

Coming of Age: The Decline of Archaeology in Israeli Identity

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Introduction

The warrior glanced west, over the rampart, as the rising sun sent its golden rays beyond the cliff fortress. He could see the glistening of the spears and shields of the Roman army as it crystallized into a fighting phalanx and began to march toward the ramp. The realization that resistance was futile at this point occurred to him as an afterthought, virtually irrelevant to his existence up to this point. He strode to the prayer room to inform Elazar.

The archaeologists, gathered like reunited family from all over the world, scraped and polished the monument to and the myth of these heroes of ancient times.

The young paratrooper, staring at the rising sun over Masada, imagined the last days of the besieged Jews, accepted them as his fathers-in-arms, and swore an oath to himself that Masada should not fall again.

This is the heady stuff of myth. It is a well-established fact that archaeology has been a significant tool used by the state and pre-state agencies of Israel to fashion an old-new Jewish identity based upon ties to the land of Israel and a conception of the modern Jew (read Israeli) drawn from the ancient Judean Commonwealths, and in contradistinction to the Diaspora Jew.¹ Given the above fiction, in all its purple prose splendor, it is clear that it does not take much imagination or originality of thought to see the role that archaeology has played in the fashioning of Israeli consciousness.

In the past decade or so, analyses of the relationship between archaeology and the state in Israel and elsewhere have provided fascinating and crucial accounts of the mechanisms and symbols of the archaeology-nationalism connection. This is, in essence, about the sociology of knowledge, how history is constructed. In Israel these studies have focused most especially on such seminal figures as Yigael Yadin, and archaeological projects such as Masada and Jerusalem, establishing the basic premise that archaeology was a powerful force in legitimizing the Jewish presence in Palestine.² Corollary to this legitimization process was the delegitimization of an Arab presence and its history.³

To be blunt, in spite of the important insights we have gained into how our academic predecessors constructed knowledge, the equation "Israeli archaeology=national identity" is now passé and no longer up-to-date. This is not to say that archaeology is no longer exploited by politicians and special interest groups to advance parochial interests, or that we should cease to examine and critique this connection, but rather that archaeology in Israel in the past two decades has undergone a remarkable evolution. Israeli archaeology has developed well beyond the seemingly crude nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s. As an academic discipline it has to a large extent adopted the universalist and critical

paradigms espoused by its counterparts in Western Europe and North America, including a basically pluralistic approach to research. Thus the discipline incorporates a broad range of often contradictory methods and theoretical frameworks, in contradistinction to its earlier characterizations as biblical, Jewish, nationalist, and therefore intellectually dishonest. Indeed, characterizations of the discipline not acknowledging this transformation are best perceived as caricature, rather than scholarship.

This evolution is of intrinsic interest for two reasons. As alluded to in the title, it marks a coming of age for Israeli archaeology, in fact reflecting the maturation of Israeli academia in general. Second, we can, perhaps, consider this evolution of archaeological study in Israel as a paradigm for the development of the field elsewhere. Such a comparative framework might have implications for understanding the general dynamics of academic disciplines, especially in developing countries. Additionally, consideration of the processes of academic development might help to strip much of the moralistic and self-righteous posturing from the analyses of the relationship between archaeology and politics that disturbs the discourse.

A Development Sequence

To understand the rise and decline of Israeli archaeology as a major factor in Israeli politics and self-image and its transformation into the variegated discipline of today one must review some of its history. To this end, the development of Israeli archaeology can be divided, albeit simplistically, into three basic phases: pre-state Israeli archaeology, early Israeli archaeology, and recent Israeli archaeology. Furthermore, although unquestionably influenced by the milieu of imperialistic archaeologies practiced in Palestine and Israel during the course of this development,⁴ the distinction between foreign biblical archaeology (the sub-discipline of archaeology devoted to the study of biblical times, places, and events), regardless of whether its practitioners were American, British, French, or German, and the nascent and evolving Israeli discipline, must be maintained. Archaeology, even biblical archaeology, as practiced by the Israelis and pre-Israelis was fundamentally different from that of their visiting disciplinary cousins in its motivations and implications.

