During the past fifteen years there has been an increase in the number of young scholars, mainly in Europe, who are interested in what has been called the “European Presence in Palestine 1799–1948,” and who have devoted their MA and PhD theses, as well as further studies, to various themes within this field. These scholars, many of them in the German-speaking world, usually have a background in history and/or theology. Good examples are the PhD thesis, the Habilitation thesis, and at least one MA thesis that have been devoted, between 1997 and 2003, to the famous 1898 voyage to the Orient of Wilhelm II.  

Another field that has aroused increasing interest is Christian missionary activity, as part of the general Occidental penetration of the East, and its impact on the country, as well as its inhabitants. These studies do not tend to limit themselves solely to the Ottoman period, but include developments during the twentieth century, as well. The trend is away from the former historical-geographical positivistic fact-finding that led to the reconstruction of natural and cultural landscapes in a certain space and within a defined time. The new work instead examines the long-term sociological influences of an external element on the existing local landscape and focuses mainly on the society or societies living within it.  


These scholars form a new generation, following and continuing the tradition of an earlier one, mainly historians of the 1960s up to the early 1980s, who devoted special attention to the study of the European presence and European intervention in the countries bordering the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Some of them devoted specific studies to Palestine, usually defined by its Mandatory borders, although all of these studies dealt with the area during the last 120 years of the Ottoman regime. Such scholars included Helmut Mejcher, Alexander Schölch, Abdul Latif Tibawi, Abdel-Raouf Sinno, and Derek Hopwood. Some of them are still publishing and continue to educate the scholars of the new generation. Most of their work concerning the Europeans in late-Ottoman Palestine has been dedicated to wider, more general perspectives within this field of research.3

Israelis comprise the second group of scholars who have taken a great deal of scientific interest in the European (and American) Christian presence in Palestine during the above-mentioned period. The physical remains of this presence, spread throughout the country, form an integral part of Israel’s cultural landscape. These, together with surviving names such as “the German Colony,” “the American Colony,” “the Greek Colony,” “the Russian Compound,” “the Italian Hospital,” “Namsawi” (= Austrian) neighborhood in Nazareth, “the Scottish Hospital” (in Tiberias), and many more of the same, have attracted numerous visitors as well as scholars whose aim has been to study their background, origin, history, and influence on the cultural landscape as well as on the local population. The huge interest that the Israeli public devotes

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to the theme has been demonstrated, for example, in the fact that the best-visited exhibition in the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel-Aviv for many years was the “Chronicle of a Utopia,” dedicated to “theTemplers in the Holy Land, 1868–1948.”

The aim of this paper is to make two similar generations of Israeli scholars known, scholars who devoted their research, or at least part of it, to this European penetration. The main argument here concerns the lack of cooperation between European and Israeli scholars working on the same topic, and the lack of mutual acknowledgement, caused mostly, but not solely, by the obvious language barrier. In addition, the paper will try to establish the reasons for the decreasing interest that young Israeli scholars have shown for this topic during the last fifteen years. Naturally, such a paper must include an extensive bibliography.

Mordechai Eliav, professor emeritus and historian of the Jewish communities in Eretz Israel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, devoted much of his time to intensive studies of the European consulates in nineteenth-century Jerusalem and their attitude towards the Jewish population. He is an outstanding representative of the scholars, who, while working on other subjects, studied certain elements of European activity. Other leading Israeli historians in this context include Shimon Shamir, Israel Bartal, and Benjamin Zeev Kedar.5

