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Establishing Scientific Authority –
Citizenship and Israel's First Census

Introduction

In 1948, the newly-established Jewish state was at war with both the local Arab population of Palestine – the Palestinians – and the neighboring Arab countries. It was a year marked by demographic upheaval: while the Jewish community in Palestine comprised less than a third of the total population toward the end of the British Mandate, beginning in December 1947, many Palestinians either fled or were driven from their homes, leaving the country with a Jewish majority – some 85% of the total population. Yet while this numeric balance was considered one of the achievements of the war, the military and political leadership of the new state feared that Palestinians who had fled to the surrounding countries might return to Israeli territory, reversing the demographic trend. Despite international pressure to repatriate a large number of refugees, Israel was determined to prevent the Palestinian returnees from reoccupying their former homes and lands. To this end, the government took several steps under the banner of a »war on infiltration,« including razing some of the Arab villages that had been abandoned since the war, while quickly moving to resettle Jewish immigrants on the sites of others. Based on the Emergency Regulations formulated in 1945 by the British Mandate, a Military Government was founded to control the Palestinians who had remained in Israel and restrict their movements within the country.¹

Demography and population management have been central concerns of Israel's leaders since 1948. One of the dominant institutions established in 1948 to assist leaders in their demographic and administrative decisions was the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), which, although it had an active role in nation-building and state-formation processes, is absent in the social and historical studies of that period. In addition to the CBS, a temporary policymaking body (»A Committee Alongside the Military Government«) was nominated to combat the phenomenon of infiltration of Palestinians from outside Israel's borders, as Shira Robinson describes in her recent study.² One of its roles was to plan and conduct a census of the local Palestinian population through which a clear line could be drawn between the re-

1 Palestinians who became Israeli citizens are also widely referred to as »Israeli Arabs.«

2 Shira Robinson, *Occupied Citizens in a Liberal State: Palestinians under Military Rule and the Colonial Formation of Israeli Society, 1948-1966*, Ph.D. thesis in History, Stanford 2005. According to her abstract, Robinson's dissertation explores

maining Palestinians and the illegal returnees, enabling the government to determine who was and who was not entitled to citizenship.³ The CBS, however, had already begun to plan its first major undertaking – a census and establishment of a population registry of all those living within the borders of the new Jewish state. Later, this registry would become the basis upon which Israeli citizenship was first granted.

At the core of this paper are the negotiations between the two bodies – the CBS and the Committee – regarding the question of whether to hold a separate census for the Military Government, and, if so, under what terms. The CBS statisticians wanted to count the population using one questionnaire for all the residents, without regard to national, religious or ethnic group. The Committee's members were interested in the populations of particular geographic areas, and wanted to ask questions about Palestinians' property and relatives who had returned to their villages since the initial wave of flight in late 1947-early 1948. The negotiations between the sides reflected two diverging sets of interests and commitments; while the CBS' foremost statisticians were academic figures, the Committee members were political figures from various ministries. The statisticians' primary allegiance was to the statistical discipline and rationalization of the state. The politicians were committed to practices related to state security and surveillance of hostile populations. Yet upon examining the peculiar way in which the census was conducted, it becomes clear that the statisticians' position gradually eroded, and the two groups grew closer. Though statisticians were professionally in conflict with the politicians and their representatives, they ultimately found a way of satisfying the politicians' needs in a more universal form.

One of the main characteristics of the first census in Israel, carried out in November 1948, was that it was conducted jointly with a full registration of the population.⁴ Each resident was assigned a sequential ID number, which represented the resident in all of his/her institutional encounters. Counting residents, in that census, meant including them in the citizenry: practically, by issuing an identity card and number, which would function as a certificate for voting and getting food rations distributed at that time; and formally, by

Israel's military rule over the small Palestinian population who remained in, or returned to, the nascent state following the displacement that occurred during the 1948 War. It identifies the legal categories, types of knowledge, and methods of control that were developed in order to clarify the meaning of Arab citizenship in a self-defined Jewish state whose own national culture was still evolving. Her analysis suggests that the period of military rule over the Arab population, which continued until 1966 and thus formed the bridge between the pre-1948 and post-1967 periods, was not an exceptional institution in the process of state formation, but rather one of its integral parts.