Pre-State Israeli Archaeology

Three primary attributes are of special interest in characterizing Zionist or Jewish archaeology in Palestine before the founding of the State of Israel: 1. the number of professionals was small although public interest was widespread, 2. it was integrated into the Zionist ideology and enterprise, and 3. it differed from the archaeology as practiced by foreigners in Palestine both in content and in a perceived need to distinguish itself institutionally and socially.

Perhaps most significant in terms of characterizing pre-State Israeli archaeology, the number of trained Jewish academic archaeologists digging and teaching in Palestine was not only small,

numbering only a handful, but was also dwarfed by the influx of foreign scholars working on the large scale projects initiated during the Golden Age of Palestinian archaeology between the World Wars. Hebrew University, founded in 1925, served as the primary focus of Zionist archaeology, but was limited both in terms of staff and budget. The scale of work was limited as well. With the exception of the excavations at Beth Shearim, directed by Maisler (later to be Mazar), and perhaps Beth Alpha, excavated by Sukenik, no Jewish investigations approached the scale of such projects as Megiddo, out of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, Jericho, out of Liverpool University, Ai, Farah north, Wadi Gaza, Ashkelon, Beit Mirsim, Taanakh, Shechem, Beth Shemesh, etc. In spite of these limitations, the Jewish public was clearly interested in archaeology, and the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society (Hahevra leHakirat Eretz Yisrael veAtikoteha) was founded in this period, along with its journal *Yediot Hahevra leHakirat Eretz Yisrael veAtikoteha*, whose English name was the *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society*. In the 1950s, these ultimately evolved into the *Israel Exploration Journal* and the *Israel Exploration Society*, with the retention of the Hebrew name of the organization. Public interest in archaeology is also clearly reflected in wide scale participation in various archaeological activities, including lectures, conferences, field trips, and excavations.

The integration of this Jewish pre-State archaeology with Zionist ideology should come as no surprise. The very presence of Jewish archaeologists in Palestine in this period is the result of the Zionist enterprise. These earliest pre-Israeli archaeologists, people like Maisler/Mazar, Sukenik, and Avi-Yonah, were inevitably committed Zionists, else they would not have been there. That their science should have been colored by their ideology is a triviality. The 1920s and 1930s were the hey-day of culture-history as the primary paradigm underlying archaeological work all over, especially in Europe, and it is reasonably clear that culture-history served at least partially as a gloss for legitimizing modern national movements, again, most especially in Europe^[5].⁵ Since the pre-Israeli archaeologists of the Mandatory Period were all European and European trained, it should come as no surprise that this approach should be transferred to their work and political ideology. Thus, the basic structure of the discipline as it was practiced by pre-Israeli archaeologists did not differ from that of archaeology practiced elsewhere. The emphasis on Jewish roots present in the work of these early Zionist archaeologists should be seen as the natural outcome of the practice of archaeology at the time, not as specific to the Zionist enterprise.

Beyond the general ideas of cultural history, specific research programs designed to enhance the Zionist programs were also undertaken. This is reflected, for example, in the 1918 work by Ben-Gurion and Ben-Tzvi, *Eretz Israel in Past and Present*, published, in fact, in Yiddish. It was written in direct response to Huntington's *Palestine and Its Transformations*, the environmental determinist tract exploited by the Mandatory government to provide scientific rationalizations for limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine.⁶

Even with this shared theoretical structure based on culture-history, the specifics of the approach to pre-Israeli archaeology of differed from that of foreign disciplinary cousins. There are three levels of

difference here. First, and most obviously, if culture-history in England, France, or Germany focused at least partially on English, French, and German cultural roots, then in Judea/Israel/Palestine, Jews would obviously focus on Jewish roots. This is a difference in emphasis more than in essence.