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However, the intention of this paper is to discuss scholars who, unlike Eliav, concentrated their studies primarily on the activity, influence, and contribution of Europeans in Eretz Israel and/or Palestine and/or the Holy Land. Each scholar used the geographical labels that best fit his perceptions and goals. Two Israeli researchers were responsible for what Jacob Barnai termed as “intensive liberty from the childhood diseases of narrow and tendentious nationalistic historiography. […] Modern critical research is no longer afraid of dealing with the history of other people and other religions in Eretz-Israel.”6 Although one of them is a historian and the second a geographer, they both arrived, independently but almost simultaneously, at the conclusions that led them to devote their studies to the European presence. In his MA thesis dealing with the history of Haifa during the Ottoman period, first published in 1969 and republished already in its fourth edition, the late Alex Carmel (1931–2002), who studied Middle Eastern history, encountered two elements that were to become leading motifs in his more than forty years of academic research. The first of these was the importance of published descriptions by pilgrims and travelers as sources for the study of Palestine/Eretz Israel, and the second was the role of the German Templers, a sect rarely studied, as a leading factor in the development of Haifa.7

Carmel’s great contribution was in the publication in 1970 of his doctoral thesis. For the first time, the significance of the Templers for the history of Palestine and their role in the building and development of the country, beginning with their settlement in 1868 in Haifa, was explained to the interested Israeli reader.8 Many of Carmel’s publications appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, all of them of fundamental importance for the study of European penetration of Palestine in the nineteenth century. A general description of the phenomenon, including a section devoted to each “Power,” first appeared in Hebrew in 1983.

and two years later in English.\(^9\) One should note that these summaries still serve as “text-books” in relevant academic courses.

In 1975, he published his important paper dealing with the German *Palästinapolitik*, and explained the importance of the periodical of the *Tempelgesellschaft, Die Süddeutsche Warte* (first published in 1846, beginning in 1877 entitled *Die Warte des Tempels*), as a source for “Eretz Israel Studies,” a developing field in Israeli universities and high schools. Three years later, he published the first volume of collected reports concerning the Holy Land, most of them from the *Warte*. The second volume appeared in 1983.\(^10\) One could add here a long list of his studies concerning German Protestant and Templar activity in Palestine, including his volume *Christen als Pioniere* on German settlers and activists such as Conrad Schick, Theodor Fliedner and Christian Friedrich Spittler, German communities, and similar topics.\(^11\) Everyone involved in this field of research should be aware of, use, and cite Carmel’s many contributions to the field.\(^12\) Nearly all of his studies dealt with the German presence in Palestine with the exception of one which examined Russian activ-

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\(^12\) See also Yaron Perry, Erik Petry (eds.), *Das Erwachen Palästinas im 19. Jahrhundert. Alex Carmel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Judentum und Christentum 9, Stuttgart–Berlin–Köln 2001).
ity. Another point that should be emphasized here is that Carmel published many of his works – though not all of them – in Hebrew as well as in German or English.

In the 1990s, Alex Carmel tutored two Israeli PhD students, this in addition to having earlier mentored the dissertation by Christine Schütz and my work which will be discussed later. These students, Ejal Jakob Eisler and Yaron Perry, who worked with Carmel at the Gottlieb-Schumacher-Institute of the University of Haifa, helped him establish its archives, and they have studied and published within the field. Eisler conducted thorough research into the American-German settlers in Jaffa for his thesis. This was immensely expanded in his dissertation which, published in German, became the most important book concerning the German settlement in that city. He added a bilingual Hebrew-German study concerning Peter Martin Mezler, an important, though neglected, figure in nineteenth-century Jaffa. Since 1998 he has been working and publishing in Germany. Among other projects, he participated, along with his tutor, in the editing and writing of the magnificent volume describing the German emperor’s visit in 1898, which includes many rare illustrations. He also contributed a paper to the centenary-volume commemorating the establishment of the “Church of the Redeemer,” and edited a collection of letters by a family of early nineteenth-century colonists in Palestine. Eisler continues publishing extensively: the important *Bilddokumentation* that he published with others based on the archives of Schneller’s Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem should also be mentioned. Three further publications appeared in


2008: a volume describing the banker Johannes Frutiger, his life and works (written together with H. H. Frutiger), a study dedicated to the Johanniterhospice, and an edited volume with fifteen papers concerning the contributions of Germans to the modernization of Palestine.17

