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Facts on the Ground

Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society

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Archaeology and Its Aftermath

By the 1990s, neither the practice of archaeology nor the particular configuration of politics and polity to which it had long been bound remained hegemonic in Israeli society. Not only had a national-religious agenda partially hijacked the formerly labor-Zionist national hobby, as exemplified by the practices at the Western Wall Heritage Tunnel, but broader assumptions that archaeology had helped to produce had begun to unravel in the face of challenges from various quarters, including critical Israeli scholars and journalists, Palestinians opposing the Israeli occupation, and Ultra-Orthodox Jews fighting against the secularism of (much of) the Israeli state. No longer a discipline in the making, nor one that, for the most part, engaged in any systematic way in a project of creating new political realities on the ground, archaeology found itself facing challenges to its practices and to the realities it had helped to create—at times from members of its own community. As some members of the archaeological community began mounting a defense of their discipline, far more than a protection of archaeology was at stake. The legitimate contours of territory, polity, and society were assumed to hang in the balance.

Several struggles over the rightful ownership of archaeology's objects will be considered here. First, I explore a set of arguments dealing with Palestinian rights to archaeological artifacts and sites and regarding the kinds of claims that Palestinians can and cannot, do or do not, make to the ancient past and thus to a distinctive national history of their own. Second, I analyze a challenge from Ultra-Orthodox Jews demanding the right to control some of archaeology's (Jewish) artifacts. This is a struggle to redefine specific classes of objects, human bones and, increasingly, specific artifactual remains, as sacred and not archaeological. Each of these groups stands as outsiders to a Zionist state and national culture, although in radically different and largely incommensurable ways. The first set of arguments harkens back to foundational questions in the establishment of the Israeli state: Is it a colonial *or* a national state? The second revolves around mainstream Zionism's long- standing secular commitments and its effacement of forms of Judaism understood to have characterized the "abnormality" of diasporic life. While analyzing some of the arguments and objections put forth by Palestinians, on the one hand, and Ultra-Orthodox Jews, on the other, I focus primarily on responses to such challenges through which the archaeological community engages in an energetic reavowal of its discipline's epistemological and cultural-political commitments, and, at times, in critical reflections thereupon. Such maneuvers reconfigure specific aspects of that cultural and political horizon, all the while avowedly defending and sustaining others. And through this analysis of the manner in which archaeology was deployed and buffeted about in public discourse and street battles alike, questions of nationhood and colonialism, of secularism and religiosity, and of science and knowledge that have all saturated and characterized the by now lengthy history of the work of archaeology in Palestine and Israel can be revisited.

Relics, History, and Peoplehood: The Colonial Question Returns

On November 14, 1993, one month before the scheduled Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank town of Jericho, the Antiquities Authority (in cooperation with Yitzhak Magen, the Israeli antiquities staff officer for the West Bank) launched a survey and excavation project named "Operation Scroll." These were salvage excavations that involved approximately sixteen teams of archaeologists, accompanied by Palestinian laborers. They combed an area spanning a sixty-mile stretch of the lower Jordan valley and the western shore of the Dead Sea (see Yossi Torpstein, "Mivtsa le-Giluy Mimtsaʾim Arkheologim ba-Gada," *Haʾaretz,* 15 November 1993: 5a; Oyediran 1997: 51). The operation was designed to discover "additional Jewish scrolls from the Second Temple period and other finds" before the area was turned over to the Palestinian authorities in the first stage of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank (ibid.). Operation Scroll sparked a conflict between the Palestinian authorities set to take over the Jericho area and the Israeli authorities still in control. It precipitated a debate in the press and among Palestinian and Israeli archaeologists and others over the rightful ownership of archaeological finds uncovered in territory slated to be turned over to Palestinian rule. "Just whose Heritage is it anyway?" asked the *New York Times* (Clyde Haberman, "The Holy Land 'digs,'" 22 September 1994: A4).

What should happen to those artifacts excavated in the West Bank and Gaza once the territories are turned over to some form of Palestinian control? After decades of struggle, the Palestinian nationalist movement, and its most recent incarnation in the intifada (the popular uprising), had forced the Israeli state to the negotiating table. The occupied territories were to be turned over, at least in part, to some form of Palestinian authority or rule. Within the context of those negotiations over land and possible statehood, the Palestinian negotiating team put the question of antiquities on the table.

According to the Declaration of Principles, a provisional agreement reached between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (September 13, 1993), the future status of the antiquities from these territories would be dealt with in the negotiations over final status. In the meantime, with regard to particular areas to be handed over to Palestinian control (in this agreement, the Jericho area and much of Gaza), Israel was to provide a list of archaeological sites for which excavation licenses were granted since 1967 and, where available, a general description of artifacts excavated at each site (Declaration of Principles 1993: 20). The Oslo II Agreement (signed in Washington, D.C., on September 28, 1995) further developed guidelines for dealing with questions of cultural property. Following the terms of that earlier Declaration of Principles, it transferred jurisdiction over archaeological sites in the territories under their control to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). It established a Joint Committee of Experts to deal with "archaeological issues of common interest," and it required that Israel provide the Palestinian National Authority all "archaeological records for sites" under their jurisdiction along with a "detailed list and description of artifacts found at such sites since 1967." In addition, the agreement mandated that both sides enforce a prohibition on the transfer of cultural property out of the West Bank and Gaza—whether to Israel or to other countries (Oyediran 1997: 38–40). As summed up in a report on cultural property produced by a Palestinian human rights organization: "The transfer of information on archaeological excavations conducted in areas under PNA jurisdiction will be of great assistance in pursuing Palestinian claims for the return of cultural artifacts removed from the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territories] since 1967" (40).

There is an international legal context for these negotiations over antiquities. In demanding the return of cultural property excavated in and transferred out of the occupied territories since 1967, the Palestinian negotiators were calling for an enforcement of international law.[1] But legal compliance would require a clear and agreed-upon definition as to *whose* cultural property particular archaeological objects really are. From an Israeli perspective, the international treaties that govern control over cultural properties may not apply to the Palestinian and Israeli case. Those treaties do ban occupying powers from transferring cultural property out of an occupied territory. But the Hague Convention defines "cultural property" as "movable or immovable property of great importance *to the cultural heritage of every people*" (quoted in Oyediran 1997: 7; emphasis added). In other words, the prohibition against seizing cultural property is cast in the terms of protecting one people's cultural heritage from being plundered by the occupying army of another. The language of national or cultural heritage saturates this international legal convention. Given the long history of demarcating attachments and claims to archaeological sites and objects, the question of who actually is the legitimate *national-cultural* heir to specific archaeological relics is precisely what is at stake in determining what will happen to artifacts excavated by Israeli archaeologists or seized by the Israeli state since the 1967 war.

The very distinctive form of Israeli settler-nationhood returns to haunt the cultural property debate. The ongoing work of archaeology, after all, was constitutive of the territorial self-fashioning of Jewish nativeness out of which a settler-colonial community emerged as a national, an original, and a native one, which would thereby have legitimate claim not just to the land as a whole, but, more specifically, to particular ancient artifacts that embody the Jewish nation's history and heritage. As argued by a professor of international law at Hebrew University, while "removing cultural properties" from occupied lands "clearly contradicts the Hague treaty," the application of that law to certain archaeological artifacts uncovered in the occupied territories may not be quite so clear (Felice Maranz, "The return of the shards," *Jerusalem Report*, 18 November 1993: 19). That lack of clarity takes a very particular form in this case. For example, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute does not replicate the terms of legal battles within North America or Australia, which pit the rights of science and archaeologists against those of heritage and the Native American and Canadian communities demanding the repatriation of artifactual and human remains (see Gathercole and Lowenthal 1994; Layton 1994; McLaughlin 1998; Messenger 1989). In Palestine/Israel, the dispute involves demarcating the contours of legitimate *heritage ownership* itself. "Israel may have the right to keep synagogue mosaics and other Jewish artifacts," the professor of international law explicates, "The preamble of the Hague convention talks about cultural property as part of a *people's heritage*" (Maranz, *Jerusalem Report,* 18 November 1993: 19; emphasis added). While most of the archaeological finds excavated since 1967 and transferred into Israel proper will surely be returned to the Palestinian National Authority if a final agreement on the status of the territories is ever reached, what will happen to objects of "clear Jewish character" (Torpstein, *Ha'aretz,* 15 November 1993: 5a) is not entirely clear. That is, what will happen to those objects defined by the Israeli negotiating team as being of great importance for the cultural heritage of the Jewish people?

Specific sites have already been placed under special jurisdiction in the Oslo II Agreement. The agreement requires both sides to respect and protect sites regarded as "holy or which hold archaeological value." Each side is empowered to raise concerns relating to such sites before the Joint Committee of Experts. But with regard to specifically named sites, the Palestinian National Authority *must* refer all decisions regarding any actions on their part to the joint committee for "full cooperation." That list includes twelve sites deemed by the Israeli negotiators to be of particular "archaeological and historical importance to the Israeli side," mostly synagogue remains (Oyerdian 1997: 38). (There is no comparable list of sites of special significance to the Palestinian side, a testament to the asymmetrical power relations of these negotiations).[2] The rights of control over those twelve archaeological sites remain ambiguous. While under the territorial jurisdiction of the PNA, they are not unequivocally theirs to manage. It is precisely the question of their proper ownership that is in question. Any resolution of that question depends upon the ability of both sides to agree on the rightful ownership of such sites or objects.

As James Clifford has argued, while "repatriation" is one "possible, appropriate route," it is not always clear, or agreed upon, "where home is for collected objects" (1997: 211). In this instance, is an object at home within the territory from which it was hewn (the local inhabitants thus being its rightful owners)? Or is it at home when in the hands of a population whose own national culture and identity the objects are believed to represent, even if that means rendering the objects "diasporic" by transferring them to a state or territory other than the one in which they were found? So, the question returns: Just whose heritage is it anyway?

