adom*, from the root אד"מ, which denotes also "land" and "human being") stretched, according to Horon, from North Africa to Canaan, while the "White" (*Lavan*, from the root לב"ן, which also denotes "moon") began in the snowy mountain-tops of Lebanon (hence the toponym) and continued northwards to

the cold and dark domain of Japheth (Horon 1966a:137-144; 2000:35-36, 148-156)<sup>90</sup>.



**Figure 4: Astronomic circles and their cultural expressions: the Land of Japheth in the north versus the Land of Ham in the south (source: Horon 2000:36).**

A different cultural expression stemming from the Hebrew national outlook is described by Horon as "admiration toponyms", meaning nouns that, without the definite article, signify general geographical terms, but with the definite article are reserved for particular locations. These were common among the ancient Hebrews, says Horon: for example, "the Land" or "the Country" meant the Land of the Hebrews; "the

<sup>89</sup> Compare Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:1548-1551.

<sup>90</sup> Neither Gesenius (1906:9-10, 526-527) nor Koehler & Baumgartner (1994:14-16) support such far-reaching interpretation.

Sea" was the Mediterranean Sea; "the River" was the Euphrates, etc. Such linguistic forms stressed the geocentricity immanent in the national outlook, facilitating cognitive unity between the general and the singular, between the whole and the one (Gourevitch 1952:12; Horon 2000:39-42).

Developing a national outlook is conditioned upon obtaining appropriate *epistemological tools* to analyse properly the relationship between the nation and its land; and these, Horon claims (1965a:98; 2000:42), are utterly lacking in contemporary Israel. Instead, he says, non-national ideas based on cosmopolitan worldviews predominate in the Israeli cultural and political discourse. Horon (1965a:98-102; 2000:42-46) divides these worldviews into three main groups: Biblical romanticism, which treats the Bible as a historical source; Jewish traditional historiography, which catalogues the miseries that befell the Jews during the two-millennium dispersal (these two occur to various extents also in Zionism, Horon notes); finally, foreign, mostly European, scholarly paradigms, founded upon oriental archaeology and Biblical criticism. None of them promulgates a view from *within* with regard to the Hebrew land and identity, and are thus either irrelevant to the Hebrew national outlook or overtly hostile to it, he concludes.

Let us dwell a little on the last category. Yaacov Shavit (1987:112) argues that Horon's call to dispose of western analytic tools is tantamount to a sweeping rejection of "universal culture". This, of course, is an unsubstantiated claim, since Horon never denied his indebtedness to western scholarship, in particular to Biblical criticism and archaeology (as the bibliography to *Kedem vaerev* [Horon 2000] demonstrably shows); he even stressed the valuable contribution of Protestant-inspired critical study of the Bible to demythologizing the Biblical text (Horon 1966a:129-130; 2000:141-

142). Horon's objection is *not* to the methodology or to the usefulness of western scholarship, but to its *underlying assumptions*, which ostensibly favour universal outlooks over national approach and therefore suffer from a lack of what he regards as proper historical consciousness. Non-national foreign scholarship stands accused by Horon of producing broad images of the "eastern world", none of which, he says, withstands criticism when scrutinized using national outlook: an essentialist picture of "Semitic race", "pan-Babylonism", "a romanticism which uses the Bible to identify the 'eternal unchanging East'"<sup>91</sup>, and, most significantly, the idea that the Hebrew people and language originated in the Arabian Peninsula (we will see later how this last objection buttresses Horon's political argumentation) (Horon 1965a:101-102; 1966c:178-180; 2000:45-46, 135-137). This theme appears quite early in Horon's thought, since the *On History* series begins with a similar criticism of the available historical literature (Alraïd 1931h:7).

Given the profusion of western academic sources in Horon's works, can we really take him at his word that he is free from their paradigmatic influence? There are in fact quite easily observable parallels between some of Horon's principles and the ideas advanced by Herder. Although they disagreed on the role of language in nation-formation (Herder believed it to be of primary importance, Horon, as we have seen, relegated it to the background), some of their assumptions remain strikingly similar. Even though a cleric, Herder perceived the Bible more as a collection of folklore than as a revealed truth, an idea that became the starting impulse for Biblical criticism. Herder was also fascinated by ancient German paganism, deploring Christianity's effect upon the German national "essence", quite similar to Horon's dislike of

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<sup>91</sup> Horon might have thus anticipated Edward Said in his criticism of "Orientalism" by several decades.

monotheism and Judaism in particular (a perhaps less discernible inspiration might be the British 19<sup>th</sup> century thinker Lord Acton, who emphasized the essential tie between ancient nationhood and paganism [Rejwan 1999:22]). Some of Herder's ideas lie at the root of environmental determinism, such as his contention that the more a nation is secluded geographically, the stronger is the influence of geophysical conditions upon its collective character (Hayes 1927:722-727, 733). Finally, Horon's unshakable anti-racism brings to mind Herder's denial of superiority and inferiority among races and nations (also reflected in Horon's assertion [1966c:162; 2000:120-121] that languages cannot be "backward" or "advanced" by their nature). The unacknowledged influence of one of the fathers of modern nationalism is thus highly visible in the output of the father of "Canaanite" Hebrew nationalism.

The series of articles Horon published in 1965-1966 thus becomes a blueprint for an authentic Hebrew national historiography, as its general title suggests ("A world in a *Hebrew outlook*"). Hebrew antiquity is not merely an age to be studied; it is *the* Hebrew golden age, which, as Horon makes clear, should inspire political action here and now:

The Hebrew nation will not develop adequately without self-consciousness, that is, without recognizing its own self and might. This is why we must base ourselves... on national historical-geographical background and scholarship... We should concentrate on antiquity – not merely because it is longest, but... [because it is] in accordance with our particular points of view. For we are like a man rising from sleep... (Horon 1965a:118-119; 2000:60).

### 3.2. A Hebrew nation in antiquity?

At this point we need to commit ourselves to a deeper analysis of Horon's opinions concerning the existence of a Hebrew nation in antiquity. It must not be simply assumed that he took the presence of an ancient Hebrew nation for granted; the question of whether nationhood was possible before modernity is not an easy one, and Horon was certainly aware of this. Despite the centrality of this issue for his analysis, Horon never explained in his writings the *exact* nature of the differences and similarities between modern and pre-modern nationhood, probably to make it more "elastic".

In the 1931-1932 *On History* series Horon traces the emergence of a Hebrew "national consciousness" (he uses these exact words) to an ages-long process of consolidation that the Hebrew-speaking tribes underwent in Canaan. Dissenting from Jewish traditional historiography, which regards the Exodus and the Sinai covenant as the *starting* point of the ancient Hebrew ethnogenesis, Horon describes it as its *pinnacle* (before he negated completely the Exodus legend in the 1960s). According to Horon, the Hebrews, who drew in other related Canaanite tribes, had developed their own consciousness of distinctiveness<sup>92</sup> by the 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, under oppressive Egyptian rule in Western Canaan. A religious symbol was chosen for the new nation: YHWH, the god of the Israeli tribal confederation, the strongest confederation among the Hebrew tribal unions. Only much later, Horon asserts (Alraïd 1931e:6; 1931g:7; 1931i:6; 1932b:4-5), did this local cult become the focal

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<sup>92</sup> The 1930s *On History* series does not contain the notion of "national outlook", which was introduced only in the 1960s *A world in a Hebrew outlook* series.

point of the prophets' preaching, resulting in its incorporation into Judaism (see sections 3.4 and 3.5).

In the 1960s writings, with his concept of "national outlook" already developed, Horon (1965a:104; 2000:47-48) insists that it characterized also (and perhaps primarily) ancient societies: "This awareness of everything's dependence upon everything [meaning forces of nature intertwined with historical processes]... was no less typical of the ancient peoples' [*amei-kedem*] sensation of the world". Horon's primordialist definition of a nation – a group identified territorially, whose relation to its native land is encapsulated in culture – emphasized the continuity between *umma* and *leom* (ancient and modern nation, respectively). For Horon, constituting a nation means acceptance and realization of certain values – irrespective of time and place, as national outlook can develop anywhere and at anytime, given the adequate environmental conditions. However, the fact that *umma* and *leom* are not *entirely* synonymous suggests that Horon recognized the existence of a difference between modern and pre-modern nationhood. It can be inferred that for Horon differences between various nations stemmed from the different relationships each nation developed with its land; that is, the clusters of elements contributing to the emergence of the national outlook, which are obviously inimitable in each particular territory, dictated the different conditions within which each and every nation emerged in its own way and the identity it assumed. This leaves us to conclude that modern *leom* in Horon's understanding is distinct from the historical *umma* merely by a higher form of political organization – which is exactly the distinction that Anthony Smith draws between a nation and an *ethnie* (see previous section). A casual remark by Horon (1966a:140) hints in fact at such a distinction: "All the 'forefathers' are apparently

'national' [*leumiim*] in the ancient sense – name-givers ('eponyms') to peoples [*amim*] and places". That is, an ancient nation coalesces around a *myth* of familial origin, but is also similar to a modern nation by an attachment to its ancestral territory (Gourevitch 1952:15). Notably, Horon became aware early in his career of the impossibility of ruling out any differences between the ancient and modern nation, as evidenced by his declaration in *On History* that "the [notion of a] sentiment of the Hebrew unity... should not be treated in a too modern way" (Alraïd 1931i:6).

It would be informative to juxtapose Horon's ideas about national identity in antiquity with other opinions on the subject, in order to assess how "unorthodox" Horon's approach was. A book by David Goodblatt (2006), *Elements of ancient Jewish nationalism*, readily lends itself to such a comparison, having the same conceptual and temporal frameworks. Being a meticulously researched study, it covertly serves aims other than simply expanding our knowledge: in Goodblatt's case, this is to buttress the legitimacy of the Zionist political project by arguing that the ancient Jews (in Horon's terminology: ancient Hebrews and their Jewish descendants) constituted a fully-fledged nation. To do so, Goodblatt has to perform certain methodological tricks, the most crucial of which is doing away with the uncomfortable issue of difference between ethnic and national identity:

How is national identity distinguished from ethnic consciousness? And isn't ethnicity as modern a category as nationalism? If so, why would its application to antiquity be any less anachronistic?..; I find it difficult and not helpful to distinguish ethnicity from nationality...; I am comfortable using the concepts of national identity and nationalism in the context of antiquity. I too do not see any useful distinction between national identity and ethnicity. And I agree that the concept of

nationalism can be useful in understanding ancient Jewish history (Goodblatt 2006:5, 26, 204)<sup>93</sup>.

Goodblatt is thus even more straightforward than Horon, who, mindful of the complexity of the theme, retained an analytic distinction between *leom* and *umma*. Although Goodblatt's refusal to separate ethnic and national identity leads him unavoidably into theoretical ambiguity, he too does not dispose entirely of the division between modernity and pre-modernity in the context of national identity. For him, the difference between "ancient" and "modern" nationalism lies in the transformation of the discourse associated with these phenomena over the ages (Goodblatt 2006:14)<sup>94</sup>. Vagueness and generalization follow him wherever he sets foot, as the following "differentiation" between national identity and nationalism à la Goodblatt (2006:26-27) demonstrates: "By national identity I mean a belief in a common descent and shared culture available for mass political mobilization... by nationalism I mean the invocation of national identity as the basis for mass mobilization and action".

In the context of the dispute over what constitutes Jewish national identity, Goodblatt follows the lead of the fathers of Zionism, for whom Jewish religious and national identifications were dialectically intertwined (see section 5.1). In order to sustain his argument, Goodblatt is left with no choice but to attribute demonstrations of collective zeal (which could as well be identified as tribal or religious fervour) to a nationalist sentiment. Goodblatt locates the sources of ancient Jewish "nationalism" in

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<sup>93</sup> For Goodblatt's methodological approach in full, see Goodblatt 2006:1-27. Other scholars, while admitting the difficulty of drawing a clear dividing line between ethnicity and nationalism, do not "solve" the problem by declaring it nonexistent (see: Suleiman 2003:17-18).

<sup>94</sup> This argument slips into essentialism, by implying that there is something more to national/ethnic identity than merely changeable discourse, but without clarifying what it is.

the existence of a common literary heritage (the Bible and apocrypha), common language (Hebrew), common tradition and culture, and common social and legal structures (the Jewish law, various forms of statehood, and the institution of priesthood)<sup>95</sup>. If we look with greater attention at this list, we will recognize Anthony Smith's criteria of a nation, applied indiscriminately to antiquity – something that Smith himself, to the best of my knowledge, carefully avoided: "Clearly, ancient Israel in the later Second Temple Era was well on the way to becoming a nation...", he admits; however, "it is easy [in that context] to fall into the trap of a *retrospective nationalism*" (Smith 1999:108, emphasis mine)<sup>96</sup>. Moreover, Goodblatt argues that Jewish national identity survived the downfall of Jewish statehood in the first century CE by proposing a "passive political nationalism" as the explanation for the endurance of Jewish nationhood until the rise of Zionism. He even claims that the Jews in dispersal remained a nation thanks to the preservation of the ancient *national* system of cultural symbols and memories (Goodblatt 2006:204-210).

Steven Grosby (1991; 2002; 2005) offers a more developed argument that concurs with Goodblatt's but is better articulated and largely avoids methodological ambiguities. For Grosby, it is beyond doubt that national identity could exist in antiquity, since the very elements that constitute it are primordial. Primordiality according to Grosby [2002:168] consists of

beliefs about the significance of nativity, that is, about the life-giving and life-determining connections formed through both birth to

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<sup>95</sup> An additional element is suggested by Steven Weitzman (2008): the enmity between the ancient Jews and their foreign occupiers (Egyptians, Babylonians, etc.) that nourished the former's sentiment of distinctiveness.

<sup>96</sup> For Smith's standpoint in greater detail, see: Smith 1999:80-82, 107-108, 203-224.

particular persons and birth in a specific territory. These are beliefs that attribute significance to the creation and transmission of life; they are the cognitive references to the objects around which various structures of kinship, from the family to the nation, are formed.

Consequently, a primordial national identity, in Grosby's perspective, is

a configuration of traditions that are pervaded by vital life and that have as their referents territorially specific beliefs about the processes of the generation, maintenance and protection of life. These referents are found within the conceptual center, that organizing focus of beliefs, of the collective self-consciousness of the national collectivity... The beliefs that are constitutive of the conceptual center of the nation... do not only refer to the transmission of life and the freedom of life, they also refer to the order of life. The order of life is realized in law... Ultimately, the foundation of the conception of right relations is expressed in the conception of God (Grosby 2002:111-112).

Moreover,

a constitutive characteristic of nationality, ancient and modern, is the existence of a relatively extensive, yet bounded and sociologically relatively homogeneous territory. There are a number of apparently constitutive elements to the existence of such a territory, for example, as an indication of its relative, sociological homogeneity, a name common to both the territory and the people who are related by inhabiting the territory... In addition, this terminological conflation of the image of an extensive, yet bounded area of land and the image of "its" people usually has, as one of its elements, the fiction that the people are related by blood-tie (Grosby 2002:121).

Crucial to Grosby's analysis is this conflation of ethnonym and toponym, which, to an extent, evokes Horon's "national outlook". When a particular society and its land carry similar names, Grosby argues, this points to a special relation between the two, which in antiquity tended to be supra-tribal and to enjoy the patronage of a supreme territorial deity, whose cult constituted the equivalent of modern national legislation. Add to this the myth of common descent and kinship, which in antiquity could be

even stronger than in modernity, and the result, Grosby suggests, is a complete national identity (1991:243; 2002:52-91).

Grosby's principal example of a fully-fledged nation in antiquity is Israel. He dates its transformation from a tribal to a national society to the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, coterminous with the transition from the idolatrous to the "monolatrous" (Grosby's term) cult of YHWH<sup>97</sup>. At that stage, Grosby claims, ancient Israel came to possess a clear supra-tribal sentiment, enhanced by the common myth of origin from the descendants of Abraham, the possession of, and identification with, a defined territorial domain (called likewise: Israel), and the acknowledgment of the supreme lordship of YHWH, who ruled over the nation from the administrative and religious centre in Jerusalem. Additional elements strengthening the ancient Israelites' sense of nationality were, according to Grosby, the common Hebrew language they spoke and the common foundational myth of the unified kingdom ruled by David and Solomon (the formulation of which, Grosby admits, required some tampering with the old Hebrew scriptures) (Grosby 1991:230-242, 259-260; 2002:94-98; 2005:10-13)<sup>98</sup>.

It would seem that Grosby's methodology rejects any differentiation between ancient and modern nationalism, but this is not entirely so: Grosby acknowledges that modern nationalism is much more commonplace and advanced as a result of technological development; moreover, modern nations are delineated territorially much more

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<sup>97</sup> This is otherwise known as the Deuteronomic reform. Notably, Grosby admits that the reform was incomplete, since many polytheistic traits survived into Judaic monotheism (Grosby 2002:9, 171-174).

<sup>98</sup> What is particularly striking in the present context is that what Grosby sees as the starting point of Hebrew nationhood (the Deuteronomic reform) was for Horon the beginning of its decline, as we shall observe below. This position is possible for Grosby because, unlike Horon, he does not differentiate Hebrews and Jews.

efficiently than ancient ones; finally, a unifying religious cult is nowadays not a precondition for the emergence of a national sentiment and national legislation does not require sacral authority to become effective. Additionally, Grosby is well aware of the deep tension obtaining in modernity between religious and nationalist conceptual frameworks, to which he devotes a significant space (Grosby 1991:243-245; 2002:235-256).

Grosby generally avoids the tough issue of the preservation of the Hebrew/Jewish national identity after the demise of its ancient statehood, limiting himself to the following statement: "...the beliefs constitutive of Israel remained 'active' in the minds of a continuous stream of numerous individuals; they remained so even in the absence of the existence of the state of Israel. As a consequence, this continually existing potential for 'activation' permitted the possibility for Israel to reemerge... in 1948" (Grosby 2002:110). This evokes the "passive political nationalism" that Goodblatt attributed to Diaspora Jews; once again, a case of an academic argument tacitly supporting a political ideology. This becomes more pronounced when we take into consideration Grosby's assertion (1991:242, 246-250) that other societies adjacent to Israel and contemporary with it (like Greece, Egypt, Sumer, and Aram) did not develop into complete nations despite the potential to move in this direction.

A comparative perspective, pertaining in particular to ancient Greece, is the thrust of M. I. Finley's analysis. Finley emphasizes that the ancient Greeks were not a nation in the modern sense of the word; however, they did share a general feeling of solidarity, which bypassed the distances and animosities between the city-states. Among themselves, the Greeks identified as citizens of various *poleis*; however, facing foreigners, they spoke of themselves uniformly as *Hellenes*. Such identification did

not entail any political allegiance; thus, Finley concludes (1990:120-123, 126-127, 132-133), the Greeks constituted an ethno-cultural and not a national society.

Both Finley and Horon draw analogies between ancient Greeks and ancient Hebrews. Horon invokes Greece as an example of a cultural-linguistic unity within a political disunity, pointing out that "the endless number of clans and statelets, into which Canaan was divided... is a phenomenon similar to the situation of... classical Greece... [and] is demonstrative only of the country's political and social division – not of national diversity" (Alraïd 1931d:5). He also claims that identifying different Canaanite tribal unions with different nationalities is "as wrong as calling the Spartan and Athenian confederations of classical Greece different peoples" (Alraïd 1931e:5). Interestingly, Horon suggests that the Canaanite and Greek cultural-linguistic situations during both societies' respective "classical" ages were similar; Finley, however, remarks that the ancient Hebrews were more tightly coalesced than the Greeks (that is, they had developed a stronger supra-political identity) and that, therefore, they were nearer to becoming a nation than the latter. Finley (1990:24, 126) implies that a possible reason for this is that, compared to the Greeks, the Hebrews possessed a clearer concept of linear forward-moving time (whose sources he identifies in Jewish eschatology, an element entirely foreign to the ancient Hebrews, according to Horon). And as we have seen in chapter 2, one of the numerous conditions permitting the emergence of modern nationalism was the spread of the secular diachronic time-concept. In consequence, Finley concedes that ancient Hebrews were more "national" than their Greek counterparts, since they managed to develop a characteristic that became fully elaborated and commonplace only when

modernity and nationalism burst upon the historical stage in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 3.3. The Land of Kedem, land of the Hebrews

Horon's declaration (1976a:40) that "a nation is equivalent to its land" illustrates the centrality of geography for his thought; so much that having discussed the way Horon conceptualized national identity, we are compelled to devote a separate section to a discussion of his concepts of Land and Homeland. The geo-historical area lying at the heart of Horon's enquiry is named the "Land of Kedem" (*Eretz Hakedem*), and he begins its history from the Land's formation when, approximately twenty million years ago, the African continent, to the north-eastern tip of which the future Land of Kedem was attached, collided with Euro-Asia (Horon 1976b:215-216). The Land was formed as a pass between the three continents of Africa, Asia and Europe, lying precisely in the midst of the "Old World" (meaning the "world" as imagined in antiquity: without the American continent and surrounded by the Ocean [see fig. 2]). The way Horon establishes its location reminds one of the legendary "chosen Land" placed in the centre of the universe (a practice not uncommon in mediaeval cartography). Hebrew axiological geography is indeed phrased quite poetically:

Our Land is the in-between land of the Old World, on the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, at the juncture of the routes of the Nile and Mesopotamia, the Red and the Mediterranean Seas, up to the external Ocean. Such localization establishes future fate: it is a Land of multitude of influences, absorbing elements from without and exporting elements from within, in recurrent cultural waves, in various epochs (Horon 1966b:113; 2000:61).

Where does the Land of Kedem precisely lie? Horon (1965a:105; 2000:48-49, emphasis mine) informs his reader that "our natural zone, 'the Land', meaning the land of the Hebrews, is *not* the state of Israel, nor is it the Land of Israel [*Eretz Israel*], but an extensive geographical unit". This pronouncement juxtaposes the Hebrew national geography with the Zionist one, revealing the political character of the Land of

Kedem demarcation. Horon (1965a:105; 2000:49, emphases mine) defines the Land as

...a geographical division stretching between sea and desert, from the boundaries of Egypt to the river Euphrates – in accordance with the extensive, *ancient Hebrew outlook*. By this we mean a *natural unit*, divided today between *so-called* "Israel", "Jordan", "Syria", "Lebanon", etc. – and encompassing them all<sup>99</sup>.

Elsewhere Horon proposes a clearer definition of the Land's outreach, hinting at a direct correspondence between geopolitical and geophysical conditions:

The area that is... the subject matter of our analysis corresponds roughly to the five states of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Iraq<sup>100</sup>. Though all their boundaries are highly artificial and unstable, the bulk of their territory is comprised within a single *geopolitical unit*. This *natural unit* may be defined as the *Levant* (that is "the country of Sunrise") (Gourevitch 1952:10, first two emphases mine; fig. 5).

Its natural make-up is as follows:

Our Land is located at the crossroads of the two major lines: the sea-and-desert space and the Rift. These lines' conjugation determines the Land's shape as a geomorphologic unit; furthermore, it is the source of its visible internal division into five parts. They stretch northwards and southwards in parallel and lie adjacent to each other from west to east; a) the sea-shores (lower in

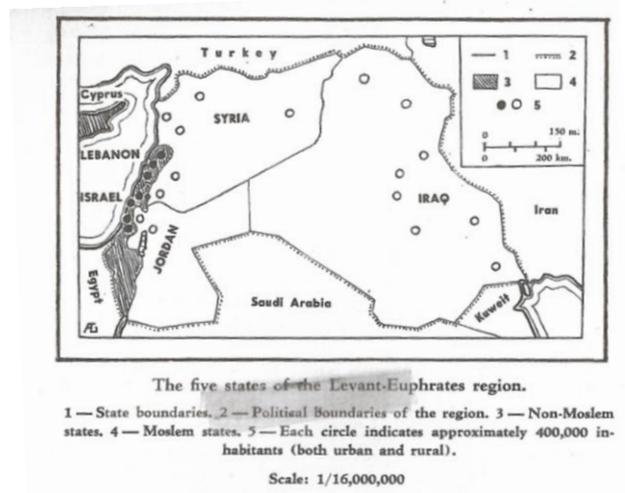


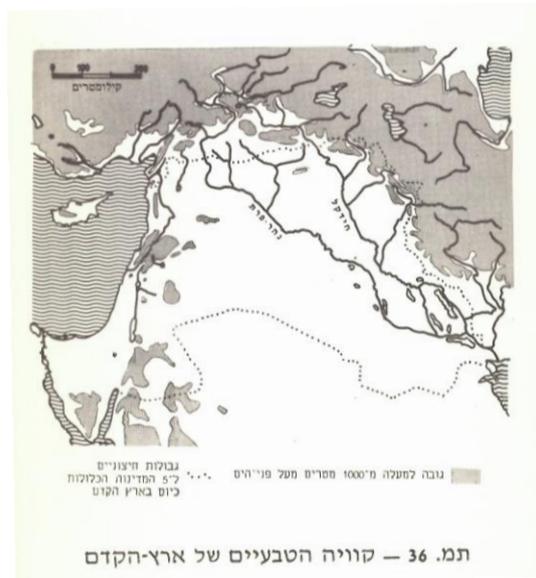
Figure 5: The political make-up of the Land of Kedem (source: Gourevitch 1952:15).

<sup>99</sup> See also: Horon 1957:3; 1970:54, 104.

<sup>100</sup> On a different occasion Horon (1970:122) also annexes Cyprus to the Land of Kedem.

"southern" Canaan, higher beginning with the Carmel peak); b) the "Mountain", that is, the mountains of the western part...; c) the Rift...; d) the mountainous plateaus in the eastern part...; e) the eastern desert... over most of the "Land of Kedem"; and "the great river Euphrates" [which] flows near its north-eastern edge... (Horon 1966b:114; 2000:63-65)<sup>101</sup>.

Being "both sea-and-desert", the Land of Kedem's geomorphologic elements configure a unique territory with naturally-defined boundaries and make it an intermediary between continents and climatic zones. Its variety of climates, Horon continues, adds up to a natural unity, which is transposed to the geopolitical and cultural spheres: "its parts tended to merge during the periods of its prime, like complementing organs, as provinces of a single country" (Horon 1970:56); however, "east and west... balance each other... **they complete each other** in the field of economy and spirit, but **compete** for political primacy" (Horon 1970:64). The Land's western, watery part receives its waters from the Atlantic basin and drains them into



the Mediterranean; conversely, its eastern, saltier part is dominated by the Euphrates running to the Persian Gulf (figs. 6-7). These different ecological inclinations, Horon writes further, influenced the types of agriculture that evolved in the Land's two major areas: precipitation-based in the west, irrigation-based in the east. In effect, and in

**Figure 6: The natural make-up of the Land of Kedem** (source: Horon 1970:55).

<sup>101</sup> For the Land of Kedem's natural structure in greater detail, see: Horon 1966b:113-116, 123; 1970:54-65; 2000:61-67, 76.

accordance with the principles of environmental determinism, cultural development in both areas differed in pace. Indeed, the Land of Kedem is not "neutral" in respect of its location: Horon states that culturally and mentally it is closer to the Mediterranean basin than to the eastern desert. The Land and the Sea are described as naturally extending one another: "Our area of attachment... is not particularly 'Semitic'... and surely not 'Arabized'... but wider and richer, more to the west and north, African and Mediterranean in essence" (Horon 1965a:108)<sup>102</sup>. Yet this proximity is still not strong enough to make the Land of Kedem an *organic* part of the Mediterranean world, since, according to Horon, a climatic catastrophe that hit the northern African continent between 8000 and 3000 BCE, turning it into a desert, bypassed the Land. Horon therefore presents the Land of Kedem as separate in geophysical and cultural terms (though not equally) from *both* Africa and Asia (Horon 1966b:134; 1966d:130; 2000:93, 114).

The Land stretches over 800,000 sq km and was inhabited in Horon's time by approximately 15

million people, according to his calculations ("an average country", admits Horon [1970:54, 106-107], "yet large enough according to European standards" [fig. 8]).

Particular attention is paid to Canaan, which Horon describes as encompassing the seashore, the Rift, and the mountain ridge on the edges of the desert (that is, current Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and south-west Syria). Though constituting only 10% of the



**Figure 7: The Land of Kedem's drainage basins – "East meets West" (source: Horon 1970:63).**

<sup>102</sup> See also: Horon 1966b:115, 116, 132; 1966d:124, 128; 2000:51, 65-66, 90, 106, 112.

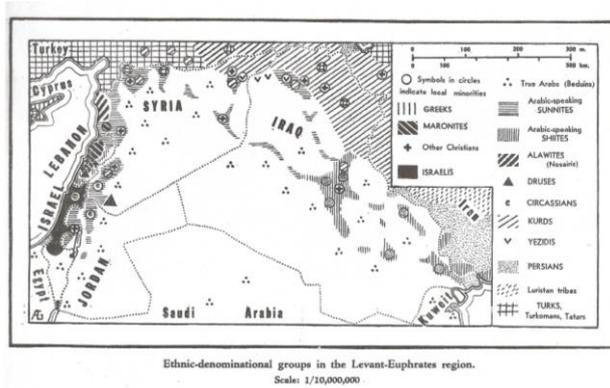


Figure 8: The Land of Kedem's population (source: Gourevitch 1952:21).

whole Land of Kedem, Canaan, Horon claims, remains its pivotal part due to its proximity to the sea. Canaan is the most watered area of the Land; Horon mentions that the toponym probably originally denoted the area where the yearly precipitation was above 500 mm (from Gaza northwards<sup>103</sup>). "Canaan" was thus initially a strictly *geographic* term and its purported linguistic source is the root כנ"ע, which Horon explains as "descent" (towards the sea); later, he says, it became a *social* term, signifying an urban merchant class (the "Canaanites")<sup>104</sup>. Canaan additionally is crucial to the national outlook since it is from its shores that the ancient Hebrews viewed the Land of Kedem: "the geographic feeling of the Hebrew-speaking peoples [*amim*]...", Horon states, in accordance with the idea of the Land's affinity with the Mediterranean sphere, "is based upon the western positions within their world" (Horon 2000:39). Finally, Horon describes Canaan as constituting a miniature version of the Land of Kedem: the former is centred on the Jordan River, similarly to the way the latter is centred on the Euphrates. The Jordan, Horon adds, has not two but *three* banks: the western (the contemporary West Bank and Israel), the eastern

<sup>103</sup> Hence, the Sinai Peninsula, though part of the Land of Kedem, does not belong to Canaan.

<sup>104</sup> This etymology is not unilaterally accepted: other researchers derive "Canaan" from the Hurrian (that is, non-Semitic) word for "purple" (Grosby 2007:111). Gesenius (1906:488-489) likewise makes no connection between Canaan and "descent", though he supports the interpretation of "Canaanites" as "merchants". Also, Canaan's regional predominance is questioned in present-day scholarship: "The idea that there was an entity known as 'greater Canaan' extending along the entire eastern Mediterranean coast is a scholarly ghost that should be laid to rest" (Rainey 1996:11).

(modern-day Kingdom of Jordan), and the northern (the sources of the Jordan River in Lebanon and Syria). All three constitute *one* geopolitical unit – a statement whose political implications are not difficult to discern (fig. 9) (Horon 1966a:146; 1970: 100-101, 140; 1976a:40; 1976b:216; 2000:37, 39, 159-160).

What is the meaning of the toponym "the Land of Kedem"? Place-naming is a key aspect of axiological geography, especially nationalist: the chosen name often indicates, overtly or covertly, the values vested in the land, while the ambiguity that often accompanies it may expand nationalist



Figure 9: The three banks of the Jordan (source: Horon 1970:101).

symbolism by allocating greater room for meanings. The designation "Kedem", which combines *three* intertwined meanings, is deliberately ambiguous and therefore highly effective. The Hebrew word *kedem* (from the root קד"מ) denotes "east": in Horon's view, it refers to the land partaking in the Land-Sea continuum in the eastern Mediterranean basin. Secondly, *kedem* means "front", "fore". Our discussion of the national outlook renders this meaning easily understandable: the Hebrew, as Horon puts it, stood facing the Land with his/her back to the Sea and looking forward, with the south to his/her right and the north to his/her left. Thirdly, *kedem* is also "antiquity". This meaning calls to mind what Horon regards as the ages-old uniqueness of the Land and its culture, legitimizing the modern quest for it as a suitable golden age. In sum, three cognitive domains are encoded in this short word: the *geographical*, the *cosmological*, and the *temporal* (Horon 1966b:113; 1967:59; 2000:36, 39, 62; see also: Gesenius 1906:869-870). Equally important is the fact that

the Hebrew-sounding name *Kedem* expresses a *national* view from *within*, while rejecting such names as "Orient" or *Ash-Sham* that for Horon denote "East" or "North" and thus reflect foreign (British or Arab) outlooks and conceptual systems (Gourevitch 1952:11)<sup>105</sup>.

Curiously, Horon avoided the toponym "Land of Kedem" in his non-Hebrew writings, preferring somewhat less nuanced names. We have seen above that he translates "the country of Sunrise" as "Levant"; he then writes: "[The Land] may be defined as the Euphrates country, because of the great river which crosses its entire hinterland. Or, by combining its two main features, one may call it the *Levant and Euphrates* region...; [moreover, the Land], as a geographic and ethnic name, could be rendered in English as *Hebrewland*" (Gourevitch 1952:10, 12; also Horon 1970:56). As to Hebrew synonyms to the "Land of Kedem" that we encounter in Horon's writings, these are "Riverland" (*Ever-hanahar*) and "the Land of Ever" (*Eretz-Ever*). The last is actually a tautology; as explained by Horon (2000:158), the Hebrew word *Ever*, usually rendered as "Side", in fact denotes "Land": "This is a noun signifying a space along a natural line, such as sea or river, also on both its banks... *Ever* can refer to an extensive territory... or to a particular territory that is being traversed"<sup>106</sup>. In Horon's lexicon, *Ever* is chiefly a topographical notion, and he suggests that initially it denoted only hilly Canaan and was later extended to the whole Land of Kedem.

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<sup>105</sup> One can observe a seeming inconsistency in Horon's reasoning here, since he rejects the designation "Orient" ("East"), while one of the meanings of *Kedem* is exactly the same. Apparently Horon rejected the former as implying "east to Europe" and thus being based on an extrinsic (foreign) vantage point, while the latter, as explained above, meant "east to the Mediterranean", preserving the intrinsic point of view.

<sup>106</sup> Compare Gesenius 1906:716-720, who disagrees.

Smaller *Evers*, Horon adds, exist within the greater Land of Ever as well, such as "Riverland" east and "Riverland" west (the territories adjoining the Euphrates banks), the "*Ever of Jordan*" (Canaan), the "*Ever of the Sea*" (the Mediterranean), etc. The most significant aspect of this onomastic decision is the linguistic kinship Horon points to between *Ever* and "Hebrews", both derived from the same root (עבר). Thus, Hebrews (*Ivrim*) are not "those who pass" (as common interpretation has it), but "inhabitants of *Ever*", that is, "people of the Country", otherwise "those who stay". Stated simply, for Horon the word "Hebrews" denotes an *indigenous, autochthonous* population (Gourevitch 1952:12; Horon 1966a:145; 1970:56-60; 1976b:217; 2000:157-159).

This element of Horon's geo-historiography utterly negates the accepted Biblical image of the Hebrews as wanderers. Hebrew tales of passage (such as the migration of the household of Abraham from Mesopotamia to Canaan or the Exodus from Egypt) are all myths, Horon says; and although they reflect certain historical reality, Biblical narratives cannot be treated as trustworthy sources (Horon 1966a:128-130; 2000:140-141)<sup>107</sup>. The central fact of Hebrew history for Horon is that "the Hebrew nation formed in its *own* land, whose backbone is Canaan; yet this is a complex and mixed nation by the very nature of its consolidation; it possesses local elements, and the rest came from all directions" (Horon 1966a:135; 2000:147, emphasis mine). The *soil* remains the crucial element of Hebrew ethnogenesis: though the proto-Hebrews maintained cultural and economic ties with other areas of western Asia and northern Africa, and migrated to and fro, Horon insists that the assimilatory power of the Land

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<sup>107</sup> See the next section for a more exhaustive discussion of Horon's approach to the question of the Bible's "usefulness" as a historical source.



### 3.4. Horon's account of Hebrew antiquity

Having introduced and scrutinized Horon's theoretical framework, we can now move on to his actual historiographical discourse, which grounds the Young Hebrews' political ideology in a uniquely elaborate vision of the past. The following review makes no claim of doing full justice to Horon's rich description of ancient Hebrew history, nor does it pass judgment on the scholarly "validity" of his findings; my central aim is to throw light on the main *ideological* positions and statements that are interspersed throughout his writings. For the present chapter I will utilize mostly Horon's later and more developed works (1960s-1970s), posthumously brought together and published as *Kedem vaerev*, but will also make reference to the 1930s *On History* series, helping to trace the transformations in Horon's historiography. Other works will be referenced more occasionally, insofar as they contribute new insights to the main body of Horon's writing.

Keeping in mind that non-impartiality does not preclude scholarly accuracy, as discussed in chapter 2, we should nevertheless remember that engaged scholarship often seeks to shatter contemporary political myths. And indeed, Horon admitted more than once (Horon 1965a:97, 98; 1976c:211; 2000:34, 43, 345) that his purpose was to facilitate the Hebrew national consolidation *here and now* by undoing the Jewish-Zionist historiography, as the following passage demonstrates:

The [ancient] Hebrew society was not born of the "slaves" which "we were in Egypt", but from a long chain of free generations in the Land of Kedem. The Bible's late editors were disinterested in this period of glory [lived] by the Hebrew "pagans" in their Land and universe; its memory could only hamper the secluding Judaism (Horon 1974:132; 1976b:239-240).

However, not all hope is lost:

[The Bible's] final editors, moved by a spirit of Judaism which was henceforth to be monotheistic and exclusivist, never entirely managed to eliminate... traces of Hebrew paganism. However, they succeeded in depriving Canaan of its Semitic parentage – for reasons which have little in common with ethnography, but everything to do with theology (Horon 1967:39)<sup>108</sup>.

This "Semitic parentage" is the Holy Grail sought after by Horon. His main methodological assumption, clearly inspired by positivism, is that by removing the layers of later legendary-ideological accretions to ancient Hebrew folklore one can reveal the "true" reality behind the ancient myths. Horon therefore concludes that the ancient Hebrew tales, even if corrupted beyond repair by the Jewish editors of the Biblical source material, *do reflect some concrete historical truth*:

In order to reach the source of the ancient myth we must dig up the layers of additions, adornments, and commentaries, amassed during the ages...; we must concentrate on [the "remains" which preceded Judaism] if we want to uncover some reality under the strata of mythology (Horon 2000:247, 253)<sup>109</sup>.

In tracing the sources of the socio-cultural reality encoded in the Hebrew beliefs, symbols, and archetypes, Horon utilizes his profound knowledge of the history, archaeology, and, above all, linguistics of the ancient Near East. Competent in Libyan/Berber, old Egyptian, ancient Hebrew, and other Eastern-Semitic languages, and acquainted throughout with the Ugaritic epic literature, Horon produces an etymological-historical analysis of the onomastics of the Land of Kedem, tying the emergence and migration of symbols, mythical motifs, and names to pre-historical or historical events, which he then locates in a wide geo-cultural context.

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<sup>108</sup> For other declarations to a similar effect, see: Horon 1965a:111; 1966a:135; 1974:123; 1976b:234; 2000:53-54, 146, 303.

<sup>109</sup> See also: Horon 1976b:225; 2000:217, 224, 322.

Krinka Vidaković Petrov (1989) explains that oral folk traditions tend to develop in time into sophisticated literary forms; that is, an initially chaotic legendary material undergoes standardization to emerge as written epopees. In his study Horon attempts to trace the process backwards, uncovering the oral culture preceding the written one canonized in the Ugarit epics and the Bible. His enquiry consists of two central elements: deciphering the ancient Hebrew myths and cultural codes on the one hand, and proposing on the basis of his findings an alternative historical narrative for the rise and development of the ancient Hebrew culture and nation on the other. This narrative is organized into general repetitive cycles of rise and fall, or into cyclical transmutation of a "golden age" into an "age of demise" and then again into an "age of renaissance", quite in accordance with the nationalist system of periodization.

As explained above, the key idea in Horon's historiography is the Hebrews' *indigenusness* to the Land of Kedem. Three elements are involved in the making of the Hebrew *umma*: territory, language, and religious belief, all of them native to the Land. Canaan is the core of the Hebrew domain, which is in conformity with traditional Jewish historiography; yet, by insisting on the complete synonymy between the linguistic terms "Hebrew" and "Western-Semitic", Horon pictures the Hebrews as more widespread than is usually accepted by the latter:

Western-Semitic is nothing but Hebrew...; the whole [Western-Semitic linguistic] family spread only on the western territories of the Land of Kedem, with its eastern frontier reaching the Euphrates mid-stream...; [the Western-Semitic group] is nothing but the **Hebrew** tongue in its ancient form: the Canaan language and related dialects (Horon 1966c:170; 1974:124; 2000:129, 297).