Yaron Perry, the student to whom Carmel was closest and who worked with him in the Schumacher Institute, studied the history of the Anglican missions in Palestine and published his dissertation as a book in Hebrew, which was then translated into English and German. This followed an earlier study of the “Mount Hope” settlement in Jaffa and a published paper dealing with the missionary hospital in Safed. His cooperation with Efraim Lev brought four papers and a book describing the development of modern medicine in Palestine.18 Perry was also one of the two editors of the Festschrift issued in honor of Carmel’s seventieth birthday.19

In addition to Perry, there are some other Israeli scholars interested in the nineteenth-century medical history of the country, most of them physicians. The first and leading work was published in 1983 by Norbert Schwake, a German physician who lives in Israel.20 In addition to him, one should mention

19 Perry, Petry (eds.), Das Erwachen Palästinas.
here Shemuel Nissan, who, usually together with Petra Martin from Germany, dedicated many years of study to the history of the German childrens’ hospital in Jerusalem.21

A glimpse at the lists of contributors to the above-mentioned *Festschriften*, the centenary volume of the visit of the German emperor and the one issued for Carmel, as well as at the lists of participants in workshops and conferences, mainly in Germany, and their published proceedings, would suggest that these were the only Israeli scholars of the European presence in Ottoman Palestine.22 It is perhaps no exaggeration to argue that most European scholars working in this field do not know of the existence of a much longer list of Israeli scholars, who were absent from these volumes. The argument here reminds us of many other historical geographers, if not historians, who have contributed a wide range of studies to the broad theme of European activity in nineteenth-century Palestine. All of them studied under Yehoshua Ben-Arieh or under Ben-Arieh’s pupils.

Ben-Arieh turned from geography to historical geography quite early, dealing with “historical relics existing in the present landscape,” that is, with the geography that lies behind the history.23 This major change in his scholarly career came about during his first sabbatical leave, which he spent in England in 1964/65 and where he encountered Clifford Darby’s *Historical Geography of England* and other works by this scholar.24 Ben-Arieh chose to concentrate on nineteenth-century Palestine, which resulted in the publication of *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* in 1970,25 the same year in
which Carmel’s dissertation appeared in print. Though probably coincidental, this fact led me to choose that year to begin this paper. Both publications were breakthroughs in the study of the Christian-European presence in Palestine during the nineteenth century, as well as in the use of traveler’s accounts for its history. Thus, they may be termed “period-making studies.”

In that same year, Ben-Arieh published a fundamental paper in which he developed his methodology concerning active “geographical” (versus “archaeological”) historical geography, a distinction which he still applies in his publications and which he has imparted to his students. He used this method in the two-volume monumental study of nineteenth-century Jerusalem entitled *A City Reflected in Its Times*, published in 1977 (Old City) and 1979 (New City). Both appeared in English translation as *Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century* in the mid-1980s. It can be assumed that everyone who has studied the history or geography of Jerusalem in the nineteenth century is aware of how much material both books hold for our theme.

On the other hand, it is difficult to find in Ben-Arieh’s long list of publications studies which deal directly with the European penetration of Palestine. Following his intensive study of travel literature, he devoted numerous publications to this genre, mainly establishing the different perceptions of the Holy Land by its European visitors. He also presented some important basic

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29 As examples: Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Perceptions and Images of The Land of Israel in the Writings of Nineteenth-Century Western Travelers, in: Shmuel Almog et al. (eds.), Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History. Essays Presented in Honor of Shmuel Ettinger (Jerusalem 1987) 89–114 [Hebrew]; Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Ha’nof hayishuvi shel Eretz-Israel erev hahityashvut hatzioniit [The Cultural Landscape of Eretz-Israel on the Eve of Zionist Settlement], in: Israel Kolatt (ed.), The Ottoman Period, Part One (Moshe Lissak, Gabriel
research concerning the history of the geographical exploration of the Holy Land, a subject to which he has returned in recent years and in which his interest has shifted to the British Mandate period (1918–1948). In addition, he co-edited with Moshe Davis the papers presented in the scholarly colloquium entitled *Western Societies and the Holy Land*, which has yielded five collected volumes.