Second, archaeology in Palestine, as practiced by the Imperial powers, was motivated by a combination of academic interest, imperial competition and legitimization, and various religious beliefs. While sharing the basics of academic research, early Zionist archaeologists were hardly the business of glorifying or legitimizing the regimes from which they had, for all intents and purposes, fled. If there is any imperialist element in pre-state Zionist archaeology, it is there primarily by default, a by-product of European academic training. Furthermore, the pre-Israeli archaeologists did not dig to prove or illustrate the bible and justify religious beliefs. In contrast to the relatively high proportion of foreign archaeologists working in Palestine with religious training and motivation, their pre-Israeli counterparts were avowedly secular. If perhaps tied to a fundamentalist reading of the biblical text, the text itself was viewed as a secular historical document, and not a holy one. For these pre-Israeli archaeologists, archaeology and the bible converged to legitimize Jewish claims to Palestine, but archaeology was not seen as proof of the sanctity and truth of the holy writ.

Finally, pre-State archaeology displays a specific kind of resistance, a need for self-definition in apposition to other institutions and schools. Thus the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society, publishing primarily in Hebrew, was founded clearly to be distinct from the Palestine Exploration Society, a British organization. Of course, the insistence on doing archaeology in Hebrew, as well as in English, while on one hand an expression of Jewish renaissance, on the other also functioned to create distinction. Foreigners could rarely read Hebrew. In this context of 'resistance,' British control over the Palestine Department of Antiquities was not especially sympathetic to Zionists or Zionist projects. Even on the level of prehistoric archaeology, Moshe Stekelis, the first Israeli professor of prehistoric archaeology, was denied permits to excavate in caves where British projects were granted permission.

In sum, archaeology by Israelis-to-be in the pre-State period was, in fact, a limited enterprise. In spite of this, the seeds of later institutions and programs were planted.

Early Israeli Archaeology

It is now accepted wisdom that early Israeli archaeology was fundamentally flawed scientifically as a result of the intense need to establish the new state on a secure ideological foundation. To demonstrate this fact of nationalist bias such grandiose projects as Hazor, Masada, and post-1967 Jerusalem are trotted out and excoriated for their prejudicial hypotheses, problematic methods, and skewed conclusions.⁷ Of late the archaeologists themselves have been accused of deliberate deceit.⁸ The dominance of the debates on such issues as early Israelite settlement, the archaeology of the various

kings of Israel and Judah, and Jewish subjects such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the importance of ancient synagogues, seems indisputable, thus cinching the nationalist case.

There was also a public obsession with archaeology, perhaps best exemplified by the high profile looting activities of Moshe Dayan, but also seen in the large public participation in the annual archaeological congresses organized by the Israel Exploration Society. In the 1960s these congresses often attracted more than 1000 people, the vast majority from the public at large. Considering the population of Israel at the time, these numbers are truly impressive. Indeed it would be foolish to dispute the centrality of national ideology in the theory and practice of early Israeli archaeology.⁹

However, to leave the issue here, with early Israeli archaeology as a political tool and a scientific fraud, is to ignore a larger context in the wider world of archaeology, and indeed of the historical dynamic of the times, thus assuming, wrongly, that Israeli archaeology suffered from an ineradicable original sin. In fact, in those dark ages of nationalist archaeology, so well illuminated by hindsight, Israeli archaeology was more varied than assumed, methodologically on par with other archaeologies, and was not perceived in its time as significantly theoretically flawed or biased. Furthermore, the foundations for a more mature discipline are clearly being laid in this period.

Perhaps the best reflection of the widening range of Israeli archaeology can be seen in the rise of Israeli prehistoric archaeology in this period, an archaeology whose ties to Jewish national myth and identity are virtually non-existent. Thus, in the early 1950s Moshe Stekelis, the professor of prehistoric archaeology at Hebrew University, begins a series of major prehistoric investigations at the Neolithic site of Sha'ar HaGolan, and later, at the Paleolithic sites of Ubeidiya, Kebara Cave, and Gesher Benot Ya'akov. The basic framework of Levantine prehistory had already been established by Garrod, the Englishwoman, and Neuville, the Frenchman, in the 1930s and 1940s. Nevertheless, Stekelis' work expanded these frameworks significantly. Sha'ar HaGolan became the type-site of the earliest pottery bearing culture of the Levant, the Yarmukian, the name given by Stekelis. Ubeidiya was established as the earliest human occupation outside of Africa, and although earlier sites have since been found, Ubeidiya still appears in all basic texts as a fundamental piece of the puzzle of human origins. Beyond these large projects, numerous small-scale excavations and surveys were undertaken, whose relevance to any national myth of Jewish resurgence was non-existent.

