

# Clare Louise Ducker ~ Jews, Arabs And Arab Jews: The Politics Of Identity And Reproduction In Israel

## *1.1 Introduction*

While the bulk of anti-Zionist literature has tended to focus on the disastrous effects of the creation of the state of Israel upon the indigenous Palestinian population and its consequences, including the present day endemic discrimination faced by Palestinian citizens of Israel (Lustick 1980), there is relatively little recognition of the tragedies that befell Jews from Arab countries (and also from Turkey, Iran, India & Ethiopia) during and after the creation of Israel in 1948. It is rarely acknowledged that Jews from the Arab world have been politically, economically and socially marginalized by the ruling Ashkenazi elite and have suffered discrimination based on their appearance and cultural affinity – a phenomenon that is an inseparable part of the Zionist discrimination against Palestinians and Arabs as a whole (Giladi 1990:208). Professor Yehouda Shenhav (1996) has remarked that the new historians – those Israeli historians who have exposed the Zionist myths surrounding the creation of the state of Israel as ‘a land without people, for a people without land’ and revealed the massacres, expulsions and ill-treatment of Palestinians that occurred during the creation of Israel – have excluded from their revision of Israeli history the many injustices inflicted on Jews who came from the Arab world. The lack of recognition of the plight (and even existence) of Arab Jews is reflected in descriptions of the conflict in the Middle East as ‘a conflict between Jews and Arabs’ despite the fact that about fifty percent of Israel’s Jewish population are also Arab (Kanaaneh 2002:43).

Israel, defined as the “Jewish State” but whose founding members were all European asserted from the outset the European character the Jewish state would take: Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, wrote that the Jewish state would serve as “the portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to oriental barbarism”. Conceptions of East versus West, of the modern and civilized world against the backward and barbaric

“other” are a recurrent theme in Zionist literature and which are directly associated with the colonial Europe Zionism emerged from. During the first Zionist Congress, European Zionists consistently addressed themselves only to Ashkenazi Jews, rejecting the non-Ashkenazim and opposing the “tainting” of the settlements in Palestine with an admission of “Levantine Jews” (Shohat 1999:9). Zionism’s answer to the “Jewish question” was therefore an analysis of the “European Jewish question” deliberately not concerning itself with the Jews from the Middle East, Asia and Africa (Massad 1996:54). It can thus be seen that Zionism is actually an Ashkenazi nationalist movement, a movement established by and for Jews of European origin (Giladi 1990:67).

Read more: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/JewsArabs-and-Arab-Jews>

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