Horon also notes that the linguistic label "Semito-Hamitic" (to which the Western-Semitic group of languages belongs) is a misnomer, since it draws on mythological

sources and suggests the existence of two different branches within a single family of languages. Actually, he states, no more substantial differences exist between "Hamitic" and "Semitic" languages than between languages within these two "branches" (Horon 1966c:169-170; 2000:127-128).

So, while the Western Riverland was entirely Hebrew, Eastern-Semitic languages – related to Hebrew, but not identical with it – were spoken in the Eastern Riverland. Here Horon describes the Hebrews as primarily a linguistic community, despite his insistence on the language's secondary role in ethnogenesis. This, however, allows him to attack another aspect of Jewish historiography: namely, limiting the Hebrews to the "twelve tribes" of Jacob's progeny. The clans that formed the Israelite tribal union, Horon states (1966a:128; 2000:140, 158), were kith and kin to other Hebrew-speaking pagans, who shared with them the same land and culture:

The Hebrew nation [*umma*] included not only the Sons of Israel but all the "Sons of *Ever*", dwellers of the Land of Kedem who spoke Western-Semitic dialects similar to the tongue of Canaan...; the Amalekite, the Midianite, the Ishmaelite, etc., are all sons of *Ever*... the sons of Canaan were Hebrews to all intents and purposes<sup>110</sup>.

Horon claims in consequence (Alraïd 1931b:4; 1931e) that various group-titles one encounters in reference to the inhabitants of Canaan (like the "seven Canaanite nations") do not denote ethnic identity, but rather a political entity or a social class. This way Horon undoes another idea underpinning certain strands of Jewish historiography: namely that the terms "Hebrews", "Jews", and "Israelites" were synonymous. Horon regards this as a terminological abuse, since he strictly

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<sup>110</sup> See also: Alraïd 1931c:9; 1931d; 1931e:6; Horon 1966c:180; 1974:132; 1976b:239; 2000:136, 156-158, 296-302. The sweeping identification of Hebrews and Canaanites is opposed to by other scholars (Raine 1996:5-6, 9, 10).

distinguishes between "Hebrews" as an ethnonym, "Canaan" as a toponym, and "Israelites" as a political term that signified complex and fluid tribal coalition. As for "Jews", this was for Horon an anachronistic phrase, wholly irrelevant to early Biblical times.

While the Land of Kedem experienced invasions and migrations, Horon asserts that the incoming elements did not supplant or destroy the existing ones, but joined with them to enrich the local ethno-cultural tapestry. Of particular significance were the several long-term migratory waves from North Africa that were assimilated into the Hebrew ethno-cultural space, but also brought with them their own lingering influences (to prove this point Horon mentions the dissemination of totem adoration or the disappearance of pig remains from the Land of Kedem after the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE) (Alraïd 1931d:5; AGH 1952b:924; 1953a:339-340; Horon 1974:116, 122; 1976b:225-226; 2000:179-180, 246-256, 264, 280, 300). Ethno-cultural continuity was never broken in the Land: unity of territory, language, and faith prevailed on the stage of the ancient Hebrew drama over its *longue durée*, as unveiled by Horon.

Insisting that any sacral content springs from a material source, Horon argued that the Hebrew totems and deities (as well as the place-names honouring them, dispersed throughout the Land of Kedem) originally represented astronomic-geographic elements and retained an onomastic connection with them even after their transformation into cult entities independent of their origins. The ancient Hebrews, he says, perceived their cosmic order as pervaded by various dichotomies of both geographical and religious significance, such as east/west, sun/moon, land/sky, sea/land, day/night, morning/evening, "red"/"white", bull/sheep, dog/falcon, etc. Every Canaanite god was associated with some of these dualist sets, by name,

location, or activity (Horon 2000:182-206). For instance, Baal was the god of the sky-waters, and was therefore identified with "high" geographical elements: sky, clouds, mountains, etc., while his "low" counterpart was the sea-abyss monster Leviathan (Horon 2000:222). A "red/white" duality, which we have already encountered, is observed, according to Horon, in the myth of Jacob, who marries into the family of Laban ("white"), while his brother Esau becomes the "red" Edomites' progenitor (Horon 2000:224). A "sun/moon" duality persists until today, Horon writes, in the toponyms Beit-Shemesh ("House of Sun") and Beit-Yerah or Jericho, both derived from the root signifying "Moon" (Horon 2000:186). However, the most intriguing (and politically significant) etymological observation by Horon (2000:222) is that the theophoric place-and-tribe-name "Judea" honours not the Israelite-Jewish YHWH (*Yehuda*) but the Canaanite Baal, otherwise known as HaD/HaDaD (*Yehuda*)<sup>111</sup>. In the ancients' time-concept, these dualities represented recurrent seasonal changes; therefore, Horon concludes, the Canaanite sacral calendar reflected the local agricultural cycle (Horon 1967:45; 2000:186, 190, 223, 249, 293-295). And what can be more indigenous than that?

Some pre-historical or early historical cataclysms found their way into the Bible, Horon says, but most often in a distorted shape or misattributed geographically. For example, he explains that the tale of "the plagues of Egypt" is a memory of the ecological, and in consequence social, catastrophe that befell Egypt in the closing centuries of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, when the Land of Kedem and North Africa separated into distinct environmental zones (see section 3.3); the deluge myth is a

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<sup>111</sup> Gesenius (1906:212, 397) does not support this contention. For other examples of wordplays symbolizing geo-cosmic elements that were assimilated into the ancient Hebrews' beliefs, see: Grosby 2007:108-109.

reworking of a dim memory of local floods, caused by the glacial recession at the end of the last ice-age (the Land of Kedem remained untouched by those floods, Horon remarks, so the myth has foreign origins); finally, the Sodom and Gomorrah tale of cities destroyed by fire and earthquake is an import from the central Mediterranean basin, where volcanoes were active and therefore such events could take place. The positioning of those two legendary cities in the Dead Sea vicinity stems from a linguistic error, Horon asserts, since tribe- and place-names derived from the root עמ"ר/ר'ע"מ"ר (whence the name of Gomorrah originates) were present in the territory that today makes up Tunisia. This territory also abounded with salty lakes, hence the conflation with the Dead Sea (Horon 1966a:139; 1966b:124-125; 1966d:134; 2000:77, 151, 198-200).

These cataclysms, Horon continues, caused huge waves of migration from North Africa to the Land of Kedem, which imported memories of disaster, dressed in a legendary garb and incorporated into the local Canaanite mythology. The last among these numerous waves, according to Horon's calculations, occurred in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, giving rise to the "Exodus from Egypt" tale. Thus, some of the Hebrews' totemic forefathers, like Abraham or Moses, are the end-result of the fusion of North-African and Hebrew mythical motifs. Following Peter Burke (1989:104), who traces the transformation of historical or semi-historical figures into mythical archetypes by collective memory, we can suggest that Horon follows the same process not with persons but with proto-historical events. To sum up in Horon's own words (2000:203-204): "All those tales... testify to a movement of Libyan 'sea-peoples' through Egypt to Canaan... stressing the connection between this movement and a natural disaster... along the Mediterranean coast".

Horon dates the entry of the Land of Kedem into history roughly to 2500 BCE, when written sources appear in the Land, but notes that primeval state-like entities can be identified even earlier, when the technological advances of the Bronze Age facilitated communication between Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia. Shinar (a synonym to Eastern Riverland in Horon's terminology) witnessed the emergence of the royal Semitic city-states of Mari and Kish, joined later by (the non-Semitic) Sumer, and finally conquered between 2300 and 2200 BCE by Akkad, the first Semitic Mesopotamian super-power, in political and cultural aspects alike. Simultaneously, weakened by internal instability and internecine warfare in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, Egypt had to face ravaging bands of Canaanites (a memory of which, Horon suggests, was preserved in the recurrent Biblical motif of "descent" to Egypt by the forefathers and their progeny's "ascent" back to Canaan). In about 2000 BCE, however, Egypt managed to seal its border against the Hebrew intruders, and in consequence, Horon states, the Hebrews directed their attention eastwards (Horon 1966d:133-138; 1974:116, 123-127; 2000:160-181, 207-213, 275-279). In the 20<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE Hebrew-speaking Canaanite tribes known as *Amurru/Mar-tu* (Amorites)<sup>112</sup> began penetrating the Eastern Riverland in consecutive waves of migration and conquest. Those tribes founded upon the ruins of Akkad the first kingdom of Babylon, which was more Western-Semitic than Mesopotamian in its socio-cultural build-up, says Horon. The Hebrew-Canaanite culture was brought to the eastern part of the Land of Kedem, enabling livelier and easier communication between Eastern and Western Riverlands and enhancing their unity (Horon 1974:127-129; 1976b:234-238; 2000:173-175, 273, 277-283).

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<sup>112</sup> Compare Gesenius 1906:57; Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:67-68.

The early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE opened an age of deep reform and reconstitution in the social, cultural, and political spheres. After several centuries of chaos the Land of Kedem entered a period that Horon describes as an age of prosperity: commerce, crafts, and metallurgy flourished, making travel simpler and, in consequence, cultural exchange became swifter and more long-term. In this first Hebrew "golden age", Horon claims, cohesive centralizing processes, in step with environmental determinism, were set in motion in the Land of Kedem (Alraïd 1931c:8-9; Horon 1974:129-131; 1976b:237-238; 2000:277-278, 280-283). The decentralized tribal system was little by little replaced with proto-feudalism: fortified cities were built, led by chieftains and princes who wielded their power more effectively, thanks to the introduction of hereditary kingship over a wider realm than that of the older tribal chiefs (this period is mentioned in the Bible as the "age of the Elders", which, Horon states, was much longer than the impression one gets from the Biblical text, "bowdlerized" by Jewish editors). Especially important for Horon's argument is his observation that in these new conditions a proto-political identity began forming among the city-dwellers. It was expressed, Horon asserts, more vividly along the Canaanite coastline, and this gave rise to a socio-cultural differentiation between the coast and the hinterland, whose dwellers had preserved their tribal system more strongly. The Hebrews' social structure became more rooted and complex, facilitating the emergence of a single cultural-religious identity despite the political disunity. The Canaanite tribes and classes organized around a vitalistic agricultural cult of a legendary eponymous ancestor figure (usually an animalistic totem) that augmented their sentiment of territorial belonging.

This development resulted in the reshaping of the tribal coalition, a key social tool, which reflected both the ethno-cultural unity and the political diversity in the Land. Horon holds the view that the earlier egalitarian and loose coalitions were replaced by the more hierarchical and centralized alliances of the Hebrew tribes. Tribal unions and confederations abounded in the Land of Kedem, sharing similar language and mythological motifs, and facilitating the emergence of early Canaanite high culture. In approximately 1750 BCE, Horon says, the first phonetic alphabet was worked out in the Canaanite city of Byblos (modern-day Gebal in Lebanon), from where it



Figure 11: The Canaanite alphabet as the progenitor of other alphabets (source: Horon 1970:79).

gradually spread all over the "Old World", giving rise to such alphabets as the Aramaic, the Libyan, the Greek, the Etruscan, the Latin, and the Iberian (fig. 11). The first known works of Hebrew-Canaanite literature are dated by Horon to the same period (AGH 1950b:608, 615-616; 1953b:141-142; Horon 1966a:131-147; 1974:127-129; 1976b:234-237;

2000:143-162, 267-275, 283-302). Biblical literature is described by Horon as a continuation of earlier Canaanite literary legacy, meaning that it *did not* represent an independent tradition<sup>113</sup>. Predating the Bible, the Canaanite literary tradition was not "tainted" by monotheistic "bias" and is therefore a more reliable source, especially for

<sup>113</sup> Hence the magnitude of the Canaanite epos to Horon's study, which, though discovered in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE ruins of Ugarit, he says is of a more southern and earlier origin.

philological comparative analysis, which is the kernel of Horon's method (Horon 1974:130; 1976b:237)<sup>114</sup>.

The Hebrews' growth in might, Horon continues, tempted the Canaanite chieftains to invade Egypt once again around 1730 BCE. The new rulers became known in Egyptian as KHQAW KHSAT (חִקְאוּ חִסְאֵת), which is explained by Horon as a corruption of the Hebrew phrase "lawgivers of a hilly and forested country" (implying Canaan)<sup>115</sup>. This, in turn, was corrupted by the Greeks as *Hyksos*, the same Hyksos who ruled Egypt for two centuries. They were expelled in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century BCE by the 18<sup>th</sup>-Dynasty Pharaohs, who chased the Hebrew invaders back to their own land, laid siege to their cities, and eventually subjugated Canaan for the next few hundred years. This leads Horon to conclude that from the middle to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE Egypt and Canaan constituted a single polity (as much as the term is applicable to ancient history), a development resulting in a significant expansion of the Hebrew cultural space at the cost of the Hebrews' independence. This fact was edited out of the Bible, Horon continues, since it undermined the eschatological value of the myth of Exodus and release from "Egyptian bondage" (Alraïd 1931f:7; 1931g:7; Horon 1974:131; 1976b:238-239; 2000:158, 255-256, 274, 309-310, 317-318).

Horon points out that at the same time a process of even greater significance took place. Faithful to the principle of the Hebrew-Mediterranean cultural bond, Horon

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<sup>114</sup> This view is shared by the Biblical scholar Umberto Cassuto (1958:20), certainly not a "Young Hebrew".

<sup>115</sup> This etymology is supported by the existence of a wave-shaped Egyptian hieroglyph, which, as Horon assumes, stood for "the land of the Hebrews" (see illustration in: Horon 2000:213).

argues against the Hebrews' standard Biblical image as nomads or city-dwellers, picturing them instead as mighty seafarers, with the Hebrews' most important naval base located in Tyre. The Hebrews, he continues, embarked on their sea voyages in the 20<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, gradually disseminating their culture all over the Mediterranean, reaching as far as the Apennine and the Iberian Peninsulas, and perhaps beyond. One of the foci of the spread of Hebrew culture was the Aegean archipelago, Horon states, where the Hebrews became known as Phoenicians. In order to demonstrate the Canaanite/Hebrew/Phoenician-Greek connection, Horon performs a backward analysis of Greek mythology, similar to his deconstruction of the Hebrew myths. This analysis includes a pronounced ideological accent, as Horon accuses contemporary Greek studies of exaggerated philhellenism, picturing the ancient Greek culture as contained in itself (and – in effect – of "phoenicophobia", which is implied to be similar to the Jewish Bible editors' abhorrence of anything "pagan"). Horon believes that such attitude reflects anti-Semitic prejudices, whereby it would not be possible for Hebrew-speakers to play any role in the shaping of the supposed cradle of Western civilization (though he duly warns against the opposite extreme as well [Horon 1967:60-61; 2000:312]). Horon insists that Greek mythology testifies to a different reality, one where Hebrew and Greek commercial and cultural contacts were quite extensive. Horon provides plenty of evidence for this thesis: he cites common totemic sources for deities (like the bull cult), a common linguistic heritage (the Cretan Linear A script possibly being Hebrew in origin, in his opinion), and migrating toponyms and ethnonyms (Horon points to the etymological kinship between the Hebrew *Yawan* ["Greece"] and Greek *Ionia*<sup>116</sup>, the Hebrew "sons of Dan" and the

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<sup>116</sup> Supported by Gesenius (1906:402).

Greek Danaans<sup>117</sup>, the legendary Canaanite king Caret as the eponym for Crete<sup>118</sup>, etc.). Horon dates the beginning of the Hebrew colonization of the Greek islands roughly to the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, that is, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The Hyksos' demise in the 16<sup>th</sup> century BCE sent waves of Hebrew-speaking refugees all over the Aegean Sea and even to mainland Greece; and it is this migration that left the deepest mark upon Greek culture, Horon claims, rejecting the possibility of a Greek borrowing from Canaanite culture as the result of the Greeks' own voyages to the Eastern Mediterranean (Alraïd 1931a; AGH 1950c:731; Horon 1967; 1974:131-132; 1976b: 239; 1976c; 2000:185, 302-312).

The most intriguing and daring aspect of Horon's analysis of Greco-Hebrew contacts is the cosmological symbolism he reconstructs from Greek Hebrew-inspired myths. Analysing the tale of Cadmos and Europa, he identifies these two names as personifications of a typically Canaanite duality of east/west, taken from the Hebrew terms *Kedem* ("east") and its opposite *Erev* ("west"/"evening"). Thus, "the myth of Cadmos and Europa [is a myth] of an Eastern brother seeking a sister who is the very embodiment of the West" (Horon 1967:59); its Canaanite counterpart is the myth of Shahar and Shalem, the morning and the evening star, respectively (Horon 1976c:214). Implied here is the *Hebrew* etymology of *both* "Europe" and "Maghreb" (also of Algarve in Portugal), two adjacent areas lying to the *west* of the Land of Kedem. In this way, Horon argues, modern toponymy and cartography preserve the ancient Canaanite cosmic-mythical dichotomy of east and west, sunrise and sunset. These are not the only examples of what Horon regards as the traces of Hebrew

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<sup>117</sup> This is challenged by Rainey (1996:11).

<sup>118</sup> Compare Gesenius 1906:504-505.

toponymy that survived the trials of the ages; he mentions Ibiza (originally *I-bosem*, "Perfume Island"); Iberia and Eire (whose origins Horon traces to *Ever*, though he also acknowledges a possible Berber influence); Cadiz and Agadir (both derived from the Hebrew *Gader*, [border-]"Fence") (AGH 1950b:607-610; Horon 1976b:244, 245; 2000:152, 200, 311, 326, 382)<sup>119</sup>.

The centuries after the Hyksos' downfall (approximately 1500-1200 BCE) are described by Horon as another "era of darkness" in Hebrew history, a "Middle Ages" period after the 20<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE "golden age". The Land of Kedem was divided between two powerful foreign peoples: Egyptians from the south and Indo-Europeans (mainly Hittites) from the north. Whereas outside the Land, Horon stresses, the Indo-European ethno-cultural element survived in the long term (hence the huge Iranian and Kurdish populations in western Asia), within the Land the Indo-Europeans, less numerous and affected by environmental determinism, were assimilated into the Hebrew population (Horon 2000:317). In 1200 BCE an extremely destructive invasion of another Indo-European people, the Philistines, laid the cities of Canaan waste but also weakened Egypt (already undergoing a severe internal crisis) and the Hittites.

This experience of foreign occupation lay, Horon claims, at the roots of the Hebrew *ummic* identity, which was formed by the end of the second millennium BCE. The transformation from a tribal to a city-state organizational framework, initiated a few centuries earlier, bore fruit in the Hebrew monarchy of Saul, who was capable of uniting and leading the emerging nation in a liberation struggle against the foreign

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<sup>119</sup> For more such etymologies, see: AGH 1950b:610-612. Gesenius (1906:787-788) confirms the linguistic connection between "west" and "evening" in Hebrew, but is wary of bolder conclusions.

powers. Thus, Horon stresses, a *state ideology* appeared for the first time in Canaan, whose unifying symbol became YHWH, worshipped as the divine patron of the royal house. Early in his career Horon already gave weight to this period of Hebrew history, claiming that the foreign occupation taught the Hebrews the art of political organization and stimulated their national consciousness: "in its Israelite form the Hebrew people becomes a **nation** [*natziya*]" (Alraïd 1931i:6)<sup>120</sup>.

It is important to note here two of Horon's contentions that stand out due to their explicit anti-Jewish/Zionist bent. One, that the Israeli tribal confederation, which arose in about 1250 BCE, was merely the latest and best-known among the Hebrew tribal leagues; therefore, its emergence was not the *beginning* of a new historical stage characterized by a Jehowist statehood but the *pinnacle* of a millennium-long socio-cultural development deeply immersed in paganism. Two, that the Israeli confederation, though united around the YHWH cult, was far from being "Jewish" in any way. YHWH, Horon clarifies, was back then no more than a tribal deity, a regionally-identified member of the Canaanite pantheon, son of the supreme god El and brother to Baal and Asher<sup>121</sup>. Though the prophets spoke in the name of YHWH, their teachings did not resemble any monotheism, and the political formation "Israel", whose participants were not exactly the legendary "twelve tribes", as evidenced in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), retains a Canaanite theophoric component. "Israel",

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<sup>120</sup> Despite the importance of this theme for Horon's historiography, its later espousal (Horon 1976b:240-260; 2000:313-345) is noticeably shorter than the chapters preceding it, which analysed the processes that led up to the Hebrew nation-formation. Probably, he passed away before he had the time to develop the subject in greater detail. A pity.

<sup>121</sup> Accordingly, Horon calls the dispute between Elijah and the Baal priests (1 Kings 18) "a sorcerers' quarrel" (Horon 1976b:247; 2000:329).

Horon points further, is a corruption of *Asher-El*, Asher and El being Canaanite deities, and therefore the Jewish etymology of "Israel" as a name for the patriarch Jacob is an anachronism (Horon 1976b:247; 2000:195, 220, 267, 319-320, 328-329). The Israelite confederation embodied in Horon's eyes a vitalistic pagan culture, exhibiting "a giant vital power, a desire for expansion in almost all spheres of human activity, an extreme individualism" (Alraïd 1931f:7).



Figure 12: The peak of the Hebrew power. Above: the Hebrew kingdom in the age of David and Solomon; below: the dissemination of its culture in the ancient world (source: Horon 1970:75).

This age, which we might term the second Hebrew "golden age", is associated above all with the names of David and Solomon (11<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE). Under David's leadership (Horon suggests that *David* is a title meaning "warlord", rather than a name<sup>122</sup>) the Israelite confederation rose to the status of a regional superpower. David's son and heir, Solomon (whose name Horon contrasts to the name of his father by tracing it to the root של"מ, which suggests a "peaceful" inclination; for Horon

both names are thus more archetypal than strictly historical), preferred diplomacy and

commerce to war-politics. He extended the regional system of tribal alliances through intermarriage, sent his ships all over the Mediterranean and beyond, and established Hebrew coastal colonies and outposts (Alraïd 1932b; Horon 1976b:240-245;

<sup>122</sup> Gesenius (1906:187) traces the name to the ancient Israelite sun-god Dodo, of whom Horon makes no mention at all.

2000:221, 313-327, 364). The Hebrews, who now possessed a highly advanced political organization, became the predominant cultural element in the Mediterranean region (fig. 12). Describing this stage at the outset of his career, Horon did not attempt to moderate his enthusiasm:

The rule of the first Davidides spread over one of antiquity's greatest empires; it was possibly the first colonial empire ever to exist upon Earth... It was a logical conclusion... of Hebrew evolution... Two millennia have passed before we witness in the Arab expansion and in the great American discoveries overseas enterprises whose verve matches Canaan's expansion (Alraïd 1932b:4).

The post-Solomonic age marked, according to Horon, yet another period of decline, when the Israelites split into two rival kingdoms and the Hebrew city-states saw internecine warfare and palace revolts that expelled more refugees from native Canaan to its Mediterranean colonies. One of them, "the New Fortress" (קרחדשת), established on the northern coast of Africa, was destined to play a major role in the later stages of Hebrew history. Known by its Greek corruption of *Carthage*, Horon writes, it was founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE by Tyrean exiles. A dual balance of power emerged in the Mediterranean basin, with the eastern focus of power centred on Jerusalem and Samaria (capitals of the kingdoms of Judea and Israel, respectively) and the western gradually organizing itself around Carthage. Carthage's allegiance to Tyre, Horon adds, quickly became nominal, making it a major Hebrew cultural and political power. Its influence radiated all over the western Mediterranean, from the Maghreb to the Iberian Peninsula, where in time a Carthaginian colony, "the new New Fortress" (קרחדשת חדשת), grew into the city of Cartagena.

After a phase of relative stabilization and prosperity under kings Omri and Jehoash, Canaan irretrievably lost its geopolitical pre-eminence to newer and stronger

formations, like Assyria. Simultaneously, Horon observes, a spiritual transformation started in the Land of Kedem, which reflected the Hebrews' exhaustion from upholding the mighty empire and their discontent with the imperialist ideology promulgated by the Canaanite ruling houses. The YHWH prophets channelled this sentiment into pacifist agitation, abandoning the image of YHWH as *Adonai tzvaot*, "Lord of hosts", and turning what previously had been Jehowist state-ideology into a subversive rallying cry. Though Isaiah, Horon claims, reverted to supporting the royal policy, the road was thrown open to the crystallization of a wholly new form of YHWH cult, whose effects would be lethal for the Hebrew national identity: "a political world, founded on allegiance to the material homeland, became cosmopolitan, yearning for a 'celestial Jerusalem'", Horon solemnly states (1970:82)<sup>123</sup>.

In 740 BCE Assyria launched a military expedition against Canaan, forcing the Hebrew kingdoms into the status of vassal states. Shortly afterwards, in 722 BCE, the occupier deposed the last king of Israel and exiled the elites of Samaria (and *not* the whole ten tribes, as recorded in the Jewish tradition; those, according to Horon, remained in place and continued to profess their local pagan cults). The last remnant of Hebrew independence was destroyed in 586 BCE, when the kingdom of Babylon conquered Jerusalem. Thus, Horon concludes, ended the period of the Hebrew glory in the Land of Kedem, and the balance was finally tipped in favour of Carthage, which emerged as the sole remaining champion of Hebrew culture and power (Alraïd

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<sup>123</sup> The Biblical scholar Norman Gottwald argues somewhat similarly that the YHWH cult began as an egalitarian protest movement against the Canaanite hierarchy (Knapp 1989:126-127).

1931i; 1932b; AGH 1950a:606; 1950b:611-613; 1953a:346; Horon 1976b:245-248;  
2000:327-332).

### 3.5. From nation to denomination: the emergence of Judaic monotheism

Tracing the evolution of the YHWH cult from pagan-territorial to monotheistic-universal, Horon ties it to the transformation of the Hebrew Levi tribe into a class of priests. His claim is that the mythical Levitic historiography, though Hebrew-pagan in origin, was absorbed into the nascent monotheistic Judaism as its core paradigm, subsuming the surviving Hebrew commemorative narratives, of which only traces are preserved in the Bible. Conceived this way, Horon sees Judaism's dialectical role *both* as a negation *and* continuation of Canaanite legacy: "[Judaism] is not a continuation of the ancient Hebrew culture but its negation; ...Judaism... emerged from the Hebrew prophecy, but eventually turned hostile to the Land of the Hebrews and its heritage" (Horon 1976b:250; 2000:334), and yet "...Judaism, to the extent that it preserved and transmitted the knowledge of the [Hebrew] language... made a cardinal contribution to the Hebrew national revival; ...Judaism, as shaped by the Levitic authors, remains... a late version of Canaan's most ancient traditions" (Horon 1965a:107; 2000:50, 249). Accordingly, Judaism emerged from the Canaanite legacy that it subsequently repudiated but, after being "purged" of monotheistic additions, can assist in the pursuit of the Hebrew pre-Judaic foundational myth.

The central motive of Levitic historiography is the Exodus from Egypt, a tale known in Canaan before Judaism but deformed in the Bible into a legend of wonders, Horon argues. Scrutiny of the surviving pre-Jewish elements in the Exodus tale and an etymological analysis help Horon in establishing the Levites' origin. The "sons of Levi", he tells his reader, arrived in the Land of Kedem during the latest phase of migration from North Africa (circa 2500-2200 BCE) as a strong and warlike tribe. The name *Levi* (from the root לוי"ה) points, according to Horon, to the tribe's

eponymous sacral totem: the Leviathan, a sea-monster, probably a huge lizard-like dragon<sup>124</sup>. The same root (though with local variations) also discloses the Levites' original domain: the territory stretching between Egypt and the Maghreb along the Mediterranean coast, otherwise Libya. Horon explains that the literal meaning of the root, common both to Hebrew and Libyan/Berber, is "water" (Horon 1966a:147-152; 1974:120-121; 1976b:231-234; 2000:241-246); hence, water motifs occupy a central place in Levitic mythology, to name Moses' deeds alone: saved from water in infancy, commands the Red Sea, produces water by hitting a rock, etc. "It is no wonder", Horon notes, "that in Biblical myths Moses and Aharon the Levites wielded power over water from the rock, the Red Sea, and all that lives in the Great River: for they are descended from the monster ruling over waters of sea and abyss" (Horon 1974:121; 1976b:232)<sup>125</sup>.

The figure of Moses is central to the Levites owing to his position as their legendary forefather. Horon emphasizes that the Biblical Mosaic legends make it close to impossible to distinguish between mythical additions and historical traces. What is nevertheless certain for him is that the name "Moses" belongs *etymologically* to northern Canaan, where an Ugaritic tale tells how Baal impregnated a cow by the lake of Hula, who gave birth to a magical calf called Mush. This tale, Horon adds, is one

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<sup>124</sup> And not a whale, the present Hebrew meaning of the word *leviathan*. To the same totem Horon ascribes the legendary figure of Lot, Abraham's brother, as a personification of *Shalyat*, an Ugaritic synonym to *Leviathan* (Horon 2000:200). Gesenius (1906:532) states that the root and the meaning of *Levi* are "dubious".

<sup>125</sup> Another North African water-born (though not Levitic) legendary forefather is Joseph, whose name, Horon argues, is meaningless in Hebrew, but its original form (*w-a-sif*) denotes in Libyan/Berber "of the river" (Horon 1966a:151; 2000:179-180, 363). Gesenius (1906:415) nonetheless sticks to the Hebrew interpretation of the name, which regards it as theophoric (*Joseph* being a shortened form of *Jehoseph*) Horon (2000:363) calls this interpretation "wordplay".

of the tales reflecting cosmological dichotomies reworked by the Canaanites into mythological motifs: the linguistic roots used in this tale (מ"ש versus ח"ל) denote the contrast of evening/west and morning/east, respectively<sup>126</sup>. *Narratively* though, Moses comes from North Africa: Horon asserts that the Levitic-Libyan tale of his deeds reuses some Egyptian folk motifs, while its place of action leaves no doubt as to its origins. Horon assumes that at a certain point, when the Levites took root in the Land of Kedem, there occurred a fusion of these traditions, or rather a fusion of an African narrative with Canaanite onomastics. The Levites' presence became eventually so conspicuous in the Land that Canaan became known in Egypt as רתן (RTN; Horon explains that the Egyptians substituted R for L in their tongue; the name was therefore a corruption of the Hebrew לותן [LWTN], which pointed to the Levitic-Libyan source). To distinguish Canaan-LWTN from the rest of the Land, the lands to the east of the River Jordan began to be referred to as *Kedem*. This way, the linguistic distinction of LWTN/Leviathan from Kedem once again recreated the cosmic-legendary duality of west versus east. Horon points his reader's attention to a remainder of this toponymy hidden in the Litani River in Lebanon; a name that he believes discloses "Leviathanic" origins.

As argued by Horon, the Levites were initially an ordinary tribe who settled all over the Land and adopted the Canaanite agricultural cults *without* joining the Israelite tribal confederation. Subsequent political upheavals deprived the Levites of most of

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<sup>126</sup> This means that the root מ"ש (Mush) in the Canaanite language is synonymous with the root ע"ב (erev), and the root ח"ל (Hula) is similar to קד"מ (*kedem*). Clans, deities, and legendary figures whose names are derived from these two roots (not only Moses) appear throughout the Bible and extra-Biblical literature as well, according to Horon (1966a:148; 1967:58; 1974:120; 1976b:231; 2000:186-187, 190).

their territorial possessions, which resulted in a growing attachment to the tale of their ancestors' travels throughout the desert, now infused with Canaanite sacral motifs. Little by little the Levites became professional sorcerers and experts in witchcraft, mutating from a *tribe* to a *caste*. The event that sealed their fate, Horon tells us, was another invasion from North Africa, this time by the tribe of Ephraim, led by the legendary Joshua, son of Nun. Horon emphasises that the Levitic and Ephraimic migrations to the Land of Kedem were separate and unrelated developments, despite the Biblical argument to the contrary, and proves Ephraim's putative African origin etymologically: the Berber word *Afri*, Horon explains, denotes "cave-dwellers", hence *Africa* in Latin and *Ephraim* in Hebrew (Horon 1966d:125; 1974:122; 1976b:233-234; 2000:108, 232, 257, 261)<sup>127</sup>. Joshua, like Moses, is for Horon a non-historical figure, whose accomplishments put him somewhere between a mighty sorcerer and a warrior-angel (Horon 2000:265-267)<sup>128</sup>. The Ephraimides brought from Libya the cult of the Sinai-god (which, Horon remarks, originates in Maghreb and not in the misidentified peninsula adjacent to Egypt) that in Canaan was absorbed into the cult of YHWH<sup>129</sup>. When the Israelites adopted YHWH as the patron of their confederation and kingdom the Levites became identified with its cult and began rising in prominence as a hereditary professional priestly class. Furthermore, Horon says, when YHWH became the unifying symbol of the masses discontented with Davidic imperial politics, the prophets associated with the Levites became their tribunes,

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<sup>127</sup> Koehler & Baumgartner (1994:80) connect the etymology of Ephraim to "pasture land".

<sup>128</sup> Studies published after Horon's passing corroborated that the figure of Joshua was most probably a concoction from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, whose purpose was to lend historical credibility to the religious reforms of King Josiah (Piterberg 2008:267-273).

<sup>129</sup> Another African tradition imported by "sons of Ephraim" was the circumcision, Horon says.

undercutting subsequent attempts to restore the empire. The road was open, Horon concludes, to impose Levitic historiography upon the Hebrews. This process reached its finale after the destruction of the Hebrew statehood, when yesterday's lords of the Mediterranean yearned for a cohesive symbol to uphold their broken spirits (Horon 1966a:147-152; 1974:119-123; 1976b:230-234; 2000:185-187, 203, 241-267).

Next, Horon states, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Levitic paradigm mutated into Judaism. This happened when the Persian King Cyrus subdued Babylon in 538 BCE and emerged as the ruler of a vast empire, stretching over many lands and peoples. Its enormous territorial expanse (as compared to the kingdoms predating it), Horon notes, pushed Cyrus and his successors to seek a source of legitimacy other than serving as the supreme king-priest of the local deity, since the Persian Empire now encompassed numerous peoples, each with its own pantheon. To solve the problem of authority, the Persian Empire resorted to a previously unknown model of social relations: it replaced regional and tribal alliance-making with religious and social freedom conditioned upon political loyalty. The Persian kings particularly encouraged beliefs that sought "universal" abstract truths and were disinterested in pagan territorial theology and its intimate connection with tribal politics. In effect, Horon claims, the mental connection between the land and the deities identified with it, which lay at the base of "national outlook", was broken.

Persia in Horon's portrayal emerges as a precarious multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic empire, facilitating the emergence of a *communal-denominational outlook* and the transformation of territorial *ummas* into congregations whose faith can be practiced *universally*. "The Kingdom of Persia signifies the shift from territorial-ethnic societies to a wholly different organization, one that is religious-

confessional, where not the geographical location and the roots in the land constitute the decisive elements, but the ideology, the heavenly-ordained discipline of the spirit", Horon remarks (1976b:249; 2000:333) on the prevalent *zeitgeist*. New universal faiths and philosophical systems sprang all over the ancient world, supplanting "outdated" magical-natural cults and preaching worship of abstract omnipresent deities: Buddhism, Zarathustrianism, Pythagoreanism, Aristotelianism, Platonism, etc. The Persian Empire became the first *non-ummic* state in the ancient world, "a prototype for all that followed, up until the Ottoman Empire" (Horon 1976b:248; 2000:332).

The new conditions enabled the transformation of the YHWH cult, now detached from its Canaanite ground, into a monotheistic religion, with its own "holy scripture" and cosmological outlook. Horon emphasizes that Judaism and its community of believers (the first Jews) arose *not* in Canaan but in Babylonia, translating the Jerusalem elites' shock of exile into a messianic dream of return. However, when King Cyrus made the return possible, only few made their way back to Jerusalem, establishing in its environs an enclosed community of non-idolatrous YHWH worshippers, hostile to the local pagan population, with whom only a few decades beforehand they had shared culture, language, and faith. Canaan was thus transformed from a real homeland for the Hebrews into a "holy land" for the Jews, constituting mainly a spiritual point of reference (also for those who *actually* returned, whose centre of attachment and loyalty remained Persia). Under Ezra the Scribe's guidance the old Hebrew folktales pervaded by Levitic mythology were canonized as the Bible, though heavily reedited to adjust the legendary material to the anachronistic dogma of YHWH as the only supreme demiurge. The numerous monotheistic glosses and

interpolations within the Biblical text betray an allegiance to the above principle, though many polytheistic traces remain, mainly, according to Horon, due to the Jewish editors' linguistic ignorance (such as the "covenant of the pieces" [Genesis 15], which is concluded between Abraham and *both* YHWH and Asher [Horon 2000:195])<sup>130</sup>. Some of the material used by the Bible's editors was a "left-over" from previous attempts to adapt ancient legends to later conditions, such as the tale of Abram/Abraham (initially two distinct figures, according to Horon) that, as Horon argues, was rewritten during the age of Solomon to legitimize his policy.

Other editorial interventions by Jewish writers resulted in the fabrication of genealogical links between totemic "forefathers" and later historical heroes or groups, like the identification of Moses and Aharon as Levites, who also became "related" to Abraham and the house of David; the "incorporation" of the twelve mythical tribes into the Israelite tribal confederation and tracing their pedigree back to the "house of Jacob"; the composition almost from scratch of the Torah and Joshua books, which, as Horon observes, radically differ in style, language, and content from the much earlier Book of Judges; and, perhaps most importantly, the reworking of the Exodus myth to suit the needs of a monotheistic community returning to Canaan under Persian patronage and blessing. In Horon's uncompromising words (2000:248): "The mythology of the 'Exodus from Egypt' is not simply a re-rendering of semi-totemic myths from the distant past. This is a very particular 'reconstruction', a reconstruction made to disseminate a message; **an ideological tale**". The Exodus tale became in Judaism *an ideal type* for later events: "The Bible is full of schematic and some of the

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<sup>130</sup> Horon also took pains to undermine the Jewish-Biblical chronology by pointing to the Bible's inconsistency not only with the extra-Biblical historical material, but to contradictions *within* the Jewish version of the Bible as well (Horon 1976b:218-225; 2000:142, 253-256).

events narrated in it are presented as re-enactments of earlier ones", as noted by Burke (1989:103). Thus reconstructed, a historical analogy was drawn by the Jewish editors between the Exodus and the return from Babylon, suppressing the Hebrew commemorative narrative in favour of the emerging Jewish historiography (Horon 1966a:135; 1974:122; 1976b:218-220, 223, 233, 248-251; 2000:146-147, 217-224, 247-248, 252-256, 332-334, 364, 366). The new Jewish mythology not only disowned the Canaanite heritage upon which it was founded; based on non-national assumptions, it professed an outward hostility to the Hebrews' pagan past. And this hostility was easily transferred to the contemporary heirs of Canaanite polytheism; the Samaritans, for example.

Horon decries the disintegration of the *umma* and its replacement by a confessional community, dissenting from the standard historiographical opinion that the transition from polytheism to monotheism amounted to a progressive development. Echoing Herderian sentiments, he reflects melancholically on "how wrong are those who assume that the new religions and philosophical currents, which have prevailed among us since Ezra and among the Greeks since Plato, are more 'enlightened' than the ancients' beliefs" (Horon 2000:247). The truth is quite the opposite, he asserts. Judaism could only appear in an empire organized into a complex hierarchical structure of classes, castes, and religious communities ("churches"), discriminated and played off against each other by the ruling house, as the case was with the Persian Empire. In conditions such as these, the first Jewish communities could not but adopt a zealous and xenophobic outlook, exemplified in the activity of Ezra and his successor Nehemia. In the generations that followed, Horon adds, Jewish xenophobia was augmented by the Pharisee sect, the progenitors of Diaspora Rabbinic Judaism.



based in Sidon, remained a mighty force in the Mediterranean; the Hasmonean kingdom, though making Judaism its state-religion, was modelled after the Hellenic states, which meant that its cultural composition was syncretistic and tolerant on religious matters (and therefore despised by the Pharisees). This kingdom reinforced local patriotism, which, though only a weak reminder of the Hebrew glory of old, was nonetheless animated enough to confront the Roman Empire. The millennium starting with the Assyrian attack in 740 BCE and ending with the great anti-Roman rebellions in Judea in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE is described by Horon as the twilight of the Hebrew national culture. This period was characterized by ambiguity, he argues, since both elements of Hebrew nationalism and Jewish universalism partook in its shaping, though on an unequal footing. "[Those were] transitional stages and not an ending", Horon asserts (2000:339), when national and communal outlooks survived side by side for some time (Alraïd 1932a; Horon 1965a:112-113; 1976b:251-254; 2000:54-55, 334-341).