In the wake of colonial regimes, demands have been made by newly established states and indigenous peoples throughout the world for the repatriation of cultural property that had been collected by colonial scholars and transferred to European and American universities and museums. In writing of the terms of this debate, Richard Handler argues, not only have proponents of repatriation insisted that museums have "misrepresented other cultures, they have oppressed and plundered them. From this point of view, no appeal to scientific necessity can justify the removal of what has come to be called, tellingly, cultural property: only the people who created artifacts, or the people whose 'identity' they represent, can place them in a proper context" (1988: 193). The question of whose identity such objects represent, however, is itself an effect of the very projects and practices of collection and classification. Objects, after all, do not inherently represent anyone. Claims to ownership depend on the practical entanglement of objects in a long history of cultural, political, scholarly, and, often, market practices that come to circumscribe them *as heritage*—as objects with a specific cultural-historical significance as emblems of identity (cf., Dominguez 1986; Handler 1988; Clifford 1988; Fabian 1983). What is at stake in the dispute over Jewish objects from the occupied territories is not so much who it was that created specific objects but what *kind of a relationship* those ancient inhabitants have with the land's present population groups. The very incompatibility of understanding Zionism as a colonial *versus* a national project stands at the argument's very core.

The project of inventory, of acquisition, and of enclosure began almost immediately upon the seizure of the territories in the 1967 war. Archaeological surveys were conducted in the West Bank, in Gaza, in East Jerusalem, and in the Golan Heights.[3] A similar preliminary archaeological survey was carried out in southern Lebanon on the heels of Israeli troops in 1982. Except for in the latter case, excavations and more extensive surveys soon followed. An ancient historical geography was gradually substantiated on the contemporary landscape, incrementally extending the expanse of territory considered (by many) rightfully historic Jewish land. Particular Jewish relics unearthed from those sites, together with other artifacts seized with the capture of the Palestine Museum during the 1967 war (most notably the Dead Sea Scrolls), were currently, or potentially, objects of contention.[4] These artifacts were the source of a political disagreement that erupted into public debate with the launching of Operation Scroll in November of 1993.

Operation Scroll was attacked by Palestinian archaeologists and political figures as last-minute plunder on the eve of Israel's withdrawal from the Jericho area. They argued that this operation was illegal, but one more instance of colonial pillage (see Silberman 1994). They were joined in their critique by a few prominent Israeli archaeologists and journalists. According to Aharon Kempinski, chairman of the Association of Archaeologists in Israel (*Agudat ha-Arkheologim be-Yisrael*, an organization founded in the 1980s as a counterpart to existing archaeological institutions), this operation was "an attempt to conduct an archaeological coup before the area [was] handed over . . . to the autonomy authorities or the Palestinian Administration in Jericho" (quoted in Oyediran 1997: 51). For Kempinski, there were no legitimate national-heritage grounds on which these excavations were justifiable. Or, as Tom Segev, a prominent Israeli critic argued in his weekly *Ha᾿aretz* column, Operation Scroll involved "tens of archaeologists rushing about like Indiana Jones from cave to cave in an effort to discover more scrolls." It was the realization of "Amir Drori's life-dream," the director of the Antiquities Authority and a former IDF general who led Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and was given directorship over the Antiquities Authority upon retireing. Operation Scroll is "the final madness, rather pathetic, of a dying colonial administration" (19 November 1993: 7b).

It was in the face of such public criticism, which brought the colonial character of the Israeli occupation to the fore, that the Antiquities Authority and participating archaeologists defended their decision to launch this, initially secret, operation. The terms of their defense were twofold: legal and cultural. First, it was argued that the Israel Antiquities Authority had the legal responsibility, as defined under international law, to protect archaeological objects from destruction. Far from taking part in "organized robbery," as one participating archaeologist explained, everything was "being done according to international law." All discoveries would be passed to the Civil Administration (i.e., the military administration that has ruled the territories since the 1967 war). The idea was that, in the future, it may be possible to turn everything over to the Palestinian state, "But in the beginning the Palestinians will have other worries: by the time they have time to search for scrolls—antiquity robbers will not have left any trace of them" (ibid.). The Antiquities Authority's official spokesperson similarly appealed to the special status of artifacts as objects of science that had to be protected: "The Operation is conducted in accordance with the Jordanian law and in accordance with international law and the Hague Convention which states that archaeological artifacts in an occupied area must be preserved, and that it is the purpose of the operation: to protect the archeological artifacts from antiquity robbers" (quoted in Oyediran 1997: 51).

But an enforcement of international law was neither the sole nor the most important grounds upon which participants in the operation defended it. This was Jewish national-cultural patrimony, and that meant the Jewish state, and certainly not a Palestinian one, had legitimate ownership rights over ancient *Jewish* objects. As explained by Neil Silberman, an American author who has written extensively on issues of politics and archaeology in the Middle East:

> "The French did the same thing before they left Algeria," charged Nazmi Juʿbeh, a technical advisor to the Palestinian delegation to the Washington peace talks.
>
> There were, of course, some significant differences. The most important artifacts in the Operation Scroll dispute were not artworks or treasures, but ancient Hebrew and Aramaic documents whose emotional importance was considerably greater [for Israelis] than any attachment felt by the Palestinian people to them. (1994: 27–28)

"Are the Israelis justified," he asked, "in mounting an effort to retrieve documents and artifacts of direct and demonstrable relevance to their culture and tradition—even if those artifacts lay in disputed territory? Do Palestinians, on the other hand, have a right to claim ownership of ancient Jewish artifacts, even if those artifacts are of relatively little significance to them?" (28). Or as explained by the *Jerusalem Post* reporter, Abraham Rabinovich, "The fact that one of the main objects of the operation is to uncover remains of the extensive Jewish presence in the Judean desert in antiquity clearly overrides for the Israeli participants the legal niceties raised by the objectors" ("Uncovering a priceless national heritage," *Jerusalem Post,* 26 November 1993). As summed up in a *Ma'ariv* article entitled "Le-mi ha-Aretz?" (Whose land [is it]?): "The Antiquity Authority's operation is [according to Aharon Kempinski] a last minute attempt to rob the Palestinians of historical treasures. . . . Indeed, what could be more Palestinian than the Hidden Scrolls" (Yoseph Lapid, 17 November 1993)? In other words, from this *nationalist* perspective, Jewish objects belong quite simply to the Jewish state. The colonial question is occluded.

It was on the basis of a very different demarcation of ownership and a very different perspective on the Israeli state, however, that Palestinian negotiators at the Oslo accords demanded the repatriation of captured and excavated archaeological remains. The territory in which objects were found determines rightful ownership, regardless of its religious or cultural purview (see Oyediran 1997).

Competing conceptions of rightful ownership were operating here. One perspective articulated an anticolonial politics that regarded the Israeli state as an occupying power with no legitimate national claims as heir to either the territory itself or to any of its material-cultural objects (even if as a compromise, a two-state solution must now be accepted). This anticolonial challenge, moreover, entailed rereading the history of the land (or country) as a whole, a historical reinterpretation that is fundamentally incommensurable with Zionist historical claims. As argued by one Palestinian archaeologist, while "Jewish culture" existed in Palestine during "*specific periods* . . . it would not be right to emphasize *the history of one people among the many peoples* who invaded Palestine and settled there" (quoted in Yossi Torpstein, "Bonim ʿAtid la-ʿAvar ha-Falastini," *Haʾaretz*, 21 August 1992: b7; emphasis added).[5] The second conception of rightful ownership expressed a commitment to an ethnonational identity believed to inhere in the objects themselves. That heritage conception has long been an essential component of a national grammar that reconfigured practices of colonial settlement and seizure within a language of national return. From that perspective, modern Israelis/Jews are the rightful inheritors of an ancient homeland whose own national identity is substantiated in particular archaeological sites and artifacts (even if parts of that land were now worth ceding in return for peace). In essence, this argument over Operation Scroll was just one round in a long-standing battle over the legitimacy of the Jewish state—in this instance, as seen through the prism of its rule over the occupied territories—and it was accompanied by a significant political shift.

By the late 1980s and 1990s, Palestinians, through their active resistance to the state, and Israeli critics had raised the question of Palestine in Israeli public discourse. The *settler* character of Israeli nationhood, at least as it applied to the Israeli state in the post-1967 period, was coming to the fore, and the taken-for-granted legitimacy of the Israeli state as simply one more democratic nation-state was beginning to unravel, at least for certain sectors of the Israeli-Jewish public. That unraveling, however, was but partial. Fundamental colonial commitments continued to endure.

"Commonsense assumptions about history and nationhood persisted, ones evident in the ethnonationalist conception of heritage ownership that characterized the Israeli discourse. Arguments concerning the rightful ownership of Jewish heritage are situated squarely within what Virginia Dominguez has argued to be a specifically modern historicity, one imbricated in the project of scholarly practices of "collecting." Objects are collected "as metonyms for the people who produced them" (Dominguez 1986: 548). These objects are not simply of market value, but, moreover, of historical value. They serve as vehicles for historical understanding. Particular objects emerge as emblems of heritage, a fundamental category for societies—for nations—"intent on finding legitimacy through history" (550).[6] Of course, to produce ancient objects as the heritage of the modern Jewish nation requires the assertion, or *belief in,* a connection (perhaps even a genealogical relationship) between "the people . . . who created [the] artifacts" in the first place and those whose identity they are seen to represent (Handler 1988: 193). That is a national-cultural conception that maps ethnicity onto artifacts in a manner that replicates the long-standing (Israeli) archaeological practice of equating pots and peoples. But while within an Israeli heritage discourse, certain objects seem to be quite obviously of "direct and demonstrable relevance" to Israeli-Jewish "culture and tradition" (Silberman 1994: 28), it seems much harder for Palestinians to lay claim to an ancient national heritage of their own, at least within the terms of that same discourse.[7] In contrast to (Israeli-)Jews, Palestinians seem to be neither a truly fully formed or authentic nation nor a fully modern one. In considering such arguments about the state of Palestinian nationhood, it is worth contemplating what it is that "science" signifies and what role it plays in demarcating Palestinian and Arab otherness.