3 Ibid., 10f.

4 In the transition from the voluntary institutional system of the Jewish community in Palestine to the formal bureaucracy of the new state, a full registration was a means of applying the sovereignty of the new state over its residents.

affording civil rights. These uses of the census were possible only because it was conducted through an exhaustive enumeration of the population and under a seven-hour curfew, as proposed by the CBS. The idea was to take a snapshot of the population at a particular moment and to grant civil rights only to those who were present during the curfew. In spite of the fact that the CBS stated on different occasions that the census and registration would include all of Israel's residents present in their homes, several non-Jewish groups were not counted – the entire Bedouin population, as well as several geographic areas populated by Palestinians. Since the government conditioned the granting of ID cards and numbers on participation in the census, those who were not counted during the seven-hour curfew lost their right to Israeli citizenship. While, as we shall see, not all Palestinians who were counted ultimately received Israeli citizenship, those who were not counted had no chance of receiving it. Consequently, the population was roughly divided into two groups – people who had property and voting rights (mostly the Jewish population) and people who did not have these rights (most of the Palestinians).⁵ The census was a major mechanism through which the naturalization of Palestinians was carried out, and its statistical categories legalized and institutionalized the appropriation of Palestinian lands in 1948.

The CBS: Practicing science, administrating the state

This paper focuses on the statisticians' role in the naturalization of Palestinians and their position with regard to the »counted« and »uncounted« Arab residents of the new state. The basic assumption guiding this essay is that the CBS is not only a state institution, but also a scientific institution, whose knowledge – i.e., its set of political, economic and demographic categories and classifications – forms the epistemological basis of the nation, both within its national boundaries and beyond them. The history of the development of this organization lends credence to this claim: In the years following its establishment, the CBS enjoyed a growing degree of prestige among different sectors of the Israeli public, such as universities, industry, economic institutions, politicians and government agencies; its statistical measurements and classifications were rarely disputed. Furthermore, the CBS' foremost statistician, Prof. Roberto Bachi, had established the first two statistics-related departments at the Hebrew University. Finally, the Bureau's statisticians belonged to various academic and scientific societies, and published articles in academic journals of statistics.

The CBS' establishment in August 1948 was followed by a transformation of national statistics from a fragmented array of statistical departments of

5 A more detailed discussion of the first census and its context can be found in: Anat Leibler/Daniel Breslau, *The Uncounted: Citizenship and Exclusion in the Israeli Census of 1948*, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28/5 (2005).

various pre-state institutions to a centralized office. Bachi and Dr. Pinhas Hamburger were selected to head up the system of Israeli national statistics; as former statisticians under the British Mandate with no affiliation with the Labor Settlement Movement (LSM), their nomination was contrary to the demands of LSM members to dominate the new bureaucracy and exert their influence on national statistics.⁶ The perception among the Zionist organizations was that statistics should serve as a means to political ends. The use of statistics by political organizations during the period prior to the establishment of the state led to a general distrust of statistical figures among the Jewish and Palestinian populations. The establishment of a centralized system served as both a rejection of these demands and a reaction to this instrumental view of statistics. Israeli statisticians took a number of steps to expand their monopoly over the means of statistical production; one of these steps was to separate the CBS from all other government offices, making it directly answerable to the Prime Minister.⁷

Preliminary discussions on Israel's first census commenced in January 1948; the census was scheduled for November 1948, simultaneously with a full registration of the population. In the transition from a system of voluntary institutions to the formal bureaucracy of a new state, a full registration was also a means of applying the sovereignty of the new state over its residents. Each resident was to be issued an identification number, which would represent the resident in all of his or her institutional encounters. Residents counted in the census would become part of Israel's citizenry, both practically, since an identification card and number enabled the bearer to vote and obtain food rations, and formally, in terms of civil rights. These uses of the census could be made possible only by an exhaustive enumeration of the population, which, at the behest of Bachi, was to be conducted under a seven-hour curfew. The goal was to capture the state of the population at a particular moment and grant civil rights only to those who had been present at that moment.