While Judaism was growing in might in the Hebrew east, Carthage, representing an older socio-cultural model that contrasted with the one introduced by the Persians, continued to carry the torch of Hebrew nationalism in the west<sup>131</sup>. Carthage's downfall in the last Punic War coincided with the emergence of the Hasmonean kingdom, which defied the Seleucids and checked the growing Roman might, thereby becoming a regional force. Cultural influence followed political power, Horon observes,

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<sup>131</sup> Horon does not specify whether Carthage possessed its own "national outlook". He merely asserts that "inasmuch as a Hebrew history persists, it is concentrated mainly in the Canaanite overseas, from Tyre and Sidon to Carthage" (Horon 2000:335). He does however juxtapose the frailty of the Persian Empire, which could not oppose Alexander of Macedon, to the vibrancy of Carthage, which bore Hannibal, whom Horon regards as the greatest Hebrew warrior of antiquity (Alraïd 1932a:12; AGH 1950b:613; Horon 1965a:112; 2000:55, 334-338).

attracting masses all over the Mediterranean to acknowledge the Hasmoneans' supreme god YHWH and its Jewish cult. Numerous Canaanite communities, as well as autochthonous communities throughout the Mediterranean, from Libya to Rome, converted to Judaism; many by will, some by force (missionary Judaism was sometimes quite aggressive, Horon notes; fig. 14). This way, the Canaanite-Hebrew Diaspora soon evaporated, only to be replaced by a Jewish Diaspora, which merged with newly-converted local collectives, few of whom spoke Hebrew. This, for Horon, is the true explanation for the astonishingly rapid and wide dissemination of originally-xenophobic Judaism: its proselytes were drawn to a *victorious* religion,



Figure 14: The dissemination of Judaism in the Mediterranean basin at the beginning of the Common Era (source: Horon 1970:85).

whose social base were the Canaanite colonists of the Mediterranean along with the autochthons, and not the exiles from Judea vanquished after the crushing of the anti-Roman rebellions. Most importantly, Horon dates the increase in the

Mediterranean Jewish population *before* the alleged dispersal in the wake of the 70 and 135 CE disasters. He argues that the Jewish paradigm, which laid the blame for the exile on the Romans, originated in the Pharisees' hostility to any form of Hebrew statehood that did not uphold their version of the YHWH cult<sup>132</sup>. The narrative that makes the Jewish exile a result of a military defeat is merely a fable, Horon asserts (1976b:257; 2000:344), and a quite tendentious one: "[this view], rooted in historical

<sup>132</sup> Unbent in their enmity to the Hellenized Hasmoneans, Horon claims that the Pharisees even welcomed the Roman occupation of Judea in 63 BCE.

ignorance, is in reality drawn from a malevolent fabrication of the fathers of the Church, who were keen to prove that this is how god punished the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ"<sup>133</sup>.

Horon asserts that the socio-cultural dialectics of national versus denominational persisted into the first centuries of the Common Era. He points out that Rabbinic Judaism did not prevail at once after the demise of the Bar Kochba state in 135 CE; moreover, Horon claims that a current he titles "militant Judaism", although suppressed in rabbinic books, survived at least until the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is to its influence that Horon attributes some of the best-known cases of mass conversion to Judaism, such as the Himyarite kingdom in modern-day Yemen, the Berbers in North Africa, and the Khazars in the lower Volga basin (Horon 1965a:114-115; 2000:56-57). Nevertheless, this tendency was not potent enough to reverse the tide of history, when congregations overtake *ummas* as its chief protagonists. Such a state of affairs, Horon indicates, can be diagnosed by a nationally-minded historian only as "non-history".

We can see from the above that Horon's historical thinking distinguishes two ontological conditions relative to history: being "subject" versus being "object". The former implies an active role in history and a capability of influencing or even shaping it by wielding agency (whether collectively or individually). The latter means an opposite position, of being inactive and influenced rather than influencing the flow of historical time; as Anwar Abdel-Malek puts it (1963:107-108, cited at: Said 1994a:97), it means being "passive, non-participating... above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself". We observed in chapter 2 that the

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<sup>133</sup> See also: Alraïd 1932a:12; Horon 1976b:252, 255-257; 2000:338-345.

pre-modern concept of time, which portrayed humans as largely being at the mercy of cosmic powers, fits the "objective" stance towards history; it follows that the "subjective" stance (which means becoming an active agent of history) is characteristic of modernity, and was exploited by nationalism. The discussion in chapter 5 will show that the drive to regain historical agency for the Jews (making them "subjects" rather than "objects" of history) was Zionism's chief imperative; the Young Hebrews, on their side, questioned the validity and legitimacy of this drive.

Horon's reasoning is obviously insubordinate to the Zionist philosophy of history. A chain of correlating elements in his historiographic narrative that fit each of the two historical conditions outlined above – subjectivity-Hebrews-"golden age" versus objectivity-Jews-"Middle Ages" – shows that Horon understood being Jewish as being *inherently* bereft of historical agency and sovereign will. The Hebrew "Middle Ages" begin for Horon when national outlook is finally overtaken by communal outlook and the Jews no longer care about shaping their own history in an active participatory way. Hence, what is a "golden age" for Christianity and "prehistory" for Islam is the beginning of "a long night" (Horon 1965a:112) for the Hebrews: the *nature* of the outlook, and not stages of material development, is what defines for Horon the essence of the macro-historical phase. The "post-national" period into which the Land of Kedem lapsed with the emergence of Judaism nearly two millennia ago is dismissed by Horon as

not an active history but passive deeds...; this is no longer a national history – neither of a consolidated *umma* in its ancient shape nor of a territorial-political *leom* in its modern form. Throughout the long period when the Roman Empire decayed, baptized and broke into several churches, the Barbaric nations invaded from south and north, the various sects of Islam spread, up to the emergence of territorial kingdoms in the rising West – during all this period the forefront of

history was occupied by religions, communities, and clans, various houses of dukes and royalty, and not by structures that can be described as "national" [*leumiim*]. In this medieval world the Land of Kedem... mutated from a homeland of a particular *umma* to a holy land (Horon 1965a:114; 1976b:257-258; 2000:56, 345).

As stated in the introduction to this section, the above review of Horon's historiography concentrated mainly on his later works, those being more elaborated as well as corresponding more clearly to the political opinions he espoused in the closing decades of his life. However, due attention must also be paid to his earlier attempt to propose an alternative Hebrew history, the *On History* series of 1931-1932. Though following the conventions of popular journalism, this is nevertheless a very intricate and nuanced work; what strikes one most forcefully is that it is still quite "Zionist" in its approach to ancient history and its current political implications. One must not forget that, notwithstanding its overall rejection of traditional Jewish historiography, it appeared *before* Horon's departure from the Zionist movement and only a short time after he had first encountered the Ugarit discoveries. Some of the underlying assumptions and methodological principles of *On History* are incompatible with Horon's later writings, his concentration on Canaan at the expense of the larger geopolitical space foremost among them. He defined Canaan back then quite vaguely as lying "between the Red Sea and Euphrates", or "between the Euphrates and the Nile, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Great Desert" (Alraïd 1931f:6), hinting probably at the Biblical "covenant borders" mentioned in the book of Genesis ("from the river of Egypt unto... the river Euphrates"). He also referred to the countries bordering Palestine as "neighbouring states" (Alraïd 1931b:3), which underscores the relatively limited geopolitical and geohistorical scope of his early studies. Likewise,

Horon supports in *On History* the identification of the Hebrews as hailing from the Akkadian *Khabiru* (Alraïd 1931b:4), which he later rejected as incompatible with his defence of the Hebrews' indigenoussness to the Land of Kedem (Horon 1966a:145-146; 2000:159).

Moreover, persons and events that Horon subsequently declared to be mythical are treated in *On History* as historical, although in a way hardly resembling their traditional portrayal. To cite only a few examples: the conquest of Canaan is a combination of an external invasion by desert-dwellers of Hebrew extraction and internal resettlement by indigenous Hebrew-speakers, constituting the decisive stage in the ancient Hebrews' ethnogenesis (Alraïd 1931b:3, 5; 1931c:9; 1931g:7; 1931i:6, 7); some of these tribes might have even emerged from Egypt (Alraïd 1931e:5); the formation of a new cult under Moses is a historical turning point, though not the beginning of Judaic monotheism but rather the consolidation of a new *umma* around a national-tribal worship (Alraïd 1931d:5; 1931i:6; 1932b:4); the destruction of the Hebrew statehood does not entail the decimation of the Hebrew national spirit, which continued to challenge both Greece and Rome (Alraïd 1932b:5); Abraham is a "semi-sedentary tribal chieftain" (Alraïd 1931b:4); Jacob is another such chieftain (Alraïd 1931g:6).

Finally, what is most outstanding in Horon's early work is the *continuity of heritage and blood* that he identifies between ancient Hebrews and modern Jews. He portrays the latter as the direct descendants of the former who dreamt "for forty centuries" of Palestine as their homeland (Alraïd 1931f:6;

1931i:8)<sup>134</sup>. This idea, however, was soon to vanish from Horon's writings along with his other more "mainstream" contentions, concomitant with his gradual move to anti-Zionist positions. After *On History*, he never returned to writing in Russian, his beloved mother-tongue, which offers no clear linguistic and terminological distinction between "Hebrew" and "Jew".

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<sup>134</sup> Contrast this with Horon's later statement (1976b:258) that the ancient Hebrews were "our national, albeit not racial, forefathers".

## Chapter 4

### 4.1. The Jews in a "Canaanite" perspective

#### 4.1.1. Modern Jewish identity

It ought to be quite evident by this stage that Horon's periodization of the Hebrew national commemorative narrative for the most part excludes the Jews from the Hebrew "golden age". This is the most plausible explanation for the paucity of references to Jewish post-Hebrew history in Horon's writings. Such methodological choice is undoubtedly dictated by Horon's understanding of his mission as being principally that of a *Hebrew* national historian; moreover, it was undertaken quite early in his career, as the following words from *On History* testify:

If it were written on the cover, or at least humbly stated in the foreword to, say, Renan's study: *The history of the Semitic element in Israel*; or in Dubnov's latter tomes: *The history of anti-Semitism and the Jews' legal status in contemporary states* – I would not protest. I would not trouble myself with reading either. But since it is written plain and simple: *The history of the Jewish people*, *The history of Israel*, etc. – I am left with no choice but to "demand my money back" with indignation from the book-seller (Alraïd 1931h:7).

Horon's aversion to a universal, deterritorialized (and, therefore, in his reasoning non-national) Jewish history is representative of a wider phenomenon noticed by John Breuilly. Breuilly (2009:8-10) argues that it was the universal outlook that he believes to be typical of Judaism that lay at the base of so-called "general" history: a history-writing with pretensions to encompass the whole of humankind or at least to point to some "objective" rules of historical development supposed to be universally valid, irrespective of time and place. As we saw above, this historiographical paradigm was rejected by nationalist historians, who went after the "unique" and the "essential" in

their nation's histories. Horon was no different from his nationalist historian peers, though he obviously could not simply ignore the role of Jews in the history of the state of Israel, or the Land of Kedem for that matter. Horon's scant references to Jews are limited in most part to two issues, one historical, the other socio-political: tracing their ethnic origins and analysing their contemporary social situation. In both cases the outcomes of Horon's study sharply contradict the established Jewish-Zionist historiographical paradigm, which subscribes to a racial-biological concept of ethnogenesis by identifying most, if not all, of the Jews as the descendants of the ancient Israelis exiled by the Romans from the Land of Israel after the defeats of 70 and 135 CE.

Horon's version of the emergence of Judaism and the Jewish Diaspora, summarized in the previous chapter, highlights his insistence on the multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan nature both of the Mosaic religion and its community of followers. Horon acknowledges, all the same, a certain continuity between Hebrews and Jews, in biological, linguistic, as well as cultural regards: "all that remained from western Hebraism [sic]... eventually 'dissolved' into Judaism... In the veins of the North-Western African Jewry... as well as in the veins of the Sephardic Jewry there undoubtedly flows more **Carthaginian** than Jewish blood, strictly speaking" (Alraïd 1932a:12). Hence, the western Canaanites of Carthage (along with the autochthonous Libyans/Berbers) are portrayed by Horon as the progenitors of North-African Jewry, while the Carthaginians who settled in the Iberian Peninsula become in his account the forefathers of Sephardic Jewry. Other significant Jewish societies that emerged in the centuries after the Hebrews' downfall as a result of what he describes as "militant Judaism" remain in Horon's historiography wholly unrelated to Canaan: the

"Yemenites", according to Horon, hail from the Judaized Himyarites; the Ashkenazi Jews' emergence is explained in accordance with the theory of East European Jewry's descent from the Volga basin Khazars (which is slightly ironic, if we recall Horon's own Ashkenazi pedigree) (AGH 1950b:613-614; Horon 1965a:115; 2000:57); and although he does not mention Ethiopian Jewry, it is highly probable that he would have classified it similarly as a society of indigenous converts.

A modernist nationalist who sees the nation as an "imagined community" – that is, a real one regardless of whether its ideologues' claims are historically credible or not – might argue that a rejection of the racial-biological concept of origins does not automatically nullify a group's nationhood; according to this viewpoint, the Jews might still constitute a nation despite not being a real *ethnie*. Horon, who does not adhere to the modernist concept of the nation, refuses to acknowledge them as such, in accordance with his territorialist conception of ethno-national identity. The Jews, Horon claims, are above all not a nation because they possess neither a defined territory to identify with nor a national outlook; thus, their lack of ethnic cohesiveness is only an additional, secondary argument<sup>135</sup>. In Horon's description, the Jews comprise a faith-community coalesced by a spiritual culture and heritage, which functions in a rigid system of codified principles that leave the question of identity outside the individual's choice. Such a community is classified by Horon as a "caste" or *millet*. The latter is an Ottoman loanword designating, as Horon explains (1970:88), "a body or quasi-religious, quasi-racial class, to which a man belongs by

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<sup>135</sup> We will see below that in the modern *Hebrews'* case, Horon also did not insist on their unitary *ethnic* identity, this time in order to *accept* them as a nation.

the virtue of his birth and which he can abandon only with a great difficulty". *Millets*, or denominations,

may stand anywhere between the ethnic group, the tribe, the clan, and what we call churches in the Western world. But mostly they act and feel like castes – with loyalty bestowed upon an ideal, ritual way of life, and upon such men and women as follow it from birth. Territorial bonds, political affiliation, and formal citizenship play a secondary role (Gourevitch 1952:16).

The *millet* system, Horon states, was introduced by the Ottoman Empire in order to manage its numerous ethno-class communities by bestowing upon them autonomy in matters of faith and communal life in exchange for political submissiveness: a model directly borrowed from the Persian Empire. One of the Ottoman *millets* was, of course, the Jews; and despite the vast differences between the Ottoman Empire and the European West, Horon does not believe that the western Jews' situation differs in any meaningful way from that of their eastern counterparts:

A typical instance of caste within the Western world is of course Jewry; is or *was*, until quite recently. For in spite of the impassioned biases of both Anti-Semitism and Zionism, Jewry never was a physical "race", nor a nation, but quite definitively a caste: something more than a mere church; a religion which controlled the entire life of its members, irrespective of their country of residence, their language, political affiliation, etc. (Gourevitch 1952:16).

We see that Horon defines the caste/*millet* deterministically: one cannot alter it from within, and it will be hardly susceptible to gradual long-term transformations from without. The italicized *was* in the above citation does not imply Horon's tacit acceptance of the Zionist maxim that the Jews transformed themselves *internally* from a caste to a nation. It points rather to a completely different tendency: that by breaking the boundaries of the caste a Jew would inescapably adopt the majority's national outlook (provided that one exists; this is known as assimilation); in the Land of

Kedem this would mean that s/he would assimilate into the fledging modern Hebrew nation. Traditional Judaism, Horon asserts, must succumb to the onslaught of modernity: it will crumble, but not abandon its nature. In this respect, Horon is actually not very remote from Baruch Kurzweil's thinking.

#### 4.1.2. Zionism: a "pseudo-nationalism"

If Jews do not constitute a nation, can Zionism be regarded as a national movement?

Horon obviously answers in the negative. We have seen above (section 3.5) that he attributes the Jewish historiographical paradigm of dispersal following the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans to a "malevolent fabrication" by the patriarchs of Christianity. This "anti-Semitic fable", as Horon calls it, was internalized by the Jewish Diaspora, whose tradition was based on decrying the *Galuth* and yearning for a messianic restoration in a rebuilt Jerusalem. Horon believes that this tradition was transferred unscathed into Zionist historiosophy, which merely substituted the divine agent of redemption with a human-secular one, leaving the other elements intact (the foremost of them being the Jews as a single nation suffering in an exile that is temporary by nature). Wielding this argument of organic continuity between traditional Judaism and Zionism, Horon mounts a radical attack on the latter, aimed at undermining its intellectual sources and, in effect, its politics.

We must remember that while many opponents of Zionism accused it of mirroring anti-Semitism, they blamed it particularly for adopting the racial principles of the "new" 19<sup>th</sup>-century anti-Semitism that accompanied the growth of nationalism in Europe (Berelowitz 2010:91; Evron 1988:16-17, 93-98, 156-186; 1995:4-5, 41-44, 68-86; Piterberg 2008:30-36; Shatz 2004:108-117). Horon, however, looks deeper, by claiming that it is the "old", religion-based anti-Semitism that Zionism incorporated into its worldview and commemorative narrative. Zionism becomes in Horon's analysis not so much a *reaction* to the anti-Semitic racism of modernity (though he does not deny it altogether) but a *continuation* of a pre-modern anti-Semitic theology, whose Christian sources, in turn, reach back to the first monotheistic universal faith,

Judaism. What Horon implies is that the Jews, being a *millet*/caste, were incapable of adequately utilizing the nationalist grid of concepts; they were thus *deterministically* left to toy with outdated ideas, trying to adapt them to a socio-political reality that was changing beyond recognition and to their perceptive capacities.

Horon draws several parallels between Judaism and Zionism, which he uses to deprecate both. Similarly to his portrayal of Judaism as foreign to the Land of Kedem by the fact of its emergence outside the Land and its professing of a non-national outlook, he labels Zionism an "international Jewish agency" (Horon 1965a:117; 2000:59), whose central aim is the solution of a vague "Jewish problem" that affects the Jewish masses "around the Carpathians, between the Danube and the Dnieper" (Horon 1970:136). Since a "Jewish problem" is worldwide in scope, Zionism's simultaneous contention that the Jews constituted a single nation whose sovereign identity was to be expressed by Israeli statehood is diagnosed by Horon as self-contradictory, and the whole idea is derisively described as "a dream of tradition dreamt by the Jewish Diaspora" (Horon 1965b:155).

Horon also notices a resemblance between Jewish history and Zionism in the renewed Jewish emigration to Palestine/Israel, which he regards as a re-enactment of the "Return to Zion" during the age of Cyrus – the same movement that, we may recall, originally brought the communal-sectarian outlook to the Land of Kedem and turned Canaan into a "holy land". Just as in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the allegiance, material resources, and spiritual values of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish emigrants lay outside the Land: Persia, in Horon's perspective, was replaced by the European and American

Jewish Diaspora<sup>136</sup>. The Zionists are accused by Horon of importing values and problems that are alien to the Land, thus becoming agents of foreign influence: "Among the many foreign influences which play a part in the Levantine imbroglio... we must mention Zionism... from a geographical standpoint... Zionism is indeed an outside factor" (Gourevitch 1952:26). The Zionists, moreover, did not come on their own: they found a patron in the British Empire (a parallel to the Persian court of Cyrus), which exploited Zionism in order to pursue its own geopolitical interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, such an unequal relationship meant for Zionism that its covenant with Britain failed to secure a victory: referring to the 1917 Balfour declaration, Horon (1964b:508) mentions that it was delivered to a "people not yet resurrected, but already betrayed" and describes it as an imperialist self-serving tool rather than a true help to the *Yishuv* (Horon 1965a:117; 2000:59). In collusion with France, Horon writes (Gourevitch 1952:26; Horon 1964b:508; 1970:92, 96), the British manipulated Zionism and Pan-Arabism against each other, drawing the borders of the constituent states of the Land of Kedem in a way meant to entrench the two movements' dependency upon their imperial overlords.

Scrutinizing Zionism from the standpoint of its own principles, Horon reaches the conclusion that it was all-in-all a miserable failure. Acknowledging that Zionism had its role in shaping the Hebrew-speaking *Yishuv* ("for better or worse", he qualifies) and in fostering Jewish emigration to "the Land of Israel", he nevertheless observes that the Jews rejected the Zionist appeal *en masse*. Since the "Jewish problem" was for Horon not a national problem but a socio-cultural question (finding a place where

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<sup>136</sup> Horon even acidly referred to the 6<sup>th</sup>-century BCE "Return to Zion" as to a "Babylonian-Persian Zionism" (Horon 1965a:112; 2000:54; also Alraïd 1932a:12).

the Jewish community could prosper), it could be resolved by exchanging one universal outlook for another: either by a migration to America or a conversion to Soviet-style communism. Those who chose neither of the above were in due course decimated by the Holocaust, Horon notes, so that Zionism lost the bulk of its potential clients.

As for the remainder, Horon calculates that only 10% of the Diaspora Jewry eventually came to Palestine/Israel, its overwhelming majority being Sephardi Jews. Many of them, he remarks, were not driven by the pull motive of Zionist idealism, but by various push motives (religious, economic, etc.). In this regard, Palestine/Israel, he claims, did not differ from any other migration-absorbing country (Gourevitch 1952:26; Horon 1965a:117; 1965b:155; 1970:136-137; 2000:59). Therefore, Horon concludes, if one can speak of a national reality in Israel or in the Land of Kedem, this will certainly not be a Zionist-Jewish one.

#### 4.1.3. Modern Hebrew identity

What is then Horon's main proof for the failure of Zionism? Although the Jews' supposed lack of enthusiasm for immigration to the Land of Israel is by no means insignificant, Horon measures Zionism primarily not by what it did not achieve but by what it *did*. He suggests that Zionism has not played a negligible part in setting in motion socio-cultural processes quite contradictory to its own goals: namely, the ethnogenesis of the Hebrew nation in the Land of Kedem. Here we can observe again Horon's deterministic mode of thinking: the geophysical environment will necessarily prevail over ideological-cultural elements that are incompatible with it, regardless of their own potency. An age-old regularity was repeated, Horon's argument goes: once the Jewish migrants to the Land of Israel established themselves in a particular geographical setting (an attachment to which was admittedly enhanced by Jewish mythology), environmental determinism acted to consolidate them into a *different* national community. The society shaped in Canaan (primarily, though not exclusively, of Jewish extraction), Horon claims, developed in time a natural relationship to its land, that is, a sentiment of nativeness. In Horon's lexicon, a new national outlook was created, enabling the transformation of the Hebrew-speaking society into a modern *leom*. It thus could not but be *inherently* distinct from the non-national Jewish community, despite the genetic ties between the two. Moreover, Horon implies that the Hebrews were unaware of their ethnogenesis, thus underscoring their nation-formation's determinist nature. The attachment to the Canaanite past, which Horon ascribes to the modern Hebrews, is for him as natural as their purported distaste for the Jewish Diaspora heritage, though they are *not* related

genetically to their reputed national ancestors. This is how Horon sums up the disposition of the newly-formed nation:

As to the renaissance of the Hebrew nation, which is emerging in front of our eyes in its country, still half-consciously... [it] matures by striking new roots in that same ancient land. What is buried in this land fertilizes also life above; and since the deeper layer is Hebrew-Canaanite, the new Hebrew nation tends to grow in the Canaanite direction, whether the powers that be wish it or not; ...when growing, [the Hebrew nation] begins developing self-consciousness, in a natural way, that is, at least subconsciously, defying the education it receives (or refuses to receive) at school (Horon 1965a:96; 1976b:259; 2000:33).

Elsewhere, Horon formulates this even more succinctly: "the Canaanite language is coming back to life in the State of Israel" (Horon 1970:70).

Ergo, according to Horon, the Hebrew foundational myth, if it is to serve a fledgling nation, must necessarily bypass the two thousand years of non-national Jewish history, reverting to the Hebrew "golden age". By implication, the Hebrews ought to adopt Horon's own historiographical narrative as the only one apparently fitting their "national outlook".

Being aware of the complexity of nation-formation in general, Horon takes a measure of care before announcing the existence of a nation totally independent of its Jewish lineage (unlike most of his fellow Young Hebrews, who almost never doubted the reality of a Hebrew non-Jewish nationhood). Writing shortly after the establishment of Israel, Horon cautiously states that

it would be an error to assume that the Jews, or specifically the *Israelis*, are already a nation, or even a unified group... [The *Sabras*]... are visibly the basis and ferment of an emerging Hebrew nationhood, but

they still have to assimilate a discordant majority of foreign Jews and native non-Jews (Gourevitch 1952:22)<sup>137</sup>.

Nonetheless, Horon is optimistic: "nobody with first-hand knowledge may honestly deny that many Israelis are lukewarm Zionists or no Zionists at all", he states with confidence (Gourevitch 1952:26). A few years afterwards, on Israel's ninth independence day, Horon is already convinced that "almost all of [the Jews in the Levant] have become ISRAELIS" (Horon 1957:4)<sup>138</sup>. Having moved to Israel in 1959 and obtained an unmediated perspective on the growth of the Hebrew-Israeli identity, Horon's 1960s' and 1970s' writings betray his belief that by this time the Hebrew Israelis have entirely detached themselves from their Jewish past to form a fully-fledged nation<sup>139</sup>:

This nation possesses an established character, its own identity, albeit informally: it is Hebrew linguistically, territorially and existentially. The rising *Sabra* generation regards itself as Hebrew in a self-evident way, without any special education. Whoever is not a Jew – a Druze, for instance – can feel himself a Hebrew here and be an equal citizen of Israel; without converting to Judaism, obviously, and without declaring allegiance to a "Jewish state" that does not exist as such... It is enough to state the fact: as a national reality, our Israel is not a *Judenstaat*... On the contrary, the state is Hebrew de-facto; that is, by the nature of things, based on a territorial-linguistic reality, without any particular consideration of one's racial origins or religious awareness... (Horon 1965b:156).

This nation is not a continuation of that "eternal people" about whose foreign virtues we are being preached daily by the "Jewish

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<sup>137</sup> He reiterated this standpoint a year later (Horon 1953:5).

<sup>138</sup> Note the transition in Horon's usage of the term "Israelis": from a *civic-political* to a *national* signifier.

<sup>139</sup> Horon does warn at least once (Horon 1965a:117; 2000:59) that this question belongs to modern politics rather than to geo-history, and therefore remains basically outside his purview.

consciousness" priests<sup>140</sup>. This national resurgence is a wholly new beginning, and not an effect of any Zionism (whether Jewish, English, or Crusader) (Horon 1976b:259; also Gur 1976c:323).

By the late 1960s Horon (1970:138-139) had calculated that the *Sabras* (native Israelis) constituted almost half of Israel's population (*including* Palestinians in the territories captured in 1967)<sup>141</sup>, capable of assimilating both Arabs and Jews from abroad, exactly the way the ancient Hebrews assimilated North-African and Mesopotamian invaders and migrants. Significantly, he does not draw any meaningful distinction between "Hebrews", *Sabras*, and "Israelis", unlike other Israeli-based Young Hebrews, who contrasted *Sabra* Zionist-influenced identity with the Hebrew identity, which was to be free from Jewish and other foreign influences (Keinan 1986). It seems that for Horon the indigenusness of the modern Hebrews does not necessarily cancel any foreign input: whether Jewish influences, which admittedly played a role in preserving the Hebrew heritage, or Zionist influences, which directed to a certain extent the struggle for Hebrew self-determination. Horon admits that such influences can even be quite welcome, provided that they do not outweigh the autochthonous elements (Horon 1965a:118; 1976b:259; 2000:59-60). However, the *Sabras'* numerical power in Israel, Horon argues, is not translated into socio-cultural hegemony; in effect, the Israeli-Zionist socio-cultural system conducts what might be described as a *Kulturkampf* against the Hebrews, eliciting their all-too-natural enmity (Gourevitch 1952:26).

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<sup>140</sup> Horon refers to the introduction of the "Jewish consciousness" lectures in Israeli schools in 1957, which the Young Hebrews unanimously condemned (Diamond 1986:83-84).

<sup>141</sup> In 1952, Horon estimated that the *Sabras* were "not much more than one third of all the people in the state" (Gourevitch 1952:22).

Horon dates the emergence of the modern Hebrew national consciousness to the First World War, when the Hebrew *Yishuv* embarked on its first organized attempts to win independence by force, citing the pro-British NILI spy network and the Hebrew battalions led by Jabotinsky and Trumpeldor within the British army (contrasting these examples with the "Jewish-style" lobbying by the official Zionist leadership that resulted in the much-derided Balfour declaration). This friction in outlook and disposition between *Israelis* and *Israeli authorities*, Horon suggests, perpetuates a constant tension within the state. He even hints that in 1948 the Hebrews disposed of a foreign occupation only to be subdued by another one (exchanging the British for the Zionists), since Zionism, which promoted Jewish historical vision and politics, did not *lead* the Hebrews (as distinct from *participated*) towards independence. However, unlike the British, the Zionists lay a particular claim upon the hearts and minds of Hebrew Israelis, resulting in what Horon describes as an uneasy ambivalence of accommodation and rejection, whereby the "Zionist regime... is dangerously balanced on the edge of a sharp inner contradiction" (Gourevitch 1952:26).

#### 4.1.4. Israel: a Zionist-occupied state

Israel's precarious situation is exemplified for Horon by the very name picked for state in 1948. He argues that the name "Israel"... resurrected from Biblical antiquity – seems to strike a compromise between Zionists who conceived of a racially or religiously *Jewish* structure, and such home-grown patriots who fought for a modern, national *Hebrew* commonwealth, without racial and religious limitation" (Gourevitch 1952:26)<sup>142</sup>. Horon explains that this indecisiveness stems from the multitude of meanings packed into the denominator "Israel": does it refer to "tribes migrating to Mesopotamia, hailing from Libya and Egypt or native to Canaan? Or the kingdom of Saul and David, the house of Omri, and the house of Jehu? Or perhaps it indicates '*Knesset Israel*', [that is,] a figure of speech... which denotes all Jewish congregations wherever they are?" (Horon 1976b:259). This argumentation constitutes an attack on the Jewish-Zionist axiological geography: whereas the name "the Land of Kedem" possessed a "positive" degree of ambiguity, allowing it to express the Hebrew national outlook in its vast entirety, the name "Israel" is presented as an example of a "negative" ambiguity, since, as Horon sees it, it symbolizes the Zionist establishment's unwillingness to cope with the chief existential questions facing the state and its society.

When Israel was only a few years into its existence, Horon interpreted the above ambiguity as reflecting its situation as "an incipient nation [that] still lack[ed] definition, in practice as well as in theory, as to its ties with international Jewry, with the non-Jewish sections of its own population, and with the broader territory to which it belongs" (Gourevitch 1952:16). Yet the more Horon became confident of the

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<sup>142</sup> See also: Horon 1965a:118; 1976b:259; 2000:59-60.

disparity between the Jews and the Hebrew Israelis, this situation came to represent for him Israel's, so to speak, "schizophrenic" condition, both in its domestic and foreign policy. Let us analyse these two aspects as they appear in Horon's thought.

Israel's "schizophrenia" is summarized by Horon in the following words: "The growing, modern society of Hebrew-speakers in Israel cannot become an integrated, leading national group in a progressive Levant, while remaining at the same time the spearhead of international Zionism, whose proclaimed aims are more or less racist and more or less theocratic" (Gourevitch 1952:26-27). The core problem of Israel's politics (also projected to its socio-cultural make-up) then is that the state *denies its own raison d'être*, which Horon (1965b:156) defines as "becoming a framework for a nation forming in its land" rather than serving as a "museum of Jewish antiquity" or "a 'ghetto' for an outdated Zionism... a religious tool, or a mixture of communities and parties". Horon suggests that even Israel's war of independence of 1948 was to a large extent not a war *for*, but *against* Hebrew self-determination. The war, Horon points out, came about as the result of a prolonged process of territorial partitions that the Land of Kedem was subjected to under Anglo-French imperial patronage and which contravened both the Land's geophysical mould and the Hebrews' national outlook formed by it. Horon names the Sykes-Picot treaty of 1916 that detached Jordan's "Northern Bank"<sup>143</sup> from its two remaining banks as the starting point of this process, followed by the creation in 1923 of the Kingdom of Transjordan on the Eastern Bank, the 1937 Peel commission proposal dividing the Western Bank, and finally the 1947 UN partition plan that again tore up the Western Bank. The Zionist leadership, which in Horon's narrative was an accomplice to this breaking of the Land, used the 1948

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<sup>143</sup> For Horon's concept of Jordan's "three banks", see section 3.3.



selective conscription duty it enforces, the lack of separation between religion and state obtaining therein, and its refusal to introduce unitary secular education.

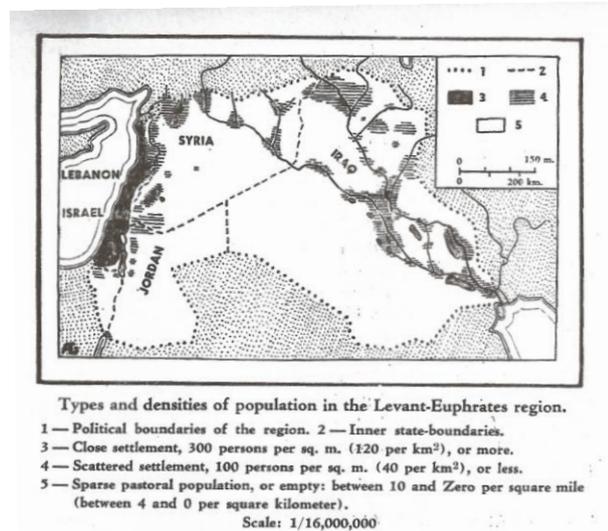
Moreover, Horon adds, Israeli policy on citizenship and immigration stands in stark contrast both to liberal democratic values and to the self-preservation imperative of a national state. Its most blatant demonstration, in Horon's eyes, is the "Ingathering of the Exiles" principle, which favours Jews of low socio-economic background over "productive" non-Jews. Since non-Jews are unwelcome in Israel, Horon observes that those who nevertheless manage to make their way into it are forced either to undergo a humiliating process of conversion to Orthodox Judaism or to fabricate a Jewish ancestry (Gur 1976a). Horon was so indignant with this arrangement that he almost openly accused the Israeli ruling establishment of acting according to a Nazi-like logic (which is rather unsurprising given that he traces Zionism's intellectual origins to an anti-Semitic myth), terming the Oriental and Sephardic Jews' segregated poverty enclaves "ghettoes" and suggesting that Israeli citizenship legislation is an emulation of the Nuremberg laws (Gur 1976a; 1976f).

The same pathology, Horon asserts, is transferred to Israel's foreign relations and, in consequence, to its geopolitical standing. An analogy is implicitly drawn between Israel "from within" and Israel "from without": whereas "from within" Israel pretends to be a "Jewish state" while not being such de-facto, "from without" Israel is strategically the strongest state in the Land of Kedem, yet is unable to make appropriate use of its superiority due to its clientist dependence upon foreign powers, by which Horon chiefly means worldwide Zionism and the United States. Both are naturally uninterested in Israel breaking free from their sphere of influence, but so is the Israeli regime, since for Horon it is organically tied to the patron-client pattern of

social relations that ideally suited the Jewish Diaspora but became anomalous when applied to a modern polity. Horon sardonically describes this state of affairs as "a ghetto wielding decisive military power over significant parts of two continents... a virtually unprecedented phenomenon" (Gur 1976e:153). He accuses Israel of "micromania", the source of which he traces to the "Jewish mentality" that guides Israel's heads of state and the military. These, Horon claims, treat war achievements as merely a bargaining card for "leaving Israel alone" instead of using them to reshape the whole of the Land of Kedem – a strategic imperative for Israel and a liberating perspective for all its inhabitants, according to the Young Hebrews (Horon 1964b:517; Gur 1976e). For Horon, Israel's status of an "armed ghetto" permeated with existential fears and unwilling to take up the initiative proposed by the geophysical and geopolitical conditions (particularly after 1967) is a deadly dangerous aberration. This aberration was only exacerbated after the 1967 war, Horon writes, when Israel held back from annexing the captured territories and granting their inhabitants full citizenship, so that the "Jewish state" could finally be dismantled. Instead, he laments, it introduced a dual administration, extending a military occupation over close to a million persons living beyond the "Green Line", but keeping parliamentary regime within pre-1967 Israel, perpetuating in this way the neo-*millet* system (Horon 1970:132). By doing so it obstructed what Horon regards as the natural course of history, which replaces pre-modern *millets* with modern nations; in Israel's case, this would mean disposing of the Jews' peculiar privileges by absorbing non-Jews on an equal footing, including (primarily) Palestinians.

Nonetheless, Horon asserts, Israel's regional isolation – by itself a manifestation of Jewish xenophobia – has ironically contributed to its geopolitical growth. Since Israel

was cut off from the Land of Kedem's hinterland, it directed by default its strategic efforts westwards, becoming a prominent Mediterranean naval force (Horon 1964b:501)<sup>145</sup>. Furthermore, "prompted by enemies and *alleged* friends" (Horon 1970:146, emphasis mine)<sup>146</sup>, it invested heavily in knowledge-based industry (not only military), propelling itself to the status of a leading economic power in the region. Thus, Horon could write back in 1952, "the Israelis are today the most compact and the strongest single element in the entire Levant, from almost any standpoint, and not alone from the standpoint of military superiority as displayed in the war of liberation" (Gourevitch 1952:22). This way, Canaan (meaning Israel with Lebanon) became the most populous and culturally and economically advanced district of the Land of Kedem (Horon 1970:140; fig. 16)<sup>147</sup> – a bridgehead for a larger Hebrew liberal-democratic polity, if only Israel could overcome its mental inferiority vis-à-vis the Jews, the superpowers, and... the Arabs.



**Figure 16: Canaan's superiority in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Land of Kedem (source: Gourevitch 1952:23).**

<sup>145</sup> One can notice here a variation on the "marine" motif, so central to Horon's historiography and geopolitical thought.

<sup>146</sup> In "alleged friends" the reference is probably to the USA and European powers.

<sup>147</sup> This again is an analogy to Horon's Hebrew ancient history that made Canaan the pivot of the Land of Kedem (see section 3.3).

## 4.2. The Arabs in Horon's historiography

### 4.2.1. "Arabs" proper and improper

It is telling that Horon opens his discussion of the "Arab question" with a survey of the Arabs' ancient history, in the same the way as he tackled the "Jewish question". Yet, having critically reviewed Arab historiography, Horon does not construct a positive alternative for it. This is reasonable: as a Hebrew national historian, it is not his task to provide the Arabs with a new commemorative narrative once he has demolished the existing one. He merely remarks that an Arab national entity and identity might, and perhaps should, emerge in the Arabian Peninsula (and, as we shall quickly see, nowhere else) (Horon 1964b:518; 1965b:157); he thus leaves the task of writing an Arab national history to his putative Arab counterpart. Other methodological similarities in the way Horon treated Jewish and Arab history will become readily apparent in the following discussion.

Horon once again employs historical and philological analysis to undo what he perceives as false mythology underscoring most of modern Arab politics. An important piece of evidence he produces to show that contemporary Arab nationalism lacks grounding in provable historical realities is the etymology of the word "Arab". Horon explains that this is a *hapax legomenon* in the Arabic language, its root (عرب) carrying no other meaning and being actually a loanword from Hebrew that stands as a synonym for "Bedouin", "man of the steppe". The loan is proved by Horon by pointing out that the Hebrew root for "steppe", or "Arab" (ער"ב) also covers meanings like "evening" and "west" (see chapter 3), while the Arab counterparts of the last two words are derived from an entirely different root, غرب (Horon 2000:226; see also: Gesenius 1906:787-788). Likewise, Horon states, the Arabs' mythical ancestors Ismail

(Ishmael in Hebrew) and Qahtan evidently have Hebrew names that originated outside the Arabian Peninsula and remain meaningless in Arabic. Horon notes that Qahtan originates from "an older Hebrew patriarch", while the geographical etymology of Ishmael and his legendary mother Hagar points, according to Horon, to North Africa. This makes him kin to some of the Hebrews' totemic ancestors, in particular Shimon, whose name is derived from the same root as Ishmael, שמ"ע, which literally means "hearing" but is more widely understood, Horon qualifies, as "one who hears [that is, commands] a language"<sup>148</sup>. Ishmael's original domain, as stated in the Bible, is Havila in the Sahara Desert, and his physical description – half-man, half-wild ass – is explained by Horon as symbolizing the economic realities in the northern part of the African continent in the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. It is there, he writes, that the wild ass was first domesticated and subsequently used as a transport animal, carrying precious goods from the Sahara to Egypt and from there to the westernmost environs of the Land of Kedem. The transport leaders, he adds, often donned animal masks (supposedly to enhance the goods' smooth transfer), which easily acquired sacral-totemic meaning, with the ornamental and cultic motif of part-man, part-animal quickly spreading to early pharaonic Egypt.