Ben-Arieh was not only a pioneer scholar in this field; he also founded a school of Israeli historical-geographers whose members now teach in all Israeli universities and some academic colleges. Renowned throughout the country for his unique dedication to his students, he has encouraged many of them to study different aspects of Christian activity. Prominent in the “first generation” are Ruth Kark, Yossi Ben-Artzi, Rehav Rubin, Dov Gavish, Yossi Katz, and Zvi Shiloni, all of whom have dealt with the different aspects of the European penetration. Naftali Thalmann, Shaul Sapir, and Haim Goren belong to the “second generation.” Thalmann and Goren are the only ones of this list who have devoted their studies solely to Christian-European activity.

It would be almost impossible to give an adequate overview of Ruth Kark’s studies. She has looked at American activity and at the work of different European groups either by themselves or in connection with wider topics. One of her books treated Jaffa, another Jerusalem and its surroundings (the latter together with her student, Michal Oren-Nordheim). As examples of her studies

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that focus directly on American and European involvement, it is important to mention her paper “Millenarism and Agricultural Settlement,” which dealt with early experiments of American settlements in the Holy Land. Other examples include her study of the European influence on traditional patterns of landownership in Palestine, her books about the American consuls and the American-Swedish colony, and her paper concerning Swedish pietistic settlements.33 Kark’s studies of Protestant missionary activity in Palestine, as well as of the introduction of modern technology,34 led to a joint project and paper with the German historical geographer Dietrich Denecke, and Haim Goren.35

Yossi Ben-Artzi’s significant contribution to the study of the physical and cultural aspects of the Templer settlements is well known.36 In recent years, he has also published papers on Johannes Zeller and Gottlieb Schumacher, two of the leading Europeans who resided in Galilee and their unique contributions to the area, as well as studies on other “European” topics.37

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37 Yossi Ben Artzi, Johannes Zeller – A Missionary to Nazareth and the Holy Land, in: Cathedra 50 (December 1988) 73–97 [Hebrew]; Yossi Ben Artzi, Unbekannte Pläne und Land-
Well-known for his studies of the historical maps of Jerusalem, Rehav Rubin has published studies concerning the Greek-Orthodox community in Jerusalem, the missionary settlement in the village of Artas close to Solomon’s Pools, and – together with Haim Goren – the introduction of modern agricultural technology into Palestine. As an essential part of his map study, he has begun studying three-dimensional models and relief maps of Palestine, all of them produced by Europeans. Some of these, such as Conrad Schick, resided in Jerusalem.

Dov Gavish’s main interest lies in the history of cartography and photography of Palestine and the Middle East. In addition to his study of the surveying of Palestine in the years of the British Mandate, he has published numerous papers concerning nineteenth-century mapping, as well as European involvement in the area during World War I.


Zvi Shiloni, whose general interest concerns Jewish issues, studied French activity in Palestine even before Dominique Trimbur arrived on the scene and “conquered” the field. However, he published only one scientific paper on this theme, in which he discussed the history, activities, and personality of the mysterious but forgotten French Count Paul Amédée de Piellat, who probably contributed more than any other of his compatriots to the monumental French presence in Jerusalem.42