In spite of these activities, in this context, the small scale of these investigations should still be stressed. Stekelis was the only academic prehistorian. He worked with students, the next generation of professional prehistoric archaeologists, and with amateurs, and he provided the only academic archaeological input into these researches. The activities of the developing cadre of amateurs, reflected in the formation of the Israel Prehistoric Society in 1960, can perhaps be forcefully subsumed under the heading of 'Know the Land,' and thereby be classified as a quasi-nationalistic activity, but their primary scientific value, as seen in the still extant journal *Mitekufat HaEven*, *From the Stone Age* (now the *Journal of the Israel Prehistoric Society*) far outweighs any mystical land-people connection.

In addition to prehistory, Israeli archaeology expanded beyond its Jewish/Israelite roots. Although it might be argued that excavations of Middle and Late Bronze Age Canaanite sites provided background grist for the biblical historical mill, major investigations at Early Bronze Age sites, such as Arad, Beit Yerah (Bar-Adon's large scale excavations), and Tell Erani do not fit comfortably into this mold. Research in the Negev, on classical period sites, and on ancient desert agricultural regimes focused especially on the Nabateans, Romans, and Byzantines. Although there was research on the Iron Age as well, archaeology in the Negev was hardly Jewish. As inspiring as these ancient desert societies were to the modern Israeli, and clearly Ben-Gurion was the first among the inspired, this research can hardly be ascribed to Zionist ideology. One might ask whether it is possible to see the millennia old still standing towns of the desert and not be inspired.

Early Israeli archaeology has also been attacked for being methodologically flawed, blinded by its ideological needs. In her recent book, *Facts from the Ground*, Abu El-Haj points out the pernicious fallacy of the pots=people equation so prominent in the debates over the origins of the Israelites. She concludes that this methodological blunder is the result of the crudeness of ideologies that did not permit any other interpretations. This is to misapprehend both the basic assumptions of archaeology, and the wider context of these methods.

Assuming there is such a thing as ethnicity, a concept with which anthropologists continue to grapple, then material culture is often one of the primary media of cultural negotiation, at least in part tied to ethnic identities. So of course pots can equal people. The problem is that not all pots equal all people equally. However, this qualifier is the result of the last 40 years of modern and post-modern exploration of the interpretation of material culture. The archaeologists defining Iron Age Israelites in the 1950s and 1960s can hardly be faulted for not being theoretically prescient.

Indeed, methodologically, Israeli archaeology in this early period was quite in line with other archaeologies of the time. There is no contemporary methodological critique of the Iron Age ceramic issue, nor for that matter did anyone question the basic structure of Israeli theoretical perspectives. Issues of substance and the specifics of interpretation of such questions as the rise of the Israelites, the nature of United Monarchy fortifications, and variability in the Dead Sea Scrolls were debated throughout the literature, both foreign and Israeli, but the first overt methodological critique of Israeli methods per se was not conceived until the 1970s, in Dever's attacks on Israeli stratigraphic systems. Even here, although deliberately defining an Israeli school, there was no clear linkage to any political agenda.¹⁰ That is, even given alleged variation in methodological rigor, these variations were perceived of as within an accepted scientific framework. If Yadin's work had been so obviously and grossly biased, as claimed, for example, by Ben-Yehuda in his recent work *Sacrificing Truth, Archaeology and the Myth of Masada*, how could Oxford University have invited him to deliver the Schweich Lectures?¹¹

The simplistic characterization of early Israeli archaeology as informed almost exclusively by nationalism suffers from two other errors of fact and conception. First, Israeli archaeology has never operated in a vacuum, but has always been integrated into the larger world of Near Eastern archaeology. This is most evident in both Israeli publication in foreign journals, like the *American Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, the *British Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (and later, *Levant*), the *French Revue Biblique*, and later for prehistory, *Paleorient*, and the German *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, and foreign writing in the primary Israeli journal of the early period, the *Israel Exploration Journal*. Israeli work is also cited without qualification in the major foreign syntheses of the early period, Dame Kathleen Kenyon's *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, and the later editions of Albright's *Archaeology of Palestine*, as well as in other contemporary synthetic works. That is, if Israeli work suffered from critical errors of method and conception, these errors were shared by all practitioners of the archaeology of the region in this period, and hence cannot be attributed to Israeli Zionist tendencies.