As to Hagar, Horon argues that its root is also a Semito-Hamitic one, appearing in two versions, הג"ר and הו"ר, both indicating "pregnancy", "parenthood", and similar notions in the same semantic field. The legendary figure of Hagar, he asserts, probably originated in the matriarchal Libyan tribe of Hawara (corrupted sometimes to Hagara), which bequeathed a trace of its existence to the Hoggar/Ahaggar highland in modern-day Algeria. The Hawara's totem was a snake, which Horon identifies as

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<sup>148</sup> See also: Gesenius 1906:1035; Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:1576-1577.

evidence of an ethno-cultural connection with the Levitic mythical sphere (Moses and Aharon were both symbolized as snakes), where the figures of Ishmael and Levi's brother Shimon also belonged (Belyaev 1969:60, translator's footnote; Horon 1974:117-119; 1976b:227-230; 2000:228-241).

Horon thus lets his reader understand that the Hagar and Ishmael myth arose in a similar way to other North-African Hebrew myths that later merged into the Canaanite Abrahamic mythology, except that the former came to occupy a prominent place in the Arab mytho-history. Horon argues that this was quite a late development, since nomadic (Bedouin) Arabs cannot be identified as a separate group before the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, while the Ishmael myth is certainly much older. Moreover, he says, in ancient Arabic literature the "sons of Ismail" denoted those migrating towards Arabia from the north-west (that is, from the Land of Kedem), and not an autochthonous peninsular element. In conclusion Horon (2000:226-228) says that the reason the myth rose in prominence, eventually transposing Ishmael from North Africa to Arabia, was probably the Prophet Muhammad's legendary descent from the Ishmaelites. Thus he suggests a close intellectual link between Islamic and Arabic mytho-history, which is crucial for his attack on the political tenets of modern Pan-Arabism.

The Prophet's activity is classified by Horon as an example of the "militant Judaism" variety that became relatively widespread in the first centuries CE. At the onset of Muhammad's preaching the Jews were prominent in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly along its southern and northern rims (Kingdom of Himyar and Canaan respectively), and therefore, Horon says, Muhammad preached initially to the Jews, imitating some of their traditions, such as directing his prayers towards

Jerusalem<sup>149</sup>. The first Islamic community is labelled a "crypto-Judaic sect" by Horon (1958:412): "primitive Islam can be defined as an exiguous form of Judaism grafted onto local pagan traditions and placed within easier reach of the Bedouin mentality", he argues. It is only when the Jews of Yathrib (now known as Madinah) refused to accept Muhammad as their spiritual teacher that the latter broke away from Judaism, going on to found an authentically Arab creed (Horon 1958:411-412; 1964b:502-503; 1965a:115; 2000:57).

Speaking of "Arabic Islam", Horon does not imply a new theological quality (save, perhaps, for the composition of the Quran in Madinah *after* Muhammad's death [Horon 1958:418]<sup>150</sup>), but merely that the new religion preached mainly to Bedouins, making the Arabian Peninsula its stronghold. However, he adds, purely Arabic Islam did not last long: by organizing Bedouin booty forays into the Land of Kedem Muhammad's successors took advantage of the political and military vacuum formed there as a result of the protracted Persian-Byzantine wars, thus expanding their area of influence almost inadvertently. Horon claims that this is the true explanation for the unusual swiftness of the Arab conquests, noting at the same time that that when faced with a more formidable enemy outside the Land of Kedem, like the Berber Jews, the Arabs' military advances slowed down considerably. He ridicules the historians

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<sup>149</sup> By claiming this Horon omits the possibility that the *first* Muslim direction of prayer (*qibla*) was the Meccan holy site of Qa'abah, which subsequently changed to Jerusalem and *then* reverted back (Wensinck nd), as well as the Qa'abah's pre-Islamic pagan significance. As to Mecca, Horon attributes the toponym to southern-Semitic, but not Arab, sources (Belyaev 1969:87, translator's footnote).

<sup>150</sup> This echoes Horon's observation that the Bible in its current form, or major parts of it, was composed after the Hebrew civilization's demise (see section 3.5).

"infatuated by the Arab mirage" who saw in the Arab "miraculous" military successes a re-enactment of the conquest of Canaan by the sons of Israel (Alraïd 1931i:8).

Horon observes that the transfer of the Muslim Caliphate's capital outside Arabia, first to Damascus under the Umayyad dynasty (which he describes as an Arabo-Syro-Greek kingdom) and then to Baghdad<sup>151</sup>, symbolized the resuscitation of the old Persian Empire in a renewed Islamic shape and the complete loss by early Islam of its Bedouin-Arab uniqueness. By that time the Arabs were already becoming overwhelmed, both numerically *and* culturally, by the newly-converted Muslims who used their new religion, as asserted by Horon (1958:414, 415, 416, emphasis mine), to re-establish their primacy in the Muslim world: "the triumph of Islam... signified... the victory of provincial, indigenous elements over the foreign Arabs; Islam, far from signifying the Arabization of Africa and the Orient, was... the means by which the Africans and Orientals *got rid* of the Arabs; the... neophytes... created international Islam and thereby defeated Arabism". On a different occasion but a similar note, Horon states that the Islamic invasion of south-west Europe by recently-Islamized Berbers actually signified the return to the Iberian Peninsula of the Hamito-Semitic influence that had been extinguished after Hannibal's downfall (AGH 1950b:613).

The Arabian Peninsula, Horon concludes, declined as a result into provincial insignificance, while the Muslim Empire became a huge and precarious web of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural denominations, often prone to (sometimes quite ferocious) internecine fighting, and perfected the caste/*millet* system, inherited from the Persians and which survived into Horon's lifetime. This societal organization is likened by

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<sup>151</sup> Horon remarks that this was a Persian name, ignoring the fact that the city established in 762 CE near the village of Baghdad had a clearly Arabic name, *Madinat as-Salam* (*City of Peace*).

Horon to Latin Christendom – a typically medieval patchwork of semi-autonomous communities and tribes, united only by faith (quite incompletely so, bearing in mind the various heterodox sects of Islam and the enduring non-Muslim denominations) and the literary Arabic sacral tongue. For Horon this is a demonstrably non-national pre-modern reality, in that the primary allegiance is given to one's own group rather than to an abstract political structure like the state (Horon 1958:412-418; 1964b:503-506; 1965a:115-116; 1970:12, 16, 24-30, 88-89; 2000:57-58).

The Arabs' minority status in present-day Islamic societies (not exceeding 15%, according to Horon) allows him to draw a peculiar distinction between Arabic-speakers on the one hand and Arabs proper, or true Arabs, on the other. He conceives the former as the autochthonous inhabitants of the Muslim-conquered lands, who converted to Islam and adopted the Arabic language. It was they, Horon continues, who contributed most to the splendour of classical Arabic culture, retaining all the same a living memory of their non-Arabic and non-Islamic legacy. True Arabs, as Horon defines them, are the original inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula (or, to be more exact, its central part), the desert-roaming Bedouins and their progeny.

According to Horon, true Arabs persist in a pre-modern tribal framework and have no understanding or interest in modern nationalism, let alone an Arab one (they are also quite indifferent to faith, he adds, but anyway constitute a mere 1% of all Muslims worldwide) (Gourevitch 1952:14, 17; Horon 1953:4; 1957:4; 1958:411, 418-419; 1964b:506; 1970:14, 22, 26, 42). Horon's determinist methodology is displayed with full force in the above argumentation, not only in its environmental aspect (one cannot be a true Arab outside of Arabia), but also in its socio-cultural aspect (true Arabs by the very nature of their Bedouin way of life are incapable of supra-tribal solidarity).

Notably, Horon's classification of true Arabs owes a lot to the Arabic socio-philological tradition, which admired the Bedouins as the "pure Arabs" and whose primary exponent was the great Islamic medieval scholar Ibn Haldoun (1989:91-122), whom Horon (1958:417) readily cites.

The Arabs' factual history and contemporary socio-cultural reality, as presented by Horon, stand in stark contradiction to their image in Arab nationalist ideology. This ideology exploits several myths of origin that Horon seeks to undermine; in particular, the closely connected conceptions of the Arabian Peninsula as the Semites' ethno-cultural cradle (which by implication portrays the Arab Bedouins as the "unspoilt" perennial brothers of the modern-day inhabitants of the Middle East, including the Jews) and of the Arabic language as the oldest of the Semitic languages. Both are utterly baseless, Horon argues. We saw above that he dated the emergence of the Arab Bedouin culture to the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, when the Hebrew civilization was at its prime, hence the latter could not take its origins from the Bedouins; as for the theory of the Semitic languages' Arabian origin, he flatly rejects it as defying all linguistic and archaeological evidence. Those languages, Horon asserts, developed to the north-west of Arabia, that is, in the Hebrew-Mediterranean cultural sphere.

Arabic, he states, *was* of course indigenous to the Peninsula, which merely proves its *peripheral* status in the Semito-Hamitic linguistic area, both in terms of territory and time. Nonetheless, he laments, the theory became popular, due to its attractiveness as a romantic-orientalistic myth and to its usefulness as a political device<sup>152</sup>. Horon sees the causes of this ominous popularity in the primacy of the philological paradigm in

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<sup>152</sup> In this capacity, the theory was promulgated by some Arab intellectuals like the Lebanese thinker Edmond Rabbath (Schaebler 2007:184-185).

19<sup>th</sup>-century European ethnography, which uncritically transferred its notions onto what it termed the Arab World (a misnomer from the very start, he claims, since most of the "Arab countries" are located outside Arabia proper), in blatant disregard of its variegated cultural and linguistic make-up<sup>153</sup>. The idea that ethnic belonging can be determined by sweeping linguistic identification is denounced by Horon as racist and anti-Semitic. The literary Arabic language, he asserts, fulfils a role not unlike that of Latin in medieval Europe: that is, of a sacral non-spoken language (Horon emphatically insists that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic literary renaissance, the *Nahda*, had no national undertones or effects). Accordingly, he says, the only "Arab unity" really possible is indeed a linguistic one, which by his definition is inherently non-national: otherwise, the "Arabs" exhibit no cohesive properties whatsoever (Alraïd 1931b:5; Gourevitch 1952:13; Horon 1953:4; 1958:418; 1964b:505-506; 1966c:171, 178-180; 1970:16, 34-35, 44, 70; 2000:129, 135-137, 227, 367-368). "The theory is false", he finishes with a warning, "and its proper place is in the annals of European Romanticism from the previous century, and not in contemporary informed criticism. It would have made no sense to argue against it, had it not been meanwhile transformed into a political propaganda-tool" (Horon 1966c:179; 2000:136).

The political ideology employing this tool is, in Horon's opinion, none other than Pan-Arabism, whose very name suggests a widely-encompassing range of linguistic and geographic references in defiance of the "Canaanite" environmental concept of national identity. Horon identifies its origins in a sinister alliance struck between European imperialist interests in the Middle East and local petty careerism

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<sup>153</sup> Recall Horon's general aversion to European conceptual tools, ostensibly devoid of "national outlook" (section 3.1).

(intellectual and political alike), which was looking for a new anchor after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its cosy millet system. Most of the local early adherents of Pan-Arabism, Horon states, were not of true Arab stock, and many were non-Muslims<sup>154</sup>, seeking a new cohesive framework in a vision of an Arabic cultural-political unity. The result was, in Horon's words (1964b:518), a "strange mixture of eastern and western imperialism, oil interests, Muslim lords' ignorance and Islamic princes' and tyrants' vanity, inciting a mob of dubious 'Arabs'", but enjoying no authentic mass constituency.

Horon points his finger of blame at the British as those who did the most to foment the reductionist "false" image of the Middle East as a uniform Arabo-Islamic universe in order to fan the flames of the Pan-Arabist ideology. While he acquits the French of this charge in the eastern Mediterranean (Horon is generally more lenient towards France, which based its colonial rule on the exploitation of local ethno-cultural diversities, making it in his eyes more sensitive to the actual make-up of the Land of Kedem), he admonishes them for making the same "error" in North Africa, resulting in the antagonisation of the indigenous Berbers and the loss of Algeria (Horon 1957:4; 1970:92-94). Horon, we must remember, often made his Francophilia public, also (perhaps especially) when it had geopolitical or strategic implications. For this reason he lent his wholehearted support to the French in Algeria in the mid-1950s, terming the FLN rebellion "a foreign invasion by Pan-Arabist imperialism" (Horon 1957:2). This particular standpoint throws a light on Horon's general position on national liberation: it appears that he did not perceive national sovereignty as the

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<sup>154</sup> Horon attributes the *dhimmi*'s (non-Muslims') Pan-Arabist zeal to their old desire to assimilate with the Muslim majority, comparing it to the Jewish assimilation drive in Europe and America, triggered by what he believes was an "inferiority complex" (Horon 1964b:508).

supreme and absolute value. National independence was dear to the Young Hebrews only insofar as it was attained on the basis of principles they regarded as progressive, such as secularism and liberalism. With the French professing those values and facing a Pan-Arabist and Islamic-influenced mutiny, it was natural for Horon to support the former. He clearly preferred an "enlightened" colonialism to an illiberal independence.

In contrast, Horon says, the origins of the British method lay in India, where they first learned to manipulate Muslim needs and wishes against the non-Muslim majority, by mobilizing or bribing local Muslim subcontractors. Thereafter the British applied this to the Middle East, having intervened in its affairs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to keep at bay French and Zionist advances and to secure their strategic superiority in the Suez Canal area. To this end, he continues, they did not hesitate to introduce into the Land of Kedem a concept foreign to its inhabitants' medieval-like system of ideas and values – that of an Arab unified world. By disregarding local cultural and ethno-linguistic as well as geophysical and strategic realities, and cynically playing their local agents against each other, the British attempted to reshape the area to suit their objectives:

...the English fostered since 1915 the crude legend of Lawrence's Arabia, of a "Revolt in the Desert" which never took place. What actually happened was that England found stooges among an obscure Arab Sunnite dynasty from Mecca, the Hashemites, whom she imposed or tried to impose as kings and princes upon alien lands: Upon a heterogenous [sic] Iraq... created so as to ensure British control over the Kirkuk-Persian Gulf oilfields; Upon Syria also, a scheme foiled by the French when they expelled Lawrence's protégé, the Hashemite prince Faysal; Upon Transjordan, the larger part of Palestine, which was torn away from it... in order to check the growth of Zionist colonization, although Zionism provided the sole legal and moral basis for the entire British Palestinian Mandate. When the senior Hashemite, the "king" of

Hejaz, proved too fickle, he was chased away by another royal puppet of England... Ibn-Saud, the Bedouin leader of the puritanical Wahabite [sic] sect... During and after World War II, Churchill conceded his Saudi fief... to Roosevelt; while [Anthony] Eden became the main architect of an Arab League (Horon 1957:6).

Horon concludes that the foreign intervention yielded a Middle East sliced up into ramshackle statelets (Israel included). These were *deliberately* delimited so as to remain unstable and dependent upon extra-regional powers, whether France and Britain in the past or the USSR and USA at the present time, and eliciting no authentic local patriotism (Gourevitch 1952:24-26; Horon 1953:4; 1957; 1964b:507-509; 1965a:118; 1970:30-33, 46-47, 92-99; 2000:60).

So, Horon maintains, this bastard son of European intelligentsia and British colonial designs, Pan-Arabism, is enmeshed in a web of internal contradictions, which he undertakes to disentangle one by one. Its greatest weakness, he argues, is its inherent foreignness to the area it pretends to unite and represent: the vague concept of an "Arab world" is not based on a territorial national outlook, as it prefers linguistic identification to geographical<sup>155</sup>. Worse than that, this identification is based on literary Arabic ("a half-dead language, renewed recently for educational, administrative, and journalistic purposes" [Horon 1970:16]), suppressing local indigenous and Arabic-derived vernaculars, which are for the most part mutually unintelligible, thus obstructing the imagined Arab linguistic kinship. Furthermore, Horon insists, the areas where various versions of Arabic predominate are in fact much thinner than their perception in Western and Israeli popular consciousness (less than half of the whole "Arab world"), and he even draws up a map of the spread of the

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<sup>155</sup> For more on the role of language politics in Pan-Arab nationalism (and its internal tensions), see: Suleiman 2003.

Arabic language, juxtaposing it to the geographical span of other languages and dialects spoken in the "Arab world" (Horon 1970:16-21; figs. 17-18). Another principal weakness of Pan-Arabism identified by Horon is its organic link to Islam, a religion that most of Pan-Arabism's alleged adherents profess and which supplies it with a historiographical base and most of its socio-political terminology (in one place Horon actually accuses Pan-Arabism of serving as a "front" for a makeshift Pan-Islamic Caliphate) (Gourevitch 1952:25; Horon 1953:4; 1964a:182; 1964b:510). However, as argued by Horon, the Islamic (or any monotheistic) social organization is essentially inimical to modern national society by constituting a web of pre-modern communities organized in a strict hierarchical and discriminatory order<sup>156</sup>. Further on, not only does Pan-Arabism's historiographical foundation fail to provide a suitable "golden age" for an authentic national idea, whereas it puts the multi-ethnic age of classical Islam at the centre, but it also, Horon asserts, contradicts Arabic historical writings on the origins of the Arabs and "Ishmael's sons" by adopting the European mode of worshipping the "pristine past" (exemplified in this case by the Bedouins). Exposing yet another Pan-Arabist paradox, Horon asserts that the Bedouins' supposed indifference to nationalism makes them agents of dubious value (or even enemies of it), so that Pan-Arabism's actual backbone is the meagre Arabophone Sunni and Christian urban intelligentsia. Other ethno-cultural groups in the "Arab world", he

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<sup>156</sup> For a criticism of the determinist view of the incompatibility between Islam and modern ethnic or national identity, see: Gerber 2007. This view nevertheless remains popular and a variation of it is professed by none other than Anthony Smith (1994), who writes that certain ethno-religious societies might encounter difficulties during their transition into nationhood, since the pre-modern symbolic system tying their members together can be strong enough to hamper the development of a modern secular national identity. Smith uses as his evidence Jews and Arabs and, incidentally, one of his sources is Joel Carmichael, a man intellectually and politically close to Horon (see: Carmichael 1957, which repeats almost *verbatim* Horon's arguments against Islam and Pan-Arabism).



Figure 17: Sedentary Arabic-speakers' spread in the Middle East (source: Horon 1970:19).

comments, pose a direct challenge to Pan-Arabism's unitary vision since by their mere existence they subvert the idea of a common Arab heritage. This ethnolinguistic diversity, Horon claims, is being deliberately obfuscated for ideological reasons, *both* by Pan-Arabism *and* Zionism.

Moreover, Horon argues, the actual numbers of possibly nationally-inclined

Arabs are much lower than presented in the Pan-Arab propaganda.

Fighting what he calls "the 100-million myth"

(referring to the supposed Arab

population of the Middle

East as advocated by

Pan-Arabism), Horon

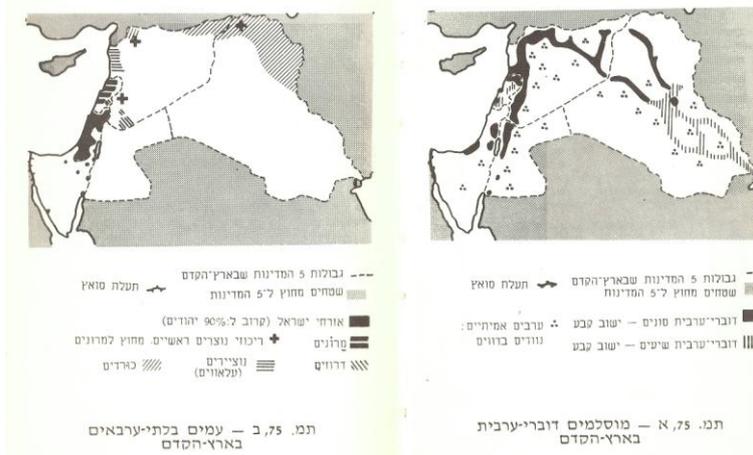


Figure 18: Muslim Arabic-speakers (right) contrasted to non-Arabs (left) in the Land of Kedem (source: Horon 1970:110-111).

sets to uncover the inaccuracies and deliberate exaggerations that purportedly abound in censuses all over the "Arab world". He proposes an alternative "Arab statistics", whereby the "real" number of Arabic-speakers does not exceed 55 million. These millions, Horon claims, are much less widespread than assumed, but are interspersed instead among a much greater diversity of non-Arabs disinclined towards Pan-Arab

nationalism, or lost altogether in the immensity of the scarcely populated or depopulated deserts<sup>157</sup>. Horon concludes his statistical review by stating that the picture of a tiny Israel facing a hostile Arab "ocean" is wholly fictitious. The "Arab world", he observes, is divided into at least four distinct geopolitical zones (the Maghreb, the Nile basin, the Land of Kedem, and the Arabian Peninsula; fig. 19), each of which is torn between several foci of power, often at odds with one another. Returning to the Land of Kedem, Horon lists its main (and contending) foci of Pan-Arabism: Damascus, Baghdad, Amman, and Beirut, all of which he describes as extremely precarious due to the large numbers of non-Sunnis in the Land. Pan-Arabism failed to win a wide indigenous support base, Horon points out, since there exist no authentic national identities in the wider "Arab world" and in the Land of Kedem, save for the incipient Hebrew identity in Israel and perhaps in Lebanon, both of which are located outside of Pan-Arabism's direct sphere of influence (Gourevitch 1952:9-10, 14, 16-17, 24-26; Horon 1953:5; 1957; 1964b:509-517; 1965b:154-155; 1970:4-49, 124; 2000:227).



Figure 19: Contemporary foci of Pan-Arabism: Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Algeria (source: Horon 1970:49).

Although Horon's treatment of Arabs "proper" and "improper" is tainted with

determinism and even essentialism, reflecting his standpoint on "objectivity" versus

<sup>157</sup> Compare alternative "Arab" statistics by Horon for 1952 (Gourevitch 1952:29-30) and 1970 (Horon 1970:10).

"subjectivity" in history (he depicts the Arabs as mostly passive recipients of colonialist conspiracies), it is nevertheless remarkable. We should keep in mind that Horon struggled to expose Pan-Arabism as void of positive content at the peak of its successes, during the 1950s and the 1960s. Given its post-1967 decline, one cannot but appreciate in retrospect Horon's far-sightedness (which does not necessarily mean subscribing to his particular mode of argumentation against Pan-Arabism).

What then are the true aims of Pan-Arabism, this "nationalism *sans* nation" (Horon 1970:48), which is "short on history but large over space" (1964b:502)? Upholding the homogeneous ideal of a unitary "Arab world" imported from European Orientalism indicates, according to Horon, a desire to suppress all other aspirations and ideologies that might undermine the fantasy of Pan-Arab singularity. In Horon's words (1970:48, emphasis mine): "the Pan-Arabist slogan does not conform to the essence of the *allegedly* national sentiments widespread in the various homeland-countries... of the world called Arab, which the Pan-Arabist schemes of unification strive to dissolve and obliterate as 'homelands'". This shows that Horon perceived Pan-Arabism as an *internally-directed* imperialism, whose objective was to impose a single social, political, and cultural platform from the Maghreb to Iraq. Such a perception leads to the conclusion that Pan-Arabism is the "Arab" peoples' greatest adversary because it strives not only to forge a political framework repellent to them but also to force upon them an apparently non-existent identity, thereby stifling any potential territorial-linguistic ethnic identification based on a defined geophysical space and an autochthonous vernacular. Horon believes that by attempting to crossbreed religious and linguistic affiliations, Pan-Arabism becomes a barrier to the emergence of a liberal-territorial nationalism in the Middle East (this is why it

attacked French positions in North Africa so violently, France being the champion of this kind of nationalism) and promotes what Horon sees as a backward, oppressive, and overreaching socio-cultural organization. Pan-Arabism's primary role, as interpreted by Horon, is to stifle the emergence of a national outlook in any part of the "Arab world" (Horon 1953; 1957:2; 1970:48).

In Horon's opinion, of all the states of the Land of Kedem, the two that make up Canaan, Israel and Lebanon, are the most advanced culturally and economically. They have the best chances of developing into *staatsnation* and are the least of all "Arab", keeping their Arab-Sunni population (also by force, in post-1967 Israel) remote from Pan-Arabist influences. Therefore Pan-Arabism directs its thrust primarily at Canaan, and in so doing unwillingly serves geography's deterministic logic: being the pivotal part of the Land of Kedem and the most resistant to Pan-Arabism, Canaan *could not* but arouse its strongest ire. As can be inferred from Horon's writings, these two states constitute an alternative model of social and national organization (faulty as it may be; see previous section), slicing the "Arab world" in two. For this reason, Horon continues, Pan-Arabist regimes will never accede to the existence of a non-Arab polity in Pan-Arabism's purported zone of domination. Any attempt to come to reason with it amounts to *naïveté* at best, since the most a Pan-Arabist regime might propose is for Israel to become an ethno-religious autonomy under its auspices, "a Lebanon for the Jews" (Horon 1964b:501; 1965b:154).

Horon concludes that the decisive battle between Pan-Arabism and its opponents that tend to liberal-territorial nationalism must take place in the Land of Kedem. Such a battle will determine more than the political course the Land should take; it will decide whether it will survive as a separate geopolitical unit or be swallowed up by

the "Arab world" (Horon 1953:5; 1957:5; 1970:42). It is worthy of note that Horon also argues that there exists a latent alliance of interests between Pan-Arabism and Zionism. Both subscribe to the image of a small and alien Israel within a hostile (and entirely homogeneous) "sea" of Arabs; both originate outside the Land of Kedem, serving as "foreign pressure" agents; both rely on a non-national foundational myth; finally, both subvert emergent national outlooks, blocking the path to the Hebrew renaissance (Horon 1965b:156; 1970:124). This way, Pan-Arabism and Zionism constitute a mirror reflection of each other – yet another argument buttressing Horon's call to dispose of both ideologies, along with the socio-political systems they have managed to construct upon the tormented backs of the inhabitants of the Land of Kedem.

#### 4.2.2. Who are the "Arabized"?

We saw that the systematic differentiation between "true" and "untrue" Arabs is a central tenet of Horon's political thinking. Let us now examine the place that Horon accords the "untrue" Arabs in his picture of the socio-cultural make-up of the Middle East and his geopolitical programme for the region.

Sedentary Sunni Arabic-speakers apart, Horon presents all other denominations and communities of the eastern Mediterranean as either potential or actual opponents of Pan-Arabism. For the sake of his political argument he quite indiscriminately lumps together almost all Middle Eastern minorities (though some of them constitute majorities in their respective areas [Horon 1964b:516]), irrespective of religious, ethnic, or social background and affiliation. Such a common denominator is both *deterministic* and *negative*: what brings all these groups together in Horon's eyes is their non-Sunni identity, which presumably entails an inclination to oppose Pan-Arabism.

This inclination is assumed by Horon to stem from the non-Sunnis' hereditary memory of their pre-Islamic origins, which, he believes, may inspire them to pursue a political and cultural order other than the Pan-Arabist unitary vision. There exists however no exact correlation between adherence to non-Sunni faith and anti-Pan-Arabist standpoint (and vice versa), as Horon himself implicitly admits. For instance, the Sunni Bedouins, despite Pan-Arabism's according them the role of the "authentic folk" organically tied to their land, emerge in Horon's analysis as hostile, or at least useless, to Pan-Arabism, by virtue of their reputed lack of attachment to modern nationalism. The hard core of adherents of Pan-Arabism is the thin layer of urban intelligentsia, which Horon is reluctant to identify as "genuinely" Arab. Rather, he

says, this class constitutes a mixture of various ethnic elements, both indigenous and migratory, that switched to Arabic after the arrival of Islam. Hence, in Horon's methodology, authentic Arab descent combined with a profession of Sunni Islam would not *automatically* correspond to an allegiance to Pan-Arabism, though, as he explains, such a correspondence is crucial to the Pan-Arabist ideological structure and, in a reversed manner, to his own politics. As with Zionist ideology and its system of concepts, Horon attempts in the case of Arab nationalism to expose once again a glaring rift between the ideological rhetoric and the "facts on the ground".

Accordingly, Horon states that many prominent Pan-Arabists belong to the huge demographic category that he names "the Arabized" (*arbaim* in the original Hebrew, sing. *arbai*). This word is a neologism, probably coined by Yonatan Ratosh, who used it liberally in his own political writings. As the linguist Michal Ephratt (Ratosh's sister-in-law) explains (2005:91-92), the Hebrew affix "i" was introduced by Ratosh to denote "pseudo". *Arbai* would thus be rendered as "pseudo-Arab"<sup>158</sup>, that is, one upon whom identification with the broadly-conceived Arab identity had been forced at some point in the past and which that person had then passed to his or her descendants. These in time came to form huge ethnic groups, Arabic by tongue but *not* by origin.

Reviewing the area to which Pan-Arabism lays claim from the Maghreb to Iraq, Horon lists both the "Arabized" and the non-Arabic-speaking communities and minorities opposed to Arab nationalism either outwardly or latently, and appends a statistical estimate of their numbers. In North Africa these are chiefly the Berbers who, though professing Islam, are of indigenous stock and, historically, are partially

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<sup>158</sup> Horon explains the word *arbai* as "Arab-like", "quasi-Arab" or "self-titled Arab" (Horon 1970:4).

related to the Canaanites of Carthage; the area, Horon notes, is also inhabited by local African peoples of Semito-Hamitic origin. In Egypt the most prominent minority are the Christian Copts, to whom Horon (1964a) devotes a separate short article, explaining that historically and culturally they are related to the ancient Hebrew Canaanites. The Copts, Horon writes, are Egypt's most ancient and original inhabitants. They are also the country's eponyms<sup>159</sup> and the ancestors of its Muslim majority, which, like the Copts, more readily subscribes to Egyptian territorial nationalism than to a Pan-Arab slogan. Indeed, Horon, as well as other Young Hebrews, speaks warmly of the "Pharaonic" Egyptian nationalism, promulgated since the 1920s especially by the Copt Salama Musa (see section 5.3 below). He sees in it a potential ally for Hebrew nationalism and wishes the Copts perseverance in withstanding the "Pan-Arabist assault" led by Egypt's president Gamal Abd an-Nasser (more an enemy of his own people than of anybody else, Horon notes), by *politicizing* their refusal to become "Arabs".

In western Asia the most prominent ethnic minority is the Kurdish nation, which is heterogeneous both by religion and language: there are Sunnis, Shiites, and Yazidis among the Kurds, as well as Kurdish-, Arabic-, and Persian-speakers. Horon is clearly supportive of Kurdish national aspirations, though he mentions that Kurdish nationalists probably exaggerate their nation's spread both statistically and geographically. Other significant ethnic minorities he cites are the Christian Armenians and the Muslim Circassians.

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<sup>159</sup> Horon explains that the ethnonym *Copt* comes from *Aegyptos*, which is a Greek form of the ancient Egyptian name *Hi-Kw-Pth*, "Castle of the bull-god Ptah", the earliest name of Egypt's original capital Memphis.

Western Asia, and the Land of Kedem lying within it, is characterized by a religious diversity that is, according to Horon, even greater than the Land's ethnic or linguistic diversity. Of particular importance for Horon are the various Christian churches and denominations, the most significant of which are the Maronites who predominate in Lebanon's population<sup>160</sup>. They are followed by the Druze and the Shiites – the latter forming the largest part of Iraq's population and also being highly influential in Lebanon – and other heterodox communities like the Syrian Nusayris (or Alawites). Horon emphasizes these communities' pre-Arab origins, which for him indicates a Hebrew heritage: Phoenician for the Maronites and Ishmaelite for the Druze (the Nusayris are also regarded by Horon as originating among the Canaanites). This fact, Horon believes, can and *should* become a catalyst for political action against Pan-Arabism (Gourevitch 1952:13-14, 18-20; Horon 1957; 1964a:179, 181-183; 1964b:501; 1965b:158-160; 1970:12-21, 36, 90, 108-131, 140-141; 1976b:255, 258-259; 2000:261, 342).

We cannot rule out the possibility that Horon was aware of the methodological flaws of his indiscriminate classification of all non-Arabs and non-Sunnis as enemies to Pan-Arabism, actual or potential. However, ideologically bent on setting up the Arabs as a "pseudo-nation" against the Middle Eastern minorities as potential nations, he went as far as to argue that some of the Arabized communities, commonly perceived of as religious denominations, in fact possess numerous ethnic attributes, including the Lebanese Maronites and the Shiites, whom Horon calls a "people" (*am*) (Horon

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<sup>160</sup> Horon does not omit lesser churches, like the Melkites, the Assyrians, and the Jacobites or churches of European origin, such as the Protestant or the Orthodox – though he remarks of the former that it is significant only inasmuch as its adherents communicated British influence, while the latter colluded with the Pan-Arabists.

1965b:158, 159; 1970:122). He supports his argument by environmental determinism: during the Islamic reign, he says, many communities that wished to preserve their old identity and traditions, or simply to escape the immanent instability of war-torn Islamdom, fled to remote and isolated areas where they went into forced or selective seclusion. As a result, those minorities developed a strong attachment to their territories, whether ancestral or new, and thus began developing an incipient national outlook. This, Horon hopes, could become the spiritual source of their modern national identity, if the feuding twins of Pan-Arabism and Zionism are ever to be defeated (Horon 1958:417-418).

Going into further detail, Horon states that the geophysical domain of the Maronites and some of the Arabized Shiites is the Lebanon mountain range; as for the Copts, their native realm is obviously the Nile valley. Horon observes of the Copts' latent nationalism that they adopted an Egyptocentric version of Monophysite Christianity and used the ancient Egyptian speech as their liturgical language, contrasting this with what he terms Byzantine Christianity's "universalist tendencies". By the latter he means the monotheistic cosmopolitan disposition that he condemned when explaining the emergence of Judaism under Persian patronage. However, Horon claims that the Copts' religion was ascetic and anti-materialistic, rejecting mundane life without proposing any positive content in its stead. Thus, he regards the Coptic faith as paradoxically fulfilling both pro-national and anti-national functions, since it augments the Copts' territorial identification on the one hand but is unwilling to engage with the material world on the other. Horon's perspective on Coptic Christianity makes it a deficient substitute for the Copts' unique Egyptian national identity, which thereby remains dormant (Horon 1964a:179-180; 1970:36).

The Maronite church also played a significant part in shaping Maronite nationalist aspirations, which, as can be deduced from Horon's writings, are much more advanced than those of the passively-inclined Copts. Moreover, the strong connection between Lebanese Christians and the French is cited by Horon as evidence of the Maronites' progressive role in the Land of Kedem. Horon expresses his admiration for the pro-Western nationalistic powers in Lebanon, referring to the founder of the Phalange party, Pierre Jumayyil, as "one of the greatest men of his country" (Horon 1965b:160). He also notices the Maronites' strong desire to cling to their own piece of territory, even at the cost of giving up part of the land of Lebanon (whose borders were anyway drawn by European colonialists), recalling an event from the closing stages of the 1948 Israeli independence war, when the IDF invaded Lebanon. Some Maronite notables reputedly used the occasion to voice their hope that Israel would annex the Shiite-populated environs of Tyre in the south of the country. Israel refrained from doing so, which Horon condemns (1970:130) as a betrayal of possible allies.

Despite such past "misdeeds", Horon seems to remain highly optimistic. It is his contention that the joined forces of Canaan – meaning Lebanon, Israel, and any other adjacent minority willing to take part – will fulfil what might be termed its "manifest destiny" in the Land of Kedem by launching a liberation war against all imported and hostile ideologies and agencies. Despite Canaan's limited scope ("6 or 7 per cent of the immense area of the five states" [making up the Land of Kedem]) (Gourevitch 1952:22), Horon insists that this is the most advanced part of the Land, culturally, economically, technically, and strategically; it is also the most densely populated (8 million in Horon's day, half of the entire sedentary population of the Land of Kedem,

according to his calculations). No less important, it is the least "Arabized" of the Land's regions, with Arabic-speaking Sunnis comprising no more than a third of its entire population (and a quarter of them are "neutralized", as Horon puts it [1970:114], from active participation in Pan-Arabist politics by being under Israeli rule after 1967). The remaining two-thirds of the population, Horon states, are split into numerous minorities, grouped in several foci of latent or active resistance to Pan-Arabism: Israel, Lebanon, the Nusayri Syrian littoral, and the Druze-dominated mountains in south-west Syria (fig. 20). Since these areas produce "practically all fighting men of value... Kurds, Circassians, Druses; Alawites, Maronites, Assyrians; and last but not least – the Israelis" (Gourevitch 1952:24), the Pan-Arab rulers of the remaining parts of the Land of Kedem will not be able to repel their advance (Gourevitch 1952:22-24; Horon 1970:108-115, 124, 140-141).



**Figure 20: Canaan's population (source: Horon 1970:141).**

#### 4.2.3. Palestine and Palestinians in Horon's perspective

One of arguably the most intriguing, though quite occasional, elements of Horon's discussion of the difference between Arab and Arabized identity is what might be termed "the Palestinian issue". In Horon's day (that is, before 1972) the question of Palestine, in terms of both its historical and contemporary aspects, was discussed relatively infrequently in Israeli mainstream socio-political discourse, as regional-territorial Arab nationalism had not then risen yet to prominence. We have seen how much attention Horon devoted to Pan-Arab nationalism, under whose banner he placed even such an outwardly Arab territorial-nationalist programme as the FLN's demand for an independent Algeria. He simply did not live to see Arab territorial nationalisms, including the Palestinian one, reaching their full force in the post-Nasser age. Therefore, in order to gain a deeper insight into the ways Horon tackled the Palestinian issue we must painstakingly collect his passing references to it, dispersed throughout his writings.

We ought to remember that the Young Hebrews debated the Palestinian issue as early as the 1940s in a way that radically deviated from the Zionist consensus, which, broadly speaking, regarded Palestinian collective aspirations (whether or not acknowledging them as a nation) as entirely incompatible with the goals of the Jewish national ideology. Horon's Israeli-based "Canaanite" colleagues employed the Palestinian question rather instrumentally, above all as a means to attack the Zionist regime in Israel. By doing so, they managed to undermine some of Israel's most revered truths with regard to the course of the 1948 war and the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem. They have devoted growing attention to it since the mid-1960s, when the PLO started to emerge as a serious factor in Middle Eastern politics

(Amir 1991:92-94, 159-160, 162-163, 166-168, 176-179; Bentov 1986a:26-27; 1986b; Eitam 1977; Hever 1994; Notev 1977; Ratosh 1967:12-17, 35-53, 62-68, 70-76, 115-116; Ratosh 1976:61-68, 70-71, 77-78, 83-89, 98-99; Ratosh 1982:75, 81, 91-95, 106, 198). As we will see below, Horon's references to the Palestinians, even before his final move to Israel in 1959, did not deviate significantly from the Young Hebrews' statements on the topic and were similarly iconoclastic with regard to the Zionist consensus.

As explained above, Horon mostly classifies the Arabic-speaking residents of the Land of Kedem as Arabized; the Palestinians obviously constitute no exception. He mentions their alleged Hebrew origins at least twice: "the fellahs of Judea and Samaria... are [mostly] the descendants of the sons of Judah and Israel (Horon 1970:138); ...if we scratch off the thin Islamic dust-layer around Shekhem [Nablus] and Samaria or... Hebron... we will easily identify the permanence of the local culture, ever since the days of forefathers and kings" (Horon 1976b:259). This is consistent with Horon's historiography: the Palestinians are simply the descendants of those indigenous Hebrews who converted initially to Judaism, then to Christianity, and finally to Islam (Horon singles out the Palestinian Christians, in accordance with his preference for the autochthonous churches in the Land of Kedem over the Muslims; see Gur 1976d). His overall picture of the modern Palestinian ethnogenesis is dialectic, since he does not forget the immigration into Canaan of Arabic-speakers from neighbouring countries, especially when attracted by Canaan's speedy economic development in the age of the modern Hebrew revival (Horon 1970:136)<sup>161</sup>. Hence,

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<sup>161</sup> Such a position echoes the Israeli right-wing thesis that those who call themselves Palestinians (or Palestinian refugees) are in fact newcomers, except that the Young Hebrews contend that the Hebrew revival was unconnected to Zionism.

the Palestinians, as all other peoples and communities in the Land of Kedem, are of mixed stock, both indigenous Hebrew and foreign. The political implication of this argument is that Palestinians lack an inherent positive identity (especially as Horon [1964b:509] argues that before 1948 Mandatory Palestine was Pan-Arabism's main bastion, with British acquiescence): being "pseudo-Arabs" of Hebrew origin, the only national identity they can adopt, Horon hints (and other Young Hebrews state openly), is the Hebrew identity. It is therefore the Hebrews' task to attract the Palestinians to the sphere of their cultural-political influence; this is why Horon describes with such satisfaction what he perceives as a gradual coming-together between Israelis and Palestinians after 1967, on both sides of the "Green Line" (Gur 1976c; 1976d).