What is it that is understood, by many Israeli archaeologists, to distinguish Palestinian (or Arab) historical claims from Israeli ones? In an article entitled "Religion, Ideology, and Politics and their Impact on Palestinian Archaeology," Magen Broshi, an archaeologist and former curator of the Shrine of the Book Pavilion at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, gives an account of Israeli and Arab archaeological traditions. Summing up the history of the Israeli tradition, Broshi argues that during the prestate period and up through the first generation of Israeli archaeologists the discipline "concentrated on Jewish subjects." Quoting Amos Elon, an Israeli historian who Broshi suggests "slightly exaggerat[es]" the case, but is "not much off the mark," he argues that the early decades of archaeological practice were characterized by "The patriotic archaeologist who directs his efforts to the exploration of the country's Israelite past. . . . Archaeological excavations, as opposed to the restoration of existing sites, have largely been restricted to Jewish objects" (1987: 27). According to Broshi, "The Israeli phenomenon, a nation of immigrants returning to an old-new land, for historical reasons, is without parallel. It is a nation *in the process of renewing* its acquaintance with its land. Here archaeology plays a major role. For the pioneers of the Third Aliyah, who were moved by the Beth Alpha synagogue mosaic and the giant blocks of the Third Wall [in Jerusalem], these discoveries weren't merely of scientific interest" (28; emphasis added). *As science,* however, Israeli archaeology has now matured. It has moved beyond that initial search for Jewish objects, and it has become "assiduous in studying all periods" (27). The discipline of Israeli archaeology has, in other words, progressed.

Contrast that account with Broshi's description of "Arab Ideologies and Archaeology." After clarifying that there is not much that can actually be said on the topic since "Arab archaeologists have not as yet taken their proper place in the study of archaeology on either side of the Jordan" (30),[8] he writes:

> However, we should note that there is an archaeological-historical argument that looms very high in Arab ideology and is marshaled frequently in political polemics: the assertion that almost all the peoples of the ancient Near East were Arabs. . . . Because it is important to Arabs to prove their early origins here, it is often stated in modern Arabic literature that the Hebrew tribes conquered the land from the Arabs who preceded them. To buttress their assertion they identify almost all the ethnic groups who appear in the history of the land as Arab. . . . From such genealogies it would naturally follow that the Arabs were settled in the land much before the Jews, as well as after the Arab "reconquest" in 636 C.E. Such arguments lack any scientific basis, and even in the political sphere hold no respectability. (31)

There is a striking difference in Broshi's analysis of a Jewish search for roots that characterized the early decades of Israeli archaeology and of a more recent Arab quest for early origins in the archaeological record. Jewish objects *moved* Jewish settlers who had returned to Palestine. In so arguing, Broshi asserted both that the Jewish interest in archaeology was intrinsic and that it generated genuine national emotion. By way of contrast, he portrayed the Arab quest for early origins in the archaeological record as being pure political polemic. In the former instance, the question of roots and return was understood as real and true, even if *as science* the practice of archaeology had to move beyond that search for Jewish origins and had to focus on other periods as well. In the latter instance, it was pure fabrication. In relation to Arab archaeologies, science and politics stood as distinct and, moreover, as incompatible realms of discourse and practice. In developing his argument, Broshi never challenged the underlying nationalist assumptions upon which the earlier tradition of Israeli archaeological practice was based: that in searching for an Israelite and Jewish past, archaeologists were uncovering ancient origins upon which modern nationhood would be built anew. The implications for Arab archaeology were fundamentally different, however. A simple expansion of the chronological agenda would not solve the problem of bias. That would require a more basic challenge. Arab archaeologists would have to disavow a paradigm that presupposes any genealogical and ethnic connection between Palestine's ancient tribes and its contemporary Arab inhabitants. In the words of a second archaeologist, after describing a book on her archaeological work on a Philistine site, she said, there are, of course, "the political implications" that "the Philistines are equivalents to modern Palestinians. . . . [you] have to kill that [conception] before it grows."

While by the early 1990s, virtually all archaeologists argued for the need to disentangle the goals of their professional practice from the quest for Jewish origins and objects that framed an earlier archaeological project, the fact that there is some genuine national-cultural connection between contemporary (Israeli-)Jews and such objects was not itself generally open to sustained questioning.[9] That commitment remained, for the most part, and for most practicing archaeologists, fundamental. (Although archaeologists argued, increasingly, that the archaeological past should have no bearing upon contemporary political claims). In other words, the modern Jewish/Israeli belief in ancient Israelite origins is not understood as *pure* political fabrication. It is not an ideological assertion *comparable to* Arab claims of Canaanite or other ancient tribal roots.[10] Although both origin tales, Arab and Jewish, are structurally similar as historical claims, Broshi's argument betrays a "hierarch[y] of credibility" in which "facticity" is conferred only upon the latter (Cooper and Stoler 1997: 21). And Broshi's argument was not uncommon. To demonstrate but one more instance of the fictitiousness of Arab claims to ancient tribal origins, I quote the following description of the state of Palestinian archaeology from *Haʾaretz*'s regular reporter on archaeology:

> The Palestinian search for national historical depth pushed Palestinian researchers and politicians to fashion a direct connection, *virtually impossible,* with peoples who lived in the land before its conquest by the Hebrews, on the one hand, and to deny or ignore the prominent Jewish presence in the history of the country, on the other. From this perspective, the Canaanites, the Jebusites, and yes the Adomites and the Nabateans were Arab tribes. "Herod, the king of Judea for example," maintains Juʾbeh, "was in effect Adomite-Arab." (Torpstein, *Haʾaretz,* 21 August 1992: b7; emphasis added)

Reproducing the terms of Broshi's argument regarding the scientific maturing of the Israeli discipline, the reporter then noted that things are changing in Palestinian archaeological practice. Palestinian archaeologists are pursuing a more scientific approach by maintaining that "the living inhabitants of the country are a direct continuation and product of the sum total of the cultures that existed here—Canaanite, Jewish, Islamic, and others, and hence the attachment *(ziqa)* of Palestinians to the country is not open to question" (ibid.).

A progressive dynamic is understood to inhere in the history of science and, by implication, in the development of the nation itself. One archaeologist explained that in their infancy, all archaeological traditions are nationalistic. As they "mature," they become more objective, more truly scientific. Practitioners gradually realize that the past should not be invoked to resolve contemporary political disputes. Palestinian archaeology, this archaeologist argued, is going through its nationalistic phase. Jewish archaeology has already passed through it. Then after transitioning to a discussion of the wider question of Palestinian national-historical consciousness, he noted that there used to be a complete lack of interest among Palestinians in archaeology. It was seen only as a source of income, through the selling of antiquities or illicit digs: "But they are beginning to realize that they are part of the country, [there is] a beginning of an interest in archaeology." The link between archaeology and nationhood was, for him, a significant one. Paralleling the contrasts between recognizable Jewish claims to a particular archaeological past and spurious Palestinian ones, arguments about the state of Palestinian historical consciousness demarcate colonial difference. They point to a presumed distinction between the fact of a genuine and Jewish historic nation and the character of a still incipient Palestinian one and between a modern Jewish society and a traditional Palestinian one.

On November 16, 1993, *Davar*, a Hebrew daily, published an article entitled "*Kovshey ha-ʿAvar*" (Conquerors of the past). The article was a critique of the practice of Israeli archaeology. Arguing that it had been central to the Zionist political project, the reporter interviewed a few critics of the field's politics. In particular, critics focused on the discipline's concentration on Jewish subjects at the expense of the country's other periods, which had characterized disciplinary practice during the early years of statehood. Amnon Ben-Tor, a professor of archaeology, wrote a letter to the paper in response:

> Agreed: it is true that the study of the remains of the people of Israel in its land attained a central place in the departments of archaeology throughout the country. It is true *and natural* that it would be so because, where is this going to happen—at Bir Zeit University [the most prominent Palestinian university]? Likewise, I agree with pointing the

> finger of blame at Palestinian researchers: the study of the remains of the Muslim past in the country is today in approximately the same place that was the study of the Jewish past in the country several decades ago. The difference is that the Israeli researchers did not seek scapegoats, but rather stood up and did something. I am sure that Palestinian researchers will be harnessed in the near future—and with enthusiasm—to study the remains of their past in the country. ("Arkheologiya ve-Politika," 12 December 1993; emphasis added)

Ben-Tor expressed a few commonplace assumptions regarding heritage and archaeological practice. First, he argued that it is *natural* that the field of Israeli archaeology focuses on the remains of the people of Israel (clearly no Palestinian university would do so). Taken from his perspective, archaeological practice is about digging up heritage. Archaeologists, for their part, "naturally" excavate in search of their own. Second, for Ben-Tor, the appropriate Palestinian past ("their past") is a Muslim past. It is *that* past with which they should concern themselves and for which they should dig.

Another archaeologist laid bare the very same assumptions in his response to the paper of an American colleague during the international conference "Interpreting the Past" (see chap. 8, n. 4). The American archaeologist had concluded his analysis of cultural property and heritage management in Jordan, Cyprus, and Tunisia. He pointed out that in contrast to Israeli society, there is very little popular Jordanian interest in the country's archaeological sites and discoveries. An Israeli archaeologist, someone who had participated in the excavations at Masada, offered what he saw as a rather straightforward "solution" to what he immediately defined as a "problem": "Why not dig a more recent, Muslim past," he asked? In one fell swoop he summarized his most basic assumptions about how people relate to the archaeological past. Public interest is a matter of heritage. In order to elicit the former, one has to dig up the latter. Moreover, paralleling Ben-Tor's comments quoted above, this archaeologist did not conceptualize those heritage pasts territorially (i.e., that all the periods and population groups in a given territories' history are part and parcel of a collective past). Rather, heritage was understood to be a nationally, religiously, or ethnically demarcated category, just as it had been defined within the terms of the communal politics that characterized British Mandatory rule. Specific heritages and specific identities are inherent in particular archaeological objects. Those objects are, in turn, characteristic of specific "eras." One traces one's ancestry genealogically, in relation to clearly circumscribed population groups whose religion, identity, and culture (and perhaps, biological substance) one presumably shares.

Ben-Tor was not alone in his criticism of Palestinian archaeologists and others, be they Israeli citizens or from the occupied territories. In the original *Davar* piece, scholars critical of the practice of Israeli archaeology leveled a similar critique. In the words of one archaeologist, described in the article as a specialist in the Arab-Muslim period, "The period of Israel in its land attracts more funding and publicity than the history of the Arabs." But it is also the responsibility of Arabs to look for their own past: "The lack of interest amongst Arabs in their archaeological heritage is simply disappointing." He ascribed that lack of concern to the fact that Arab society is "traditional." A second archaeologist (himself an Israeli-Palestinian) concurred. He "does not only point to the Israelis as guilty in the existing situation." He noted a lack of "consciousness" among Israeli Arabs regarding archaeology, something which he too ascribed to their traditionalism. Their disregard for archaeology—for *heritage*—was but a sign of the population's "backwardness."