The CBS conducted a public campaign to urge residents to cooperate with the surveyors, while explaining the census' importance to government offices, both before and after the census. The CBS also decided on the details concerning identification cards which would later be distributed, as well as the questions that would appear in the census questionnaire. Yet although it is clear that the CBS, headed by Bachi, was widely respected among its audi-

6 On the objection to Bachi's selection, see: Israel State Archives (ISA): rg 41/112/12 February 1948; rg 41/117/37 March 1948. For a general review of the statist ideology of those days, led by the first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, see: Peter Medding, *The Founding of Israeli Democracy, 1948-1967*, New York and Oxford 1990, 134 f., 173; Natan Yanay, Ben-Gurion's Statist Perception, in: *Kathedra* 45 (1987), 169-189 [Hebrew].

7 Central Zionist Archives (CZA) S25/9686, January 1948, 7-8, 16; ISA: rg 43/5458/29; rg 43/5458/29; rg 43/5459/2; rg 94/3562/4.

ences, and was seen as the architect of the census,⁸ as we shall see, the members of the »Committee Alongside the Military Government« failed to acknowledge the CBS' role as the exclusive bastion of national statistics.

An analysis of the process by which Bachi became a major player may serve to shed light on the intimate relationship between those who belong to the political sphere and those who belong to the professional and scientific sphere, as seen through Bachi's interaction with the Committee. It may enable us to see the negotiations between the two groups, as well as the practices employed by statisticians to gain legitimacy as the authoritative group for all matters statistical. This aspiration to professional exclusivity, as this author has described elsewhere,⁹ was comprehensive, and affected other statistical departments that had existed before the establishment of the state, as well as all government offices.

The Committee: »You must know your stock«¹⁰

The armed conflict between the military forces of the Jewish community and various Palestinian forces, which broke out even before the British had left the area, was the driving force behind the shift in the demographic balance in Palestine. In the course of this conflict, Israel occupied territories beyond those accorded to it by the UN Resolution calling for the partition of Palestine. Benny Morris divides the expulsion of the Palestinians into four »waves,« noting that in the first wave, which took place in early 1948, Palestinians fled their homes not due to a premeditated decision, but as a result of sporadic battles between Palestinians and the Haganah, the major military wing of the *Yishuv*.¹¹ In the second wave, between April and June of the same year, the vast majority of Palestinians were driven out of the country as a result of Plan D, an »active defense« operation of the Haganah.¹² Although Plan D was not part of a plan to change the demographic balance of the State of Israel, it included a clear and explicit order to expel Palestinians from their villages.¹³ In the fall of that year, it was already clear to the leaders of the new state that a

8 The statistical community held Bachi in high regard, both as a demographer and an officer of the state. His statistical enterprise was deeply rooted in Zionist thought, and his national and scientific contributions have remained solid and influential to this day.

9 For a detailed account of the establishment of the CBS and the consolidation of the first statisticians as a professional group, see: Anat Leibler, *Statisticians' Reason: Governmentality, Modernity, National Legibility*, in: *Israel Studies Journal* 9/2 (2004), 121-149.

10 Y. Danin to the Military Government representative, General Avner, August 29, 1948, ISA:HZ 2564/11. See also: Robinson, *Occupied Citizens* (fn.2), 50.

11 Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, Cambridge 1987, 54 f.

12 *Ibid.*, 17, 92 f.

13 See *ibid.*, 273-277.

Jewish majority had been reached in all of the areas controlled by Israel and that the »demographic problem« – the prospect of a large and partially-hostile Palestinian minority interspersed among the main centers of the Jewish population – had been solved.