What this entails for the Palestinians in practice is that they are called upon to dispose of the identity that was ostensibly forced on them and to adopt a new, more "authentic" one. In this process the Palestinian Christians may come to take centre-stage, due to what Horon regards as their almost-natural repugnance towards Pan-Arabism and its Islamic undertones. This, however, is not the only element that might bring Israelis and Palestinians closer in a Hebrew national framework: Horon devotes attention to the refugee problem, aiming to disassemble its destructive potential directed at Israel. Unlike many Israelis, he does not deny that mass population removal took place in 1948 (avoiding the question of its extent), writing in 1952 that "the Israeli method... sometimes amounted to expulsion" (Gourevitch 1952:26, also Horon 1965b:160). Such a statement could be interpreted as a condemnation of the Israeli 1948 wartime and post-war policy, which strove to dispose of as many Arabic-speakers as possible, occasionally by force. It was vociferously denounced by the Israeli-based Young Hebrews, who regarded it as a manifestation of the xenophobic

Jewish Diaspora mentality and the Jews' incapacity to create a genuine national state (Bentov 1986a:26; 1986b:34; Ratosh 1982:92, 95). At the same time, they interpreted the post-1948 Palestinian refugee problem (especially its political aspect) as a Pan-Arabist stratagem to bring Israel down. They suggested instead that if the Palestinians were incorporated and assimilated into Israel, it would defeat Pan-Arabism and shatter the Zionist neo-*millet* system from within (Kuzar 2001:227-228; Ratosh 1967:36, 43-44, 62-68, 74-75, 115-116; 1976:83-89, 98-99).

Horon took the same view, referring more than once to the "Palestinian refugees" in inverted commas, as if casting doubt upon the (political) validity of such a designation (Horon 1970:124, 128). Additionally, he explained that their numbers were severely inflated, in line with his unmasking of "sham" Arab statistics (Horon 1964b:515).

Horon believed that the problem could be solved by dismantling the refugee camps and incorporating their dwellers into Israel as full and equal citizens (Gur 1976f:191)<sup>162</sup>. If such a policy was implemented, the Young Hebrews claimed, the process already taking place naturally beyond the "Green Line" (Gur 1976c; 1976d) would merely be institutionalized, opening the door to a much wider restructuring of the area, a development that would eventually encompass the entire Land of Kedem.

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<sup>162</sup> Horon spoke of the Gaza Strip refugee camps, but other Young Hebrews made this demand more sweeping.

### 4.3. The path to the "Kedem Union"

Having analysed Horon's vision of the *past* and the conclusions arising from it that pertain politically to the *present*, we can now direct our attention to Horon's programme for the *future*. If somewhat less elaborate than that of his Young Hebrew colleagues, it is all the same audacious, far-reaching, and radical in its possible effects and implications. Its underlying motive is the transformation of the "Land of Kedem" from a *geohistorical* to an active *geopolitical* notion – and that entails a truly profound revolution, whose outline is set out below.

Possibly aware of the slim hope of realizing his programme in the near future (and perhaps also relying on the deterministic "logic of history" that was supposed to "do the job" sooner or later), Horon initially suggested quite an undefined outline for the liberation of the Land of Kedem by the Hebrews and their allies:

The alternative should be described as the Hebrew or Semitic renaissance of the Levant, that is the rebirth of Hebrewland, of the Levant and Euphrates country. Any of these expressions will do, *provided they are taken geographically and historically, not in any racial or sectarian sense*. This renaissance is no mere dream – it is starting already, from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, in ancient Canaan or Phoenicia, in present-day Israel and Lebanon. The extraordinary comeback of little Israel, the stubborn resistance of little Lebanon to Arab leveling [sic], make sense only if they are the conclusion as well as the beginning of *something bigger than they themselves*. Their success shows once more that the roots of reality, in this ruined country, go deeper than the Islamic layer, deeper even than Christendom and Judaism, to the rock-bottom of the Hebrew, the Phoenician, the Semitic – the ever-classical Orient. And both *history and geography make it quite certain* that the new growth from the old roots shall spread to all the area of the Levant, up to and beyond the Euphrates (Gourevitch 1952:28, emphases mine).

Writing a year later for the Israeli public, Horon is more explicit in laying bare his guiding assumptions for the future:

...The conditions necessary for a constructive solution of the common problems suffered by the Near East and northern Africa... are as follows:

- (1) Objective and true information about the region and a keen understanding of its difficulties...;
- (2) Acknowledging the basic fact that there are no Arab nations outside Arabia and that nationality in general takes root in this area only now;
- (3) Encouraging tendencies leading to national consolidation and organization within territorial (geohistorical) frameworks...;
- (4) An open and keen separation between religion and state and a joint objection by all good-willed people to any kind of theocracy;
- (5) A continuous assistance by all free people from beyond the sea;
- (6) Above all: without waiting for external assistance the peoples (*amim*)... must cooperate according to the principles of self- and mutual help in order to face the Pan-Arabist menace and the external forces that will necessarily follow in its footsteps and are possibly even more perilous (Horon 1953:5).

These passages can help us to infer some of the general principles that underscore Horon's vision of the future:

- The national liberation of the Land of Kedem must be based on a territorial conceptualization of the nations' right to self-determination (also Horon 1957:4).
- Such conceptualization can be formulated only when based on a "correct" historiographical image, which explains the age-long connection between nations and their lands; the more the Hebrew past is studied, the stronger a national outlook will be enhanced in the present, becoming a driving force for political and strategic initiative (also Horon 2000:345).

- Pursuing a national liberation in the Land of Kedem means striving to attain a harmonious unity between the Land's geographical reality, its political reality, and its peoples' mental horizons; Land, State, and National Identity must, roughly speaking, become one (also Horon 1965b:153).
- With national outlook re-established all across the Land of Kedem, any foreign anti-national ideologies and agencies, such as Zionism and Pan-Arabism, or foreign imperialist pressure factors like the USA and the USSR, will be driven away; local societies and governments will no longer serve as their pawns.
- The borders delimited in the Land of Kedem by European imperialist forces and maintained by their Cold War heirs and local subcontractors disregard historical, cultural, linguistic, and geographical realities; they therefore *must* be violated if the Land of Kedem is to shake off its colonial legacy (also Horon 1959:339; 1965b:157; 1970:54, 104).
- This geopolitical dynamic must start with Canaan, so that Canaan's cultural, strategic, and economic primacy will become political, allowing it to fulfil the liberatory potential it is destined to fulfil in the Land of Kedem (also Gourevitch 1952:24).
- In effect, "what is certain is that a significant part of our population will remain non-Jewish" (Gur 1976c:323).

Particularly remarkable in this context is Horon's contempt towards Israeli statehood and its borders, in contrast to certain Zionist (and post-Zionist) views of the Jewish state as a "goal attained". Since Hebrew liberation is to unfold in the entire Land of

Kedem and Israel's artificial borders are a colonial legacy that is inimical to a genuine national existence (also in physical terms<sup>163</sup>) and suppresses the Hebrew national outlook, Horon insisted that Israel should not elicit any authentic patriotism, since "we nurse no special sentiment towards 'Palestine', even with 'Transjordan' included, as delimited by the English intruder according to his needs, negotiating and competing with the French intruder" (Horon 1965b:157). A Jewish "ghetto state" like Israel lacks, according to Horon, any chance of survival (Gur 1976e:154); therefore it is legitimate only insofar as it constitutes "a transitional stage in a nation-formation process" (Horon 1965a:118; 2000:59; also Gourevitch 1952:28; Horon 1965b:156).

Following Horon's reasoning further, for Israel (and Canaan) to become the bridgehead of the Hebrew liberation war, a profound internal transformation is imperative beforehand, which would repair Israel's shortcomings as a self-declared "Jewish state" (reviewed above). Horon outlines in several places some of the components that he envisions within this transformation: the deconstruction of the socio-sectarian "ghettos" for non-Ashkenazi Jews (which basically entails the abandonment of Ben-Gurion's population dispersion policy) (Gur 1976f:191); the introduction of a new educational system that would reaffirm liberal-secular values instead of Jewish-Zionist self-seclusionary indoctrination, instil an admiration for the Hebrew national past, and promote an attachment to the Land of Kedem's vast territories *beyond* Israel's existing boundaries (Horon 1965b:161); "a **separation** of religion and state, an **equality** of duties and rights regardless of faith and communal belonging, a unitary secular **school**, a common **draft**" (Horon 1970:150); lastly, which Horon states less openly, an annexation of all the territories beyond the "Green

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<sup>163</sup> See: Horon 1965b:153, where his argumentation comes perilously close to the *Lebensraum* rhetoric.

Line", with Israeli citizenship granted indiscriminately to their inhabitants. This is supposed to undo the Israeli neo-*millet* system, and Horon pins his faith on such local organizations in the Land that will in due time become the avant-garde of this liberatory thrust. He refers in particular to the Young Hebrews, though making no mention of his own relation to them or to his role in the shaping of their ideology (Gourevitch 1952:27).

Israel's de-Zionisation should, in Horon's vision, become the first stage in a centrifugal dynamic that would burst out from Canaan and engulf the entire Land of Kedem. Shortly after 1967 Horon (1970:132), thinking somewhat wishfully, wrote that "any probable frontier change would be directed to further enlargement [of Israel]", seeing in the Six-Day War an opportunity to launch the process. To some extent, he had foreseen this war two years earlier (Horon 1965b) as resulting from the Zionist-Pan-Arabist deadlock, and he hoped that its outbreak would become an occasion to amend the "errors" of 1948 (and also of the 1956 Sinai war, which the Young Hebrews saw as a "missed opportunity"). In others words, if the 1948 war is regarded by the Jews as their independence war, the upcoming war must be the war for Hebrew independence. And this would mean a war not *against* the "Arabized" but *with* them and on *their behalf*.

The geopolitical rearrangement of the Land of Kedem, Horon points out, must begin with the adjustment of Israeli borders to the geophysical conditions in its nearest vicinity, that is, regaining the three banks of the Jordan in the north and east, and reaching Israel's southern natural limits along the Suez Canal by appropriating the Sinai Peninsula (Horon 1965b:153; 1970:52, 142). Furthermore, he states, a regime change from Pan-Arabist to liberal-national in Egypt and the states constituting the

Land of Kedem (with Egypt now "relieved" of Sinai whose control of it, Horon believed, was constantly fanning Egypt's expansionist desires eastwards [Gur 1976g:166]) would allow Israel to forge a web of regional strategic alliances to roll the liberation march forward. This is how Horon envisioned the future before 1967:

First and foremost, we must aim to move the Lebanese state and the Druze Mountain from the hostile camp to our own – not by an *annexation* by Israel but by *incorporation* within Israel. There is no other way to solve the Jordan water issue and to secure our entry, *when the day comes*, to Transjordan as well. This operation is not merely military – since, as stated, this is a much more complex strategic question: ideational, political, economic. *We should not refrain from applying force*, since our possible allies are currently captured by the enemy. To enable them to negotiate with us we must release them, we must break the existing borders, and that cannot be done without warfare. *Yet military victory is but a means*; and as such it will do no good unless we use other means as well... For we speak here of winning allies and not of just expanding Israeli territory; of liberating non-Arab peoples [*amim*], victims to Pan-Arabism, and *not of expelling additional refugees*; of renewing the independence of the Druze Mountain... or of redeeming the Maronite independent Lebanon, and not of "Judaizing" them in a Jewish state – for they will never "Judaize", nor do we harbour such an interest. *The aim is to gain partners, not slaves*... We must prepare for the day when we will move to the heads of the Jordan, to Lebanon, and the Druze Mountain, as liberators and not as invaders (Horon 1965b:160-161, emphases mine)<sup>164</sup>.

We can see above that Horon did not dream of an Israeli conquest of the Land of Kedem, but of a multi-faceted operation, involving agitation for a Hebrew national-liberal vision (both inside and outside Israel), cultural and economic pressure,

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<sup>164</sup> See also: Horon 1964b:518, where he cites as his finite ideal Jabotinsky's famous lines from his poem "The East Bank of the Jordan": "From the wealth of our land there shall prosper The Arab, the Christian, and the Jew".

diplomatic manoeuvring, and only as a last resort, armed intervention<sup>165</sup>. The latter was envisaged as a common task for all the enemies of Pan-Arabism, certainly not as a Zionist military raid aiming at re-establishing the *status quo ante*: "who amongst us steps forward without withdrawing immediately?", Horon (1965b:154) admonishes Zionist Israel's supposedly short-sighted military doctrine<sup>166</sup>.

Horon's provisional outline of this march is a three-stage process, starting with a "Greater Israel"<sup>167</sup> within its "security borders", as the 1967 ceasefire lines came to be

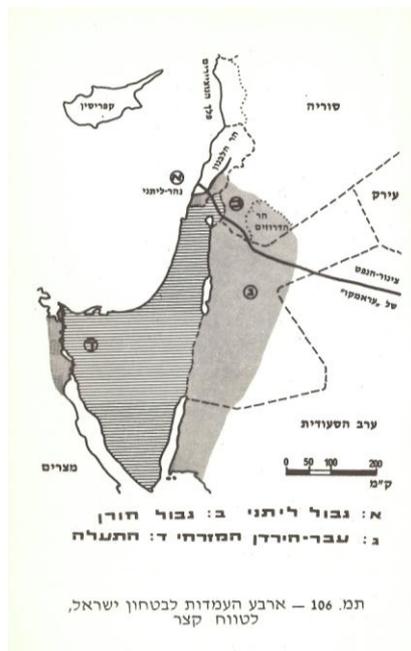


Figure 21: Horon's "Greater Israel" (source: Horon 1970:149).

known. Israel, according to Horon, must reach truly "secure borders" by obtaining territorial and strategic control over four focal points, which he lists as the "Litani border" (southern Lebanon, the same area that Israel supposedly failed to annex in 1948-1949), the "Horan border" (meaning the Druze Mountain in south-west Syria), the eastern bank of the Jordan (obliterating in effect what Horon had termed "a British protectorate in disguise"

[Gourevitch 1952:23] ruled by the Hashemite

dynasty), and the Suez Canal (Horon 1970:148-149;

fig. 21). The next stages are described as follows:

<sup>165</sup> Horon did hesitate to describe his plan as an "aggression" (*tokpanut*) but made clear that he meant first and foremost political and ideological agitation (Horon 1965b:154).

<sup>166</sup> See also: Horon 1964b:518; 1965b:154, 157-158.

<sup>167</sup> This denominator's usage by Horon has very little in common with the way it was employed by the Israeli Zionist right-wing, as will become immediately apparent.

Due to the military and political circumstances it seems that we shall witness an incorporation-becoming-annexation throughout all of Israel's "security borders", with their population included. Eventually there will take a shape here, whether deliberately or naturally, a whole national-territorial society... A second natural stage might manifest itself as a **Canaan Union** – composed of Greater Israel, Maronite Lebanon, the Druze Mountain, with the participation of any local factor interested in peace and prosperity. The **Canaan Union**, which will draw in the best progressive forces of the Land of Kedem, must be expected to attract the rest of its suppressed inhabitants from within and from without, encouraging them to establish together the **Kedem Union** all over the Land (Horon 1970:150).

The transition, as Horon sees it, would then lead from Greater Israel through the Canaan Union to the Kedem Union (fig. 22), which will "facilitate the liberation, the development, and the progress also in neighbouring African and Asiatic countries" (Horon 1970:152)<sup>168</sup>. The Kedem Union will probably become one of the pillars of the global anti-colonial struggle, which at the time when Horon drew up his programme (the late 1960s) meant joining the non-aligned movement. Indeed,

Horon not only calls for disengagement from the Cold War, thereby radically tipping the global strategic balance; he is equally hostile to both blocs, regarding the Soviet Union quite insightfully as above all a Russian national state and the United States as a heir to British colonialism, therefore an undeclared ally of Pan-Arabism (and not an

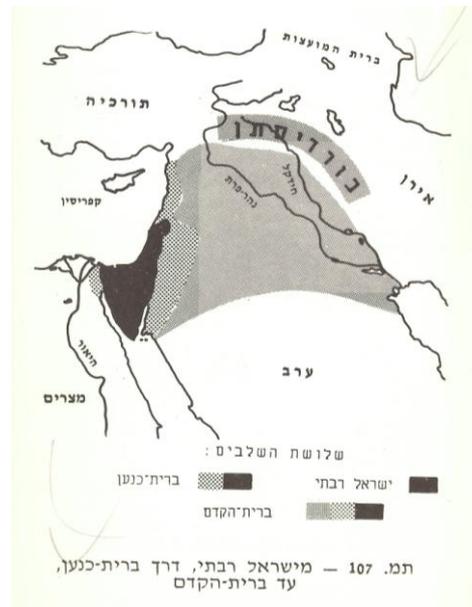


Figure 22: The three-stage process from "Greater Israel" through the Canaan Union to the Kedem Union (source: Horon 1970:151).

<sup>168</sup> Horon reminds his reader that he was one of the first Hebrew political thinkers to call for the forging of closer contacts between the Hebrews and "non-Arab" (Sub-Saharan) Africa, even before the establishment of Israel (Horon 1964b:519).

ally of Israel, as Israeli common perception has it<sup>169</sup>). A "Hebrew foreign policy", he states, would challenge the paradigm prevalent in the Middle East that in order to survive one must be aligned with one of the superpowers (Horon 1957:7-8; 1965b:161-163; Gur 1976g).

One might wonder how much the Kedem Union would have resembled the ancient Hebrew statehood as reconstructed by Horon. Horon did not dwell much on the exact shape and make-up of the Kedem Union, mindful of its rather long-term chances of realization (if at all). Undoubtedly, he envisioned a modern liberal-democratic republic, without making explicit whether he preferred a unitary state, a federation, or a confederation. Horon was certainly inspired by the ancient system of Hebrew regional alliances, which held a whole civilization together without impinging upon local tribal and princely powers; we can therefore surmise that he would have opted for a rather loose polity of voluntary members sharing the vision of the classical Hebrew period as their golden age but enjoying wide autonomy. Ultimately, the most important matter for Horon was that the Hebrew national outlook would once again be free and sovereign in the Hebrew homeland, and not the technical particularities of its future structure.

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<sup>169</sup> The theme of USA's detrimental influence upon Israeli geopolitics was developed later by Horon's disciple and friend Esra Sohar (1999).

## Chapter 5

### 5.1. The Hebrew foundational myth in a comparative framework

#### *"Canaanism" versus Zionism: Introduction*

The preceding chapters were given over to a methodical analysis of Horon's position on the historical, historiographical, and political issues of what he saw as the emergence of a modern territorial Hebrew nation and its foundational myth. They traced the link between his conception of what *was*, what *is*, and what *ought to be* in the Land of Kedem, and noted how, on the one hand, his vision of the past to a large extent dictated his future programme and, on the other, how his concept of a new geopolitical settlement in the Middle East assimilated his historiographical statements. Conceptualized this way, Horon's output answers the definition of a *national* commemorative narrative, which was discussed in theoretical terms in chapter 2. By now it has definitely been established that Horon was not merely an unconventional researcher; he was above all a *nationalist intellectual*.

The following chapter offers additional support for the above statement, developing in further detail the premise outlined in chapter 1: that the Young Hebrews were first and foremost a nationalist movement. Not only that; this chapter will also argue that the Hebrew national movement was basically *independent* of Zionism, intellectually and politically. This will be demonstrated by a detailed comparative analysis of "Canaanism" and Zionism. The juxtaposition of these two ideological-political platforms as *competing* nationalisms opens a new perspective: though disparate in resources and social power, they are treated here as belonging, each on its own terms, to the same socio-cultural phenomenon, namely, nationalist ideology. Any analysis of

the Young Hebrews that reduces them to a peculiar offshoot of Zionism that developed its inherent theses to their logical extreme<sup>170</sup>, or to an artistic coterie that occasionally toyed with geopolitical fantasies, is therefore rejected as misguided and ill-founded. The following analysis intends to show that, despite the numerous and at times crucial overlaps between "Canaanism" and Zionism, the former cannot be regarded as secondary to the latter. This is because the historiographical core (the foundational myth) and the basic notions these two ideologies utilized were ultimately incompatible.

Chapter 2 showed how nations can become "zones of conflict" (to borrow John Hutchinson's [2005] phrase) over the commemorative narratives created by intellectuals to shape their nations' identity. It also pointed to a possible parallel between the status of the dominant narratives and their authors on the one hand, and the status of the sidelined narratives and their authors on the other. It was argued that the intellectuals whose national vision wins mass support (that is, reaches phase C of Miroslav Hroch's structure) usually enjoy social and moral capital, becoming the nation's elite. Contrariwise, those intellectuals who formulate alternative national visions but fail to move beyond Hroch's phase B (preach their ideology, but either unsuccessfully or only to a small following) become a counter-elite, with a huge gap obtaining between their often meagre social capital and their immeasurably larger moral capital.

It is my contention that the struggle between Zionist historians and Adya Gur Horon over the meaning and usefulness of the ancient Hebrew/Jewish history to the Israeli

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<sup>170</sup> This is *not* to say that "Canaanism" did not continue themes that Zionism was reluctant to develop; I argue instead that it is wrong to view the Young Hebrews *only* in this perspective.

nation-formation exemplifies this phenomenon. While many of the events constituting ancient Hebrew history were *common* to Zionism and "Canaanism", the two proposed they should be remembered *differently*, by applying different techniques for remembering and forgetting – and then by reaching different conclusions about the present and the future. Or, to recall Prasenjit Duara's description of national narrative formation: Horon and Zionist intellectuals hardened *differently* the borders around the various elements of national history that were floating in the nation's cognitive space; what Horon left "soft" was "hardened" by the Zionists, and vice versa. Ultimately, Horon attempted to shape a community of memory that was meant to breach the confines set by the Zionist and Pan-Arabist dominant and mutually hostile commemorative narratives.

#### *Zionist historiography and its uses*

The account of Horon's life circumstances in chapter 1 made it clear that despite the moral capital he enjoyed among the Young Hebrews, his social capital remained rather low. His struggle to maintain a decent material existence emerges as highly informative when set against the background of the social comfort enjoyed by two of Zionism's prominent intellectuals, Ben-Zion Dinur and Yehezkel Kaufmann, both of whom contributed a great deal to shaping the Jewish-Zionist national community of memory. Besides being a prolific historical writer, the former served for a time as the Israeli minister of education and the chairman of Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust memorial museum<sup>171</sup>. Yehezkel Kaufmann, an esteemed professor of Biblical studies at the Hebrew University, authored the multi-volume magnum opus *History of the*

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<sup>171</sup> And thus played a key role in instilling the Holocaust as a central symbol of Israeli national identity. On Dinur's career, see: Piterberg 2008:131-133, 140-145; Ram 2011:10-12, 15-24.

*Israelite faith* (1961) for which he received the Israel prize, though it was far from reflecting standard Zionist historiography. Kaufmann's core argument is that the ancient Israelites developed their monotheistic Jehowist faith much earlier than mainstream Biblical criticism acknowledges. He claims that the absence of mythological-pagan elements characterized the Israelites as a *nation* from the earliest stages of their development; that is, their deity did not represent any natural "primordial realm", which in paganism was usually embodied by various "naturalistic" gods of the skies, seas, earth, death, etc., but was single, omnipresent, and omnipotent. In effect, Kaufmann denied that any substantial cultural, ethnic, or religious bonds existed between the Israelites and the Canaanites, in contrast to Horon who insisted that Israelites and Canaanites were essentially the same people.

While the aim of this study is not to criticize Kaufmann's historiography or to defend Horon's, some major drawbacks evident in Kaufmann's work (as far as the abridged translation allows us to judge) cannot be ignored. Kaufmann's argument is mainly "from silence": the ostensible lack of Biblical evidence for Israelite pagan mythology is for him sufficient proof of the non-mythological character of early Judaism. Moreover, Kaufmann treats the Bible as a world-in-itself. He rarely betrays a consciousness of "early" and "late" within the corpus of the Biblical text, makes scant and unsystematic references to extra-Biblical sources, pays almost no attention to critical philology of the Bible, and seems to believe in the historical accuracy of most of the Biblical narrative<sup>172</sup>. As Gabriel Piterberg reminds us (2008:103-105, 278-279),

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<sup>172</sup> For Kaufmann's version of the emergence of Judaism and the Israelite nation, generally in accordance with the Biblical story, see Kaufmann 1961:212-242. Ben-Zion Dinur, it should be noted, was much more sceptical than Kaufmann regarding the historical reliability of the Bible (Dinur 1969:12-19).

Kaufmann's work aroused huge controversies in the scholarly community and its findings were in due course rejected. Therefore, this discussion opts to treat Kaufmann's output in a similar way to Horon's: not as a dispassionate examination of ancient history, but more as a polemical statement in the service of a contemporary ideology. As to Horon himself, though he never states so openly, the thrust of his argument in *Kedem vaerev* is directed beyond all doubt against the premises and the theses of Kaufmann's *History of the Israelite faith*<sup>173</sup>.

Kaufmann's thesis of a faith interlocking with and defining a national identity, which stresses the Jews' perennial uniqueness and separateness from their social environment throughout the ages, makes evident his distrust in myth as a vital culture-forging element. He seems to treat mythology as a primitive relict that is doomed to die out once a more "progressive" (by implication, universalist-monotheistic) worldview spreads among the faithful. Kaufmann thus adopts an essentialist position that pagan-territorial religion is by definition more "backward" than universal-cosmopolitan faith, a Hegelian idea that was directly attacked by Horon<sup>174</sup>.

In his critique of the Young Hebrews, Baruch Kurzweil (1965:284) traced Kaufmann's "anti-mythical" position to the Dutch philosopher Johann Huizinga, who contrasted the (barbarian) *mythos* with the (rational) *logos* (see chapter 1). Horon represented the opposite standpoint, which is probably derived from (or at least influenced by) Friedrich Nietzsche's perception of myth and mythology as a source of

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<sup>173</sup> This was, however, mentioned in a foreword to *Kedem vaerev* (Eshel 2000:32), and also noticed by David Ohana (2008:107-108).

<sup>174</sup> For a criticism of Kaufmann's historiography from a post-"Canaanite" perspective, see: Evron 1988:115-127.

positive vital energy. Therefore, the indirect dispute between Horon and Kaufmann can be regarded as a clash between the worldviews of Nietzsche and Huizinga.

In the introduction to his work Kaufmann declares his disagreement with standard Biblical criticism, stating that his object is the formulation of a new scholarly paradigm whereby "Israelite religion was an original creation of the people of Israel. It was absolutely different from anything the pagan world ever knew; its monotheistic world view had no antecedents in paganism", and that therefore Biblical criticism's "basic postulate – that the priestly stratum of the Torah was composed in the Babylonian exile, and that the literature of the Torah was still being written and revised in and after the Exile – is untenable" (Kaufmann 1961:1-3). Nonetheless, if Kaufmann set out to reverse the influence of Biblical criticism on modern Jewish identity, he certainly failed. The impact of Biblical criticism and Jewish studies (*Wissenschaft des Judenthums*) upon the Jews' perception of their position in the modern world is undeniable, though its exact manner remains a matter of controversy among scholars. "Time" and "place" in Jewish consciousness underwent an enormous shift through secularization beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Chowers 1998). The dissemination of Enlightenment values and a critical-scholarly approach to the Biblical heritage gradually destroyed the reverence many Jews held for the Bible and their ancient history: in effect, the cyclical time-concept, which traditional Jews believed could only be broken with the arrival of the Messiah, was replaced by a linear-secular one. Jews became aware of history's forward movement and desired to take part in it, treating the "here and now" as worthy of remembrance and recording,

as well as shapeable by their own concentrated efforts<sup>175</sup>. As explained by Nahum Glatzer (1964:44), the "profanization" of the Jewish worldview was a necessary precondition for the emergence of a secular history of Judaism:

...the quest for a philosophy of Jewish history constituted a definite departure from the thinking of the past. The motifs of classical thought about the meaning of Israel – exile, suffering for the love of God, *galut* as punishment and purification, as a preparation for the world to come, messianic redemption – lost their relevance. The religious inquiry, an inquiry from within, was replaced by a historicism that attempted to view Jewish history from without. In order to retain the right to exist in the present, Judaism had to be explained in terms of world history...

It can therefore be suggested that the principle underpinning Jewish emancipation and nationalism in modern times was *the Jews' desire to re-enter secular history as active agents*, making them responsible for their own fate and exchanging the "objective" stance towards history with a "subjective" one. Nadia Abu el-Haj (2001:257-258) reminds us furthermore that "re-entering history" also meant laying a claim to a nation's past; therefore, history was to be "entered" not only "here and now", but also in the past.

Political Zionism, which struggled for Jewish political sovereignty (and ultimately won), was merely one variation of this overarching principle<sup>176</sup>. The task at hand was actually much larger: to amend the widespread Jewish sentiment of "exclusion from history", augmented – as Amos Funkenstein (1989:17) argued – by a historiographical

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<sup>175</sup> This view is expressed, among others, by Israel Bartal (2010) and Yosef Haim Yerushalmi (Funkenstein 1989:11). Funkenstein, who sets forth Yerushalmi's opinion, then goes on to challenge it (Funkenstein 1989:12-21). For a contemporary's evidence, see: Frenkel 1979:113-114.

<sup>176</sup> For scholarly opinions supporting such interpretation, see: Glatzer 1964:33-36; Kaplan 2005b:139; Zerubavel 1995:14. For a newer analysis of the "return to history" idea in Zionism, which problematises its basic tenets, see: Piterberg 2008:245-249; Raz-Krakovitzkin 2013.

paradigm that attributed agency only to factual wielders of material power. Subaltern historiography was not in existence at the dawn of Zionism.

As in many other national "awakenings", the Jewish awakening of the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries raised the material "short time" to the level of the immaterial "long time". Jewish mundane existence was granted a teleological value; the physical world became the arena where the liberation of the Jews was to be attained without the Messiah's participation. A similar transition can be observed in regard to Jewish attitudes to land – the physical place (whether the Land of Israel or the Diaspora countries) that had previously lingered outside of history became an active element in the Jewish drive for a national resurgence. The Jewish case was special in this regard, as the national "homeland" lay for most Jews very far away and for centuries was no more than a realm of theological fantasies<sup>177</sup>; therefore, Jewish migration to the Land of Israel and its physical rediscovery and desacralization were central to Zionism. Zionist axiological (value-laden) geography can thus be described as highly vitalistic: the new muscular Jew treading upon the Land was returning to Mother Nature (*and* to secular history) through physical work. When the state of Israel was established, the bond with the Land was facilitated further through state means, including hiking trips, the founding of agricultural settlements and the extension of official patronage over archaeological research, making it a key element of Israeli "civil religion": "not a

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<sup>177</sup> For an overview of Jewish attitudes to the Land of Israel from antiquity to the present, see: Hoffman 1986.

strictly academic activity", as described by Neil Asher Silberman (1989:125), "but rather a tangible means of communication between the people and the land"<sup>178</sup>.

Another major effect of the secularization of Jewish axiological geography was the inclusion in the "large place" of those areas of the Land of Israel that had previously been relatively marginal in Jewish history and historical symbolism. A case in point is the Palestinian littoral, which was populated by Zionist settlers much more densely than the mountain range where most of the sites sacred to Judaism lay (though Zionism never disassociated itself from its mountainous hinterland, neither symbolically nor politically). Thus, the Zionist challenge to religious tradition resulted in a shift in orientation towards the Land of Israel, which was to be reconstituted just as the Jewish person was to be born anew (Abu el-Haj 2001:16-18; Bartal 2010; Kimmerling 1983:148, 225, 227). In parallel, Baruch Kimmerling (1983:206) notes that the elements of Jewish tradition that became central in Zionism through their role as symbolic connectors to the Land were relatively marginal in the Diaspora tradition (such as the Hanukkah and the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shvat festivals, or the Masada myth, whose transformation into intensive cultural symbols in Zionism is explored by Yael Zerubavel [1995]). Zerubavel (1995:14-15) complements Kimmerling by stating that before becoming a *dominant* paradigm in the *Yishuv* and then in Israel, Zionist historiography was initially a *subversive* "counter-memory" to the traditional Diaspora historiography.

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<sup>178</sup> On Zionist territorial vitalism, see: Almog 2000:138-139; Gal 2007:223; Kaplan 2001:1-3; Kimmerling 1983:13-14, 201-205; Zerubavel 1995:15, 28-29. On the role of nationalist archaeology in Israel, see: Abu el-Haj 2001; Elon 1997; Shavit 1997; Silberman 1989.

One of the key tools employed to formulate the new Zionist axiological geography and to legitimize the Jews' re-entry into secular-material history was the Biblical text. Stripped of its sacrality as a deposit of eternal truths, it became for Zionists a secular "textbook" for the history of the Land of Israel, offering an almost unmediated connection with it. When the "profane" Bible became the prime symbol of the Zionist revolution, its cult encompassed the *Yishuv*<sup>179</sup>, bypassing the Diaspora religious tradition (whose main cultural document was the Talmudic legal code) and putting a claim of continuity with the Land's national-territorial history (Almog 2000:160-161; Conforti 2012:163-165; Gal 2007:222; Piterberg 2008:273-282; Ram 2011:21-22; Shapira 1997:646-647; 2004; Shavit 1997:53-55)<sup>180</sup>. Yaacov Shavit (1997:55-56) maps this process in the following words:

...for secular nationalists, the Bible was not important as the repository of a theological claim to Palestine; the Bible's value consisted in the objective historical account of the Jews' title to the land, borne out by archaeological evidence. Given the historical, nontheological use to which the Bible was put, it was part and parcel of Jewish modernity, and thus stood in the foundation of secular Israeli society, exerting a romantic and conservative influence simultaneously.

Uri Avneri (1969:156) offers a dissenting view. He argues that the Hebrew youth of the *Yishuv* was uninterested in the Land's Biblical history, opting for a future-directed outlook instead. He thus typifies early Hebrew nationalism as colonial, lacking in local history, and oriented towards the future. This contradicts his own contention that the Hebrew nation that had come into existence by the 1930s (Avneri 1988) directed

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<sup>179</sup> One of its chief "priests" was David Ben-Gurion (Shapira 1997).

<sup>180</sup> For a review of the role of the Bible as a cultural source for nationalist ideologies, see: Aberbach 2005; Neuman 2005.

its interest to pre-Judaic history (Avneri 1969:151-152), a sentiment upon which the Young Hebrews wished to capitalize.

We cannot therefore determine that there was a total break between the Zionist and the Jewish commemorative narratives, as Zionist rhetoric would have it; rather, a complex dialectic is observable. Like many national movements, Zionism was caught in the paradox of attempting to recreate a "golden age" while simultaneously forging a wholly new socio-cultural structure. The Zionists were looking to the Jews' past in the Land of Israel in search of inspiration<sup>181</sup>; at the same time, the state they aspired to create was meant to be morally "ideal", its structure drawing from both the ethos of the Biblical prophets and the enlightened values of the West<sup>182</sup>. Thus, as noted by several scholars (Almog 2000:73-74; Cohen 1995:204; Gal 2007:227; 2009), to the nationalist commonplace past/future dialectic was added in the case of Zionism outspoken particular/universal dialectic. As explained by Allon Gal (2007:227):

Another basic characteristic of Zionism's ethno-symbolism is its strong bent towards moral and social renewal. Typically, the nationalist renaissance was conceived also in ethical-universalistic terms. Significantly, the same historical memories and myths that nurtured the nationalist urge... also served to nourish the moral quest.

Eric Cohen (1995:204) comments that the tension between the universal and the particular in nationalism is not unique to Israel, since, he writes, "it reflects a conflict between two basic principles in the idea of statehood: the liberal idea of the state as a

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<sup>181</sup> Notably, more to the Second Temple and the Hasmonean period than to the First Temple era (Almog 1987:83; Gal 2007:223, 225; Shapira 2004:11-15; Zerubavel 1995:23). Ben-Gurion dissented in this regard from the Zionist intellectual mainstream by focusing his attention (after 1948) on the First Temple period (Shapira 1997:658-659).

<sup>182</sup> For Ben-Gurion's vision of an "ideal state", see: Ohana 2008:180; Shapira 1997:654.

political formation based on the voluntary consensus of its citizens and the nationalist idea of the state as the political expression of a primordial group"; however, in the Israeli case it became more salient, since it "reflect[ed]... a dilemma inherent in Jewish religious ethics". This quest after the "perfect" (Jewish) society and polity highlights Zionism's teleological character. Zionism incorporated much of traditional Jewish messianism; in Ben-Gurion's language, Jewish political independence was "national redemption". We observe here a kind of secular messianism, which replaces the *agent* of redemption (the Messiah of the house of David gives way to the Zionist pioneer), but keeps the *historical-teleological movement* essentially unchanged.

However, by co-opting Jewish messianism, Zionism became trapped in yet another internal contradiction. Whereas in traditional Jewish historiography the eventual redemption was *integral* to its concept of historical time, the Zionist philosophy of history was largely based on *rupture* with what had preceded it. The Israeli historian Shmuel Almog (1987:23-38, 45-58, 65-80) described this contradiction quite poignantly as historical determinism advocating a break with Jewish history *foreboded therein*: that is, the history's *telos* is its own violation! The origin of this paradox, according to Almog, is the Zionist conceptualization of Jewish history as integral and continuous, and of the Jews as a nation united by its past<sup>183</sup>. Zionism thus wished simultaneously to release itself from the Jewish past (which it occasionally described in strongly derogatory terms, likened by Yael Zerubavel [1995:14, 19] to anti-Semitic rhetoric) and to maintain a measure of continuity with it, being aware of the impossibility of total rupture. This is then the source of the question that troubled

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<sup>183</sup> See also: Ram 2011:7, 9-10; Raz-Krakotzkin 2013:44. Piterberg (2008:155-191) identified the prominent Israeli researcher of Jewish anti-scholastic mysticism Gerschom Scholem as the intellectual father of the idea of a temporal break-up as its own *telos*.

so many Jewish thinkers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century: whether Zionism was a rebellion against the Jewish past, or its transformation (Ben-Ezer 1986:287-317; Diamond 1986:9-23; Vital 1998)<sup>184</sup>.

Following numerous scholars, I would argue that it is more helpful to understand Zionism as a *partial continuation* rather than a *complete break* with earlier Jewish history. Moreover, I would claim that the introduction of traditional Jewish religious elements into Zionism (despite its anti-religious rhetoric) was the *only effective way* to solve its basic legitimacy problem: unlike most national movements, Zionism *lacked congruence* between land, language, and people. Menachem Friedman explains:

The reason for this [introduction of religious elements] was... possibly, and maybe primarily, ideological. It is connected to the problem of legitimation of the Zionist movement, for while in every "normal" national movement, the link between the territory and the nation is natural and is not cast in doubt, as far as the Zionist movement is concerned, the link between Palestine and the Jewish nation is not based on living reality; in other words, the residence of the Jewish nation in Palestine is not based on actual reality but on historical memories, links and sentiments. These memories and sentiments are an essential part of Jewish tradition (cited at: Kimmerling 1983:205).

Kimmerling (1983:204) concludes: "There is... no basis for the claim... that Zionism was in opposition to the Jewish religion. While Zionism was a revolt against specific institutional, political and social expressions of the Jewish religion... it included many components which were borrowed from the Jewish religion"<sup>185</sup>.

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<sup>184</sup> In tackling this question of continuity versus rupture we must keep in mind the difference between Zionist theory and praxis, as exhibited, for example, in the Israeli legal framework (for an analysis of the Israeli socio-political system's functioning within this dialectic, see: Kimmerling 2005:173-207).

<sup>185</sup> For a detailed description of components taken over from Judaism by Zionism, see: Kimmerling 2005:191.

Kimmerling's conclusion is shared by many students of Zionism, so that we may speak of a scholarly consensus in this matter (Conforti 2012; Gal 2007; Raz-Krakotzkin 2013:48-50<sup>186</sup>; Rubin 2013:507; Zerubavel 1995:21-22, 217, 218). The continuity between traditional Diaspora Judaism and its alleged opposite – Zionism – was exhibited at several levels, including the axiological (value-based), the symbolic, and the practical. The sociologist Oz Almog (2000:35-45) identified several key symbolic formulae that were carried over from Judaism to Zionism: deliverance from enemies (Gentiles/Arabs); the few against the many (the Diaspora community versus the Gentile world/the *Yishuv* versus the Arab world); Isaac's binding (a myth of self-sacrifice for higher aims); eschatological redemption (the messianic element common to Judaism and Zionism); the Land of Israel as god-given (the Jews' "inviolable" right to their homeland). However, both Almog and Zerubavel (1995:16-33) point out that these cultural formulae underwent a huge change when incorporated into Zionism: they were no longer embedded in a Jewish theological or philosophical interpretation (which relegated them to meta-history outside the "short time" as the "essential truths" of Jewish existence) but were reinterpreted in a secular-rational fashion. Thus, the *content and application* of these symbols became radically different in the transposition from Judaism to Zionism, though their *essential mythic core* remained intact. Zerubavel (1995:217) further notes that "the Zionist collective memory did not invent new mythical structures. Rather, it promoted a closer association between existing Jewish myth plot structures and certain periods in Jewish history and reinterpreted their meaning"; for example, by largely refraining from introducing new

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<sup>186</sup> Notably, Raz-Krakotzkin (2013:52-54) argues that the Zionist philosophy of history internalized to a large extent Protestant historiographical thought.

festivals and holidays but assigning new meanings to existing ones, sometimes in a manner that overturned their original sense (Zerubavel 1995:218)<sup>187</sup>.