In this discourse, expressing and acting upon an interest in one's archaeological past is taken to be the norm. What then *requires explanation* is the absence of such interest. What has become taken for granted is not just that one digs in search of one's past and of one's heritage, but, more fundamentally, that a noninterest in one's archaeological past signifies a *lack* of modernity (the society is too "traditional") and, as we shall see below, the absence of a commitment to, and perhaps even the existence of, "the nation," be it a Palestinian or a Jewish one. The particular manner in which the practice of modern Jewish nationhood came to articulate with archaeological practice had emerged as nationalism's "modular form" (Anderson 1991).

References to the lack of a Palestinian interest in their past were recurrent in interviews and newspapers alike. For example, one archaeologist at the Israel Antiquities Authority recounted the following incidents in order to demonstrate that Arabs were not interested in the past. In the late 1970s, the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem tried to develop a program of art classes for Arab and Jewish school children. The aim of the program was to develop an Arab "awareness" of a past "older than Salah al-Din and Mohammed." But they could not get the Arab school children to come. His interpretation? "They don't realize its importance, that it is their heritage too." (Here, of course, he defined "their heritage" far more broadly than did the archaeologists I quoted above). Shortly thereafter, this same archaeologist recounted a second story. The Antiquities Authority had organized groups of volunteers (what he described as "amateur archaeologists, mostly"—a lot of kibbutzniks) to watch out for the theft of antiquities. If they caught someone stealing from antiquities sites in any part of the country, they were to report it to the authorities. In spite of great efforts, they never succeeded in getting Arabs (in the territories) interested in launching a similar project.[11] It was like "talking to a wall."

A wider context within which such refusal to cooperate with Israeli authorities on matters of archaeology needs to be understood. In his analysis, this archaeologist completely sidestepped the political question of occupation. As an example, consider his concern with the problem of looting: It is a "real problem." "Every *fellah*" (peasant) engages in it "on weekends." He stated that the battle against looting was "a military operation," involving "intelligence" gathered by "paying people off" and then "ambushing" the looters. It is not just that such operations were quasi military in their character—and this in the context of a military occupation—that may have made Palestinians refuse to cooperate, however. The entire regulation and control over antiquities in the occupied territories were under the rubric of military power and its institutional structures: those of the so-called Civil Administration.[12]

The looting of antiquities is addressed at length in an article published in the daily *Ha᾿aretz*. Through an interview with one Palestinian archaeologist, the journalist contextualizes the fact of noncooperation within larger questions of an anticolonial politics of resistance, if only through the decision to withdraw cooperation and consent. The article explains that Palestinian archaeologists do not excavate in the territories for "political-legal reasons": "According to international law, they argue, it is forbidden to excavate in occupied territory," and the Palestinians have no interest in conferring legitimacy on Israeli archaeological activities (Torpstein, *Ha᾿aretz*, 21 August 1992: b7). But the reporter qualifies, "many Palestinians have, for many years, been doing such excavations in the territories. Most of them are villagers who find antiquities in the depths of the earth and sell them." It is said that "the plunder of antiquities" is wide in scope, based upon both the ability of villagers to identify objects of value and a network of middlemen and antiquities dealers, Israeli and Palestinian. The reporter then points out that while Nazmi Ju᾿beh (a Palestinian archaeologist and lecturer at Bir Zeit University, and a member of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks) "just like the majority of Israeli archaeologists," opposes such excavations, he is only willing to cooperate with the Israeli authorities on the matter in strictly circumscribed terms: "If the Israelis give me information about a specific place in which the robbing of antiquities is taking place, I am prepared to go there immediately in order to convince the Palestinian antiquities robbers to desist from this and to explain to them the great damage that they are causing to the historical research of their people. But, as is clear, I am not prepared to be used as a policeman or informant." (Although never argued by Juʾbeh, looting could well be analyzed as a form of resistance to the Israeli state and an archaeological project, understood by many Palestinians, to stand at the very heart of Zionist historical claims to the land. In James Scott's words, looting is perhaps a "weapon of the weak" [1985].) In his interview with Torpstein, Juʾbeh shifted the focus off the problem of Palestinian looting. He insisted on the activities and the responsibilities of the Israeli authorities and insinuated that there was another sort of theft going on. It was the responsibility of the Israeli authorities to protect "our antiquities," Juʾbeh asserted. Moreover, in the future "they must transfer all the finds that they discovered in the illegal excavations in the territories to us and *not hide them inside* Israeli museums." That is what was being demanded in the negotiations (Torpstein, *Haʾaretz,* 21 August 1992: b7; emphasis added).

This explicitly political and critical perspective was rarely proffered as an explanation in repeated questions about and commentary upon an alleged lack of Palestinian (usually "Arab") interest in their heritage. As recounted by one archaeologist, for example, an Arab antiquities dealer once handed him a handful of "Arab coins" for free. The dealer was not interested in them at all. They were bronze, after all. It is only in the silver and gold ones that the Arabs are interested. This is in marked contrast to the (monetary) value placed on "Jewish coins." Some bronze coins, he said, are worth "more than what I will make in the next five years." Another archaeologist told the following story, which took place while she was excavating at Jerusalem's Citadel, as evidence of the fact that Palestinians (synonymous here with Muslims, as is often the case) have "no concern for their history." She noted that there were very "few ancient Muslim monuments" in the city and that most of the knowledge of those early periods was from the historical records, which "you cannot always prove." So when she and her colleagues unearthed an important remain from the early-Islamic period while excavating (she did not specify what it was), she hurried off, quite excited, to share the news with her "Muslim colleagues" at the Awqaf in the Old City.

But she could not get them to come and see it. A few days later, one person finally came to visit the site. This lack of interest taught her something: "They weren't moved. It implied nothing for them. That is what I mean by culture."

While at this moment she was not sure what one should be attached to in having a culture, in an earlier point in the interview she had clearly articulated that what one needed to be connected with is one's past and one's historical roots. Those historical roots were embodied, most reliably, in material-cultural objects, which, in contrast to historical records, are incontestable proof of the past. In other words, "To 'have' a culture . . . is to be a collector," as James Clifford sums up Richard Handler's argument (Clifford 1997: 219). And to be a nation, it seems, one has to collect one's material culture. She had often asked herself, "Why don't Palestinians have a historical memory? People who want to be a people have to have a historical memory." I suggested that if there was such a lack of interest in archaeology it might not signify a disregard for their history but instead a lack of excitement about *archaeology*. There are, after all, other ways of relating to one's past and other ways of constructing or practicing nationhood; moreover, the need for roots, that which she had identified as the source of Jewish interest in archaeology, were not problematic for Palestinians. She disagreed. This disinterest was partly a function of the "culture of this area." It was a problem that stemmed from a lack of education, such that Muslim youth still "don't even know their own history." And it was partly a result of the lack of historical depth in Palestinian nationalism itself. Palestinians "don't have a historical memory" or rather, they have "a very short and a very selective one." Even if that were true, was it not also true that Zionist memory is not all that different: very long perhaps, but equally selective? She disagreed once more and pointed out that Zionist memory has "a logical sequence":

> All along historically we considered ourselves a nation. Throughout the ages, who came to Palestine? The poor and the rich. . . . But, a large part of what is called the Palestinian people are not more than five generations Palestinians. How many families were there here? In fact, if one looks at names most are Iraqi, Syrian, Kurdish families . . . *as a people with a historical feeling,* Palestinians are quite recent. . . . Jewish people are quite different. We have a *belief in the history of the Jews,* history in which culture, history, and religion are all mixed up. Our cultural and historical consciousness is related to King David, related to the Bible, also to other religious books. (emphasis added)

In her words, "Palestinians are using Zionist tools . . . [but] we have more tools to express ourselves."

She was not alone in this argument. This purported lack of Palestinian interest in archaeology was correlated over and over again with the issue of historical consciousness, a problem that seemed to lead to a far more fundamental question: What was the state of the Palestinian nation? There is, thus, a third terrain on which history and the nation converge. It is not only around framework decisions through which the past is read or with regard to the status of facts as explicated at length in previous chapters.[13] In addition, history and the nation converge in terms of the importance of historical consciousness for the existence of nationhood itself. Within this modern grammar of nationhood, being a nation means being the *subject* of history (see Prakash 1992 and Chatterjee 1993).

The above comments were considered not in order to demonstrate the attitude of various persons toward the political question of Palestinian statehood. These were individuals who would not necessarily have agreed with one another on the right solution to the question of Palestine. Rather, it is interesting to analyze what all this talk discloses with respect to far more fundamental assumptions: about a Jewish national past and thus the depth of Jewish peoplehood (that which stands, often implicitly, in contrast to Palestinian nationhood); about the terms through which the nation and its proper relationship to the past and to archaeology has come to be understood; and about the relationship of history to nationhood, writ large.

Much has been written about the importance of history to national imaginations and subjectivities. Within nationalist historiography, the nation is understood as an ontological entity believed to have existed and endured through time (cf., Anderson 1991; Brubaker 1996; Chatterjee 1993; Hobsbawm 1990; Duara 1995; Calhoun 1997). That the modern conception of the nation entails affirming historical agency is a far more specific element of that argument that is worth highlighting. It is only in "asserting . . . [one's] . . . claim to history" (Prakash 1992: 353) that the Palestinian population as an authentic or mature—a *modern*—nation can be recognized within the colonial grammar of Israeli national ideology. Palestinians, like groups marked traditional elsewhere, are cast as a "people without history" (Wolf 1982). The credibility of their claim to nationhood depends quite fundamentally on their capacity to produce a recognizable historical claim, particularly in a colonial context in which historical practice emerged as a cardinal and *self-conscious* mode of (settler-)nation making. In other words, the general struggle over the right to narrate *history* that colonized groups faced in anticolonial struggles throughout the world has distinct salience in the context of Israel and Palestine. Israeli settler nationhood, after all, displaced the colonial question onto one of national return through the production of historical facts and their attendant political claims. What becomes evident in all this talk about Palestinians, archaeology, and heritage is the manner in which the epistemic culture produced at the juncture of archaeological practice and settler nationhood has produced archaeology as the most appropriate form of historical practice, of temporal and territorial consciousness, and of nationhood itself. Archaeology's objects most credibly substantiate and signify the connection between national persons and national places. One's relationship to archaeology signals the state of one's nation and of one's commitment to it. It is from that perspective on nations and (their) histories, as embodied in scientific facts and as represented in collections of demonstrable and visible national-cultural things, that we can begin to untangle the various meanings that have saturated the battles between archaeologists and the Ultra-Orthodox over digging Jewish graves.