The Committee Alongside the Military Government was to address concerns about a possible demographic reversal. It included the head of the Military Government, the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab Affairs, representatives from the Middle East Division of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The Committee's members sought Palestinian demographic information and an accurate picture of the location of every Palestinian, making their freedom of movement within Israel contingent upon the collection of such information. This was expressed very clearly in a protocol of the Committee's first meeting. In this meeting, A. Danin, of the Middle East Division of the Foreign Ministry, voiced concern over the situation in Nazareth and its adjacent neighborhoods in the wake of infiltration of refugees and displaced Palestinians. His office objected to Palestinian freedom of movement, to prevent them from establishing any demographic facts on the ground before the office could present a coherent demographic policy. He argued:

»It is necessary to count all the refugees and displaced people by conducting a specific census, identifying [each Arab] and obtaining details on their property. The census needs to be clear and detailed, so we can get an accurate picture about [the Arabs'] condition; then we will know how many families were separated and what property they owned. Only after conducting this job will we be able to think of a system to allow these people to move [within the borders of Israel].«¹⁴

Y. Shim'oni, an official from the same division, added that the census was necessary both in the struggle against infiltration and in order to identify Israel's Arab residents. He also referred to the question of Palestinian property, arguing that the census would solve this problem. »It is very common in world,« he stressed, »that during a census, the population's movement is frozen; this is even more important in this special case [...]« Therefore, he maintained, »[...] we emphasized that movement within the territory of the state would be allowed only after the census was carried out.«¹⁵ Interestingly, the idea suggested by Shim'oni – a census under curfew – was similar to the one raised by Bachi in a meeting with the Interior Minister. Yet unlike Bachi, Shim'oni wanted to restrict Palestinians' movements not only for

14 ISA: HZ 2564/11, August 29, 1948 - First meeting of the Committee Alongside the Military Government [Hebrew]. This and all other Hebrew-language archival sources quoted in English are the author's translation.

15 Ibid. [Hebrew].

seven hours, but for a longer period; curfews became the most common method of controlling Palestinians in the first decade of the state.¹⁶

The question of the use of a census to identify Palestinian residents was raised by several participants in the Committee's meetings, and was of unique significance. The Committee's members needed specific information about the number of Palestinians living in particular areas, i.e., in Israeli territory and in the territories occupied by Israel's military, which would come to form the borders of the state. They also wanted to know these Palestinians' status – how many Palestinians had infiltrated the borders of Israel, and how many of those who had done so had returned to their original homes. Lastly, they wanted to know which Palestinians had owned land.

Yet while the CBS' plan to conduct a census had been discussed as early as January of that year, the Committee envisioned a separate census, to be carried out before the general census, which was then still tentatively scheduled for September 15. The Committee's members did not feel that the planning of the census and its questionnaire was the role of CBS, since they viewed the census as an immediate answer to the unique need for surveillance of populations.¹⁷ They believed that they could conduct the census quickly, and that officials at the Foreign Ministry and Minority Affairs Ministry could compile the questionnaire themselves. The Committee also suggested employing people whose task was to register and nationalize Palestinian lands and properties within the borders of Israel after the Palestinians' exodus to conduct the census.¹⁸ These people, of course, were not statisticians or officers trained in conducting surveys; they specialized in administrating the actual expropriation of the Palestinians' lands and assets.

By viewing the members of the Committee as representatives of the political sphere and the statisticians as representatives of science, or at least as the technocrats of the new government, one encounters a rather instrumental perception of the role of censuses as an immediate answer to the perceived need for national security and oversight of minorities. According to this division, the purpose of censuses and the interests of the Committee coincided; if statisticians' main reasoning in their first documents was determined by what they called »the needs of statistics,«¹⁹ the Committee's inter-

16 See: Peter Medding, *The Founding of the Israeli Democracy, 1948-1967*, New York 1990, 25; Ian Lustick, *Arab in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority*, Austin, TX 1980; Uzi Benziman/Attalah Mansour, *Israeli Arabs, Their Status, and State Policy Toward Them*, Jerusalem 1992, 103-114.

17 August 29, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/11.

18 This consisted of representatives of the Jewish National Fund, the Settlement Office, and the Land Registry (»Tabu«), which was in charge of registering Palestinian land as »state land.«

19 CZA S25/9686, January 1948: Preparation for Establishing the State [Hebrew]; ISA: 10/111/3560 February 1948.

est was in having maximum control over the Palestinian population. The census was just one of the means of achieving it, alongside Military Government and long-term curfews. Moreover, the Committee viewed the census subjects, the Palestinians, as merchandise to be surveyed: when E. Avner, the representative of the Military Governor, expressed his trepidation at the thought of conducting the survey in a rush, Danin replied: »You must know your stock.«²¹

Who has the right to count Palestinians?