Equally important is Almog's observation that the pre-1948 Hebrew society in Palestine, whose chief sociological symbol was the *Sabra*, a native-born "new Jew"<sup>188</sup>, still remained organically tied to the Jewish system of norms and values. He diagnoses the *Sabra's* relation to this system as "a complex and convoluted combination of rejection and acceptance" (Almog 2000:35), insisting that the "civil religion" established by Zionism possessed important structural and ideational similarities to the Diaspora communal-religious organization:

In the end, as much as the Sabra tried to be a 'new Jew' and distance himself from Jewish religion as his pioneer fathers commanded, this distance was only apparent. In fact, his entire being and essence spoke of Jewishness – the gatherings in youth group clubhouses, which were something like Hasidic yeshivot; the tribal solidarity and mutual responsibility; the sing-alongs and mandatory folk dancing; the Jewish myths that nourished his world; his aspiration to be learned in the pioneer doctrine; the sense of chosenness that filled him; and the tribal endogamy that separated him from the Arab *goy* – all these characterized the generation of the new Jews. They were, as their name suggests, new but at base still Jews (Almog 2000:265)<sup>189</sup>.

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<sup>187</sup> An example of a purely Zionist festival was 11<sup>th</sup> of Adar, the anniversary of the 1920 Tel-Hai incident/battle, but it remained relatively marginal in the calendar of the *Yishuv* and the state of Israel (Zerubavel 1995:39-47, 84-95, 147-177).

<sup>188</sup> Almog (2000:2, 3, 5-13) makes the point that the *Sabras*, being quite insignificant statistically (about 20,000 out of 650,000 in 1948), were not a "generation" in the biological sense, but a symbolic-cultural type formed by a particular socialization context, whose cultural significance highly exceeded their numerical power.

<sup>189</sup> See furthermore: Almog 2000:18-22, 226-227; Berelowitz 2010; Even-Zohar 1980; Saposnik 2008; Zerubavel 1995:27-28. Supporting evidence is offered by a member of the *Sabra* generation, the writer Hanoch Bartov, under the telling title: "A Hebrew person was expected, yet there grew a Jew" (Bartov 2007:132-142).

As for the *Sabras'* expressed antagonism towards their Jewish ancestors (as well as to the elder Zionist generation), Almog (2000:149-152, 260) defines it as a "conformist rebellion" that aims at *strengthening* particular values instilled by the forefathers rather than *rejecting* them. The *Sabras'* disdain was largely directed at the elders' pompous rhetoric and not at the ideology they propagated, in an oedipal mixture of an inferiority complex and a sense of superiority, the "founding fathers" being both greater "pioneers" and more Jewish than their "children". Yael Zerubavel (1995:27) concurs: "Zionism... sought to induce a 'fundamental' rather than a 'radical' transformation".

#### *Two historiographies at odds*

With Zionist values, norms, and cultural codes shown to be closer to the Jewish heritage than Zionism was willing to admit, we can appreciate more clearly the essential difference between Jewish and Hebrew nationalism. The latter's most outstanding characteristic is the absence of the legitimacy problem that belongs to the former – the lack of congruence between land, language, and nation – and the insistence on Jewish history's integrality along with a call to break with it. I believe that this difference stems from the fact that the Jewish and Hebrew myths of origin belong to *different categories* of national foundational myths, as typified by Anthony Smith, Steven Knapp, and John Coakley (see chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). Zionist historiography adopted from Jewish historiography the idea of the "eternal nation"; it thus relied mainly on a *genealogical* myth of origin (Smith), otherwise a myth of *biological descent* (Coakley), or a myth of *continuity* (Knapp), which implied unbroken temporal sequence between the "golden age" and the "renaissance". Conversely, Horon's historiography insisted on the (socio-cultural, not biological)

*discontinuity* between the ancient Hebrews and the Jews, and between the Jews and the modern Hebrew nation. To resort again to Anthony Smith's terminology, the "Canaanite" foundational myth was an *ideological* myth, which was *conscious* of the lack of genetic bonds between national "forefathers" and "descendants" but instead "shift[ed] the emphasis away from imputed blood ties to territorial association with a particular landscape and soil" (Smith 1984:295). In Coakley's terms, Horon's historiography would make a national "myth of cultural affinity", while Knapp would define it as a "myth of analogy". Horon's apparatus of ideological legitimization thus offers a *radical alternative* to the Zionist one.

Furthermore, the Hebrew foundational myth seems to share the characteristics of the two types of "golden age" myth outlined by Mary Matossian (chapter 2). Horon makes use of an image of a potent regional power wielding control over both land and sea when he describes the ancient Hebrew *umma* in its prime; yet no less an important element of his narrative is the Hebrews' vitalist attachment to their native land, facilitated by the "pristine" pagan-agrarian mythology and cult that underpins their very sense of nationhood. This evokes the "innocent agrarian past" image analysed by Matossian; her analysis juxtaposes the two images, implying their incompatibility. Horon's account of the downfall of Hebrew power curiously hints at a similar understanding: for instance, when he speaks of the transformation of the YHWH worship from a cult of the Hebrew royal house to the protest cult of the disaffected masses, he seems to implicitly accuse their mentality of "lagging behind" Canaan's geopolitical growth.

The divergent types of foundational myths adopted by Zionism and "Canaanism" point to another fundamental, though less sharply defined, difference between the two

ideologies. It quite clearly emerges that they were at odds over the definition of national identity *per se*. Zionism considered all those who professed the Jewish faith as belonging to the Jewish nation; at the same time, they were imagined as the *factual* descendants of those Jews who went into exile in the first centuries CE (it is easy to see that these two criteria are ultimately irreconcilable). Zionism thus subscribed to a rather rigid form of perennialism in its conceptualization of what constitutes a nation; moreover, as pointed out by Shmuel Almog (1987:41), Zionism had *no choice* but to define Jewish nationhood in essentialist terms of a single-fate community created by primordial and eternal blood-ties if it wished to defeat Jewish assimilation.

Contrariwise, the Young Hebrews, who entertained the "national outlook" notion, advocated a more flexible approach as to which group constitutes a nation. Most importantly, they did not tie national identity ontologically to a particular historical epoch (either modernity or antiquity); as explained in chapter 3, "national outlook" could develop, according to them, at anytime and at anyplace, given the suitable geophysical and social conditions. The "Canaanite" anti-teleological concept of national identity therefore contravened both the modernist and the perennialist approaches to nation-formation, though, as demonstrated earlier, Horon was not free from primordialist sympathies.

The dissimilar notions of "national homeland" in Zionism and "Canaanism"<sup>190</sup> are another manifestation of their essential difference. "Canaanism's" greater territorial outreach as compared to Zionism expresses its desire to incorporate larger populations and tracts of land; that is, its outlook tends to be *inclusivist*, in particular as it does not

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<sup>190</sup> Though partially overlapping, the "Zionist" Land of Israel being included in the "Canaanite" Land of Kedem.

imply any kind of Jewish supremacy<sup>191</sup>. Conversely, Zionism's expansionist desire was always checked by its unwillingness to include large non-Jewish populations within its sphere of control; that is, the Zionist outlook tends to *exclusivism*. While "Canaanite" inclusivism did not automatically entail a recognition of the "Arabized" communities' inherent right to their own cultural, linguistic, and religious heritage (this would have compromised to a large extent the Young Hebrews' vision of a secular Hebrew nationhood), it cannot unequivocally be stated that the "Canaanite" approach amounted to aggressive Hebrew expansionism at the expense of other cultures. Although such an argument was used by the Young Hebrews' detractors (for instance, Boas Evron [1988:363-367; 1995:215-218] found parallels between the "Canaanite" vision of a future Hebrew cultural-political space and what he called "Bismarckian" Germanization policies on the Second Reich's eastern territories), no explicit statements by the Young Hebrews support this contention. Moreover, it could be said that this argument reveals more about the Zionist mode of thinking than about the "Canaanite" (namely, that Zionists find it inconceivable that Israel's expansion would not entail oppressive "Israelization" of the occupied population [see: Ben-Ezer 1986:241, 244-245]). It is possible, of course, that some or even most of the Young Hebrews supported the enforcement of the Hebrew language and culture on the territories to be included in the Kedem Union; however, the system of values underpinning their ideology generally speaks out against such policies.

To conclude, it is thanks to Horon's vision of the past that "Canaanism" was significantly *more liberal, more self-conscious, and less self-contradictory* than

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<sup>191</sup> Anthony Smith (1984:296-297) accordingly points out that an inclusive approach is more characteristic of nationalist visions based on myths of ideological renewal rather than of those based on conservative genealogical myths.

Zionism, whose illiberal nature is evidenced by the type of origin myth it had adopted. The Young Hebrews' awareness of the ideological nature of their myth of origin was expressed in Horon's (1964b:518, emphasis mine) succinct formulation of his life-work: "How do you abolish a false belief? – By another, *better myth*".

By adopting an ideological foundational myth "Canaanism" found an easier solution to the nationalist paradox of the nation being simultaneously ever-ancient and ever-young. The "Young Hebrews", as their name suggests, were more future-oriented than the Zionists, reflecting the cult of youth widespread in the *Yishuv* (Almog 2000:80-82; Zerubavel 1995:27) and the primacy of the nationalist ideal future over the past (see chapter 2 for a more thorough discussion). In this context, the discord between Zionism and "Canaanism" is typical of the dilemma faced by emergent nationalist movements in post-colonial states established by descendants of European settlers: whether to tie the national myth of origin to the history of the settlers' mother-country or to place it in the actual non-European historical-geographical setting (Berger 2007a:5-6; Gutiérrez Chong 2007)<sup>192</sup>. Zionism remained ambivalent in this regard, attempting a balance between the local setting of the Biblical drama and allegiance to the Jewish history of the Diaspora, whereas "Canaanism" chose to anchor its foundational myth *exclusively* in the "homeland", thus saving itself to a large extent from the quagmire of the Zionist past/future dialectics.

A feature shared by the Young Hebrews and the Zionists was historical determinism, whereby macro-historical developments were bound to "prove" each ideology's claim to truth. However, the direction this determinism took in each case resulted in

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<sup>192</sup> The claim is made here notwithstanding Zionism's uniqueness, as its "mother-country" was the entire Jewish Diaspora (with preference given to the European Diaspora).

polarization: while Zionism viewed the outcome of Jewish history in optimistic terms of revival and regeneration, "Canaanism" believed in the inevitable substitution of a primordial ethno-community with a modern nation, prophesying the total decline of Jewry in its pre-modern shape. Despite Zionist optimism regarding the fate of the Jewish people, Zionism's key premise remained negative – I mean here the "*rejection of the Diaspora*" principle – while "Canaanism", which *affirmed* Hebrew nationhood, was premised on more positive foundations (Vital 1998:207).

With these insights in mind we can now proceed to a more detailed comparison of Zionism and "Canaanism" as rival national ideologies. The Young Hebrews' inclusivity as opposed to Zionism's exclusivity is best understood when we compare the delimitation of the nation adopted by each of these ideologies. The Hebrew-speaking *Yishuv* constitutes an overlapping element, being the stem of the prospective nation in both visions. However, in Zionism the *Yishuv* was hardly separable from the Diaspora, with which it maintained dialectical relations of rejection and interdependence, both politically and practically; thus, Zionism's call and field of activity was limited to world Jewry conceptualized, as we saw above, in *racial-religious* terms. "Canaanism", on the other hand, detached this connection in favour of a *cultural-political* alliance with the "Arabized" Hebrews of the Land of Kedem, irrespective of their origins. A formulaic expression of the above looks like this:

- *Yishuv* + Jewish Diaspora = Zionism;
- *Yishuv* + Land of Kedem inhabitants = "Canaanism" (fig. 23).

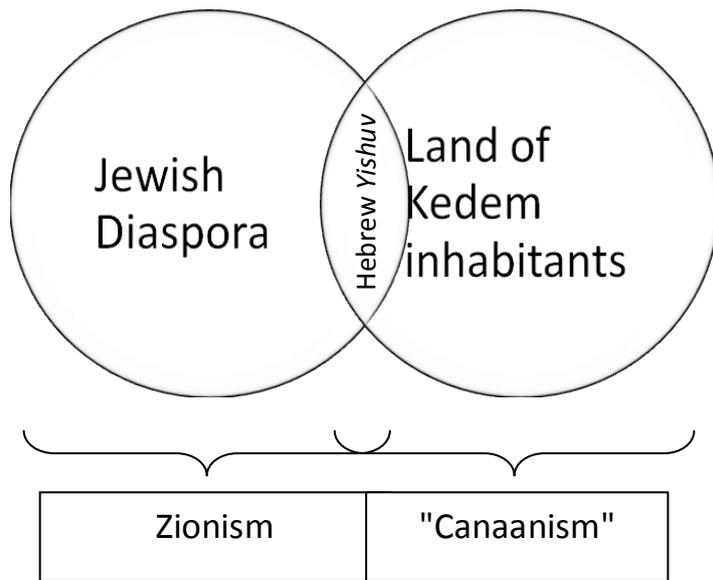


Figure 23: Nation delimitation in Zionism and "Canaanism".

Such elementary disagreement over the identity of the putative nation should lay to rest, I believe, any suggestion that "Canaanism" was a derivative of Zionism. We may rather speak of certain discursive components shared by both ideologies. An example of such a component is the so-called "romantic Zionism", which in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century professed a form of attachment to the Arab Palestinian population (and to the "East" more generally). Oz Almog describes this highly orientalist strain of early Zionist theory and practice as a mixture of admiration for and disdain towards the Arab world. On the one hand, Palestinian Arabs were imagined and described as "authentic", "unsullied" by the Diaspora or modern civilization, descendants of ancient Jews who had preserved their vitalistic attachment to their land throughout the ages, and as such were worthy of emulation as the opposite of the stereotypical image of the Diaspora Jew. On the other hand, they were portrayed as hostile, backward, in need of a "civilizing" hand by the supposedly more advanced western Jews. In terms of national mythology, the interaction between Zionist settlers and Palestinian Arabs was described as a "reconciliation" between the brothers torn apart by history, Isaac

and Ishmael<sup>193</sup>. However, as a consequence of the escalation of the Arab-Jewish conflict, this strain in Zionism died out (the Palestinians eventually being recognized as a distinct nation with competing claims<sup>194</sup>), while "Canaanism" managed to preserve the idea of Hebrew-Palestinian kinship, as shown in chapter 4. I believe that the explanation for this is again to be found in the respective definitions of national identity utilized by these ideologies. "Romantic Zionism" developed its idea of Jewish-Arab kinship on the racist premises of a common historical descent, which proved to be unsustainable in the face of the growing enmity between Jews and Palestinians. "Canaanism", conversely, based its understanding of Hebrew-Palestinian kinship on environmental determinism, regarding the Palestinians as Hebrews due to their shared geophysical space and not to any imputed genealogical closeness (Hofmann 2011:274)<sup>195</sup>. Thus, what proved to be another internal contradiction in Zionism fitted naturally into the "Canaanite" liberal outlook.

As for the historiographical basis of Zionism, we have already observed that although it incorporated the findings of Biblical criticism into its worldview, it had to limit this

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<sup>193</sup> On "romantic Zionism", see: Almog 2000:185-190; Berelowitz 2010:96-100; Cohen 2003; Eyal 2005:22-43; 2006:33-61; Kimmerling 1983:184; Ohana 2008:357-359; 2012:73-74, 182-184; Saposnik 2008:146-168, 181-182. A sub-tendency of "romantic Zionism" was the treatment by the Zionist elites of Sephardic and Arabic-speaking Jews as "intermediaries" between the Occident and the Orient (Almog 2000:186; Berelowitz 2010:98-99; Saposnik 2008:169-173).

<sup>194</sup> Notably, Revisionist Zionism preceded socialist Zionism here (Kimmerling 1983:185).

<sup>195</sup> Interestingly, Palestinian nationalism has relatively recently produced its own version of a "Canaanite" ideology that portrays modern-day Palestinians as descendants of the ancient Canaanite peoples who dwelt in the Land before the Israelite invasion from Egypt, implied to be analogous to the Zionist migration (Shavit 1987:101-103; Zilberman 1999). It is ironic that in order to demolish the Zionist claim to the Land, the Palestinians resorted to the Jewish-Biblical narrative whereby the Exodus was a historical fact!

to a certain degree, since belief in the historical veracity of at least part of the Biblical narrative was necessary to justify its geopolitical programme. The Bible, as mentioned above, was thoroughly secularized in Zionist discourse, but had never been subjected to such devastating critique as that carried out by Horon. The Zionist triad of "Golden Age" – "Middle Ages" – "Renaissance" reflected to a large extent Jewish understanding of history. In Jewish, as well as in Zionist historiography, the "golden age" ends only with the destruction of the Second Temple in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, while the "dark Middle ages" of the Exile end when Zionism appears in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kaplan 2001:3; Zerubavel 1995:16-33). In Horon's historiography, each of these elements is dated *earlier* than its Zionist equivalent: the "golden age" begins to fade when Judaism emerges in the Babylonian Exile in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, and the age of the "renaissance" sets in when Hebrew ethnogenesis begins in the Land of Kedem in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, several decades before Zionism (figs. 24-25). By shifting its periodization limits back, "Canaanite" historiography laid claim to a

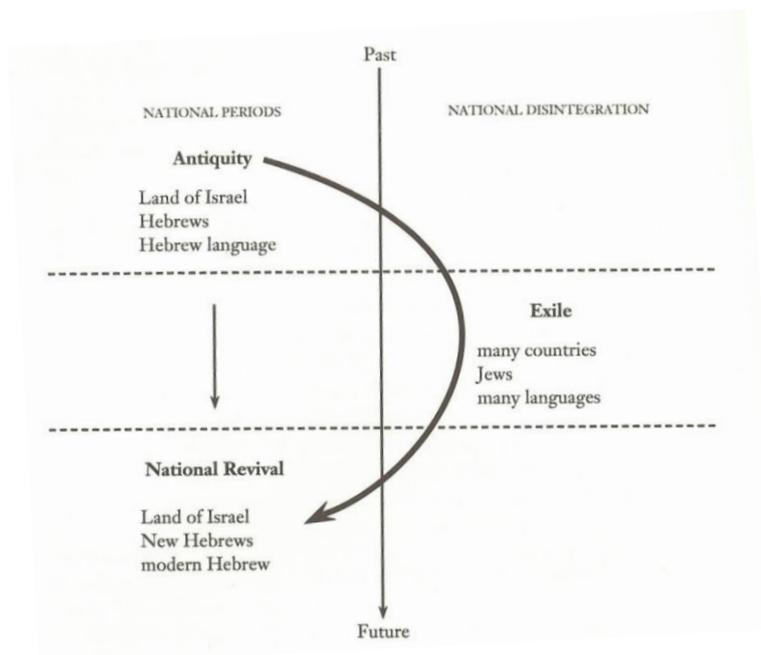


Figure 24: Zionist historiography periodization (source: Zerubavel 1995:32; reproduced by permission of the University of Chicago Press).

greater authenticity and better grounding in the past than did Zionism.

Finally, and ironic as it may seem, the Young Hebrews, due to their indifference to traditional Judaism, were in fact more *tolerant* of Jewish

tradition than Zionism, as confirmed by James Diamond (1986:99): "...in its negation of Jewish *nationhood*, 'Canaanism' actually reaffirms Jewish *religion*"<sup>196</sup>. Zionism's declared attempt to transform Judaism into an ideology of secular redemption aroused the anxiety of prominent religious (and Zionist) thinkers like Baruch Kurzweil, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, and Yishayahu Leibowitch, who accused secular Zionism of endeavouring to twist Judaism's shape by force (Ben-Ezer 1986:56-61, 214-217; Kurzweil 1965:190-224; 1969:166-183, 184-240; Ohana 2008:181-188, 263-264, 272-289). Contrariwise, the Young Hebrews never declared an *ontological* war on Judaism, but only insofar as it was perceived to hinder the crystallization of the Hebrew national identity. "Canaanite" theory actually accepted the possibility of a peaceful coexistence between religious and national identifications, if separation of religion and state were truly enforced in Israel.

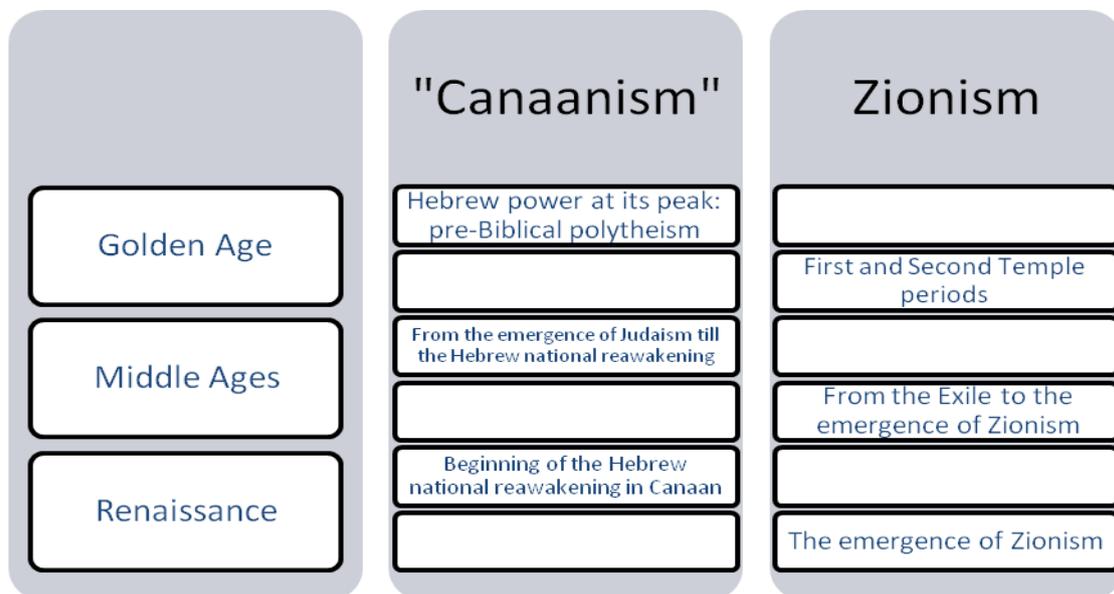


Figure 25: Comparative periodization in "Canaanism" and Zionism.

<sup>196</sup> See also Boas Evron's words: "A man who regards himself a national Hebrew or Israeli... **is the only one who can treat Diaspora Jews as equals**, whose existence possesses an inherent value" (Ben-Ezer 1986:171). Horon's daughter testifies that one of "Canaanism's" sympathizers in New York was an observant Jew (Shinar email, 16.11.2009).

*"Canaanism" and Revisionism*

We must not however fall into the same trap as the Young Hebrews, of overlooking Zionism's internal complexities. While the Young Hebrews preferred to present themselves as hostile to both right- and left-wing Zionism (Amir 1991:136-138; Ratosh 1976:285-287), they could not deny that their biographical (and to a significant extent, intellectual) origins lay in the Revisionist camp led by Zeev Jabotinsky. First and foremost, the "Canaanites" and Revisionists shared a national-minded positive approach, regarding their struggle as a struggle *for* a certain aim, not to *escape* some difficulty haunting the Diaspora. Secondly, while socialist Zionism saw the polemical defence of the Jews' right to the Land of Israel as a necessity, Jabotinsky rejected this as a preposterous weakness, since for him this meant questioning Zionism's *raison d'être*: "Only those with crippled spirits, with a diaspora psychosis", he claimed, "made these [questions about the right of the Jews to Palestine] into a 'problem' which must be investigated and proved" (cited at: Kimmerling 1983:189-190)<sup>197</sup>. In a similar vein, the Young Hebrews viewed Canaan and the Land of Kedem as the natural homeland of the Hebrew nation, whose right to it required no excuses.

Other elements common both to Jabotinsky's political thought and to "Canaanism" were a liberal approach to questions of societal and economic life and a staunch secularism. The latter point, however, requires some clarification, since Jabotinsky's attitude to Judaism, as shown by Jan Zouplna (2005), evolved over time. Remaining steadfast in his rejection of the legalistic aspects of halakhic tradition (the so-called "external" facet of Judaism), in the 1930s Jabotinsky gradually embraced, albeit

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<sup>197</sup> For more on Jabotinsky's general stance on Zionism, see: Jabotinsky 1989:200-229.

hesitantly, the "internal" aspect of Judaism. He interpreted it as the inner essence of faith and tradition that had kept the Jews nationally distinct in the Exile and was now passing on its torch to Zionism. Jabotinsky defended this standpoint at the New Zionist Organization foundation congress in 1935, which, as we saw in chapter 1, aroused the ire of several Revisionists, Horon amongst them (Zouplna 2005:23)<sup>198</sup>. Jabotinsky the Zionist was ultimately unwilling to break with Judaism entirely and, in consequence, his standpoint on political matters, such as Arab nationalism or British Middle Eastern policy, also diverged from the positions adopted by the Young Hebrews.

A form of environmental determinism was likewise shared by Revisionism and "Canaanism". Jabotinsky possibly borrowed from Herder the idea that a nation's geographical and historical conditions shape its "essence", which survives even when the nation abandons its original place of habitation (Hayes 1927:722-726). In his earlier writings especially, Jabotinsky attributed the preservation of Jewishness during the two millennia of the Diaspora to a "genetic memory" that passed down the ages and defined what he regarded as the nation's racial uniqueness (Bilski Ben-Hur 1988:157-158, 163-166). Dissenting radically at this point from his mentor, Horon rejected any idea of a genetic continuity among the Jews and did not succumb to a romantic idealization of "eternal" Jewishness.

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<sup>198</sup> Jabotinsky's growing rapprochement with Judaism can be regarded as illustrative of Gramsci's concept of hegemony (see chapter 2): now leading his own movement, Jabotinsky had to make principal concessions in order to absorb wider circles into his sphere of influence. Horon's dogmatic attitude on this point was, accordingly, a corollary of his non-hegemonic position in Jabotinsky's movement.

There were additional points of convergence between Revisionism and "Canaanism", mostly on historical matters: the Revisionists admired the ancient Hebrew statehood, whose source of power they had identified in the Hebrews' attachment to their land (Kaplan 2005b:144); thus, vitalism was perhaps more pronounced in Revisionism than in socialist Zionism (Kaplan 2001:3-11; 2005b:139-140, 142, 144). The Revisionists also subscribed to the idea of the Hebrews' cultural affinity with the Mediterranean sphere rather than with the Arab "Orient" (hence the historical and practical interest in Hebrew seafaring, shared by Revisionism and Horon) (Dotan 1981:411-415; Kaplan 2005b:140-147). Finally, the Revisionists believed that Judaism's expansion over the Mediterranean in the first centuries CE resulted from active colonization and not from dispersal (Kaplan 2005b:143). Yet, at bottom, and despite the similarities listed above, Jabotinsky's over-all conception of Jewish history remained quite distant from Horon's historiography, as expressed in his 1938 letter to him and in his novel *Samson*; therefore, Jabotinsky's vision of the present and the future could not at any stage be described as being in any way "Canaanite".

*"Canaanism" and the "first aliya"*

These observations on the differences and similarities between "Canaanism" and Zionism may be matched by another, concerning the social background of both movements' adherents. Socialist Zionism represented chiefly the poverty-stricken *shtetls* of Eastern Europe and the underclass Jewish proletariat. Socialism was the predominant worldview among the core of the "second *aliya*" (1904-1914) pioneers. These formed the backbone of the Zionist and Israeli elite up to the 1970s due to their dominance during the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century settlement of Palestine (Ghazi-Bouillon 2009:38-39; Kimmerling 1983:18, 80-83). Conversely, the Revisionists hailed mainly

from well-to-do bourgeois assimilated Jewish families, who espoused liberal values, and were thus closer in outlook to the "first *aliya*" (1882-1904) settlers. Most of the Young Hebrews came from the same social setting; it can be thus said that for them "Canaanism" was a locus for expressing the social values peculiar to their class, with a more explicit secular, and even anti-Jewish, bent. Meanwhile, Revisionism remained the ideological front of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie who were unwilling to relinquish their heritage entirely.

Bearing this in mind, we are able to assess the Young Hebrews' positive references to the "first *aliya*", whose non-socialist values were suppressed almost to the point of oblivion by the radical-minded "second *aliya*" founders of the Zionist "workers' society" (Berelowitz 2010:105-109; Eliav 1990:57). As mentioned previously, the Young Hebrews claimed that the Hebrew national identity started to develop during the "first *aliya*" age, making the "second *aliya*" generation a "usurper" of sorts. Researchers agree that a native Hebrew culture had formed in Palestine by the opening years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though they portray it in much more ambiguous colours than the Young Hebrews. A system of symbols and values new to Jewish culture undoubtedly arose from the nation-formation processes that were taking place in Palestine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the ethos of progress and renewal that relied on the ideal past to serve as a guide for the future (Berelowitz 2010:70-94; Even-Zohar 1980; Saposnik 2008). It can be argued in partial acknowledgment of the Young Hebrews' opinion that the "first *aliya*" led to the development of a potentially new nation; however, the "first *aliya*" imagined and represented itself as *the* Jewish national culture and was far from repudiating the heritage of the Diaspora. The

"liminal area"<sup>199</sup> of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Palestine combined native Hebrew elements with Arab indigenous cultural symbols, western concepts of progress and liberation, Biblical romanticism, Turkish-Ottoman influences, and cultural elements imported from the "first *aliya*" immigrants' native countries. This eclectic mix, Yaffa Berelowitz says (2010:95-96), hindered to some extent the crystallization of a new Hebrew-Jewish identity<sup>200</sup>.

In summary, the "first *aliya*" worked out several key elements that inspired the Young Hebrews, such as the desacralization of time and space, the drive to create a new culture and a new identity free from the "ailments" of the Diaspora, an ethos of nativeness and attachment to the place, a recovery of a foundational myth anchored in the local-Biblical past, and a bourgeois-capitalistic worldview. Nevertheless, it was a far cry from the ideal picture the "Canaanites" drew of a non-Zionist and a non-Jewish national renaissance-in-the-making, which was frustrated by the Zionist "invasion".

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<sup>199</sup> For a discussion of this term, see chapter 2. Gil Eyal (2005:13-21; 2006:7-16) suggests as an example for a "liminal area" effect in Palestine at the dawn of Zionism the "romantic" current described above, which not only professed attachment to Arab and Bedouin culture but also borrowed many codes and symbols from it.

<sup>200</sup> See also: Saposnik 2008.

## 5.2. "Canaanism" as a precursor of post-Zionism?

The centenary of the "first *aliya*" in the early 1980s coincided with the transfer of political hegemony in Israel from Zionist Labour to the Likud movement, which had grown out of Revisionism. The beginning of the decline of Zionist Labour was arguably one of the signals forecasting the emergence of a post-Zionist school of thought in Israel, with a symbolic bridge linking the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century "first *aliya*", mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century "Canaanism", and late 20<sup>th</sup>-century post-Zionism. All three phenomena represented, each in its own way, a secular-bourgeois worldview that treated with a fair dose of scepticism the ideological slogans that lay at the core of the "second *aliya*" Labour Zionism. Numerous researchers (Gorny 1990a; Kaplan 2005a; Miller 2004; Ohana 2008:31-32, 239-241; 2012:21-23, 78; Ram 2011:112-113; Silberstein 1999; Waxman 1997:200) have traced post-Zionism's intellectual and political pedigree to the Young Hebrews (though not necessarily to Horon's historiography); they did not, however, usually dwell on the exact nature of this connection. The section that follows intends to fill in this gap, at least in part.

My analysis distinguishes between *two* kinds of post-Zionism: the one that emerged in the early 1950s shortly after the establishment of the state of Israel, and the other that arose in the 1990s, after the Labour hegemony had crumbled almost entirely. The most prominent representative of the 1950s post-Zionism was Zeev Jabotinsky's son, Eri Jabotinsky, a close friend and collaborator of Adya Horon. In an article printed as early as in 1952 in a tribune co-published by Horon in the USA, E. Jabotinsky defined the historical stage that began after 1948 as "the 'post-Zionist period' in Hebrew history", meaning by this that "Zionism as such has *ended* by achieving fulfilment"

(Jabotinsky 1952:44, emphasis mine)<sup>201</sup>. However, the Zionist leadership's refusal to accede to this fact had resulted in an internal conflict in Israel, which, as Jabotinsky warned, would grow more intense if the state persisted in refusing to acknowledge the existence of a post-Zionist Hebrew nationhood.

Jabotinsky, who was elected to the Israeli constitutional assembly in 1949 on the Herut list (Likud's immediate predecessor), belonged to the *Lamerhav* ("To the region") faction of the party, which consisted mostly of liberal-minded Revisionists. Many of them had cooperated with Horon in the United States as members of the Hebrew Committee for the Liberation of the Nation during the 1940s or even in Paris in the preceding decade. The faction's platform came very close to the Young Hebrews' ideology in several respects; for instance, by insisting that Israeli state apparatus must have primacy over global Zionist organizations, such as the World Zionist Organization or the Jewish Agency, in the state's internal affairs, and that Israel must represent only its citizens regardless of ethnicity and not world Jewry at large. Furthermore, religion and state must be totally separated, Israel must, geopolitically speaking, not isolate itself from its immediate surroundings (hence the faction's name), and the socialist-bureaucratic institutions of the "workers' society" must not be allowed to monopolize the Israeli economy, etc.<sup>202</sup>. E. Jabotinsky's writings disclose especially strong influences by Horon: Jabotinsky (1952) advocated a Hebrew nationhood, derived, but distinct, from Jewry, and a free and "colour-blind"

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<sup>201</sup> Horon echoed Jabotinsky's stance by referring at least on one occasion to the pre-state period as "the Zionist epoch" (Horon 1964b:501), which by implication meant that the 1948 caesura signaled the end of Zionism.

<sup>202</sup> On the *Lamerhav* faction in further detail, see: Miller 2004:168-184; Ohana 2008:239-240; 2012:76-77.

immigration to Israel. He argued for the incorporation of the Arabic-speaking citizens of Israel into the Hebrew nation<sup>203</sup>, even to the extent of paying compensations to the 1948 Palestinian refugees (Porat 1989:250, 264) and supporting the struggle of the Iqrit and Bir'am evacuees to return to their homes<sup>204</sup>. He shared Horon's perception of the Arab world as atomized into numerous communities and sects, and advocated strategic alliance with the non-Muslim, believing that a non-Zionist Israel can become the beacon of anti-colonial freedom struggle in the region. Furthermore, he agreed that the emergence of Israel and the United States as two nations forged by migration experience made them similar. Finally, he regarded the choice of the name of "Israel" as escapist and one that avoided crucial decisions regarding the state's identity. It can be argued therefore that the activity of *Lamerhav*, despite its short life-span, was an example of "Canaanism's" "latent" existence in Israeli public life, as suggested by James Diamond. *Lamerhav* members in fact maintained some loose contacts with the Young Hebrews in the early 1950s; Eri Jabotinsky, for instance, published articles in the Young Hebrews' periodical *Alef* and was a member of the guiding committee of the "League against religious coercion" established by Ratosh's brother Uzzi Ornan in 1950 (Miller 2004:186-187).

It is noteworthy that a different instance of latent "Canaanism" was displayed by none other than David Ben-Gurion. His fascination with the First Temple age, mentioned earlier, did not escape the attention of some Israeli-Jewish intellectuals, who accused

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<sup>203</sup> Whereas his father favoured a national-cultural autonomy for the Arab citizens of the future Jewish state (Bilski Ben-Hur 1988:281-291, 329-332).

<sup>204</sup> Iqrit and Bir'am were two Maronite villages in northern Israel. In 1948 the IDF asked their inhabitants to "temporarily vacate" them for a few weeks. They were never let back (Benvenisti 2000:161-162, 325-326).

Ben-Gurion of being a "Canaanite" (Shapira 2004:31)<sup>205</sup>. This was not the only aspect of his activity that challenged Zionist foci of power in the Diaspora. During the early 1950s Ben-Gurion heralded the idea of "statism" (*mamlakhtiyut*), which advocated the superiority of Israel over the Diaspora as a substitute for "outdated" Zionism, and in 1953 he even announced his resignation from the World Zionist Organization (Ben-Ezer 1986:64-82; Gorny 1990b; Shapira 1997:658-660, 667)<sup>206</sup>. Nonetheless, although he was aware that 1948 was a landmark in the history of Zionism and that the new Israeli society, whose members did not necessarily subscribe to the ideology professed by the "second *aliya*" veterans, required a different "civil religion", Ben-Gurion stopped short of declaring Zionism entirely obsolete. Anita Shapira (1997:669) attributes this to his lack of consequence as a politician; however, I believe that the reasons should be seen as profounder. As argued by Eric Cohen (1995:206), the "statist" idea proved to be an insufficient alternative to Zionism and failed to fulfil the role of the "melting pot" for Israel's highly heterogeneous society. In our terms, Ben-Gurion proposed a future-oriented model of identity, crossing out the Zionist image of the past but not adopting any alternative historiography; as a result, he had no choice but to revert to Zionism as the state ideology.

Over the next decades Zionism underwent what Cohen calls "routinization", and by the end of the 1980s, he claims, it had naturally run its course. Therefore, a "post-Zionist" age was inescapably looming (Cohen 1995:207-211). Other researchers have

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<sup>205</sup> We must place the invective hurled at Ben-Gurion by Hebrew University professors in the wider context of the tensions that persisted between the Israeli government and Jerusalem intellectuals in the 1950s-1960s (Ohana 2008:188-205).

<sup>206</sup> Notably, the Young Hebrews commended Ben-Gurion for distancing himself from Zionism (Rotem 1986:40-41).

mapped a more turbulent process for the emergence and dissemination of the post-Zionist standpoint as the 1990s drew close. Baruch Kimmerling (2005) attributed it to the growing pluralisation of Israeli society that accompanied the decline of the Labour hegemony. Alain Dieckhoff (2003:270-271) pointed to the geopolitical shocks experienced by Israel in the 1960s-1970s in the wake of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. Assaf Likhovski (2010:4) indicated the paradigm shift that Israeli academia underwent as state archives were declassified and a new and less ideologically committed generation of researchers educated abroad emerged. Abu el-Haj (2001:272-276) interpreted post-Zionism as a tool in the struggle led by the Israeli secular classes against the growing significance of the orthodox and the national-religious camps in Israeli politics and social life. Finally, Daniel Gutwein (2003a; 2003b) emphasized the Israeli middle classes' aspiration to dismantle the socialist-collectivist structure designed by the Labour Zionists in order to advance a neo-liberal economic ideology answering their material needs.

Gutwein's argument, although based on a somewhat reductionist class analysis, is especially valuable in our context, since it outlines two kinds of contemporary post-Zionism, the "leftist" and the "rightist", both of which, Gutwein asserts (2003b:251, 262), serve the aim of "neutralizing the electoral advantage and the political power accumulated by the 'others', and transferring the control of the key state systems to the market and the professional institutions" by "fighting the Zionist ethos, whose collectivist foundation legitimized top-down design of economy, society and culture". He claims that in the case of "leftist" and "rightist" post-Zionism we witness the convergence of two extremes:

Right and left post-Zionism, each in its own way, struggle against the radical-collectivist ethos of Zionism... Right and left post-Zionism are inspired by opposing intellectual traditions and define themselves by means of rival ideologies; at the same time... they are potential political partners... Both make use of the category of "the Jew" in order to dismantle Israeli collective identity as defined by "the Zionist". The left sees the dissolution of Zionist collectivism as the first step in transforming Israel from an "ethno-democracy" ... into a multicultural, universalist democracy; whereas the right uses "the Jew" to replace Zionism with an alternative "more Jewish" collective identity. Both ideologies employ arguments from the arsenal of the politics of identity to undermine the hegemony of Labor Zionism... Both view the collectivism that characterizes Zionism as a source of oppression and prefer free-market capitalism to the regulating force of the state (Gutwein 2003a:34).

Gutwein (2003a:35-38; 2003b:249-250) sums up his analysis by proposing that modern-day post-Zionism is *not* a subversive ideology, but serves the up-and-coming classes and their dominant agenda<sup>207</sup>.

It is quite apparent that huge differences exist between the post-Zionism of the 1950s and that of the 1990s. While the former amounted to the statement that Zionism was a historically *justified*, and now *completed*, historical stage, the latter is far less simple, encompassing a wide array of phenomena. It is not merely a political stance that questions Zionist truths, but also an academic approach, particularly in Israeli historiography, sociology, and archaeology, where post-Zionism casts doubt upon the

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<sup>207</sup> A peculiar kind of "rightist" post-Zionism, unnoticed by Gutwein, is the readiness in certain circles of the post-1967 settler society, as well as of the Likud leadership, to grant full citizenship to the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians after their prospective annexation to Israel (Ohana 2012:22-23). These settlers are titled by Ohana "Messianic neo-Canaanites" (Ohana 2008:31, 83-95, 202, 210, 228, 240, 272; 2012:23-27), though they obviously reject any affiliation with the anti-Zionist Young Hebrews (Ohana 2012:23).

veracity of the Biblical story used as the Zionist commemorative narrative<sup>208</sup>; a self-declared literary-cultural revolution claiming to release Hebrew letters and arts from the ideological shackles of Zionism (Domb 2000); finally, a state of mind widespread in a society aspiring for a new "civil religion" once Zionism had ceased to fulfil the task (Dieckhoff 2003:273-281; Ohana 2012:21). Modern-day post-Zionism cannot be disconnected from external influences either: the dissemination of deconstructivist and post-modernist methods in the humanities resulting from the crumbling of "positivist" values in the Western world since the 1960s finds reflection in Israeli post-Zionist academic circles when they reject the "oppressive" narrative of Zionism in favour of a more pluralistic approach to the Israeli past and present, and to identity issues. Thus, while 1950s post-Zionism largely sprang from the internal logic of Zionism, 1990s post-Zionism is a product of the dialectic cross-fertilizing of intrinsic developments and extrinsic impacts.