The Sanctity of the State of Science

The same archaeologist from the Antiquities Authority who lamented the lack of Palestinian interest in their past and the problem of looting also recounted stories about *haredi* Jewish opposition to archaeology.[14] During the conflict over the digging of Area G at the City of David, one of the most protracted conflicts between Ultra-Orthodox and archaeologists to date, the haredim "got a lot of their information from Arab workers" whom they paid, implying in both tone and words that these Jews had committed quite a transgression of national loyalty. A second incident he recounted involved an excavation on a kibbutz in the Shephellah: "There were no Arab workers on this dig." The kibbutz and the excavators had taken great caution to keep publicity away from the dig. Much to their surprise, a group of haredi Jews showed up to protest one day. The kibbutzniks were quite baffled as to how the haredim found out. It turned out that a sixteen-year-old kibbutznik had been paid 700 shekels by a haredi boy. That was "equivalent to treason for a kibbutznik to be bought off by haredim." Members of the kibbutz even discussed throwing the boy off the kibbutz, although the archaeologist did not think that ever actually came to pass.

These stories capture the way in which Ultra-Orthodox opposition to archaeological excavations, specifically, to the excavation of Jewish cemeteries and graves, is understood to violate boundaries. It violates the boundaries of a secular-labor Zionist culture (which the kibbutz epitomizes) and the boundaries of national loyalty, writ large (through the solicitation of information from Arab laborers), and, of course, it violates the resonance between the two. Since the early 1980s, Israeli newspapers have been replete with images and stories of violent confrontations between Ultra-Orthodox demonstrators, archaeologists, and the police. As summed up in the title of one *Haʾaretz* article, this is "The battle over the grave" (ha-Qrav ʿal ha-Qever, *Haʾaretz,* 8 January 1993]). It is a struggle to limit the rights of archaeologists in excavating Jewish grave sites, which, according to a strict Ultra-Orthodox interpretation of Jewish religious law, should not be disturbed. More broadly, this conflict is but one axis of a wider national-cultural and political battle over the character of modern Jewish identity and of the Israeli state.

The first major battle over the excavation of Jewish graves erupted in the streets of Jerusalem in the summer of 1981. The dig at the City of David was led by Yigal Shiloh, a professor of archaeology at Hebrew University.[15] The conflict was precipitated by a disagreement over whether or not a specific locus was the site of a Jewish cemetery. The dispute focused on Area G, a two-dunam section containing remains from the tenth century B.C.E., the same area upon which El-Ad had planned to establish a new settlement in the early 1990s (see chap. 8). According to the archaeological community, there was never a Jewish cemetery in this area of the site. The Ultra-Orthodox disagreed. Using their own *(textual)* sources of historical evidence, they maintained that the site contained a 400-year-old Jewish cemetery. Archaeological excavations needed to be stopped. The Ultra-Orthodox opposition was mobilized and led by Atra Kadisha, an organization established several years beforehand in order to prevent the violation of Jewish graves on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives and which has since continued to protest archaeological activity around the country.

Sorting out the facts of the dispute is beyond the purview of this discussion. What I want to consider are the ways in which archaeologists have articulated their opposition to Ultra-Orthodox attempts to disrupt digs. This is an opposition that was initially framed in defense of a secular Zionist state and society, but later shifted to a defense of science and academic freedom. The once fundamental and *explicit* link between archaeology and nationhood was receding, if not entirely displaced, by the time of renewed battles over grave sites that rocked Jerusalem's streets in the 1990s.

In an article published in the *Biblical Archaeology Review,* Yigal Shiloh explained what he understood to be at stake for those who fought the Ultra-Orthodox over Area G at the City of David:

> The dispute with the ultraorthodox . . . involved a larger question connected with the state of Israel itself. . . . The main reason [for standing up to them] for us—myself, my family, my colleagues, my staff, Hebrew University, and Israelis generally—was larger [than a defense of archaeology per se]. Here we have a group of very fanatic Jews who believe that Zionism is the most dangerous thing in the world, that the creation of the state of Israel is a crime . . . and they're trying to do everything they can to destroy it. . . . *They want to determine what it means to be an Israeli and what kind of a country Israel is to be.* Is it to be a theocratic state or a state of law? This was the main dispute. (quoted in Shanks 1988: 39; emphasis added)

The participation of Israeli volunteers in these excavations was repeatedly represented in the press as an overtly political act, one engaged in defending the nation. As described by David Frank, the author of an article titled "Of grave concern," which appeared in the *Jerusalem Post:*

> When I decided to work at the City of David dig, I had little interest in archaeology. Scrapping in the dirt for little bits of broken pottery had always seemed to me to be a rather odd way of earning one's living.
>
> But when Dr. Yigal Shiloh . . . appealed for volunteers to help uncover the past, it was an offer I couldn't refuse. Thinking of all the Friday evenings spent with friends round the coffee table bewailing the state of the nation, I decided I was finally "as mad as hell and wasn't going to take it any more." (31 August 1981)

Shiloh, his colleagues, and many of the volunteers understood excavating as a defense of an Israeli society and polity that was committedly both nationalist and secular. They repeatedly invoked the question of loyalty or opposition to Zionism in public arguments about the Ultra-Orthodox opposition to archaeological excavations, this despite the fact that the National Religious Party (unequivocally a Zionist party) and Israel's chief ashkenazi rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, sided with Atra Kadisha in the dispute. As stated by Benjamin Mazar at a news conference called to respond to the conflict, "Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren's contention that the site was a Jewish burial ground was . . . a 'fabrication' *threatening to undermine a major national enterprise*" (quoted in Abraham Rabinovich, "Noted academics blast Goren," *Jerusalem Post,* 31 August 1981; emphasis added).

As two archaeologists told me during an interview:

> FIRST ARCHAEOLOGIST: "We have a small, marginal, extreme antisocial group that denies any view other than their own. They will exploit any opportunity to be antisocial. Their opposition is posited prior to any rationalization for it. Before the state, no one even opposed excavating tombs. It is a recent phenomenon."
>
> SECOND ARCHAEOLOGIST: "This is recent, this extreme orthodoxy is now a common occupation."
>
> FIRST ARCHAEOLOGIST: "This is a recent affair; it has nothing to do with archaeology or with bones. The latest round is about a certain Rabbi in Bnei Brak who wants his party out of the coalition and so is doing anything he can to embarrass them out of the coalition."
>
> SECOND ARCHAEOLOGIST: "Fifty years ago, there was only one small group of these groups. The Naturei Karta. As a larger social phenomenon, it has developed over the last years."[16]

Sidestepping the question of whether or not such protests are nothing more than Ultra-Orthodox communities playing party politics, these two archaeologists concurred not only that the haredi opposition represented extreme antisocial and marginal groups, but they invoked the Naturei Karta as representative of that political position: a small and clearly not representative, staunchly anti-Zionist (as distinct from non-Zionist) group, which has explicitly allied itself with the Palestine Liberation Organization against the State of Israel. Such Ultra-Orthodox protests represented, for these archaeologists, a clear violation of the boundaries of national loyalty. They signaled, even more fundamentally, a transgression of the contours of the modern secular nation and of its modalities of knowledge.

In contrast, an archaeologist who had participated in those City of David excavations offered a sympathetic reading of the conflict between the Ultra-Orthodox and the archaeological community. Today, he would be far less categorical than he had been in the early 1980s, he told me. In part that was a pragmatic decision. Given the increasing political clout of religious parties in local and national governments, archaeologists have less of a margin of maneuver today. Nonetheless, his change of mind was not only a practical decision. In the United States and Canada, he explained, there have been similar battles over bones and grave digging. Thinking about those conflicts, he began to reconsider his earlier uncompromising position. He had realized that the Ultra-Orthodox opposition represents a legitimate claim. When asked if this fight was not significantly different than the conflicts in the United States and Canada, he responded that it was really not that different at all. Even though Native American communities in North America were demanding the repatriation of human remains excavated and seized by Euro-American archaeologists, and such demands were rooted in an anticolonial critique and an indigenous postcolonial politics, if Bedouins came with the same objection, both on religious grounds and on grounds of colonization, they would be recognized. He explained, Haredim in a sense, feel "occupied by Zionists." It may be far more similar to what is going on in the United States than we would immediately assume.[17]

Undoubtedly, this archaeologist was far more critical of the practices and the often unquestioned scientific hubris of his professional community than many other archaeologists. He understood the alienation of the Ultra-Orthodox from the nation-state as being so profound that one could talk about them as being colonized. In so arguing, this archaeologist challenged a far more widespread response from secular Israelis to the increasing political clout of Ultra-Orthodox communities in general—and to their opposition to archaeology more specifically—in which the most fundamental values and commitments of the state and society are believed to be at stake. As Avishai Margalit (a professor of philosophy at Hebrew University) has written, many secular Israelis find the expanding power of the Ultra-Orthodox (increasingly through their alliance with orthodox political parties such as the National Religious Party)[18] as being just "as menacing as the . . . [conflict] . . . between Jews and Arabs" (1998: 73). He quotes one prominent Israeli artist as having said, "When you see [the Ultra-Orthodox] you understand why there was a Holocaust and why the Jews are hated" (54). The Ultra-Orthodox are often called "blacks" in Israeli society, as Margalit points out, a label purportedly referring to the black clothes that the men wear. But that label and the forms of social stratification and marginalization that it evokes have a far longer genealogy and a much deeper significance than such a simple explanation would indicate. The term was first used by secular Ashkenazi Jews to refer to their Mizrahi compatriots who supported Menachem Begin and brought the right-wing Likud Party to power in 1977: through their easternness and traditionalism (associated most widely with intolerance, violence, and religiosity), "Oriental" Jews were believed to have hijacked the state. They were, increasingly, reconfiguring its normative liberal values.[19] By the 1990s, secular Ashkenazim (joined by some secular Mizrahi compatriots) some used the name "blacks" to refer to the haredim, a population that includes *both* Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jewish communities and political parties. Like the Mizrahim before them, "The religious 'blacks' are seen to be stealing" the country (Margalit 1998: 55).