The more significant point is that even if scientific conclusions were influenced or swayed by theoretical preconceptions and biases, methodologically the data collected were robust enough to allow for alternative explanation. That these alternative explanations required a new generation of archaeologists for their development can hardly stand as an indictment of either the earlier generation or of the discipline. It is, in fact, rather typical of academic disciplinary evolution. The data and theories of the earlier generation provide the seeds for new paradigms a generation later.

This issue of generational dialectic is one rarely addressed in examining the specifics of disciplinary development, but is clearly reflected in somewhat different words in Kuhnian notions of paradigm shift. Archaeologically, Flannery has also alluded to it, in his 1976 parable of the Real Mesoamerican Archaeologist and the Skeptical Graduate student.¹² There are two important implications here. First, the myth-building phase of Israeli archaeology was a short-term phenomenon. Reaching its peak in the 1960s, the fundamental changes in Israeli society following the 1967 and 1973 wars brought an end to the naiveté of the early phase of Israeli archaeology. Second, the passing of this phase is also typical, built into the structure of academia.

One final question concerning early Israeli archaeology should be addressed. If, in hindsight, the fundamental biases and inconsistencies are so obvious, why were they not so 30 and 40 years ago? There are two pat answers. The idealistic and perhaps somewhat naive one is that science builds and corrects itself, and that errors or biases in perception and conception are part of the process. A somewhat more sophisticated perspective considers the social context of science, recognizing that science is embedded in the cultural contexts of its practitioners. With respect to the early stage of Israeli archaeology, one must also recognize the ultimately small scale of the enterprise. A single archaeological institute, in a Germanic tradition of academic hierarchy where the professor is right next to god, is not a formula for academic pluralism. Toss in the nation building of the period and we can better understand the difficulties achieving academic independence and maturity.

Recent Israeli Archaeology

Archaeology since the 1970s in Israel has undergone what can easily be described as a revolution. The changes in the discipline have spanned every aspect imaginable. At a lowest level, the professional discipline has expanded both in terms of the range of its interests and in simple terms of numbers of professional archaeologists. A few statistics will suffice to demonstrate this. In 1970 there were two university programs in archaeology, the original one at Hebrew University and the upstart founded by Yohanan Aharoni at Tel Aviv University. Both were still very much dominated by biblical archaeology, reflecting the primary interests of their founders. Now, in 2003, there are five BA-Ph.D. programs in archaeology, one at each university with the exception of the Technion, and an additional M.A.-Ph.D program in archaeological science at the Weizmann Institute. There now are more prehistorians than biblical archaeologists at Hebrew University. In 1970 the Israel Department of Antiquities numbered fewer than 100 full time staff. Today there are over 200 in the Israel Antiquities Authority, and this after severe budget cuts and lay-offs in recent years due to strains in the Israeli economy. In this context, the transition from a government department to authority, enabling major budget and manpower increases, also resulted in significant broadening of research programs and activities.

On the other hand, other numbers reflect other trends. From the 1000+ participants in the annual Israel Archaeological Congresses of the 1960s, typical participation in the 1990s and later is on the order of 200-300. Of these, virtually all are professional archaeologists, in contrast to the vast majority of laymen participating in the earlier period. A similar trend, from amateur to professional, with a concomitant decline in absolute numbers, can be seen in the Israel Prehistoric Society. Similarly, subscription numbers to the Israeli archaeology magazine Qadmoniot, published in Hebrew and geared to a lay audience, have been declining as well. Student numbers have also declined, although given the expansion in the number of programs, this apparent trend may be the result of dilution and not true decline. By way of contrast, in the United States, the yellow biblical archaeology magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*, founded in the 1970s, has maintained its numbers and even expanded its distribution and influence in recent decades.