Although the original intention of the Committee was to plan and conduct the census of Palestinians using its own people, Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok (Sharett) referred fellow Committee members Shim'oni and Danin to Bachi and Aharon Gertz, the administrative manager of the CBS, to see if the latter could provide the number of displaced Arabs. They wanted to determine the general size of the Arab population within the borders of Israel that had remained following the mass exodus of Palestinians.²² Several days after the meeting, they contacted the CBS for this information;²³ a week later, at the Committee's third meeting, Bachi's preference for two separate censuses was already represented, though not as a major voice.²⁴

For its part, the Committee felt that Bachi should comply with whatever the Committee asked of him. In a reply to a letter sent by the Middle East Division in the Foreign Ministry, Bachi stated that their intention to conduct such a census was already part of CBS's plans, but was not of foremost priority:

»Concerning your letter from September 2, I would like to inform you that a study of the Arab population is already included in the Bureau's plan and we have even started collecting data on this problem. This matter, however, is very complicated, and since we have many other urgent commitments in relation to the registration of the population, we will not be able to pursue this issue in the immediate future.«²⁵

A census, claimed Bachi, was not a military operation, but a field of study and knowledge. Neither was it a sporadic answer to an immediate need, but rather part of a general, broader plan of counting the population. In other documents from 1948, Bachi emphasized the scientific and bureaucratic ne-

21 August 29, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/11 [Hebrew].

22 August 30, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/22. Note written by Shim'oni on August 25, 1948, in which he suggests more ambiguity in presenting the number of Palestinians. Shertok replied to this note by referring him and Danin to Bachi and Gertz.

23 September 2, 1948, ISA: G 110/302.

24 September 9, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/11.

25 September 21, 1948, ISA: G 110/302 [Hebrew].

cessity of the first census. His insistence on ascribing scientific attributes to the CBS' practices was a common theme in all the places in which he discussed the role of CBS during the crucial period of the state's establishment;²⁶ he therefore rejected a direct link between the census and military needs or needs of national security.

The Committee expressed its expectation that Bachi and Gertz would obtain the information they demanded by creating two separate questionnaires, to be distributed in one census: one for Arabs (Christian, Muslim and Druze), another for Jews; the Committee's members saw the census as a means of obtaining such sensitive information. The Committee focused on two main questions: the first was about members of each family and their relatives – who lived in each household, and who had just joined recently. The second question was about the property each family owned. The Minority Affairs Minister wrote to Bachi:

» [...] [T]he state, and especially the Middle East Division [in the Foreign Ministry] is interested in clear information, to the greatest extent possible, on the number of Arabs who abandoned their property and are [now living] outside of Israel's borders, their property that remained inside the borders of Israel, and details about minorities' movements inside of Israel and its occupied territories.«²⁷

The Committee held at least five meetings to discuss this issue; Bachi was not present, but his position was represented. In the third meeting, the participants discussed the demand to conduct one census using two different forms. Bachi claimed that such a format would be discriminatory towards the Arab population. His objection to asking part of the population direct questions about property and missing relatives was also based on the concern that this would lead to distrust among Palestinians toward the intentions of both the census' architects and the statistical enterprise in general. Thus, he maintained, the two censuses should not be conducted on the same day. Danin replied: »Professor Bachi needs to find a way to conduct the census according to our needs.«²⁸ Facing Bachi's objection, the Minority Affairs Minister had an original idea of how to solve the problem of trust Bachi raised:

»We will prepare an additional questionnaire: a regular questionnaire for all residents, and a special form for [the needs of] the Interior Minister, the Minority Affairs Ministry and the Military Governor. [Then,] while we fill in the regular form [designed for Jews], we could add the details we are

26 January 1948, ISA: 18 41/107/18; January 1948, CZA S25/9686; see also interviews with Bachi in: *Davar*, January 11, 1948 and August 9, 1948; *Haaretz*, August 9, 1948; author's personal interview with Bachi, March 1992.