What such public discourse indexes is the extent to which specific forms of Jewish existence and identity were violently effaced—or *forgotten,* in Ernest Renan's terms—in the process of forging a unified, modern, *secular* Jewish state and polity (Renan 1996; see also Connolly 1999: 76).[20] The rise of the public presence and political power of the Ultra-Orthodox communities challenges cardinal national-cultural and political values. This is, in the words of one archaeologist, "a deep cultural battle." During the height of this confrontation, one used to see graffiti throughout Mea Sheʾarim (one Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem). It read: "Death to Archaeology," or "Drivers be careful: Pathologists and Archaeologists are hungry," a second archaeologist recounted. This is a battle to define "Who represents the true Jewish position? For them, it is disconnected with earthly things." Or in the words of a different archaeologist, the Ultra-Orthodox "don't need any objects. . . . The written letters are in the books, and the books can be carried with us. Ideas can carry; land and stones can't be carried with us"—the contrast between a diasporic and a territorialized-national consciousness starkly drawn. Although that distinction cannot capture what was really at stake *for the Ultra-Orthodox* in this ongoing battle—they are, after all, trying to seize control of the state by controlling important institutions—this archaeologist continued to cast their opposition in terms of his own dichotomization of a diasporic Jewish community versus a rooted Israeli nation. That discourse makes sense within an epistemic culture in which the practice of archaeology produced a historical attachment to *the land* of Israel, creating a new Hebrew person defined in relation to his or her connection to it. As explained by one former Jerusalem City Council member, the opposition of secular Jews to this attack on archaeology was a defense of "a value attached to the land, [a value] revealed through archaeology." For both sides of the conflict, archaeology has become a symbol of both the values and power of the secular Jew. It has become a site of contestation over *their* political and cultural power. The discipline of archaeology, and some classes of its specific sites and individual artifacts, are "boundary objects" (Star and Greisemer 1999) circulating among several communities of practice who are fighting to maintain or to reshape its meanings, uses, presence, and power in their battles over the legitimate and desirable contours of Israeli society and polity today.

The relationship of the Ultra-Orthodox to the boundaries of nationhood was revisited on the front pages of the country's newspapers in the early 1990s. At that time, the conflict was over the excavations of alleged Jewish grave sites at Mamilla and French Hill. These two sites in Jerusalem were salvage excavations carried out in order to enable building projects to proceed (the former an underground parking lot, the latter a road).[21] As announced in one newspaper headline, this was a "Mini-Intifada of Haredim with rocks" (Herb Keinon, *Jerusalem Post*, 8 January 1993). These riots erupted over five and a half years into the Palestinian uprising, and it was with that uncompromising and often violent opposition to the Israeli state that Ultra-Orthodox practices would be compared, and not by their opponents alone.

A few months after violent confrontations over the excavations of one grave site at French Hill, the Antiquities Authority carried out an operation in the middle of the night that sparked a new round of riots. The authority wanted to complete the salvage excavations of a burial cave at Mamilla, the site of a private development project. Like Operation Scroll, these Mamilla excavations had begun in secret. Over time, however, the haredi community found out about the project and assigned a guard to watch over the site. This guard's role was to prevent the Antiquity's Authority from completing the excavation and removing the human bones. The police informed the Antiquities Authority that they would make it possible for them to complete the excavations. They named Sunday night as the time, justifying their decision to provide such protection on the grounds of the security situation. (The invocation of security reasons in relation to fear of haredi Jewish opposition is but one more indication of their marginalization from mainstream Israeli society: those regulations have been used, almost exclusively, to control Palestinian citizens of the state or those Arab populations living under Israeli occupation, including the Syrians in the Golan Heights [see Jiryis 1976]). Gideon Avni, the archaeologist in charge, arrived at the site with workers at two in the morning. They completed the excavations, removed all the finds, and "quickly destroyed the cave." Eradicating the object of controversy, the grave itself, produced a fait accompli—yet another fact on the ground. Now, one reporter explained, the parking lot could be built. The building project was once again underway (see Shahar Ilan, "Mehumot ha-Ḥaredim be-Yerushalayim Nimshekhu Kol ha-Yom: Ha Mishtarah Yarta Kadurey Gumi ʿal ha-Mafginim," *Haʾaretz*, 4 January 1993: 5A).

Confrontations rocked Jerusalem for days to come. Once informed by the haredi guard, Atra Kadisha mobilized the haredi community to take to the streets. "'They are plundering the graves of our Fathers' could be heard throughout streets of Mea She᾿arim. . . . Thousands came out of their houses" (ibid.). But those protesters never made it all the way to Mamilla. Blocked by police, they threw stones and ignited trash cans at one of Jerusalem's main intersections. They impeded traffic in several parts of the city throughout much of the next day. The streets of Mea She᾿arim were impassable. Large stones and garbage were strewn throughout. By the end of the day, *Ha᾿aretz* reported, six policemen alongside an unknown number of haredi demonstrators had been injured. Rubber bullets had been used on haredi demonstrators for the first time. A vote of no-confidence was threatened in the Knesset. Yehuda Moshe Zahav, nicknamed according to the article, the "'training officer' of the Haredi community in Jerusalem" asked, "What would have happened if a Jewish boy had an eye put out?" His question invoked the very immediate presence of the intifada in Israeli society and consciousness in the early 1990s: five and a half years into the Palestinian uprising, rubber bullets and live ammunition were being used as a matter of course on Palestinian protesters (often boys). The moral contrast between shooting a Jewish versus an Arab child rang out loud and clear in his question. Zahav then warned: "If the antiquities authority continues to desecrate Jewish graves, five years of the intifada will be dwarfed in comparison to what will happen in Jerusalem from the point of view of the Haredim. What has happened so far, this is just the beginning" (quoted in Ilan, *Ha᾿aretz*, 4 January 1993: 5A). Or, as reported in the *Jerusalem Post*, "A haredi youth running from the police on Rehov [road] Mea Shea᾿rim on Sunday shouted *'intifada y̓ahud'* [Jewish intifada in grammatically incorrect Arabic] at two Arab laborers watching the rioting." This is a community, the reporter explained, "that prides itself on insularity," one that has successfully kept out "the likes of Spinoza, Herzl, the Rolling Stones and drug abuse. But, as the youth said, this week a decidedly outside influence—the intifada—seeped in. And it was ugly" (Herb Keinon, "High Court extends French Hill injunction," 15 January 1993).[22]

There were conflicting opinions regarding the identity of the burial site. Was it or was it not a Jewish grave? According to archaeologists, these were, *unequivocally*, Christian bones. As explained by Gideon Avni:

> It all begins, it seems when the Persians conquered Jerusalem in the year 614 C.E. Different sources, most of them Christian, teach that the Persians slaughtered thousands of the Christian residents of Jerusalem, and that the Jews helped them in that. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. Who knows. Gideon Avni . . . told me this week about one man . . .

> like the men of Atra Kadisha today, this man worked to collect the bones of the victims of the slaughter and to bury them. Several thousand of them . . . were buried in the cave that was said to be located next to the pool of Mamilla. Avni believes that this is the cave that was found. ("ha-Qrav ʿal ha-Qever," *Haʾaretz*, 8 January 1993: b7)

That conclusion was reached by dating material evidence excavated within the cave to the Byzantine period: glass, pottery, and coins. But the haredi community had its own interpretation of the matter. Rabbi David Schmidl, a member of Atra Kadisha's management committee, told the same reporter that this could well be a Jewish cemetery. First of all, it is well known that there are many Jewish cemeteries in the region. In addition, "The Christian finds found in that cave could have come also from Jewish burial caves." Schmidl challenged the evidentiary logic that was being used to ascribe ethnicity and religion to human remains. In sum, if pots equal peoples, then pots found with people are a reliable basis for establishing their ethnoreligious identification. In contrast, he maintained that "The Christian coins are not proof of the identity of the dead: in Switzerland . . . today they use coins that have crosses on them, the Jews of Switzerland use those coins as well. Perhaps then—the dead buried in Mamilla were 'Jews who used Christian coins.'" The Atra Kadisha, according to Schmidl, "works with regard to this matter as does a court of law: They demand that archaeologists convince them beyond a reasonable doubt" (ibid.). He insisted that reasonable doubt certainly still existed.[23] At the end of a very violent week, one *Haʾaretz* article questioned whether or not it really was worth it. This left-of-center newspaper that represents Israel's Ashkenazi secular elite advocated a more conciliatory stance: "The destruction of the cave was done at night, in a secret project, like a military one, that brought to Jerusalem what the expulsion of Hamas members brought to Israel: the wrath of God":

> There was something terroristic in the project this week that brought the destruction of the burial cave in Mamilla. In the two years that have passed since its discovery there was enough time to think about engineering alternatives that would have made its preservation possible. There is something very arbitrary and very arrogant in the assumption that building projects or archaeological excavations take precedence over people's religious sentiments in all circumstances. . . . I would have planted green grass on them. (Ibid.)[24]

As other journalists forewarned, the "Mamilla skirmish" was but "a warm-up for the main event on French Hill." French Hill was the site of "indisputably intact graves from the Second Temple Period and clearly

Jewish" that had gotten in the way of a road construction project (Abraham Rabinovich, "City of the dead grips the living," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 January 1993). And the battle over the French Hill graves was not to be confined to Jerusalem's streets. Parties to the conflict appealed to the High Court to rule on jurisdiction over those sites. That legal dispute was, moreover, not limited to a conflict between archaeologists (joined by residents of Pisgat Zeʾev, the Jerusalem Municipality, and private developers whose construction projects were being held up), on the one hand, and the Ultra-Orthodox, on the other. It extended to a fight within the archaeological camp. The chairs of the country's four university-based archaeology departments sued the Antiquities Authority over Amir Drori's decision to hand over ossuaries, along with the bones found within them, to the religious authorities for reburial. Are these graves and the objects found within them archaeological or sacred sites and objects? Who is it who has rightful jurisdiction over them?[25]

What was perhaps most significant about the battle over the graves at French Hill was that it extended from bones to ossuaries for the first time. The archaeological community had, by and large, come to accept some limitations on their access to Jewish bones. They had come to accept, if only out of a pragmatic compromise, that given the religious salience of human bones, they may need to be ceded to the state's religious authorities. Ossuaries, however, are *material-cultural artifacts.* They are unequivocally "archaeology's objects." They must be legally protected if the work of this historical science is to proceed. This was not a dispute that could be resolved with reference to the "identity" of the objects themselves, however. In other words, even if one were to accept that only "the people who created artifacts, or the people whose 'identity' they represent, can place them in a proper context" (Handler 1988: 193), the Jewishness of these artifacts, and the distinct connection they have to contemporary Jews, is not what was up for grabs. In that regard, Ultra-Orthodox and archaeological frameworks as they play out in this ongoing battle over graves are entirely compatible. It is with respect to the legal-scientific category of "artifacts" that the incompatibilities, and more fundamentally, the incommensurabilities, emerge. In the words of a rabbi and member of the Knesset for the United Torah Judaism Party, "The body is the cover for the soul. . . . And as the soul is holy so is the body. For us, the boxes are like a part of the body" (quoted in Clyde Haberman, "Jerusalem Journal," *New York Times*, 30 January 1992).