In 1980, Naftali Thalmann submitted his MA thesis in which he presented a general picture of German activity in Palestine.43 His work was preceded by that of the late Shlomo Elan, a real pioneer in the study of German activity in the Holy Land. His thesis, dating from the 1970s and also mentored by Ben-Arieh, was published in German in 1984.44 In 1991, Thalmann submitted his dissertation, which was the first thorough study of agriculture and farming in the Templner colonies. He demonstrated their crucial importance for the development of Palestine.45 During these years, he finished other work, all of it concerning subjects of interest for us here.46 Shaul Sapir’s thesis, dealing with the
contribution of the English missions to the development of Jerusalem, was presented in 1979. He has drawn on it in numerous published papers.\textsuperscript{47} As for my own work, until recently I concentrated all my attention on two, parallel themes drawn from my MA thesis, which dealt with the German Catholics in Palestine, and my PhD dissertation about German scientific study of the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{48} The latter was followed by a book published in 1999 in Hebrew. Its German edition followed four years later.\textsuperscript{49} Numerous studies have dealt with the many historical enterprises of various nations regarding the re-discovery and scientific exploration of the Holy Land. These papers deal with individual researchers as well as with organizations, and with private as well as state-sponsored innovations and projects.\textsuperscript{50} Special attention has been paid


\textsuperscript{49} Haim Goren, “Go View the Land:” German Study of Palestine in the Nineteenth Century (Jerusalem 1999) [Hebrew]; Haim Goren, „Zieht hin und erforscht das Land“. Die deutsche Palästinaforschung im 19. Jahrhundert (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte der Universität Tel Aviv 23, Göttingen 2003).

to the field of cartography and to the development of the modern mapping of Palestine as well as its neighboring countries. A second book, concerning German Catholic activity within the general Catholic presence in nineteenth-century Palestine, has been published in Hebrew; the German-language version appeared in 2009. Preceding it were a number of papers concerning this ethno-religious group and its unique involvement in the Holy Land during the nineteenth century. In addition, there are numerous papers dealing with Templer, Austrian, and French activity. Most of these papers were not pub-


lished in Hebrew, or, if so, only in translation of the English or German versions.

In recent years, I have shifted my interest to the scientific involvement of other countries as well, mainly Britain, and my next book tries to connect the scientific study of the Jordan Rift Valley, including the Dead Sea, with British interests and involvement in the Near East during the 1830s and 1840s.  

The Israeli study of the European involvement in Palestine, by historians as well as by historical geographers, has greatly declined in recent years. The younger generation of historical geographers, those doctoral and masters’ students of Ben-Arieh and also, some of his first- and second-generation students, have moved into other fields and are only rarely involved in this topic. The best proof can be found in the volumes of the periodical *Cathedra*, as well as in two published collections, presented to Yehoshua Ben-Arieh (1999) and to Yehuda Ben-Porat (2003), and in Eisler’s recently published collection *Deutsche in Palästina*. Ben-Porat was the real founder of Yad Ben-Zvi as a leading institution for Eretz-Israel studies at the popular as well as the academic level. Only four out of 36 papers in Hebrew and six in English included in the first collection are dedicated to European activity. They were written by Robin Butlin (an English historical geographer), Naftali Thalmann, Nachum Gross (an economic historian), and myself. The second collection contains 34 papers,
only three of which (by Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Yossi Ben-Artzi, and Mordechai Eliav) can be included in our field.58 Among the fifteen contributors to the third volume, one can find – again – the names of Ruth Kark, Haim Goren, Ejal Eisler, and Naftali Thalmann.59

This phenomenon may be explained in several ways. The broad basis for the study of Christian penetration was laid by the “founding fathers” in the 1970s and 1980s. Since that time, several factors have changed: first, today’s Israeli students of geography prefer environmental and planning topics and are less attracted to historical geography. Second, studies of “European” themes have been devoted more to specific issues that go deeper on the micro-level, such as certain groups, persons, movements, organizations, or institutions. Historical geography demands, inter alia, a good command of individual languages such as French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish, and access to various archives. Unfortunately, not many of today’s Israeli students possess such skills. There are some exceptions, such as a young PhD student in Jerusalem, whose thesis concerns “The Rebuilding of the Catholic Holy Places in the Holy Land during the 20th Century: Cultural, Geographical, and Political Aspects,” and who is fluent, inter alia, in Italian, French, and Russian. Another student, who immigrated to Israel from Russia and is studying Russian naval activity in the eastern Mediterranean in the late eighteenth century, has already published various papers together with his tutors, Rubin and Gavish.60