27 October 10, 1948, ISA: G 110/302 [Hebrew].

28 September 9, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/11 [Hebrew].

interested to the second questionnaire [for Arabs] without their noticing that we are asking additional questions.«²⁹

The Minister suggested bypassing the issue of Palestinians' sensitivities by asking them ostensibly innocent questions, that would appear equally addressed to all members of the population. His idea did not satisfy Bachi's demand to keep the census universal and not discriminate against any national group.

When the Committee's members insisted on one, split census, Bachi pointed out that the regulations of the Interior Ministry on the format of questionnaires and the kind of questions they could include applied to them as well. Although the Committee recognized the need to convince Bachi of the necessity of a split census, they also discussed the option of conducting the census using their own people, should they fail to convince him.³⁰ The legal advisor to the Minority Affairs Ministry, who met with Bachi prior to the fifth meeting, reported that the special questions were added to the general questionnaire, as Bachi initially suggested, with the exception of two questions – one about relatives, the other about property.³¹ In late September, Bachi reported to the Minority Affairs Ministry that the census form was ready. In this form, he wrote, the requisite questions about absent relatives and property were concealed.³² The Committee misunderstood Bachi, assuming that these questions would be part of a special form to be attached to the general one, and that the two censuses would be carried out on the same day. As a result, the Minority Affairs Minister sent a letter to key ministers of the new government, including the Prime Minister, asking for funding for conduct the split census.³³ In his reply to the Interior Minister, Bachi wrote:

»These studies [on absentees and Palestinians' property] were suggested by the Foreign Ministry and the Minority Affairs Ministry – in addition to the registration of the population. In meetings with these offices' representatives, I made it clear that: a. One cannot differentiate between Jews and non-Jews in the registration, such that these questions [on absentees and property] cannot be part of the general registration form. b. If you want to ask these questions, a special study will have to be conducted [...] d. One cannot complicate the general registration, nor jeopardize its success by asking sensitive questions [...] Therefore, the Bureau suggests conducting these special studies after the general registration, through the bureaucratic mechanism already in place.«³⁴

29 Ibid.

30 September 14, 1948, *ibid.*

31 September 23, 1948, *ibid.*

32 September 26, 1948, ISA: G 302/110.

33 October 10, 1948, *ibid.*

34 *Ibid.* [Hebrew]. The letter was sent to CBS for comment prior to the date appearing on the letter.

Bachi's reply is consistent with other records, in which he declared that the administration of a population registration at a time of war, during a mass exodus of the Palestinian population, was scientifically problematic. However, he promised, the CBS would make sure that residents of all religious, national, sex and age groups were included in the registration:

»Although the present registration cannot be considered a pure and scientific census, the CBS will fulfill the main criteria for demographic censuses. Therefore, we will make sure that every person in Israel – without regard to religion, nationality, gender or age group – is included in the registration, that no one is registered more than once, and that the registration provides a ›snapshot‹ of the population at the moment it is taken.«³⁵

We may read this set of exchanges between the two groups as an attempt by each group to exert its authority over the other. In other words, the initial position of the Committee's members was the urgent need for demographic information, such that Bachi should comply with the Committee's demands. At the same time, Bachi did not acquiesce, refusing to submit to the demand to treat Arabs differently and grant the matter first priority. It appears that the political demand for surveillance could not be reconciled with Bachi's insistence on planning the census in as universal, rational and scientific a manner as possible. For officials at the Military Government and Foreign Ministry, the relationship between science and politics was quite simple – science should serve those who represent the existential needs of the state.³⁶ Conversely, the first Israeli statisticians sought to protect their field of practice from political abuse, i.e., anything that could challenge its scientific credibility and compromise the disinterestedness of the census.

Yet was Bachi's promise of a universal census, with equality for all residents, ultimately realized? Was there no discrimination, no differentiation between national groups, as Bachi initially demanded? While there is no reason to believe that the public was intentionally misled, the reality fell short of Bachi's stated objectives in several respects.