Upon discovering ossuaries within one grave site at French Hill in the fall of 1992, Atra Kadisha and the chief rabbinate insisted that turning over the bones alone would not be enough: "The Chief Rabbis said it was against Halacha to take the bones out of their receptacles" (Herb Keinon, "Ancient bones are reburied after settlement in week-long dispute," *Jerusalem Post*, 22 November 1992). As a gesture to calm the situation, the Antiquities Authority handed those ossuaries over to a burial society (Watzman 1993). Subsequently, the ossuaries "containing 2,000 year old bones" were buried "in a ceremony full of religious significance for the estimated 150 haredim who took part."[26] For archaeologists, reburying those ossuaries, with the human remains inside, epitomized the dangers to science of the ever-increasing political clout of the Ultra-Orthodox: "Many people feel that if you give up the ossuaries today, why not some other item tomorrow?" (Haberman, *New York Times*, 30 January 1992). Those sarcophagi had inscriptions on them, the archaeologist continued. They "were needed for study." It was the importance of these objects for science, and no longer for the nation, that framed this renewed archaeological resistance to Ultra-Orthodox political power. As stated by another, "If we were to avoid excavating grave sites, all the archaeological work in the country would come to a halt" (Watzman 1993: 33).

In practice, the fear of archaeological activity coming to a halt—of a specific excavation getting embroiled in a conflict with the Ultra-Orthodox—has effectively circumscribed what many archaeologists are willing to excavate. Archaeology's domain, in other words, is being increasingly reined in. The disruption of excavations by Ultra-Orthodox demonstrators happens virtually every year. As a consequence "researchers sometimes refrain from excavating an ancient cemetery out of fear that the resulting controversy will delay work on an entire site" (Watzman 1993: A32). Given the increasing power of religious Jews, brashly violating their sensitivities is no longer a political option. But reaching such a pragmatics of coexistence, whether by avoiding excavating grave sites or, if necessary, hiding the evidence of human remains even when they are considered clearly non-Jewish (as was done on one excavation in which I participated), was not to be tolerated if that peace was to be achieved at the expense of handing over more than human remains. In the names of the chairmen of the country's four university-based archaeology programs, a suit was filed against the Antiquities Authority "charging its director with illegally handing over archaeological finds to one of the city's burial societies" (Watzman 1993: 33).

The High Court ruled on the dispute over the French Hill graves. It upheld the legal distinction between sacred and historical objects, reproducing the mandate-era distinction between "living" and "dead" monuments (see chap. 3). According to the High Court judges, the site at French Hill was an "antiquity site." It was *not used* for "religious purposes." As such, it could not be considered "a sacred site" as the representatives of the Atra Kadisha Society and their copetitioners had argued. The authority and discretion regarding the burial caves hampering road work at French Hill was given to Amir Drori. Nevertheless, the court was not quite as unequivocal in its ruling as its strictly legal interpretations would suggest. The judges were concerned that the violent confrontations rocking Jerusalem's streets be resolved. Thus, they asked Drori to reconsider whether or not to continue excavating these caves—especially the four (out of five) burial caves that remained "undisturbed." These were salvage excavations tied to the building of Route 1 (a road that today extends from the heart of Jerusalem out to the Jewish settlements in the northern West Bank). Members of a special Ministerial Committee, which had convened to find a solution to the conflict, had already developed proposals for alternative routings of that road, which circumvented the four still-intact burial caves. The court ordered that, pending Drori's decision regarding the proposed compromise route, "the [four intact] burial caves will not be destroyed and no ossuaries found in them will be removed, if ossuaries are found in them'" (D. Shehori, "Ha-Atar ba-Givaʾa ha-Tsarfatit: Atar ʿAtiqot she-Eino Qadosh," *Haʾaretz*, 28 January 1993). In other words, while the court was clear in its *legal* demarcation of these sites as "antiquities," *politically,* the judges called upon Drori to seek some compromise in this battle over graves. With Benjamin Netanyahu's electoral victory, the political power of the Ultra-Orthodox was only to increase, thus continuing the shift in control over archaeology and its objects even more in their favor.[27]

In an effort to form his ruling coalition, Netanyahu promised the Ultra-Orthodox parties far more power over archaeological activity in the country than they had ever had before. That promise began to materialize in earnest in June 1998. In an effort to resolve a coalition crisis, Netanyahu pledged that he would appoint a new Archaeological Council (the Antiquities Authority's management council whose job it is to supervise the authority's activities). The new council's membership would better reflect and represent Ultra-Orthodox views regarding the excavations of grave sites. Netanyahu also promised to replace Amir Drori. The next director would "be congenial to" the interests and positions of the Ultra- Orthodox (Yitzhaq Bar-Yosef, "ʿOvdey Reshut ha-ʿAtiqot Yafginu Neged Hishtaltut ha-Ḥaredim, *Yediʾot Aḥronot,* 30 June 1998). If implemented, he would have handed the Ultra-Orthodox parties effective control over archaeological activity in the country with those two decisions. Ultra-Orthodox demands did not end there. They also asked that the government submit a bill to the Knesset that would give a newly appointed Ministerial Committee the power of "religious supervision" over any excavation in the country (Ilan and Sheri, "Prime minister to fire dig boss," *Haʾaretz*, English ed., 29 June 1998; see also Shalom Yerushalmi, "Rotzim et ha-Rosh," *Maʾariv,* 29 June 1998). In the words of Haggai Merom, the chairman of the archaeology lobby in the Knesset, "We are talking about a liquidation sale of Israeli archaeology. . . . If the conditions of the ultraorthodox are met . . . it will spell the end of archaeology in this country'" (Ilan and Sheri, *Haʾaretz,* 29 June 1998; see also Yerushalmi, *Maʾariv,* 29 June 1998). As reported by one journalist on the following day, "In the Antiquities Authority they refuse to believe that this indeed will happen. The Antiquities Council is a scientific council that brings together the best researchers in the country. 'Now come the haredim and demand to appoint people of science on the basis of political criteria'" (Yerushalmi, *Maʾariv,* 29 June 1998). Amir Drori, for his part, wondered what kinds of experts would indeed be appointed to the council. People from burial societies, experts in Christian tradition? Muslim graves? And, he asked, "How are politicians going to reach scientific decisions?" (ibid.).

This ongoing battle over the grave—over human remains and, increasingly, over the objects found with those remains and the very grave site itself—is very much a dispute over ownership. It is a dispute over ownership in a literal sense: Who should have control over particular sites and objects, the Antiquities Authority or the Ministry of Religious Affairs? It is also a dispute over ownership in a figurative sense: How should one "relate to" such sites and objects? Are these graves, human bones, and ossuaries objects of science, *or* are they sacred places and remains? While the archaeological community is fighting hard to prevent Ultra-Orthodox control over archaeological artifacts and over the practices of science, the Ultra-Orthodox are battling to have particular archaeological sites and artifacts (and no longer just human remains) subject to "religious supervision" [Ilan and Sheri, *Haʾaretz,* 29 June 1998]). As understood by one journalist, compromise between the two sides is seeming less and less likely. The conflict has taken a "direction that will not make an agreement between religion and science possible" (Yerushalmi, *Maʾariv,* 29 June 1998). Betraying his own secular commitments, Yerushalmi understands science and religion to be fundamentally at odds.

Drawing a stark distinction between religion, on the one hand, and science, on the other, does not accurately convey the shifting terms of this ongoing battle over graves. Unquestionably, Israel's liberal and mostly Ashkenazi secular elite (formerly the backbone of Labor Zionism) have become increasingly indifferent to archaeology, at least as a fetishized national-cultural practice. As explained by one journalist, while during the first years of statehood, archaeology occupied a "special place in the young Hebrew culture," over the years, it has descended from its position as a "national hobby" to become "*just another science.*" Most secular types no longer care, the journalist continues. The Israeli state has been "normalized," something Netanyahu seems not to have absorbed:

> For a long time archaeology has not been the point of our connection to the country. . . . A person does not delude himself that this or that find, dramatic as it may be in the eyes of archaeologists, will determine our final border with the Palestinians. With regard to the question of our right to the country—we are here, no? The approximately 800,000 immigrants who came to Israel in the last decade did not rush to the archaeology departments in order to clarify if in fact they had the right to live here with us. The answer was already given. And for the majority of the sons of the country *(bnei ha-Aretz)* that is understood at least as well as it is understood by the immigrants. (G. Hareven, Mi Mefaḥed me-Arkheologiya, *Maʾariv,* weekend supplement, 26 July 1998: 26)

While clearly no longer a national hobby in the way that it was during the early decades of statehood, the salience of archaeology in Israeli society had not been entirely lost by the 1990s. Values other than a defense of the nation were increasingly understood to be at stake in a defense of the discipline. Moreover, different social groups, members of the national-religious movement along with their secular settler allies, had begun to harness archaeology and archaeological sites for their own aims.