Another possible explanation for the declining interest in historical geography concerns the interdisciplinary approach. Those students who currently show an interest in European activity usually come from other disciplines and want to use their expertise on specific aspects within the field. For


58 Yehoshua BEN-ARIEH, Manners and Customs in Palestine as Perceived and Studied during the Nineteenth Century and until 1948, 452–493 [Hebrew]; BEN-ARTZI, The Map; Mordechai ELIAV, Zionism as Viewed by the German Consuls in Palestine towards the End of Ottoman Rule, 507–519.


example, one student’s interest in urban planning led to a thesis dealing with urban planning in the German colonies in and around Jaffa. Two architects similarly put their professional background to use in their dissertations. One studied Templer architecture, while the other is thoroughly investigating Schneller’s institutions. During the last decade, research students of the Department of Maritime Studies at the University of Haifa started to focus on relatively modern sunken ships, combining in their works the fields of underwater archaeology and historical geography. The best example is a student working on sunken ships from Napoleon’s expedition and the 1832 and 1840 maritime battles of Acre.

This survey makes no claim to completeness regarding such scholars and publications in Israel. It does, however, present a comprehensive list of mostly historical geographers who have contributed to the field. On the basis of this list, we may detect, beginning in the mid-1990s, a change in research interests dealing with European activity in nineteenth-century Palestine. Until then, Israeli scholars had devoted much of their attention to this topic and had formed a relatively large sector of the academic community involved in it. That does not mean that there were no non-Israeli scholars dealing with the subject. On the contrary, intensive studies were conducted abroad, mainly in Germany and the USA, but also by British, French, and Dutch scholars. Some of these were tutored by Arab scholars studying at European universities. Despite this, Israel-
lis produced not only a relative, but probably an absolute majority of the scholarly production here.

This has changed drastically, with today’s Israeli scholars forming only a small part of this “scientific community.” The field has been taken over by people coming from the European and American academic worlds. Their relative advantages, as pointed out above, are clear. There has also been a growing interest shown mainly – though not solely – by theologians or historically-minded and historically-trained clergy.

In conclusion, I should like to point out what I believe is the greatest deficiency of this contemporary and well-conducted research. It is common to most (though not all) of the concerned scholars and has led me to present this paper. Most of them are unaware of the Israeli work done in the field, especially that conducted by historical geographers. Alex Carmel is well-known, at least in Germany, and extensively cited, but many of the Israeli scholars mentioned above remain unknown. What are the reasons for this? The most obvious possibility, the language barrier, is only part of the answer. Many of the above-mentioned Israeli studies have been published solely or also in languages other than Hebrew. There must be other reasons which should be discussed, especially with those who have spent a longer period on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. In new scholarship, I repeatedly come across facts and arguments with which I am acquainted from previous Israeli studies. Again generally speaking, most of the non-Israeli scholars are not generous in citing Israeli studies dealing with the European “competition, penetration, and presence” in nineteenth-century Palestine.

Some European scholars have become acquainted with Israelis and their work while undertaking their field-studies in Israel. People such as Dominique Trimbur, Jürgen Krüger, Roland Lößler, and Markus Kirchhoff are very good proof of the fact that disconnection is not unavoidable, even with the existing language barrier. It should be added that Israeli scholars on their side often do not know much about the “overseas” studies in their field and that their lack of knowledge in languages other than English is also a big deficiency. The only way to overcome these problems and disjunctions is to form a scholarly body to collect the data, report periodically about pertinent new studies, and arrange meetings with involved and interested scholars.

63 In the title of Alex Carmel’s article, above, n. 9.