At this point, two questions occur: whether 1990s post-Zionism is to any extent an heir of 1950s post-Zionism, and whether both currents can be traced to the Young Hebrews' ideology. As the above discussion has shown, the answer to both questions should be yes, albeit a very hesitant one. Whereas Asima Ghazi-Bouillon (2009) and Laurence Silberstein (1999) maintain that the adoption of post-modernist and post-structuralist approaches is what designates "genuine" post-Zionist scholarship<sup>209</sup>, I believe that this is a limited argument, since it ignores the complexity of 1990s post-Zionism and its extra-academic sources and repercussions. Silberstein himself pays

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<sup>208</sup> Incidentally, post-Zionist Biblical archaeology sharply contradicts Horon's findings (Elon 1997:38, 45; Shapira 2004:36-40; Silberman 1997:74-76).

<sup>209</sup> Dieckhoff (2003:280) seems to share this viewpoint as well.

great attention to the pre-1990s "positivist" critics of Zionism, among whom he marks out the ex-"Canaanite" Boas Evron (Silberstein 1999:69-84), thus pointing to the "Canaanite" lineage of post-Zionism. Elsewhere he states plainly: "If Canaanism can be said to represent an early effort to construct a post-Zionist ideology for the generation of the 1940s and 1950s, Boas Evron... offers a lucid formulation of a post-Zionist ideology for the generation of the 1980s and 1990s" (Silberstein 1991:688). Evron's writings resound with the Young Hebrews' critique of Zionism (despite all his disagreements with "Canaanism" as such), thus one can indeed regard them as an intellectual bridge between the two currents of post-Zionism, given that Evron was personally involved in both. Back in 1984 he stated that he regarded himself as a "post-Zionist" (*b'tar-tziyoni* in Hebrew, unlike the presently used *post-tziyoni*), meaning one who "desir[es] a state indifferent to its citizens' religious and national affiliations, which has no binding institutional links to the Jewish Diaspora, all of whose citizens are legally equal in theory and practice – and which does not regard itself as a body loyal to a certain ideology or mission, but its only obligations are towards its citizens" (Evron 1984:21). Into this camp he corrals, *post-mortem*, Yonatan Ratosh.

Evron's standpoint is "post-Canaanite" inasmuch as it rejects some of this ideology's blatantly nationalistic and expansionist elements, but retains its liberal components<sup>210</sup>. Joseph Gorny notes that post-"Canaanite" liberals have abandoned the Young Hebrews' historical-territorial myth and acknowledged the bond between Israeli/Hebrew and Jewish history (in particular, he argues that Evron's contention

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<sup>210</sup> Compare Evron's criticism of the Young Hebrews' ideology (Evron 1988:351-373; 1995:205-222) with his criticism of the Zionist policy, ideology, and historiography (Evron 1988:11-18, 93-186, 213-350, 408-425; 1995:41-67, 101-204, 242-254; 1996).

that East-European Jewry developed its own national identity is derived from Bundism [Gorny 1990a:47]). The above observations add further support to the claim that post-Zionism cannot be invariably identified with the left, an idea still pursued by some advocates as well as some students of post-Zionism (Ram 2011:111-115; Waxman 1997).

Drawing on Gutwein's approach, it is possible to suggest that Revisionism, "Canaanism", and post-Zionism were three ideological currents reflecting the class interests of the Israeli liberal secular bourgeoisie, which is one explanation for their partial overlapping. Post-Zionism's intellectual sources become apparent once one pays closer attention to the ideas of Zeev Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionism. In my opinion, three elements of his thought are echoed in post-Zionism of both the "left" and the "right" variety – *positivism*, *legalism*, and *monism*. In Jabotinsky's day, positivism meant conceptualizing Zionism as a struggle for Jewish revival without producing tortured ideological justifications for the Jews' right to Palestine, which Jabotinsky deemed unquestionable; legalism meant opting for a legally binding acquisition of the entire Land of Israel for the Jewish people against Labour's preferred policy of *fais accomplis* (including the possibility of abandoning outposts and territories if clinging to them would interfere with this aim); monism was the principle formulated by Jabotinsky that the Zionist struggle could not tolerate any ideological ambivalence (by implication, Labour's socialist inclinations), demanding instead that all efforts be concentrated on the attainment of a Jewish majority and sovereignty in Palestine. After the objective was won, Jabotinsky continued, there

would be room to work out the ideal social order for the Jewish state, preferably a democratic-liberal one, though Jabotinsky did not reject socialism out of hand<sup>211</sup>.

In view of the above, 1950s post-Zionism can be understood as a statement by Jabotinsky's disciples that the establishment of Israel signified the end of the monist era and that, in consequence, a democratic-liberal polity, one that would not privilege Jews, must come into being. While Zeev Jabotinsky did not claim that the establishment of a Jewish state *must* lead to the end of Zionism, his son, along with the *Lamerhav* faction, actually subscribed to this very notion. Later on, the 1990s post-Zionists reiterated the call for the termination of Zionism after its goals had been achieved. This element is thus common to both incarnations of post-Zionism, even though "leftist" post-Zionists, understandably, avoided invoking Zeev Jabotinsky.

The second Jabotinskian element that underpins post-Zionism, Jabotinsky's legalistic outlook, is expressed in the post-Zionist call for "normalization", meaning that Israel should adopt international legal norms that would override any ideological imperatives, and that if some territories are held in contravention of these norms, they should be abandoned. Left Post-Zionism sees such withdrawal as legitimizing the continued existence of Israel, while the Jabotinskian right-wing sees it as a "payment" for an international legal recognition of Israel's grip over other territories that are more important ideologically or strategically. Nevertheless both are ready to make major territorial concessions since, as explained by Baruch Kimmerling (1983:180, 224), "one assumes that the students of the school of Jabotinsky, who did not see settlement as the practical expression of Zionism, found it far less difficult to take such a step [of evacuating Jewish settlements]... than did the members of the Labor

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<sup>211</sup> For the monism principle in detail, see: Bilski Ben-Hur 1988:227-334.

parties" because "this was consistent with the original ideology of Revisionist (and Political) Zionism, which downplayed the role of settlements per se... and emphasized more general political processes, which were seen as more crucial in determining the fate of the Jewish nation".

The third and final Jabotinskian element, positivism, is reflected in Boas Evron's statement, uttered back in 1970, that "our existence... is justified because we exist" (Ben-Ezer 1986:188). These words recall Jabotinsky's reference, cited in the previous section, to the "crippled spirits" that make the Jews' unalienable right to the Land of Israel a matter of "investigation". The standpoint expressed both by Evron and by post-Zionists who upheld a liberal vision of Israeli nationhood free of ideological "excuses" implied that Zionism will render itself obsolete by victory. Israel, claimed post-Zionists as well as the Young Hebrews, would not require any *raison d'être* beside the mere fact of its existence as the national state of the Israelis.

Despite the similarities discussed above between post-Zionism and "Canaanism", the two ideas ultimately remained distinct. The post-Zionists were quite aware of this, as Eri Jabotinsky's critical remarks on the Young Hebrews' ideology demonstrate (Jabotinsky 1952:46-47; Porat 1989:264). Some of *Lamerhav's* positions were also non-"Canaanite", like its pro-American geopolitical orientation (Miller 2004:178-179). Likewise, Hillel Kook, the founder of the Hebrew Committee for the Liberation of the Nation and a prominent member of *Lamerhav*, was reluctant to accept Horon's ideas in their entirety, believing that Israel was not obliged to cease being a national state for the Jews; later in his life he advocated a territorial compromise with the Palestinians, which was incompatible with "Canaanism" (Kaplan 2005a:96-98, 102).

In my assessment, post-Zionism diverged from "Canaanism" because it was unwilling to accept the latter's historiographical base, which portrayed Zionism as illegitimate *from the very start*. Post-Zionism, as we saw above, *did* view Zionism as legitimate at a certain historical stage; in effect, as observed by Uri Ram (2008), it succumbed to Zionism's inherent need of historical myth-making based on the Jewish legacy. "The attempt to create a secular substitute for religious faith fashioned from materials drawn from the religious tradition could not possibly succeed in the long run", warns Meron Benvenisti (2000:250); and eventually, 1950s post-Zionism vanished quite quickly from the Israeli public stage, victim of its own innate weaknesses and internal contradictions. For it is difficult to advocate a liberal outlook by taking its legitimacy from an inherently illiberal national idea. This particular obstacle the Young Hebrews never had to tackle.

### 5.3. "Canaanism's" immediate neighbours

One of the criticisms directed at Baruch Kurzweil's analysis of the Young Hebrews was that its narrow focus reduced the movement to an anomaly within the boundaries of Jewish intellectual history. Critics pointed out that Kurzweil took no notice of other nationalist-territorial ideologies analogous to "Canaanism" that competed with Pan-Arabism for the loyalty of the inhabitants of the Middle East (Laor 2009:293). Yaacov Shavit probably had this in mind when he included in his study a chapter on the Egyptian, Turkish, Syrian, and Lebanese varieties of territorial nationalism (Shavit 1984b:46-53; 1987:92-103), though otherwise he is fully committed to Kurzweil's paradigm. In the comparison of Hebrew and Arabic territorial nationalisms, this work takes as its starting point the assertion that both belonged to the same phenomenological area. Otherwise, what sense is there in juxtaposing "Canaanism" with Middle Eastern territorialisms without admitting their essential resemblance as *nationalist* ideologies?

Of the plethora of territorial nationalisms in the Arabic-speaking Middle East<sup>212</sup>, three ideologies in particular lend themselves to comparison with the Hebrew territorial nationalism, due to similarities in principles and geopolitical outlook. These are the "Phoenician" ideology in modern-day Lebanon, which regards the Lebanese nation as non-Arab in origin and culture and locates its "golden age" in the Phoenician period (Elath 1987:40-49; Firro 2004; Hourani 2002:285-291, 319-323; Kaufman 2004; Shavit 1984a:163-164; Suleiman 2003:204-219); the Egyptian "Pharaonic" ideology, which is likewise sceptical regarding the role of Arabic and Islamic components in Egyptian identity and seeks to ground it in Egypt's pre-Islamic past, whose most

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<sup>212</sup> For an encompassing overview, see: Baram 1990.

potent symbol is the ancient kingdom of the Pharaohs (Baram 1990:429-433; Suleiman 2003:174-204); finally, the "Pan-Syrian" ideology advanced by the Syrian Social National Party, which is described as a "regional" rather than a strictly "territorial" idea (Baram 1990:433-439; Hourani 2002:317-319; Suleiman 2003:162-169). An important, though by no means exclusive, part in the formulation and dissemination of these ideologies was played by members of the ethno-religious minorities in these countries, chiefly Christians of various denominations: Salama Musa in Egypt, Antun Saada in Syria, Charles Corm, Charles Malik, Michel Chiha, and Said Aql in Lebanon. As we saw above (ch. 4.2.2), Horon interpreted the movements inspired by these ideologies as a form of resistance by the "Arabized" Hebrews to Pan-Arabist encroachment and oppression, and was therefore largely sympathetic towards them. Moreover, personal parallels can be observed between the leaders of the Young Hebrews' movement in Israel and their counterparts among the Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern territorialists: for instance, Horon's counterparts are arguably Salama Musa in Egypt and Antun Saada in Syria (both attempted to anchor their political ideology in a historical commemorative narrative, which was meant to lend it credibility as historically "unavoidable"), whereas Yonatan Ratosh's counterparts are the Lebanese poets Said Aql and Charles Corm, who expressed their yearnings for a Christian-Lebanese national renaissance in lyrical language.

All these movements shared some major characteristics deriving from their common intellectual origins and historical development, the chief of which was their close-to-simultaneous emergence in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This period was characterized by the arousal of popular interest in the Middle East's pre-Islamic past, prompted by outstanding archaeological discoveries such as the finding of Tut-Ankh-

Amon's tomb in Egypt in 1922 or the unearthing of the Ugarit literature in Syria in 1929 (also the impulse for Horon to start rethinking Jewish ancient history) (Baram 1990:429-430; Kaufman 2004:8; Miller 2004:165-166; Shavit 1984b:47; 1987:93-95). Local "golden ages" became, thanks to these discoveries, available to counterbalance the Pan-Arabist outlook, which legitimized the idea of Arab national unity by relying chiefly on linguistic criteria. Middle Eastern territorial nationalisms were therefore compelled to sideline the language-based conception of nationality, advocating in certain cases the adoption of the local colloquial as the language of the national culture they promoted. Some went as far as advocating the replacement of Arabic script with a Latin-based alphabet, ostensibly more suited to local phonetics (Salama Musa in Egypt and Said Aql in Lebanon, for instance), an idea entertained by the Young Hebrews and Zionist Revisionists as well. Furthermore, the advocates of Middle Eastern territorial nationalisms frequently resorted to forms of environmental determinism, claiming that the soil shaped the local people's personality, which, armed with local language and culture, could develop into a fully-fledged national identity. The "Pharaonic" nationalists regarded the Nile valley as the source of Egyptian identity, while the "Phoenicians" made the Lebanon mountain range their primary symbol. Though in most cases these nationalisms were of the liberal variety, Shavit (1984b:50; 1987:93) is certainly not entirely off the mark when he identifies the French pre-Second World War radical right as one of their sources<sup>213</sup>.

It was the Pan-Syrian nationalist Antun Saada whose arguments mirrored most closely those promulgated by Horon and his fellow "Canaanites". First and foremost, his map of "Greater Syria" matched almost exactly the map of the Land of Kedem

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<sup>213</sup> Also: Kaufman 2004:6.

(Shavit 1984b:50; 1987:97-98). Only the ethnonyms derived from this political geography were divergent, Horon's "Hebrews" becoming in Saada's parlance "Syrians". Furthermore, above any other territorial nationalism in the Arabic-speaking Middle East, Saada's ideology was strictly secular and inclusivist, disregarding any confessional differences between the inhabitants of "Greater Syria" and inviting them all to partake in his political project (Suleiman 2003:165). Finally, Saada, like Horon, perceived Pan-Arab nationalism as a cover-up for Islamic expansionism. Thus, in three major areas "Canaanism" and "Pan-Syrianism" overlapped: in environmental determinism, in territorial outlook, and in geopolitical regional analysis.

"Canaanism" and "Phoenicianism", too, shared a political lexicon, with terms and notions used by the one side reflected in corresponding terms employed by the other. The ancient Hebrews were paralleled by the ancient Phoenicians; modern Hebrews were paralleled by modern Lebanese or Maronites; Canaan was paralleled by Lebanon; finally, the demonic role of Zionism in "Canaanism" was taken up by Pan-Arabism in "Phoenician" nationalism. Also noteworthy is the fact that the public intellectuals and writers who spearheaded "Phoenicianism" were usually well-to-do urban dwellers who espoused a liberal outlook not only in the political but also in the socio-economic sphere, not unlike the Young Hebrews.

These significant points of convergence cannot, however, obfuscate the deep disparities between the Young Hebrews' ideology and its regional counterparts. Actually, sometimes what seemed a point of agreement turned out to be a bone of contention: to cite an example, both Horon and Saada believed the Damascus-based Umayyad Caliphate was primarily Syrian, not Arabo-Islamic (Horon 1970:26; Hourani 2002:318). However, for Saada the Umayyad period (661-749 CE) was

Greater Syria's historical "golden age", whereas Horon, as demonstrated in previous chapters, saw the Islamic age as the *non-national* age par excellence in history.

Differences were also felt between "Canaanism" and "Phoenicianism" because of the latter's more prominent position in Lebanese public life. As a result, "Phoenician" ideology was more complex and intricate than the rather dogmatic "Canaanism" in Israel. Thus, the poet and businessman Charles Corm professed a very strong attachment to Christianity and insisted that Baal worship, which for him was the ancient Phoenicians' "national" cult, was actually an early proto-monotheism (Kaufman 2004:11). Horon, as we may recall, regarded Hebrew paganism as the source of national vital energy that in modern times justified a strictly secularist outlook; Lebanese "Phoenician" nationalism, on the contrary, possessed a very strong religious component, with its "inclusivism" by and large not extending beyond Lebanon's various Christian denominations.

There were also differences between these ideologies regarding the political vision for the present and the future. "Canaanism" was outspokenly anti-colonial and welcomed the disappearance of the European powers from the Middle East in the 1940s, its francophilia notwithstanding. Contrariwise, "Phoenicianism" (especially as enunciated by Corm) defined Lebanon's *raison d'état* as the perpetuation of its political dependency upon France to ward off Pan-Arabism<sup>214</sup>.

Furthermore, the Lebanese "Phoenicians" were far from enthusiastic in their attitude to Zionism and the state of Israel. Most of them supported a form of alliance between the two states, whether explicit or clandestine, but had reservations about Israel's

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<sup>214</sup> Zionist emissaries in Lebanon reported that Corm "was in panic" when the French mandate was terminated in 1943 (Kaufman 2004:28).

policy and its geopolitical orientation. In 1955 the Lebanese intellectual Charles Malik wrote that if Israel wanted to move from functioning in wartime conditions to regional peaceful coexistence, it needed to reform profoundly its own *raison d'état* (Rejwan 1999:98). "Phoenician" friendliness towards their immediate southern neighbours (expressed, mostly before 1948, in political and economic cooperation between the Hebrew *Yishuv* and the Maronites [Elath 1987:49-56; Miller 2004:165-166; Shavit 1984a:168-169, 178; 1984b:52-53]) turned out to be the Young Hebrews' undoing. The former were simply unfamiliar with the subtleties of the identity dilemmas in the *Yishuv* and Israel; thus "Canaanism's" essential distinction between Hebrews and Jews would have been meaningless for the "Phoenician" nationalists, and its radical secularism would have been outwardly repugnant.

Let us not forget as well that the "Phoenicians'" geopolitical outlook was limited to Lebanon itself, and they seldom looked to "Greater Syria" or "Levant" as a geo-historical unit with which to identify. This was done by Antun Saada, who accordingly regarded "Phoenician" nationalism as sectarian and isolationist (Suleiman 2003:165). Hence, Yaacov Shavit (1984b:51; 1987:100) concludes that whereas the "Phoenicians" were the Young Hebrews' potential allies, the Pan-Syrianists could not but become their sworn enemies. Indeed, the Young Hebrews' very few references to Pan-Syrianism are universally hostile: Horon (1970:128) mentions in passing "the Greater Syria dream", which he ascribes to Syrian Christians, juxtaposing their position to "Muslim Damascus" that supposedly clung to the Pan-Arab dream; and Ratosh (1982:93) makes it plain that Antun Saada led "an Arabized fascist unity party".

I believe that these differences cannot be explained merely by political disagreements. A more profound variance, based on historiographical outlook, existed between the Young Hebrews and their "Arabized" counterparts. We have seen that all of them, in one way or another, used environmental determinism to formulate their visions of history and politics. However, unlike Israel, none of the states surrounding it was coping with mass immigration, facing as a result the problem of a glaring discontinuity between the "golden age" and the present. Their population was imagined to have survived on its native land throughout the centuries, with unbroken roots reaching back to history's obscurest moments; therefore, the foundational myth that "Canaanism's" Arabic-speaking counterparts used was rather a genealogical myth of *continuity* and not an ideological myth of *discontinuity*. This, in consequence, brought these ideologies intellectually closer to Zionism, which may explain why all the attempts by the Young Hebrews to form cooperative links with the "Arabized" territorial nationalists in the Land of Kedem ultimately came to naught.

## Chapter 6: Is failure a failure indeed?

The previous chapter made the case that "Canaanism" was more coherent, less self-contradictory, and more liberal than Zionism. Nevertheless, it was the latter that ultimately prevailed in the *Yishuv* and in the state it founded in 1948. The Young Hebrews were in effect pushed to the margins of Israeli socio-cultural life, and their proposals for a restructuring of Israeli polity and society were treated first as a menace and then as an esoteric nonsense. Why this was the verdict of history is the question that this chapter attempts to tackle.

Some of the authors referred to in this work put forward their own explanations for the Young Hebrews' demise between the 1950s and the 1970s. Yaacov Shavit (1984b:158-171; 1987:19-20, 160-162) treats the entire movement as a failed nativist radical reaction to the blurring of the classical Zionist dichotomy of Jew/Hebrew that took place after 1948. This position was thoroughly and convincingly refuted by Boas Evron (1984), who showed that the peak of "Canaanism" was actually *before* 1948; consequently, the solution proposed by Shavit, who does not attempt to hide his indebtedness to Baruch Kurzweil's paradigm or his allegiance to Zionism, need not concern us any further. James Diamond offers a more nuanced explanation for the Young Hebrews' failure; however, it betrays his almost complete ignorance of Horon's historiography (as well as his tacit belief in the plausibility of the Zionist commemorative narrative), in line with his otherwise correct assertion that "Canaanism" was essentially a modern political ideology:

Ultimately ["Canaanism"] represented a metamorphosis of Jewish identity into something that *had no defined historical precedent* or definable content. In other words, when "Canaanism" sought to act on the secular impulses that were so clearly manifested in early Zionism

and to actualize them by severing the tie to the Jewish past, *it had no available model or context upon which to predicate the new secular self-understanding it asked of its adherents. The appeal to a prebiblical "Hebrew" past was more a fillip than a plausible option...* Secularism as the upshot of modernity and the Emancipation could be appropriated by Jews as individuals but there was as yet no way for Jews to do this meaningfully as a collective entity *without some recourse to the Jewish past and the Jewish religion*, as the Zionist experience shows.

"Canaanism" held out a transformation into an unknown world *with no real past to structure its vision* (Diamond 1986:118, emphases mine).

We can see how both Shavit and Diamond, their different sensibilities notwithstanding, have locked up the phenomenon of the Young Hebrews within the conceptual limits of Jewish identity and history. The present work, as the preceding chapters have made clear, rejects this approach in favour of an alternative theoretical framework drawn from studies of comparative nationalism. I believe that a conceptual framework that sets "Canaanism" against Zionism as rival national visions brings us to a deeper understanding of the latter's triumph and the former's failure. It also absolves us of the implicit need to "take sides" in the dispute between the two, as Shavit and Diamond seem to do, their methodology leaving them no other choice.

The discussion in chapter 2 showed that many nations face more than one choice of their path to self-definition; eventually one prevails and the others more often than not survive only as mementoes of the victorious vision's fallibility. I see no compelling reason to regard the struggle waged by Zionism and "Canaanism" over the Hebrew nation as anything else but an example of this model.

That is not to say that Zionism and "Canaanism" were the *only* ideologies battling over the Hebrew *Yishuv's* national identity; rather, "Canaanism" was one of several standpoints – albeit the most radical – within the pre- and post-1948 Israeli social discourse on the relationship between the modern state and society on the one hand,

and the legacy passed on from pre-modernity on the other. The most evident difference between the two is, of course, that Zionism managed to win a mass following, both in the Diaspora and within the *Yishuv*<sup>215</sup>, while "Canaanism" did not. In theoretical terms, this means that Zionism reached Miroslav Hroch's phase C (of a popular movement), while the Young Hebrews lingered in phase B, preaching to a limited circle of followers.

The causes for this outcome can be divided into those that were intrinsic and those that were extrinsic to "Canaanism" – that is to say, a combination of unfavourable external circumstances and internal weaknesses accounts, in my opinion, for the failure of the Young Hebrews (see also: Diamond 1986:76-77). Before elaborating on these causes, I should restate that I regard the basic "Canaanite" assertion that a new Hebrew national identity evolved in Mandatory Palestine in the years before 1948 as being fundamentally correct. However, what the Young Hebrews apparently did not perceive was that the mere existence of the Hebrew nation did not by itself signify that its members would subscribe to the "Canaanite" version of Hebrew nationalism and detach themselves willingly and naturally from their Jewish heritage, or even from Zionism. Even before 1948 most of the Hebrew youth (to which the "Canaanite" appeal was primarily addressed) did not find the Young Hebrews' ideology particularly attractive. "Canaanite" understanding of Hebrew nationhood diverged significantly from the Hebrew youth's self-definition, which was much more complex and tied dialectically to Jewish identity and history than the Young Hebrews hoped for. An article published by the Young Hebrew Amos Keinan (1986) in 1949 captured

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<sup>215</sup> This is stated without disregarding the fact that before WWII Zionism was followed by a minority, although sizeable one, of the world Jewry (Avni & Shimoni 1990).

this incongruity in its title – "Hebrews and not *Sabras*" – revealing that the Young Hebrews were to some extent aware that their appeal was directed at a basically non-existent target, an anti-Zionist Hebrew-speaking youngster whose identity was shaped exclusively by the landscape of Canaan. At the same time the Young Hebrews ridiculed the native *Sabra's* dependence on the discursive and socio-political principles of Zionism and Jewish legacy.

Several decades later, Keinan (*Proza* 1977:5-6) recanted his arguments, stating that he had come to realize the incompatibility of the values of the "1948 generation" to which he himself subscribed, and the values propagated by the Young Hebrews, which, compared with the complex interplay of Jewish and non-Jewish native elements in the Hebrew identity, seemed simplistically rigid<sup>216</sup>. Other members of Keinan's generation argued likewise; for example, the Israeli sociologist Dan Horowitz said:

I remained indifferent to Canaanism's nativist motive that disregarded our being immigrants' children... We did not need the Canaanite ideology... since the Zionist ideology – in its version that was acceptable to us – regarded Hebraism [sic] as the realization of Jewish auto-emancipation and the expression of its transition from a dispersed community to a nation. This way we could share the Hebrew experience and the Eretz-Israeli sentiment... without implying any denial of the *Yishuv's* bond to the Diaspora... (Er'el 2006:40).

A similar attitude is expressed by the writer Hanoah Bartov, who attacks the "ideal *Sabra*" image as a "narcissist mythology", stating that in his eyes the real "story... [is not of] the *imagined Sabra* Hebrew which is dissimilar to the Jew, but the *true* one – the story of new immigrants, their children, and their children's children" (Bartov 2007:132, 157, emphases mine). Bartov, though, does not make it clear whether he is

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<sup>216</sup> See also: Diamond 1986:76, 104-105; Er'el 2006:39-40; Ohana 2008:118-120.

saying that the socio-cultural construct he criticizes *never* existed (meaning that the "ideal *Sabra*" image was completely false) or that it *did* exist, but did not encompass all native-born Hebrew-speakers, like himself (meaning that the image was only partially adequate)<sup>217</sup>.

The generation of Keinan, Horowitz, and Bartov was dubbed the "1948 generation", referring to the key role the war for Israel's independence had in shaping their experience. Many of them, however, perceived the war as a critical breaking point, after which the native Hebrew national ethos went into swift and sharp decline. First and foremost, the generation was decimated demographically, with approximately 6000 fighters on the Israeli side killed in the war. Amos Keinan described this as the Israeli equivalent of the Holocaust, referring to the damage done to the Hebrew feeling of national selfhood by so proportionally high a number of victims (Er'el 2006:53; *Proza* 1977:10); another prominent member of the 1948 generation, Uri Avneri (1988:29), stated bluntly that native Hebrew culture "was murdered" that year.

The Holocaust was another important factor in suppressing Hebrew national identity, though the event itself predated 1948. Hanoch Bartov (2007:134-142, 150, 157) vividly described his experiences as a Jewish Brigade soldier in post-war Europe, when he came to realize the dimensions of the catastrophe, stressing at least twice that this realization caused him "to tear from my heart any remaining Canaanite strings, such as had existed within me" (Bartov 2007:138, 140). Viewing the process described by Bartov from a somewhat different angle, Avneri (1988:29) referred to it quite derisively as a "Jewish reaction" thriving on "bad conscience" awoken by the

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<sup>217</sup> For other sociological portraits of the *Sabra* generation, see: Er'el 2006:38-39, 42-43; Shapira 1998; Weinryb 1953.

destruction of the Diaspora so reviled heretofore in mainstream Zionist discourse. The fact that this reversal of attitude towards the Diaspora hit the Young Hebrews hardest shows that the Hebrew youth was rather insensitive to the nuances separating the Zionist "negation of the Diaspora", which was principally hostile to Jewish non-sovereign existence abroad, from "Canaanite" criticism of Diaspora influences *within* Hebrew society, while remaining indifferent to the Diaspora itself, as explained in chapter 5. Interestingly, the Young Hebrews and their associates were quite slow to realise the ominous implications of the Holocaust as one of the key symbols of the emerging Israeli nationhood<sup>218</sup> for their ideology, as the following words by Eri Jabotinsky (1952:46, emphases mine), attest: "The *only* point concerning the Jewish past which *may* still arouse some Israelis to passion is Germany. But then it is with many a problem of *personal vengeance*". Apparently, the Holocaust as a *collective* experience did not enter Jabotinsky's mind.

The next crucial factor in the stifling of the emergent Hebrew national identity was the massive Jewish immigration to Israel between 1948 and 1952, which relegated native Hebrews to the position of a small and mostly powerless minority. Various statistics regarding the growth of the *Yishuv* up to 1948 point unequivocally to the fact that, even before the establishment of Israel, native Hebrews were generally numerically insignificant, a situation that 1948 and its aftermath only exacerbated. For instance, Ron Kuzar (2001:187) claims that back in 1918 the Jewish population of Palestine numbered 85,000, among them 30,000 native Hebrew-speakers; thirty years later, according to Yaacov Shavit (1984b:159), the figures had risen to 716,000 and 253,000, respectively. Bartov (2007:133-134) cites calculations by the historian

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<sup>218</sup> On the role of the Holocaust in the formation of Israeli identity, see: Ram 2001:47.

Emmanuel Sivan that demonstrate that in 1948 less than 40% of the male adult population of the *Yishuv* was native-born; the sociologist Oz Almog puts their numbers at a mere 20,000 (Er'el 2006:37). The calculations of a contemporary observer (Weinryb 1953:417) show that in late 1951 Israel's population already numbered 1,400,000 Jewish people, yet only 340,000 among them were local-born, and of the latter only 100,000 were adult.

These statistics, though inconsistent at times, tend to agree on two counts: that, as observed by Oz Almog (and cited in the previous chapter), the Hebrew natives' symbolic significance far exceeded their numerical strength; and that, despite their cultural predominance in the pre-state *Yishuv*, the Hebrews after 1948 were too few and too weak to resist the suppression of their national identity by the Zionist leadership (and, possibly, reluctant to do so altogether). Uri Avneri grudgingly admitted his generation's defeat in words attesting to a bitter nostalgia, uttered on the eve of the 40<sup>th</sup> (!) anniversary of Israel's establishment:

Since 1948 a new culture emerged in the country, no longer "Hebrew" but "Israeli"... It absorbed some of the traits of the preceding "Hebrew" culture, emptying them of their true content and turning them into caricatures... A new chapter started approximately 40 years ago. It must be approved of, as any living, emerging, and evolving culture deserves of approval. Yet it must be understood that this is not a continuation of what was beforehand (Avneri 1988:30).

If, indeed, after 1948 a window of opportunity was opened on a project for Israeli nation-formation that would have yielded a secular Hebrew-speaking territorial-linguistic nation, we must conclude that it was promptly shut. Furthermore, Avneri's admission is important in the present context by acknowledging the existence of an Israeli national culture that can be described as dissimilar from *both* the Jewish

traditional culture and the pre-1948 Hebrew national culture<sup>219</sup>. The establishment of Israeli statehood set in motion complex processes of ethnogenesis, which, while subsuming Hebrew nationalism, created a wholly new national identity – yet linked in a myriad ways to its past legacy – that held both secularism and religious sentiment in a tense balance. Relying on the Israeli Zionist thinker Eliezer Schweid, Gideon Katz (2008:253) explains that

...Hebrew culture – the culture that took shape during the period of the pre-state *Yishuv* – was not able to create a consistent religious tradition, nor was it able to acquire the authority necessary to replace religious tradition. These problems were not resolved within the framework of Israeli culture, that is, within the culture that developed after the founding of the state. Indeed, new and difficult problems then arose. Israeli culture is comprised of segmented subcultures that together do not compose a whole, unified cultural matrix.

Thus, recourse to a pre-modern religious communitarian legacy was in a way unavoidable if one wished to hold the above-mentioned matrix together. This means that the Israeli nation's collective values, symbols, experiences, and historical consciousness are a far cry from the elements constituting Hebrew national identity in a respective order, despite a not negligible measure of continuity. At present, politically-engaged Jewish religious sentiment is one of the most effective tools employed in maintaining this heterogeneous matrix, as Uri Ram (2008), for whom Israeli national identity consists of national chauvinism mixed with rising religiosity, observes with some anxiety. Polls conducted in the 1970s, coinciding with the final collapse of the Young Hebrews' organized activity, confirmed that by that time their ideal of a secular-territorial nation functioning in an inclusive democratic system

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<sup>219</sup> For the sake of the argument I shall presently overlook the role played in the shaping of Israeli national identity by non-Jewish Israelis.

detached from primordial criteria of identity had become irrelevant to most Israelis: "In answer to the question – 'Are we in Israel an inseparable part of the Jewish people throughout the world or do we belong to a separate people formed here – Israelis?' – 96 percent of the religious, 87 percent of the traditional, and 76 percent of the nonreligious in [a] 1974 study identified with 'the Jewish people' throughout the world" (Tekiner 1991:44). Another mid-1970s' poll showed that support for "Canaanite" secularism in Israel oscillated around 5% (Liebman & Don-Yehiya 1981), a situation that even the most outspoken post-Zionists were ultimately unable to reverse. This state of affairs is corroborated by James Diamond (1986:84, 114), who writes that "an Israeli nativism has certainly developed since 1948, but it is a nativism in which the Jewish component has persisted with increasing strength", and therefore "an elite, if it is truly to function as such, cannot be in opposition to the norms and values of the society of which it is a part. Because the 'Canaanites' were by their own definition anti-Zionist, they were in effect cut off from their society, unattached to its basic assumptions and so devoid of cultural influence"<sup>220</sup>. And this returns us to the idea expressed in the previous chapters that the Young Hebrews can be classified as a counter-elite rather than an elite.

It might be said that the post-1948 facts on the ground – meaning Israeli nation-formation – defeated Horon's idealist environmental determinism. The Young Hebrews, who refused to abandon their deterministic assumption that artificially created colonial boundaries could not compete with the allegedly stable laws of political geography embodied in the geophysical unity of the Land of Kedem, did not realise that the Israeli nation, though forming in, and identifying with, the

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<sup>220</sup> The same perspective is shared by Nitza Er'el (2006:36).

"circumscribed" borders of the "Zionist statelet", nevertheless possessed an authentic national outlook and identity. Moreover, put in a comparative perspective, the Young Hebrews' belief in the artificiality, and therefore the non-tenability, of the Land of Kedem's post-World War I internal borders as the sources of national identification, turned out to be resting on flimsy grounds. As several political scientists and scholars of nationalism (Breuilly 1994; Neuberger 1994; Young 1994) have argued, the geographical delimitations made by colonial powers in actual fact quite often relied on pre-existing divisions within the colonized societies. Their artificiality and foreign origins notwithstanding, this ensured the survival of the borders and their subsequent transformation into foci of national or anti-colonial sentiment and allegiance. While this phenomenon can be chiefly observed in Africa, it is also applicable to the Middle East; therefore, Israeli national identity, as well as other identities functioning in the Land of Kedem (Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, etc.), can be said to be distinct and authentic, despite the internal tensions that from time to time threaten to rip them apart, as the Lebanese (1958, 1975-1990) and Syrian (1976-1982, 2011-) civil wars demonstrate. One might observe with a hint of irony that the Young Hebrews, busy repelling Jewish/Zionist and Muslim/Pan-Arabist "false consciousness", did not perceive this in time. Their obsession with "macro"-identities, such as the Pan-Jewish or the Pan-Muslim, blinded them to the fact that "micro"-identities can be vital enough as well.

The Young Hebrews' obliviousness to the actual dynamics of nation-formation in the Land of Kedem is representative of a more general weakness in their theory, which emerges from the analysis of Adya Horon's discourse, both in its historiographical and geopolitical aspects. One feature of Horon's methodology that strikes the reader as the

most prominent is his reliance on deterministic analytical tools. This sometimes slips over into all-out essentialism – as, for example, his insistence that modern nations and primordial denominations or ethno-communities are mutually exclusive by their very essence. Craig Calhoun (1997:18) defines essentialism as "a reduction of the diversity in a population to some single criterion held to constitute its defining 'essence' and most crucial character... often coupled with the claim that the 'essence' is unavoidable or given by nature". Anwar Abdel-Malek describes it in more developed terms as an analytic attitude whereby "an essence should exist... which constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all things considered; this essence is both 'historical', since it goes back to the dawn of history, and fundamentally a-historical, since it transfixes the being... within its inalienable and non-evolutive specificity" (Abdel-Malek 1963:108, cited at: Said 1994a:97). In true 19<sup>th</sup>-century positivist fashion, Horon arms himself with what he identifies as the stable rules of historical and social development, which loom large over his otherwise sensitive and complex exploration of ancient Hebrew history. His trust in the combined influence of space and time on socio-cultural long-term processes renders his writings highly teleological, as is often the case with nationalist historiography. This leads him to disregard or even ignore facts that apparently contradict this macro-historical vision. Such an approach certainly did a disservice to the Young Hebrews' political vigour: having convinced themselves that history was deterministically on their side, they in a sense fell into a political complacency, relying on history's "stable laws" to "do the job" in their stead. A political movement that implicitly claims its prognoses will be realised anyway, no matter what the stubborn reality says, cannot be too attractive to activists.

Moreover, the Young Hebrews seem to persist in a kind of cognitive dissonance: for although Horon admits that a "false myth" should be replaced by a "better myth" (worked out by himself, we are led to understand), this does not lead him to question the factual veracity of the historical elements he employs to construct his Hebrew national counter-historiography. He maintains that it is enough to apply "logical" argumentation grounded in "unbiased" facts of history in order to deconstruct "false" identities (such as the "Arabized") and to release their carriers from the inhibitions placed by "regressive" primordial social categories, such as the ethno-community or the *millet*. This belief in the power of rationalism as an instrument in national liberation is all the more striking given that, on the face of it, Hebrew nationalism, though certainly more "progressive" than Zionism and Pan-Arabism (as argued in chapter 5), is by itself no more "rational" than its rivals.

Horon's approach evokes what we referred to in chapter 1 as "category error", that is, the application of one's own categories and analytical tools to a reality that might resist them as irrelevant or ill-used. As explained by Laurence Silberstein (1999:177), category error means placing "the practices [of the objects analysed] in the wrong category or discursive framework", mistakenly assuming that "they share the same interpretive premises as their... critics". We can only surmise that Horon was so struck by his discovery of the ancient Hebrew civilization when working on the Ugarit texts in the early 1930s that he became convinced that once historical reality (and the political conclusions arising from it) were thoroughly explained to the Jews and Arabs of the Land of Kedem, this would bring down the "backward" system of socio-cultural relations in which they lingered and replace it with a more "advanced" structure that drew its inspiration from "objective" historical truth. He did not sway

from this conviction, apparently unaware of the possibility that the past that was of direct relevance to him as an ideologue of the Hebrew national revival might be vague or wholly unappealing to those inhabitants of the Land of Kedem who identified with a different national vision (however "false" it might be).

However, the above observations are by no means intended to imply that a reverse historical determinism is justified: namely, that the triumph of Zionism (and, for a certain period, contemporaneous with Horon's own life, of Pan-Arabism) suggests that the factual historical dynamic proves the inherent "correctness" of Jewish nationalism. That would be tantamount to falling into the trap of Zionist ideological discourse by supplying it with a retroactive justification that would echo its teleological character. The fact that Zionism prevailed and "Canaanism" did not does not of itself "acquit" the former or "condemn" the latter in the eyes of history. Quite the contrary: the foregoing analysis scrutinized these ideologies' inherent components, juxtaposed with the external material circumstances, and steered free as far as possible of the teleology so typical of both. As argued in chapter 5, it is in fact Zionism that suffers from greater inconsistencies than "Canaanism" and has more painful internal paradoxes to untangle. The only plausible conclusions to be drawn from this are, it seems, that in order to gain the high ground an ideology does not have to be ideally structured, and that in the brutal world of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century nationalism there was no room left for an intellectual articulation of a liberal political platform based on a profound and systematic study of the past and the present. And, to close this work with a note of a more personal character: as someone who has spent most of his life in Israel, and to whom the fortunes of the state and its people are very dear, it is my sincere conviction that as long as Israel maintains its self-definition as a Jewish

state, "Canaanism" *will* remain relevant, and that the challenge posed by the Young Hebrews will stay in place, despite its present obscurity. The "Canaanites" have lost a decisive battle over the Israeli identity; yet the war still rages.