In an article published in *Maʾariv,* a journalist warned the Ultra-Orthodox that they failed to realize that "a long time ago they crossed the border of good taste, *and not just in the eyes of secularists* . . . but in fact, in the eyes of groups for whom Judaism is not a bad word" (Ben-Dror Yemini, "Horssim ʿod Ḥelqa Tova," 1 July 1998; emphasis added). "Archaeology," he continues, "provides us with the connection between nation and country more than does any other field. These excavations that incited the wrath of haredim, they are still the most important historical document that connects [*meḥaber*] the ancient people of Israel with the Land of Israel." There is a shift in the alliances and various interests invested in archaeology, as Yemini's article suggests. In June 1998, for example, the archaeological lobby in the Knesset included representatives from the Labor Party, Meretz (generally considered Israel's "civil rights" party, supportive of the peace process and avowedly secular), alongside a representative from Moledet (a radical, settler party). This is perhaps a rather unholy alliance. Each party's investment in archaeology falls along a spectrum that ranges from a radical commitment to settler nationhood (Moledet) to a radical commitment to secularism (Meretz). Whether as an object to defend or as one to contest, archaeology continues to be a powerful symbol in Israeli society. The discipline of archaeology is perhaps not quite as "normalized," or, irrelevant, as the *Maʾariv* journalist would like to suggest.

Salvaging Science and Secularism

There were significant differences between the nature of public debates regarding archaeology and Ultra-Orthodox opposition in the more recent protests over graves—those beginning with French Hill in 1992 and continuing in 1998 with Netanyahu's latest promise—than in earlier confrontations over Area G at the City of David. There remain profound cultural-political visions at stake here. But it is no longer clear either that secular Israeli-Jews are the only players in the struggle *for* archaeology. Nor is it clear that the most important issue, for archaeologists and their secular political allies, is archaeology's national(ist) role. As articulated by the chair of Haifa University's archaeology department, "It is Drori who is doing our work and defending the real scientific interests of the academy" (quoted in Meirav Sari, "Ḥaver ha-Knesset Merom: Netanyahu Hivtiaḥ la-Ḥaredim Lefater et Mankal Reshut ha-ʿAtiqot," *Haʾaretz,* 29 June 1998: 3b). In the words of another archaeologist, this battle is about protecting "important values and principles to us, such as *scientific freedom and the preservation of ancient artifacts*" (Bar-Yosef, *Yediʾot Aḥronot,* 30 June 1998; emphasis added).

The reavowal of Zionism and nationhood that dominated the responses of archaeologists and their allies to the conflict over Area G of the City of David during the early 1980s is strikingly absent here. In its place, a post-Zionist archaeology is being articulated, one that maintains a commitment to the principles of secularism and science. And, given the realities of Israeli politics today, those principles might best be sustained by relinquishing the nationalist frame.

Post-Zionism is a label generally used to refer to a group of Israeli intellectuals and political critics who have become disenchanted with the Zionist commitments of their elders. Quite literally the children of those

Labor Zionist elites of a generation ago, these critics have begun to rethink the history of the state and its consequences for the existing Arab population in 1948, the policies of the state toward its Palestinian citizens, and the Israel occupation of the territories since 1967. While clearly not a consensual political stance, these scholars and public figures have developed trenchant critiques of some of the central commitments and myths of Zionism and the state and society it produced (cf. Pappé 1995*a,* 1995*b;* Kimmerling 1983; Shafir and Peled 2000; Shalev 1992; Rubinstein 2000; Segev 1998; *Ha'aretz,* 19 November 1993; and Sternhele 1998; for a review of the literature, see Silberstein 1999). Most post-Zionists cannot be described as either truly postnationalist or fully anticolonial, however. They do not, in general, advocate a vision of a polity and society that would parallel that of the postapartheid South African state, for example, that is, that Jews would live as a minority in a country whose population is mostly Palestinian. Rather, as a political vision, post-Zionism can perhaps best be described as the struggle to create a more fully liberal, less ethnonational nation-state than the Israeli state has been thus far. It would be a state that would withdraw its troops, and at least some of its settlers and settlements, from the Palestinian territories to which it had allowed some form of statehood. And it would be a state that protects the civil rights of Israel's Palestinian citizens. But to understand post-Zionism only in relation to the question of Palestine is, perhaps, to misrecognize one of its most important if sometimes less explicit commitments, that is, to salvage the secularism of the state in the face of the increasing power of the Ultra-Orthodox in its public domain.

It is not just the Ultra-Orthodox who are reconfiguring politics in accordance with religious practices and beliefs. Zionism itself, and, in particular, its commitment to historic right and its practices of settlement and territorial expansion (of "making place"), has been increasingly appropriated by the settler movement. For most settlers, national and religious commitments and practices are inextricably enmeshed (see Neuman 2000). In letting go of the former, the formerly Labor Zionist elite may be better able to rescue Israeli society from the latter, possibly through an alliance with the state's Palestinian citizens whose own civil rights, these critics maintain, will better be protected in a secular state less and less committed to Jewishness as its primary and overriding criterion of political inclusion. *Post*-Zionism, in other words, may well be even more fundamentally and enduringly about secularism and the effort to rescue or, more accurately, to *create* a liberal, modern nation-state than about the question of Palestine at all. And as evidenced in the recurring and increasingly violent and acrimonious conflicts over Jewish graves, archaeology, the discipline and practice that once both epitomized and helped to shape a Labor Zionist vision of state, polity, and citizen, has become but one symbolic terrain upon which this battle for the future is being fought.

As the two disputes tracked in this chapter indicate, science—in this instance, *archaeology*—operates as a metaphor for specific national and political values and commitments. In the dispute over archaeological artifacts from the occupied territories, and in arguments regarding an alleged lack of Palestinian interest in their archaeological heritage, archaeology, *and science,* have signified both the modern nation and the forms of knowledge upon which it was built. In the eyes of its defenders, Operation Scroll was legitimate within the terms of a national-heritage discourse. Those salvage excavations ensured that the Jewish nation would "own" some of its (potentially) most cherished objects of national heritage, that is, additional Dead Sea Scrolls. Moreover, it is in the presumed absence of such knowledge or *interest* in their archaeological heritage that Palestinians are understood to be a less than fully developed nation. "To be a nation" perhaps really is "to be endowed with science," as Prakash has argued with respect to (post)colonial India (ibid.). In this instance, it is to be committed to a historical science through which the truth of nationhood is revealed.

The disagreement over the future status of archaeological remains from the (formerly) occupied territories is a dispute over the legacy of settler nationhood and the specific forms it took in Palestine and Israel. On that level, Palestinian nationalist politics and rights are incommensurable with Jewish nationalist commitments and historical beliefs. Nevertheless, if a two-state solution is ever reached, a longstanding political and scholarly dispute over whether or not Israel is most fundamentally a colonial or a national state will be set aside via some form of political and geographic separation between Israel and Palestine. The two sides may never actually have to agree on the history and meaning of Jewish settlement in Palestine as a whole. *As nationalists,* however, archaeologists and officials on both sides of this divide hold entirely compatible conceptions of history and heritage. They demarcate artifacts as objects of scientific and historical value in commensurate ways. While some "Jewish" objects are and likely will remain in dispute, Palestinian archaeologists and negotiators partake in the same historical-scientific paradigm as do "the majority of Israeli archaeologists" (Torpstein, *Haʾaretz,* 21 August 1992: b7), as demonstrated by their shared disapproval of looting.

The battle over the graves is a dispute over the character of modern Jewish identity and the contemporary Israeli state, and it may well prove intractable. Once again, science *stands for* something in this ongoing confrontation. More accurately, archaeology and the specific objects of dispute signify a series of shifting and contested values and commitments concerning Jewishness, nationhood, secularism, and modernity. All is not cohesive within the Israeli-Jewish polity. The Ultra-Orthodox, long alienated and marginalized by the Jewish majority, are gaining political power, and they are using their political clout to unsettle some of the key elements in a long, relatively stable social and political frame. Handing over ossuaries for burial and giving Ultra-Orthodox religious authorities the right of control over scientific research represents a very fundamental challenge to the kind of state and polity that Zionists of a variety of political persuasions struggled to build. Moreover, if archaeologists are deprived of access to their objects of knowledge, the scientific work of historical reconstruction will become impossible. Archaeological practice requires that ancient remains be recognized as objects of science, empirical evidence through which past societies can be known. The Ultra-Orthodox are demanding that archaeology's objects be allowed to circulate entirely outside the realm of scientific practice, a demand that is incommensurable with the epistemological commitments and epistemic culture upon which archaeological practice depends.

As James Clifford has rightly noted, museums can become "lending libraries," loaning "art and culture" to local museums, community centers, or even for "current ritual life" beyond their walls. But can they really "allow art to travel in and out of the 'world of museums'" altogether? Can they permit the repatriation of particular properties to communities who do not share the same commitment to "conservation"? "Shudders were surely felt by many museum professionals over the recent repatriations of Zuni war god figures, *Ahauutas*, which are now rotting on secret mesa tops, completing their interrupted traditional life journey" (Clifford 1997: 212).

It is precisely such a move that the Ultra-Orthodox community, through street battles, party politics, and legal judgments, is demanding. It is a struggle to redefine artifacts as something else, that is, as sacred remains no longer subject to excavation, no longer the alphabet in a material-historical text to be deciphered and read. In that move, a fundamental component of archaeology's epistemological architecture and institutional possibility is being undermined. Less and less are these objects recognized as dead monuments, rightfully subject to archaeological tampering alone. They are, moreover, no longer understood as objects of heritage, building blocks of a contemporary national culture that can be collected, classified, and displayed (see Handler 1988), and through which the nation's history can be revealed as factual and demonstrable and made visible to the naked eye. Through this battle over the grave, artifacts and human remains have increasingly emerged as remainders with ongoing sacred life histories of their own, ones that demand to be protected from the practices and institutions of the science of archaeology. Insofar as this battle over archaeology is but one terrain of a much larger battle *for* the state itself and its forms of knowledge and of power, far more is at stake here than the future status of archaeology as a scientific discipline. The discipline has emerged as a "salient object" (Daston 2000) of political cultural scrutiny. Fighting over archaeology is part and parcel of a battle over the very manner in which state, polity, society, and territory will be configured in the decades to come.