The essence here is that as Israeli archaeology has grown professionally, wider public interest has clearly declined.

Beyond these numerical trends, research directions, emphases, and indeed basic paradigms have changed as well, especially as Yadin's and Aharoni's students, veterans of the early period of Israeli archaeology, retire. Prehistoric archaeology, with its greater background in the natural and social sciences, has clearly played some role here. It can be no accident that Tel Aviv University now teaches

prehistoric archaeology as a regular part of its curriculum with two full time positions, after it was literally banned for a period in the 1970s. At Hebrew University, the five archaeologists engaged in prehistoric research now outnumber those still active in biblical archaeology. Similar trends are evident at Haifa and at Ben-Gurion University, in Beersheva.

New trends in archaeological research have arisen as well. At a recent conference at Bar-Ilan University, the religious based university where one would expect a more conservative or traditional approach to archaeology as a matter of course, the rejection of the traditional historical approaches was striking. Lectures were dedicated almost exclusively to issues such as the interpretation of gender in the archaeological record, reconstruction of social structure and dynamics, and quantitative aspects of archaeological methods. No David, no Solomon, no Israelite settlement, no Exodus.¹³

At the Megiddo excavations, perhaps the flagship excavations of Tel Aviv University, a major subproject focuses on the modern populations around the site, their perceptions of the various projects carried out over the decades, and their understanding of the history of the area as revealed through the archaeology. Part of the idea is to expand the perception of Megiddo beyond the idea of Solomon's stables, to make history inclusive, not exclusive.

Research in the Negev, especially as based on the Negev Emergency Survey initiated after the peace agreement with Egypt, has also had significant impact on Israeli archaeology. Aside from the vast quantities of new data generated, with all the associated implications for established research questions, entirely new archaeological issues have arisen. For the first time in Israel the issue of an archaeology of nomadism, independent of the historical texts, has been addressed. Do nomads leave archaeological remains, and what can actually be said about ancient nomadic societies based on their archaeological remains? Perhaps even more important, research in the Negev in the past two decades has revealed a major Early Islamic horizon, with mosques, inscriptions, settlements, and ceramics, suggesting an entirely new perspective from which to view the rise of early Islamic civilization. Briefly stated, whereas the historical records by and large reveal large-scale political events, what the writers deemed important or expedient at the time, the archaeology shows us what happened on the ground – trend changes in settlement, economy, and even religion. These new data often demand that we re-evaluate the texts.

How we understand, interpret, and integrate ancient texts with the archaeological record is, of course, the most striking change to arise in recent Israeli archaeology. It is not especially unique to Israel, but it is perhaps more evident, giving that the primary text is the bible. From the essentially literal reading of the bible (and other ancient texts as well, like Josephus), as understood by scholars such as Yadin and Aharoni, the recent generation of Israeli archaeologists has adopted a critical perspective, viewing the bible as an historical text, but not necessarily an accurate record. The bible is read as a reflection of the beliefs, understandings, and practices of the people who wrote it. It reflects their misunderstandings, biases, motivations, and agendas, as well as their specific perceptions of events. At best, it is difficult to

date, and certainly the earlier books are not contemporary accounts of the events they purport to describe. For Israeli archaeologists working in the biblical period, or in historical periods in general, the texts are added historical data, but they are no longer the scale against which to measure the archaeology.

This is a sensitive issue, as reflected in the controversies engendered by the apparent conflicts between text and artifact. Ze'ev Herzog's article in the prestigious newspaper HaAretz several years ago, attacking the historicity of the Exodus story, was debated throughout the world. This was clearly his intent, but in terms of the archaeology, there was literally nothing new in what he had to say.¹⁴

The so-called biblical minimalist school, propounding that the earlier half of the biblical text is primarily a later fiction with virtually no narrative historical content, has its counterpart in Israel Finkelstein's suggestions that the entire historical framework for the first half of the Iron Age, be re-evaluated. The thrust of his thesis is to debunk the mythologies surrounding the Golden Age of David and Solomon. While the details of chronology and stratigraphy are debatable, most academic historians and archaeologists are in agreement that the superstate attributed to David and Solomon in the bible never existed.¹⁵