## Appendix I

Horon's scholarly writing: "Canaan and the Aegean Sea: Greco-Phoenician origins reviewed" (Horon 1967; selected pages)

*Adolphe G. Horon*

### CANAAN AND THE AEGEAN SEA:

### GRECO-PHOENICIAN ORIGINS REVIEWED

No problem is more crucial in the history of the Old World than that of the relationship between opposite shores of the Mediterranean. We should like to approach it from a particular though historically central viewpoint: namely, from the connection existing between Canaan and the Aegean basin, or, in other words, between a Semitic Orient or Levant which the Greeks called Phoenicia, and a Europe which was the Occident, the region of Sunset, to the Near-Eastern Semites.

We cannot hope to do justice to such a broad subject in its entirety. Therefore we will not deal here with the momentous encounter between the classical Hellenes and those Barbarians who spoke Phoenician or Hebrew (which is actually the same language); or vice versa, with the meeting of Hebrew and Gentile—the latter being the Hebrew's Barbarian. Instead we will restrict our discussion to the more remote background of this encounter and mainly to events which took place in the Bronze Age. This was the age which toward its end witnessed the legend-

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ary Trojan war, followed around 1200 B.C. by devastating raids by "Sea Peoples" in the Levant: Aegean tribes like the Philistines (or Pelasgians)<sup>1</sup> and the Tyrsenians (Tyrrhenians, later Etruscans),<sup>2</sup> or tribes from farther afield, such as the Sardinians<sup>3</sup> and the Siculians.<sup>4</sup> These raids foreshadowed, for Greece herself, the Dorian invasion which put an end to Mycenaean civilization.

After seventy years of learned and often acrimonious debating, seldom free from bias, the time seems at hand for a more sober review. Indeed, discovery and research during the last few decades now provide us with rather abundant factual documentation in which we can find some trustworthy, objectively valid bearings.

Since the beginning of the present century, most scholars have shared the opinion according to which the Greeks—both Hellenes properly so called and their forerunners, the "Sons of Achaeans" of whom Homer sang—arose and developed quite separately from any Semites, even from the Western Semites. According to this view, these two major ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups met and struggled at a fairly late stage in their history, that is, during the last pre-Christian millennium, prior to and especially after Alexander.

This was not at all the belief of the Ancients themselves. As early as the Book of Genesis ("Table of Nations," chapter x), we are told that Shem—the eponym or name-giving hero of the Semites, to whom all "Sons of Hebrews" lay claim—was also the elder brother of *Yaphet* (Japhet), father of *Yawan* (the Ionians and other Greek tribes). Such a kith and kin relationship between Mediterranean peoples, or at least between their heaven-born

<sup>1</sup> It now appears that the two names are basically identical, cf. W.F. Albright, *Archaeol. of Palestine*, 1960, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Turusba* in Egyptian texts, probably also *Tiras* in the Bible (Genesis, x, 2); but it might already have been a group of such people settled in Italy. Cf. Jean Bérard, *Revue des Etudes Anciennes*, 1949, pp. 201 ss.

<sup>3</sup> The identity of these *Sardi* (*Sbardana* in Egyptian) seems well established; cf. W.F. Albright, "Some Oriental Glosses on the Homeric Problem," *Amer. Journ. of Archaeology*, 1950, p. 167, n. 18.

<sup>4</sup> The *Siculi* (Sicels) seem to have left their mark in a toponym of the Palestinian south-country, which is often mentioned in the Bible: *Tsiqlag* or *Siqelag* in Hebrew, *Sequelak*, *Siceleg* in the Greek and Latin versions (cf. F.M. Abel, *Géogr. de la Palestine*, 1938, II, p. 465).

aristocracies, is indeed a basic tenet of that eponymic or ethnographic mythology whose fragments are found scattered throughout the more ancient, still "pagan" writings collected in the Bible. Its final editors, moved by the spirit of a Judaism which was henceforth to be monotheistic and exclusivist, never entirely managed to eliminate these traces of Hebrew paganism. However, they succeeded in depriving Canaan of its Semitic parentage—for reasons which have little in common with ethnography, but everything to do with theology. Nevertheless, even the rather orthodox Josephus still tries to ferret out the connections, real or imaginary, between Biblical history, Phoenician and Egyptian chronicles, and the myths of pre-Hellenic Greece.

As to the Hellenes prior to the ideologists who inspired Alexander's "crusade" (just like the Hebrews who antedated Ezra the scribe, Plato's contemporary and the true founder of Judaism), their ideas were eclectic and rather liberal with respect to past and present relations with foreigners, i.e. Barbarians. Nearly the entire literature of Greece until ca. 400 B.C. bears witness to the intercourse between civilized nations dwelling on both sides of the sea, an intercourse which took place despite commercial rivalries and political conflicts and despite differences in language. The two foremost historians of classical Greece, Herodotus and Thucydides, are quite explicit as to the presence of Phoenicians around the Aegean and as to their considerable influence both before and after the Trojan war. Moreover, Phoenicians or Sidonians were already familiar to the audience of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

From the renewal of ancient studies in the Renaissance, until the 19th century, hardly anybody questioned the validity of these traditional data. Quite to the contrary: there was rather a tendency to credit the Phoenicians (although there was very scant knowledge of them) with a well-nigh exclusive pioneering function as universal civilizers, even in places and epochs about which tradition said nothing at all.

An anti-Phoenician reaction against such exaggerated claims set in rather abruptly toward the end of the 19th century and went at once to the other extreme.<sup>5</sup> The Humanities were to be

<sup>5</sup> Especially after the paper by Julius Beloch, "Die Phoeniker am aegaeischen Meer," *Rheinisches Museum f. Philologie*, 1894, p. 111-132.

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cleansed of every Phoenician bias; influences from the Near East were to be rejected as the mere shimmering of an "Oriental mirage;" the purely European (or "Indo-European," or perhaps "Aryan") character of ancient Europe was to be fully restored. This curiously retrospective anti-Semitism was fed by current affairs; it was also the counterpart to oversimplified linguistic and anthropological theories current in a naive century which had not yet been trained in the racist inhuman refinements of our own times.

In any case, the motive for this "Phoenicophobia" did not lie solely in a praiseworthy desire to test the traditions by methods of scientific criticism. Indeed, at the turn of the century, scientific integrity would have instead suggested a postponement of judgment. Too many items in the evidence were still missing, whatever the progress of Egyptology and Assyriology and despite the occasional diggings in the Aegean and the Levant. Interpreting the findings was no easy matter because of a dearth of comparative data and for lack of any reliable chronology. Nevertheless no one waited, and verdict was rendered: the Phoenicians were expelled from Europe some four millennia after the mythical advent in Crete of the Tyrian maid Europa, whose name is still attached to the continent.

Of course, there were scholars who raised their voices in protest against such a peculiar way of vindicating European pride and honor; but they were few, and got no real hearing. One should single out for mention Victor Bérard, the prominent and original interpreter of Homeric poems: all his life was a quest for a better understanding of this Bible of the Greeks, and therefore of the role played by the Phoenicians as the educators of early Greece.<sup>6</sup> Bérard died just about the time that a new era of archeological and philological discovery was starting in the Levant and the Aegean area. He did not witness the deciphering of the Ugarit texts (by Charles Virolleaud and Edouard Dhorme in France, and Hans Bauer in Germany), which brought to light important fragments of Canaanite epics dating back to the Bronze Age, such as Bérard had actually postulated as necessarily existing as the common sources of both the Bible and Homer. For lack

<sup>6</sup> V. Bérard, *La résurrection d'Homère*, 1930; *Les Phéniciens et l'Odysée*, 1927, 1-11.

of documents of this kind, Bérard's arguments had often been incomplete or even erroneous as to details. Yet his overall views were correct and justified, and his thesis is by now largely supported by the newly discovered data.

Those specialists who chose to ignore Bérard were quite wrong<sup>7</sup> in their assessment of the nature of European civilization, which had always been complex and composite, in every respect, since its very beginnings. Mediterranean in the broadest sense, it was built up from the most varied components: no purity in it, either "Aryan" or "Semitic", and no preordained dominance of any "miracle"—Greek or Judaic—to play a unique, determinant part, exclusive of other factors.

We cannot sift out here the numberless items of evidence of every kind and provenance pertaining to Mediterranean or more specifically Aegean and Levantine origins. But we must say a few words about some of the major groups of texts and inscriptions discovered in ancient Canaan as well as in Greece, including Crete.

The Ugaritic texts,<sup>8</sup> first of all: they were found in the course of French excavations at Ras Shamra, at the site of Bronze Age Ugarit, on the Syrian shore facing Cyprus, i.e., in the north of ancient Phoenicia. These excavations (under the direction of Claude Schaeffer) were started some ten years prior to World War II and have been resumed since the war.

The city of Ugarit, founded as a Phoenician settlement before the end of the third millennium, was laid waste by the "Sea Peoples" about 1200 B.C.; ultimately, the ruins were abandoned

<sup>7</sup> "...The correct Phoenician approach of Bérard did not prevail against the wrong non-Semitic approach of Beloch. Bérard unfortunately did not know enough Semitics to maintain his essentially correct views with linguistic finesse. Like other people, scholars are likely to be more impressed with refined falsehood than with crude truth." These remarks by C.H. Gordon, *Journ. of Semitic Studies*, 1963, p. 76, n. 1, disregard the fact, however, that Beloch, while an outstanding Hellenist, had no knowledge whatsoever of Semitic languages, as he himself acknowledges.

<sup>8</sup> The Ugaritic texts, notably those in cuneiform alphabet, have already given rise to a vast literature of interpretations, comments, etc, which we cannot review here even in the briefest way. Their first edition has been and still is the task of Charles Vroilleaud (in the quarterly *Syria*, Paris, from 1929 on, as well as in the publications of the "Mission de Ras Shamra"). A good overall view can be gained from C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, Rome, 1949, and *Ugaritic Manual*, Rome, 1953.

## Appendix II

Horon's political writing: "Is there an 'Arab civilization'?" (Horon 1958)

## IS THERE AN "ARAB CIVILIZATION"?

### *Islam and Arabism*

A. G. HORON

**I**SLAM arose in Arabia. But from the ethnographic standpoint Arabia proper comprised at first only the Nejd and the Hejaz, the vast desert lands of the nomadic Bedouins in the center and north-west of the Arabian peninsula. It is the Greeks and Romans who stretched the name of Arabia until it was made to include the less barren south of the peninsula—"Arabia Felix," i.e. the country from which frankincense came and which was inhabited by sedentary, relatively civilized peoples. However, the peoples of Arabia Felix neither were nor called themselves Arabs, and their languages—Sabæan, Minean, and related dialects, either extinct or still spoken today—are more closely akin to the Semitic tongues of Ethiopia than to Arabic.

During the formative period of Islam, Judaism still played a cultural and even a political role both in the Orient and in Africa. The last pre-Islamic state in the Arabian peninsula was the kingdom of the Himyarites (who were the heirs of the Sabæans and lived in what is now Yemen and Hadramaut), which had become Jewish in religion before being destroyed by the Christian Ethiopians around 525 C.E., some

IN A time when Arab nationalism represents an important international issue, and the Arab nationalists evoke the Arab past, it becomes a question of some moment as to who the Arabs really were, and what they actually accomplished on the world historical scene. A. G. Horon has spent half a lifetime studying, writing, and lecturing (in English, French, and Hebrew) on the interlocking problems of Semitic history and current Middle East affairs. The present essay is the condensation of a chapter in his forthcoming book on "Pan-Arabism and the Mediterranean." Mr. Horon was formerly associate professor at the Asia Institute of New York, and a contributor to the Encyclopedia Hebraica of Jerusalem.

forty or fifty years prior to the birth of Mohammed. The fall of the Himyarite kingdom was followed by a period of chaos, tribal unrest, and migration, the memory of which is preserved in Moslem tradition under the name of *jahaliya* (time of "ignorance" or "barbarism"). In North Africa, too, there were in the 7th century several important groups of Berber "Jews," or rather Judaizers, notably among the powerful Zenata tribes, who inflicted some resounding defeats on the Arab invaders and thus delayed the progress of Islam in the West until the beginning of the 8th century. Even after the triumph of Islam the Jews retained, or regained for some time, their economic and political importance in several regions around the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins. One of the great powers of the early Middle Ages, the empire of the Khazars (a people akin to the Turks), which dominated the southern and eastern parts of what is now European Russia, professed Judaism from the 8th to the 10th centuries.

In the early 7th century, Jews and Judaizers were still numerous and influential in the Arabian peninsula itself. Mohammed (born about 570) belonged to one of the very few merchant and urban communities of Arabia proper, and at first believed his mission to consist as much in providing guidance to the Jews as in converting the Bedouins. Two events transformed emergent Islam\* into a truly indigenous sect: the hostility, or at least the indifference, of the Jews in Arabia toward the new prophet, and the blow suffered by Judaism throughout the East as a result of the disastrous outcome of the ferocious duel fought be-

\*Islam means "conversion, surrender" (to Allah's will); a *Moslem* is "he who surrenders, who accepts Islam."

tween the Byzantine and the Iranian (Sassanid) empires. At an earlier stage of the seesaw struggle—around 614, upon the approach of the Iranian armies—the Jews of Palestine had risen in revolt against the Byzantines; but their hopes for a restoration had come to nothing, and by 625 the Byzantine counter-offensive was in full swing; the final victory of the Christian power (628), climaxed by frightful reprisals, broke the back of Palestinian Jewry and imperiled the principal centers of Jewish life, which lay then in Mesopotamia.

These dates should be borne in mind in order to understand Mohammed's turning away from Judaism, his literal about-face. At the time of the *hejira*—the "emigration" of Mohammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622—he still was a Judaizer and the Moslems prayed facing toward Jerusalem; but from about 625 on they turned toward Mecca in prayer—this marked the beginning of a purely Arab Islam.

## II

**T**HE historic role of this Arab Islam consisted in bringing together, for a brief span—just before and after the death of the Prophet in 632—many of the anarchic tribes of Bedouins who had once been the vassals, or clients, or hirelings of the Himyarite kingdom or of the Byzantine and Sassanid empires. However, as a result of the Moslem conquests, the absorption of foreign elements into Islam became so great that the new religion ceased to be a specifically Arab movement.

Thus, if primitive Islam can be defined as an exiguous form of Judaism grafted onto local pagan traditions and placed within easier reach of the Bedouin mentality, this definition no longer holds true after the second or third Moslem generation. For then Islam began to develop and split up along lines which would soon have little to do with Arabia and the Arabs. Even before the end of the 7th century, it becomes essential not to confuse the terms "Arab" and "Moslem"—and this despite the persistence of Arabic as the sacred tongue of the new

world religion. Such transformations of the original basic character of a religion, which sever it from the ethnic environment in which it originated, are not at all uncommon. Christianity began as a Jewish sect, yet it became the creed of the Roman world and then of the entire Western world. And Buddhism, born in India, after a number of centuries ceased being Indian and took roots in Central Asia and the Far East.

Impressed by the spectacular, almost miraculous expansion of primitive Islam, modern European historians first sought its explanation in an alleged outburst of Bedouin religious fanaticism, as well as in an imagined drying up of the Arabian peninsula and a consequent "wave" of mass migration. But there has been no notable change of any kind in the climate of Arabia within the historical period; and a better knowledge of the facts shows that most of the Arabs of the 7th century were quite indifferent in matters of religion, with a few individual exceptions; indeed, the nomadic Bedouins have remained to the present day notoriously uninterested in religious questions. Therefore, if the reason for the success of primitive Islam is to be sought among the Arabs, it should be found in some more tangible causes, such as the social and economic structure of Mohammed's Arabia and the immediately preceding history of the peninsula as a whole.

The fall of the Himyarite kingdom, coinciding as it did with the beginning of one of the worst crises yet suffered by civilization in the Orient, had destroyed what little political organization there was in the Arabian peninsula, together with the caravan trade on which it rested. Left to their own devices, the Bedouins—half-starved shepherds, camel drivers, and marauders—had no resource but brigandage. This they carried on among their various clans, according to the time-honored custom of internecine guerrilla, and later on also upon a much larger scale—when occasion arose and a pretext was offered. The pretext happened to be a religious one, Islam, and the occasion was the exhaustion of the civilized world

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following the endless wars between the great powers of East and West. The citizens of Mecca, Medina, and the few other Arabian townships were a mere handful of settled people, amid the unruly nomadic majority of the Bedouin tribes. But the Meccans were crafty enough to realize that Bedouin anarchy could be somehow channeled and controlled by the novel means of Islam. Abu-Bekr and especially Omar (murdered in 644)—the first two successors of the Prophet but almost the only ones having real authority as his "lieutenants" or *caliphs*—became organizers of forays on the grand scale. The aim of these raids was booty and prestige, not territorial acquisition. No one had foreseen the political consequences of Arab raiding.

## III

FROM the very start, the decisive factors and circumstances operated not inside, but outside Arabia—in those thickly populated lands of ancient sedentary civilization which were then provinces of the Byzantine and Iranian empires. In Syria and Egypt, a majority of the native Aramaic- and Coptic-speaking masses belonged to the Monophysitic church, which was heretical in the eyes of both Rome and Constantinople. While suffering under the Byzantine yoke and hating the Greeks, these Monophysites also feared the zeal of the Sassanid "fire-worshippers," devotees of the Persian god Ahura-Mazda. Similar conditions prevailed in Mesopotamia, a mostly Aramaic-speaking country under Iranian domination (Ctesiphon, the Sassanid capital, was on the Tigris). The native mass of "heretical" (Nestorian) Christians, and a numerous, and well-organized "Babylonian" Jewry, had reason to loathe their Iranian suzerain, yet even greater reason to fear the Byzantine emperor.

Thus pretty much everywhere, from the Nile to the Tigris, the newly arrived bands of Moslems, little given to proselytizing (contrary to modern legend) and as yet neutral in religious matters, were welcomed as the lesser evil. Both the Byzantine and

the Sassanid auxiliary troops were made up, on the Arabian borders, largely of pagan or superficially Christianized Arabs. Poorly paid, these mercenaries deserted en masse, thus becoming the first recruits to Islam outside Arabia. In such circumstances, warfare was often little more than a formality. Provincial authorities and local communities reached direct agreement with the Arabs, granting them political suzerainty and financial aid in return for guarantees of communal and religious freedom. Palestine and Syria, then Iraq and Upper Mesopotamia, and finally Egypt gave themselves up, conditionally and (so it was thought) temporarily, to the enemies of their own oppressors. This is the real secret of the Moslem "miracle."

The Moslem conquest, or rather occupation, of the countries between the Tigris and the Nile was accomplished in a few years, during the lifetime of Omar. It completely changed the character of Islam. For a brief spell Islam became a political force centered upon Damascus and wielded by the Arab commander in Syria, Moawiya, who was later to found the Omayyad dynasty by taking over the caliphate (660/661). The result was that Arabia, more divided than ever and drained of its best warriors, fell back into utter insignificance. Its central role had lasted a mere fifteen or, at most, twenty-five years.\* The Arabian chapter of Islamic history, whatever its tremendous consequences outside Arabia, turned out to be an episode without deep cause or real future. At the peak of his fortunes, just before he died, Mohammed hardly controlled more than the territory of Hejaz; the attempts of the first caliphs to unify Arabia proper miscarried; and though the Arabian peninsula quickly accepted Islam, it never formed a political whole, for the states in the south and southeast (Yemen, Oman, etc.) retained their inde-

\*From 630 (submission of Mecca to Mohammed) to 644 (murder of Omar); or at most to 655 (murder of Othman, the last caliph of Medina). Thereafter the seat of the caliphate ceased to be even nominally in Arabia.

pendence and the Bedouin tribes their anarchic autonomy. Our "historical" maps which show this entire peninsula unified under Mohammed, or ruled by the Omayyads and later by the Abbassids, are the products of fantasy.

Nor were the ruling Arabs outside Arabia more than a handful, a few thousand people, Meccans for the most part, who formed an exalted governing caste, but a caste which from the second generation on was incorporated into the structure of the lands it governed by intermarriage and every kind of commingling. This upper class was finally slaughtered, almost to a man, in the factional wars and dynastic struggles of the 7th and 8th centuries. On the other hand, the Bedouin tribes—those who made up the bulk of the first invaders, and those who now swarmed in to get their share of the booty—remained always a foreign body. One should not exaggerate their numbers: a total of a few tens of thousands of fighting men, a few hundred thousand people if one counts their dependents—such is the size of the Bedouin invasions which followed in the wake of Moslem conquests. These Bedouins were a troublesome lot; they had to be segregated, pensioned off, and closely watched in semi-military camps: Kufa, Bassora in Iraq, Fostat in Egypt, and later Kairouan in Tunisia, etc. Moreover, they were used as the vanguard in new raiding expeditions, which the Arab potentates partly undertook just to rid themselves of their obnoxious kinsmen. Very few survived the forays of the 7th century, which ranged as far as the Caspian Sea and the Atlas Mountains. Properly speaking, there was no Arab colonization, and the Bedouin contribution to the motley ethnography of the Moslem world remained infinitesimal; Oriental and Mediterranean societies were not really Arabized.

**E**NCAMPED from the Nile to the Tigris in countries which were at that time among the wealthiest on earth, and supported by un hoped-for resources which, however, they could only use with relative moderation for

fear of antagonizing the more massive and cohesive peoples among whom they dwelt, the Arabs quickly began to look to new fields of conquest. Despite its improved organization, this second phase of Moslem expansion met with more obstacles than the first; it was resisted all the way from Iran to Turkestan and the Indus, and from North Africa to beyond the Pyrenees. As against the few years needed for the purely Arab episode, this second or international stage of early Islamic conquest lasted approximately a hundred years: from the invasion of Iran in 641 to the battle of Poitiers in 732—when the Moslem tide reached its highest mark in the West—and to the final collapse, in 743, of the Omayyad caliphate in the East. The extension of the new religion over so vast an area spelled the doom of the weak Arab minority; the triumph of Islam in the great region between Central Asia and the Atlantic signified, by the middle of the 8th century, the victory of provincial, indigenous elements over the foreign Arabs. The latter, insofar as they survived at all, became mere figureheads or venerable ciphers, manipulated by contending Moslem forces which were no longer Arab in fact.

The Arabs, lost in the immensity of their success, had never really cooperated with, or even managed to tolerate, one another. Discord and civil wars never ceased to rage among them even for a moment. Regional factions—the Hejazian, the Syrian, the Iraqi, etc.—were pitted against each other. Clans carried on their bitter feuds with rival clans: "Yemenites" of South Arabian extraction fought the self-styled Ishmaelites or "true" Arabs. Sects warred upon sects: Shiites who supported the "legitimate" successors of Mohammed rose against the so-called orthodox Sunnites, who recognized the usurping caliphs, and contended with the Kharijites who, being anarchists on principle, recognized no one. Emirs quarreled with emirs: military commanders or gubernatorial satraps supported or opposed the authority of the various caliphs, or fought among themselves over the delegation of the caliphate's nominal powers. Last

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but not least, every caliph was constantly obliged to fight other caliphs or pretenders. After the death of Mohammed, his son-in-law Ali and the latter's descendants intrigued incessantly against the Medinese caliphs, battled with the Omayyads, and defied the Abbassids; whereas the presence of a single Omayyad survivor in Spain was sufficient cause (or pretext) for the creation of a separatist emirate in Cordova, which later became an independent Moorish caliphate.

Amid this chaos, even at the most glorious moments of the so-called Arab empire, there was no trace of central government, except in theory. The leaders who stayed longest in power were those who massacred with least compunction their brother Bedouins. The fact is that the conquering Arabs literally destroyed each other as a people. The dynasties that endured for a while were those that appeased their non-Arab subjects. The last Omayyads of Damascus, when they were unwise enough to attempt the creation of an Arab state, provoked immediate universal hostility, followed in a few decades by their extermination. Under the earlier Arab rule in the Levant, from about 640 to the beginning of the 8th century, all branches of administration, which had been inherited from the Byzantine-Sassanid period, remained essentially native in personnel and language (chiefly Greek or Aramaic). The Omayyads Abd el-Malik (685-705) and Walid (705-715) were the first to coin money inscribed in Arabic. Amid ceaseless revolts, they struggled to control the administrative machinery by introducing Arabic into public affairs. But their motley empire was not thereby unified; each province merely became bilingual or trilingual. Anarchy, worse than ever, flared up in 715-724, and the final explosion came two decades later, after a brief respite in the early years of Hisham (724-743).

Following this a new caliphate was established under the half-Arab, half-Persian Abbassids, truly a recreation of Sassanid pre-Islamic theocracy. The Abbassid caliphs soon enough became the prisoners of their Iranian supporters and advisers, and then

the captives of their own bodyguard—the Turkish emirs and their slave soldiers. No Abbassid was ever free to act as an Arab (assuming that he felt so inclined), not even Harun al-Rashid, the celebrated contemporary of Charlemagne, whose very capital, Baghdad, bore a Persian name. Similar conditions prevailed in the African and Moorish Occident.

To sum up: Arab divisions and Moslem slogans were simply taken over by non-Arabs, and thus gave expression to cultures, religious movements, and political rivalries which had little or nothing to do with Arabia. The old ethno-geographic entities re-emerged, but superficially coated with Arabism: Andalusia (i.e. Spain); Morocco (ancient Mauretania) and Tunisia (the formerly Punic Africa); eternal Egypt; the Syro-Palestinian Levant; a Lower Mesopotamian Iraq; Persia proper; a Farther Iran or Khorassan; and the Hither India of the Punjab, etc. Or, new formations appeared, entirely unconnected with the Bedouin episode—notably the various Turkish and Berber empires. Contrary to a widespread belief, Islam, far from signifying the Arabization of Africa and the Orient, was so to speak the means by which the Africans and Orientals got rid of the Arabs.

## IV

**E**VEN before the end of the Arab conquests, a hundred years after the *hejira*, the non-Arab proselytes to Islam—though still a minority among the population of most countries—were already far more numerous than the immigrants from Arabia. (Today the nomad Bedouins together with the authentic Arabs among the settled peoples hardly make up more than 2 per cent of Islam's world-wide total or around 350 million; should we count all Arabic-speaking Moslems, of all dialects and origins, as Arabs, they would still represent rather less than 15 per cent of Islam.)

The *mawali*\* or neophytes—individually and later as entire peoples—created inter-

\*Originally the "clients" of an Arab tribe or faction.

national Islam and thereby defeated Arabism. With the triumph of the Abbassids (743-750), their victory was complete. From about 750 on, for twelve out of the thirteen centuries that have elapsed since the death of Mohammed, the genuine Arabs played no part in history, except as figureheads for other forces or prowlers of the deserts of Arabia and the Sahara. What, then, were the non-Arab forces that acted on the Islamic stage around the Mediterranean basin?

In Africa, from the epoch of Islamization to the period of the Crusades, the three major forces were represented by the following:

1. Egypt, which had remained largely Christian (and to some extent Jewish) and where the Coptic language survived. Starting with the 9th century, however, the land of the Nile was governed in turn by Turks, by Arabo-Berber Shiites—the Fatimids from the *Maghreb* (a North African “West”)—by Kurds (Saladin and his Ayyubid dynasty), and finally by Turks again (the first Mamelukes).

2. The cities of the *Maghreb*, notably those of Tunisia, which were of Punic (that is, Canaanite) origin; they had become Arabized in speech and Islamized in religion—except for the still numerous Jews, and many native Christians who held on for several centuries.

3. Finally, and chiefly, the Berbers, who were Moslems in their own often dissenting fashion, and who spoke the Berber tongue in their vast majority.

Farther to the west, in Spain, Arabic served as a *lingua franca* for all peoples and religions. But on the whole, the peninsula remained Romano-Iberian, though in part it had become “Moorish,” that is Arabo-Berber. Yet genuine Arabs were always very few, even in Andalusia proper. The great empires of the Almoravids and Almohads which dominated the *Maghreb* and established themselves astride Africa and Spain (11th-13th centuries) were purely Berber; the lesser “Saracenic” principalities that ruled Tunisia, Sicily, and the Central Mediterranean (9th-10th centuries), were half-Berber, half-Arab, like the Moors of Spain.

In the east of Africa the Arabo-Berber caliphate of the Fatimids—possibly the greatest power in Moslem Africa—was created under the Shiite banner by a 10th-century Berber tribe, the Ketama from Algerian Kabylia. However, this caliphate was destined to become Egyptian (the Fatimids are the actual founders of Cairo), and it stayed Egyptian, despite occasional extensions into the coastlands of the Levant.

In Asia, the essentially non-Arab Abbassid caliphate of Baghdad lasted only from 750 to about 850; its disintegration as a temporal (if not as a spiritual) power started well before the end of the 9th century. The dynasties which in the 10th and 11th centuries succeeded it on the secular level were purely Iranian. These in turn were superseded by Turkish rulers. The event that set off the First Crusade was the threat posed by the sudden growth of the mighty if ephemeral empire of the Seljuk Turks. Previously, an uneasy equilibrium had been reached in the Levant between the Byzantines and Fatimids, wherein the Arab princelings of Aleppo and Mossul found themselves in the paradoxical situation of defending the independence of districts which were essentially Aramean and in good part Christian, or otherwise non-Moslem. But they too were soon subdued by the Seljuks, and then by the Crusaders. The latter found themselves facing not Arabs but Turkish hordes, warring dynasts and tribal chieftains (the “Atabegs”), and also the motley forces of Fatimid Egypt.

Saladin, the great conqueror of the Crusaders, was himself a Kurd (and therefore an “Indo-European”); and the nondescript Ayyubid empire (about 1200), of which he was the founder, defies all ethnic classification, as does the Mameluke empire which succeeded it. Both had Egypt for a base and the Turk for a sword—this is about all that can be said of them.

## V

THE 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries saw the destruction of native forces to the south and east of the Mediterranean and

the ruin of ancient lands which to this day have not recovered from the catastrophe. Crusades and counter-crusades decimated Oriental Christendom, broke up the Moorish civilization of Spain, and dispersed the Jews once more around the Mediterranean basin. The terrible Mongol invasions under the successors of Genghis Khan completed the work of extermination. For three hundred years the Levant served as a battlefield for the contending Mamelukes, Tamerlane's Tartars, Ottoman Turks, and Turco-Persians. Finally, in the early 16th century, the Levant fell into the hands of the Ottoman sultan-caliph, the political heirs of Byzantium.

The Ottoman Turks, who misruled Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, looked down on the Levantines and despised the Arabs, to the point of disregarding the main tenet of the caliphate, though they themselves professed to be strict Sunnites. (According to orthodox doctrine, a caliph, either "legitimate" or "usurping," had to be at the very least a member of the Meccan tribe of Qoreish, if not of its Hashemite clan, which was the clan of the Prophet.\*) The sacrilege represented by the Turkish caliphate evoked only indifference, even from the orthodox section of the Moslem world. Arabism was thus losing its last symbol of prestige, its quality of an Islamic fetish. Moreover, except in matters of religion, literary Arabic also fell more and more into neglect. At the court of Selim, of Soliman the Magnificent, and of their successors (even until our own 20th century), Persian was cultivated instead, Latin, and later on French.

From the Sahara to the Eurasian steppes, the Sublime Porte was now the only major power. Europe trembled before the Great Turk, and North Africa—whose fate is inseparable from that of the Levant—either passed into the Ottoman political orbit or fell into chaos. Morocco withdrew into itself, while the "Barbary States" became under

\*The Omayyads were Qoreishites, though not Hashemites; whereas the Abbassids were Hashemites, like the Alids or Fatmids whom they had managed to supersede.

Ottoman guidance a lair of international piracy. Such conditions prevailed well into the 19th century, when the decay and fall of the Ottoman empire permitted Europe again to intervene decisively in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

These hundreds of years of desolation (from the 13th to the 19th centuries) gave the Bedouins one more chance to play a role—a negative one. For during this period additional nomadic tribes from Arabia infiltrated little by little into the formerly prosperous but now devastated regions of settlement and created—more effectively than any change of climate might have done—that desert landscape which suits the Bedouin way of life.

The great Moslem historian of the Berbers, Ibn-Khaldun, a Hispano-African scholar and gentleman of the 14th century, paints a striking picture of the camel-riding Bedouins—the only true Arabs he recognizes. Their presence, he writes, is incompatible with any form of civilization; their barbarous speech is shocking to the ears of a cultured Moor; spoliation and degradation accompanies their parasitic way of life.

All the uprooted, discontented and ne'er-do-well Moslems and non-Moslems of every description (Berber pastoralists in Algeria or elsewhere along the Sahara; rebellious Druzes, Kurds, and other sectarians or clansmen in the Levant; adventurers, fugitives, dissenters, from the Balkans, Turkey, the Caucasus, etc., etc.)—all more enterprising and better equipped than the Bedouins—banded together or fought each other in a permanent state of lawlessness, abetted by the impotent tolerance or the self-seeking complicity of pashas, beys, deys, and other local Ottoman authorities. Amid this unending chaos, the less disorganized groups of sedentary people had no other recourse but to bar themselves in their impoverished towns, villages, or oases and conduct a passive—occasionally active—resistance against the anarchy without. Such were the Kabyles in the Atlas, the Moorish exiles from Spain, the Mozabites; such also, in Egypt, the Islamized peasants ("fellaheen") and Chris-

tian Copts; the Catholic Maronites in Lebanon, often allied with the Druzes; the semi-pagan Nossairians ("Alawites") of coastal Syria; the "Assyrian" Christians of Kurdistan; the Shiites of Iraq; the Jews, both the natives of Asia and Africa, and the refugees from Spain; and many more communities, whose ethno-religious traditions and—quite frequently—languages were not of Arabian origin.

## VI

**S**UCCESSION is the political and social history of the Arabs since Islam. But what about the cultural aspects of their past? The so-called "Arab" civilization was extinguished many centuries ago. However, when it shone during the early Middle Ages, in exactly what sense was it Arab? This word is highly ambiguous. In the Middle Ages, too, there was a "Latin" culture which was Latin in its literary language but hardly in anything else. The coeval culture which is now labeled "Arab" (though formerly one used to call it Moorish or Saracenic) is something equally difficult to define, and even more complex. Like our European or Western civilization, it was international and interdenominational. The Arabs had an exceedingly small part in it; even the imprint of Islam, however deep, was not, on the whole, decisive. Many other traditions, Judaic and Graeco-Roman, pagan and Christian, Oriental and Occidental, stemming from antiquity or arising in the Middle Ages themselves, exercised, in their totality, a more decisive influence on "Arab" civilization.

Should we then call this civilization "Arab" only because its language was Arabic? The facts are not as simple as that; many other tongues contributed to the culture of the period and region under consideration. In the nearer and the farther East alike, the Aramaic of Oriental Christians and Jews, the Persian tongue used by Iranian, Turkish, and Indian Moslems, and several other idioms, held a place no less important than that of Arabic. In Asia, in Africa, and along the Mediterranean this epoch witnessed the golden age of Persian

poetry, the beginnings of Turkish literature, a flowering of "Syriac" (i.e. Christian Aramaic) writings, a renaissance of Hebrew letters, and a final Coptic production. Written Arabic owed only its barest origin to the Arabs. Its development and enrichment as a "classical" medium of expression was the work of grammarians who flourished after the hundred years of Arab dominance. These scholars were Persians, Arameans, Jews, Moors, etc., very seldom Arabs. The same remark applies to most of the writers in Arabic. They were no more Arabs for having couched many of their writings in Arabic (the international language of scholarship in their day) than Duns Scotus or Dante Alighieri were Romans for having written so abundantly in medieval Latin. Among all the many authors there is hardly one Bedouin. No wonder: the great period of Arabic literature did not begin before the 8th or even the 9th century, by which time very little was left of the original conquerors, whereas the Arabic language had become a medium of communication used by the elites in countries between India and the Atlantic. (The mass of the peoples continued to speak their own vernaculars, or to develop new vernaculars more or less derived from Arabian dialects.)

However, Arabic, the language of the Koran and the Moslem religion, is the only reality to which our modern notion of an "Arab civilization" could be attached. Indeed, the Koran, which was composed in Medina after the death of the Prophet, is the one and only Book of the Arabs. Pre-Islamic Arabs had no written literature, and their brief and trivial inscriptions, mostly funerary, give evidence of a much lower level of culture than that of their non-Arab neighbors in the peninsula, the Sabaeans and kindred peoples. In later times, the only work of belles-lettres in Arabic to attain world-wide fame, the *Thousand and One Nights*, had nothing particularly Arab about it. It is a compendium of Oriental folklore and light entertainment: Persian, Indian, even Chinese; Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Judaic, etc. These "Arabian Nights" are set

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in all climes of the Orient except Arabia. With regard to other aspects of culture, not linguistic or purely literary, it is noteworthy that both masters and workmen, teachers and pupils, were in nearly all cases non-Arabs, and that the sources, methods, procedures, and styles were of non-Arabian origin, deriving mostly from Oriental and Mediterranean antiquity. Thus the famous "Mosque of Omar" (which does not date from Omar but from the early 8th century) was built on the site of the Temple of Solomon by architects and craftsmen none of whom were Arabs. And the Arabic version of Aristotle—which contributed so much to the shaping of medieval Moslem, Christian, and Judaic thought—was the work of Christian-Aramean translators and commentators who were often Judeo-Spaniards. For even the celebrated "Arab philosophy" is a complete misnomer. Its great authorities were Iranians\* like Avicenna (Ibn-Sinna), Turco-Iranians like Al-Farabi, Moors like Averroes (Ibn-Roshd), or Spanish Jews like Avicbron (Ibn-Gabirol), and, above all, Maimonides.

\*Al-Kindi, "Philosopher of the Arabs," provides an exception. This Iraqi scholar was of genuinely Arabian origin, whence his traditional nickname.

The contribution of true Arabs to this falsely styled Arab civilization is therefore meager; in theology, a minimum; in the humanities, still less; in the sciences, almost nothing; in the arts, absolutely nothing. "Arabian" architecture is Byzantine, Persian, Levantine, Moorish. The "Arabic" numerals are Hindu (though the principle of the zero seems to go back to the Sumerians). Even the "Arab" horse is of Syrian or Syro-Mesopotamian breed (but domesticated first on the steppes of Eurasia). Only the dromedary—perhaps†—is Arabian, together with the landscape which befits it. For, truly, the void from which Arabism sprang remains its sole creation. As a well-informed Englishman, a former governor of Sinai, once remarked: the "sons of the desert" deserve more properly to be called "fathers of the desert."\*\*

†Yet this too is doubtful. The first domestication of the dromedary, like that of the two-humped Bactrian camel, may have taken place somewhere on the northeastern confines of Iran. As to systematic camel raising in Arabia, it started toward the end of the Bronze Age (about the 13th century B.C.) among Midianites and other south Semitic tribes. But these were more closely related to the Hebrews than to even the pre-Koranic Arabs.

\*\*C. S. Jarvis, *Three Deserts*, p. 161.

### Appendix III

The map of the potential Jewish maritime force, prepared by Horon in the 1930s, using Latin alphabet for Hebrew



## Appendix IV

A. G. Horon, "The Land of Kedem" (Horon 1976a; original publication: *Alef*, summer 1970)

The Canaanite worldview is the only Hebrew national view. I suppose that it can be summarized as follows:

A **nation** is equivalent to its **land**. Therefore the Zionist opinion, which sees the Jews as a "nation", despite their global dispersal and attachment to various nationalities, is wrong. On the other hand, there is no truth in the Pan-Arab claim regarding the single "Arab nation": it is dispersed over many distant countries in the Asian and African continents and is not susceptible to a uniform national consolidation.

**Israel** is not "the Jewish state", but a stage in the national revival of Canaan, the land of the Hebrews, the common homeland of the Hebrew-speaking peoples before Judaism. Israel's mission is to resuscitate the Land and its residents for the benefit of both natives and immigrants. This mission requires separation between religion and state and equality in duties and rights for all the Land's inhabitants (including national-secular education and army service); in other words, jointly for all, without difference of origin or confession. As to immigration: it should be managed in accordance with the needs of the Land's construction, according to each immigrant's personal qualities; again, without racial, religious, or confessional discrimination.

**Canaan** – it being divided and bisected between Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and southwestern Syria – is presently inhabited by confessions and tribes, each of them constituting a minority in the general population. Indeed, the more advanced and consolidated groups (Jews in Israel, Christian Maronites in Lebanon, Druze and many others) already constitute the majority, whose vested interest is a common defence against the invasion of the Pan-Arabist murderous tyranny which is supported by foreign imperialisms.

The existential struggle will ultimately force Israel to initiate a "kinship union", the **Union of Canaan**, starting with the Lebanon Mount and the Mount of the Druze. However, this Union's role and destiny will be to gather and reorganize the entire **Land of Kedem** (meaning the land lying between Egypt, Turkey, and Persia). This is how the Middle Eastern problem will be solved – for it has no other solution.

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