Beyond the disputation with the texts, there are clear signs that Israeli archaeology is, in fact, transcending them. In addressing issues such as gender, nomadic cultures, and social dynamics in ancient societies, archaeologists in Israel are changing the fundamental structure of their discipline. No longer guided almost exclusively by questions dictated by the texts, archaeology in Israel is now informed by a much wider range of academic disciplines and theories. That is, the historical narrative, whether defined by the bible, Josephus, or Byzantine pilgrims, defined a structure to archaeological research. Research is framed by reference to text driven issues. As Israeli archaeology has slowly freed itself of the constraints of text based issues, and drawn from the entire range of historical and social sciences for its agendas, so it has become a more varied and significant discipline.

In direct relation, with the need to establish a national identity passé, academic freedom plays a greater role in research directions. The very great opportunities afforded by the nature of the archaeological data themselves stimulate new interpretative modes.

Finally, as in all disciplines in our post-modern ivory tower, reflexivity also plays a role in how archaeology in Israel is now practiced. There is now an awareness of the role that archaeology has played in the politics of the region, and a willingness to address that role critically. (The excavation of the Roman ramp at Masada, casting some doubt on the accepted story, and more particularly on Yadin's interpretation of it, is only one example.) There is a clear understanding of at least some of the political implications of our research among those of us engaged in the archaeology of early Islam in the Negev. Similarly the work mentioned earlier at Megiddo has its political ramifications. Debunking

old myths is part of this, but recognition of the need for awareness of the implications of archaeological research is also more and more evident.

Why?

Given the developments and trends outlined above - the decline of nationalism, national myth, and identity construction, the increasing critique of text-based history and text-generated hypotheses, and the professionalization and broadening of the field - it remains to attempt to explain them. There is no single simple explanation, but I suggest that there are three general realms of explanation for these trends.

On perhaps the most naive level, nationalist explanations have been abandoned, or are being abandoned, because they are ultimately unsustainable scientifically. Yadin's claims concerning Masada have not been undermined by attacks on his professional integrity, but by re-examination of both the literary and archaeological evidence. The rejection of conquest theories for the origins of the Israelites has been based on accumulating data showing problems with the chronologies of the so-called "destructions," and the development of alternative explanations, mostly involving nomadic sedentarization, which better fit the current state of the data. Exclusive historical claims to the Land of Israel based on archaeological presence of ancestors must contend now with the obvious presence of other ancestors.

If academia no longer provides scientific legitimization to nationalist claims based on ancient presence or possession because of inherent scientific inconsistencies, there is also less demand on it to do so. Israeli society itself has outgrown its early phase of nation-building. The last two generations of Israeli Jews have been born and raised in Israel. There is a vibrant society that identifies itself as Israeli. As fractured as this society appears to be, it is legitimate in its own eyes, and does not require that archaeology provide justification for its presence in Israel. There will always be lobbies, especially from conservative elements in the society, harkening back to the good old days when archaeology was not "misinterpreted" and properly served the needs of the state, but the fact that these calls in the wilderness are now restricted to particular interest groups is evidence that Israeli society has moved on.

Finally, without reference to the specifics of paradigm change or social values, intra-disciplinary dynamics effect change as well. I refer here to two phenomena: generational conflict and demographic growth. New generations of students and scholars must at some point establish themselves as independent of their teachers. The Oedipal urge in academia is indeed encouraged, at least figuratively, resulting in creative tensions between generations. The changes in Israeli archaeology do seem to occur along generational lines and may well be related to conflicts of this nature. As indicated earlier, the growth and professionalization of the discipline also automatically effect variation. Thus, a large

number of young scholars all with the need of obtaining tenure will generate new ideas and paradigms to survive the academic jungle. Competition in the Israeli academic jungle is fierce.

Final Comments

We are truly in the post-modern era when we engage in the revision of the history of an academic discipline that engages in history, for that is what I have tried to do here. But of course, this has hardly been a sterile exercise, loaded as it is with sensitive symbols sometimes spanning millennia.

Obviously there is polemic here. It is impossible to avoid this when dealing with issues of national myth and politics. In fact, there is no such thing as a disinterested party when dealing with these issues.

I have tried to present a model of disciplinary development where myth-building/nationalism/identity construction is integrated into a larger and more complex dynamic than is usually addressed in histories of archaeology. Thus, nationalism and identity construction are not features unique or specific to Israeli archaeology, but instead a rather typical phase through which Israeli archaeology has passed (and is still passing), and through which virtually all western archaeologies have passed as well. In this light, we can expect that archaeologies in developing countries will experience similar dynamics, marked by the specificities of their local history, both ancient and modern. In this light, we can see Palestinian archaeology engaged in the same constructions and reconstructions that Israeli archaeology has experienced and continues to experience. This is not an issue of scientific rigor, integrity, or quality. Rather, it is apparently the way the discipline develops.

Indiana was tired. He sat on a large stone, shifting the bullwhip aside as he examined the small cooking vessel. No Nazis, no gold, no crashing airplanes. The pot represented an early culture about which little was known, and here was a chance to learn more. There was actually great satisfaction in that.

¹ E.g., Zerubavel, Y. 1995. *Recovered Roots*. Chicago, University of Chicago. Ben-Yehuda, N. 1995. *The Masada Myth : Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison. Silberman, N.A. 1982. *Digging for God and Country*. Knopf, New York.

² E.g., Silberman, N.A. 1994. *A Prophet from Amongst You: The Life of Yigael Yadin: Soldier, Scholar, and Mythmaker of Modern Israel*. Addison Wesley, New York. Ben-Yehuda, N. 2002. *Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada*. Humanity Books, New York. Zerubavel *ibid.* note 1.

³ E.g., Abu el-Haj, N. 2002. *Facts on the Ground, Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

⁴ E.g., Silberman, *ibid.* note 1; Silberman, N.A. 2000. *Between Past and Present*. Doubleday, New York.

⁵ E.g., Trigger, B. 1989. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 148-206.

⁶ Huntington, Ellsworth, *Palestine and Its Transformation*, Boston, Houghton and Mifflin, 1911, Ben-Gurion, D. and Ben-Zvi, Y. 1979 [1918]. *Eretz Israel in Past and Present*. Yad Ben Zvi Press, Jerusalem. (Translated from Yiddish to Hebrew by D. Niv). Troen, I. 1989. *Calculating the 'Economic*

Absorptive Capacity' of Palestine: A Study of the Political Uses of Scientific Research. *Contemporary Jewry* 10:19-38.

⁷ e.g., Abu el-Haj, *ibid.* note 3; Ben-Yehuda *ibid.* note 2; Geva, S. 1992. Israeli Biblical Archaeology at Its Inception. *Zmanim* 42:93-102 (Hebrew). Kohl, P. 1998. Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past. *Annual Reviews of Anthropology* 27:223-46, esp. 237-8; Trigger, *ibid.* note 5, pp. 183-184.

⁸ E.g., Lemche, N.P. and Thomsen, T.L. 1994. Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64:3-22; Ben-Yehuda, *ibid.* note 2.

⁹ e.g., Broshi, M. 1987. Religion, Ideology, and Politics and Their Impact on Palestinian Archaeology. *The Israel Museum Journal* 6:17-32.

¹⁰ Dever, W.G. 1973. Two Approaches to Archaeological Method – The Architectural and the Stratigraphic. *Eretz Israel* 11:1-8.

¹¹ Ben-Yehuda, *ibid.* note 2, Yadin, Y. 1972. Hazor: the Head of All Those Kingdoms: Joshua II:10. *The Schweich Lectures 1970*. Oxford University Press, London.

¹² Flannery, K.V. 1976. *The Early Mesoamerican Village*. Academic Press, New York.

¹³ Faust, A., and Maeir, A. 1999. Material Culture, Society and Ideology: New Directions in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel. Conference Proceedings. June 3, 1999, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan.

¹⁴ Herzog, Z. 1999. Deconstructing the Walls of Jericho. *Ha'aretz* October 29. (article #845439).

¹⁵ E.g., Finkelstein, I. and Silberman, N.A. 2001. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. Free Press, New York.