Representation practices and the political order

Ultimately, the CBS designed a two-part form for registration of the population, the second part of which was attached as an addendum to the general form. This addendum was itself divided into two parts. The first was entitled »Information on Absent [i.e., at the time of the census] Relatives.« The second part was entitled »Information on Property of Family Members (Present

35 R. Bachi, 1948. Population Registration in the State of Israel [Hebrew], file no. 172, Ben-Gurion Archives, not dated.

36 It is unlikely that these officials viewed the census as a scientific domain.

or Absent).³⁷ In this form, Bachi addressed the Committee's demand for specific information on the Palestinian population during the general census. Surprisingly, the solution at which he ultimately arrived was quite different from his initial position of two separate censuses, and rather similar to the solution suggested by the Minority Affairs Minister: different forms for different populations in one census; this was in contrast to the universal dimension Bachi had been so determined to achieve. By indirectly addressing the issue of property in the general questionnaire, Bachi alleviated the anticipated distrust of Palestinians, but did not solve the problem of discrimination to which he so vehemently objected in his letter to the Interior Minister.³⁸

One question remains: did the CBS capitulate in this conflict? If so, why? In other words, did the CBS struggle with competing loyalties – to scientific principles, and to the state's need for security and oversight of its national minority – ultimately choosing one over the other? It seems that the CBS did not have the ability to impose its authority while positioning itself as the main agency of statistical representation of the population, since the phenomenon in question – the Palestinian population – was not given to numerical definition at that particular moment in time, which was so fraught with demographic upheaval. But by allowing the Committee members' ministries to seek alternative means of conducting a split census, the stature of the CBS as the sole statistical agency of the State of Israel would have been jeopardized.

Bachi indicated in several instances that, during 1948, the CBS anticipated the Palestinians' unwillingness to be observed by the state.³⁹ Yet while the document referred to herein related this anticipated objection to the fact that the »Oriental« Palestinians lacked the capacity to understand science and its applications,⁴⁰ or to their suspicion towards the new Jewish state in general, the main problem the CBS faced during the census and for several months thereafter was the inability to enumerate the entire Palestinian population and present a complete statistical picture, since the phenomenon itself was so unstable: even as the exodus of Palestinians was going on, some of the Palestinians found their way back into Israel as illegal returnees, making it difficult to account for them using standard demographic tools. Ultimately, several populations were not counted.

37 Not dated, ISA: GL 19/3559.

38 October 10, 1948, ISA: G 302/110.

39 For example, when Bachi portrayed the organization of official statistics of the new state, he wrote: »The poisoned political atmosphere in our country has had a damaging impact on the regularity of the statistical work [...] The general, understandable distrust in the politics of the [British] government is also manifested, of course, in a baseless mistrust toward enterprises that have no political intention or technical defect.« CZA S25/9686, January 1948, 2. See also author's personal interview with Bachi, March 1992.

In addition to a group of Palestinians who were classified as »Present Absentees,« due to their absence from their homes during the seven-hour curfew,⁴¹ other Palestinians who were present in the country were not included in the census. As Bachi would write several years after the census, while the size of the Arab population was put at 69,000, entire geographical areas populated by Palestinians, such as the Western Galilee and the Negev, were not visited by the surveyors due to the war.⁴² Although these areas would be enumerated later, at the beginning of 1949, the data on the Arab population would remain incomplete even after 1949. Bachi offered several explanations for the incomplete figures for the numbers of Palestinians and Bedouins: firstly, the conditions of the war and the population exchanges among Palestinians prevented a full account of the non-Jewish population. Secondly, at the beginning of 1949, the territorial changes to Israel as a result of the war increased the non-Jewish population by 30,000. Finally, Bedouins were hard to count, due to their nomadic lifestyles. Robinson, who studies the naturalization process of Palestinians during and after the 1948 War, cites three major groups that were left out:

»The Israeli census bureau counted roughly 69,000 Palestinians in November 1948. This figure excluded the 13,000-15,000 Bedouin residents of the Naqab/Negev desert, whom the Interior Ministry's Registration Division secretly left out of the population registry altogether. It also excluded roughly 5,000 men and teenage boys then interned in Israel's POW camps, roughly 14 percent of all Palestinian males left in the country between the ages of 15 through 60. Most of them were picked up by the IDF upon the

40 R. Musam, one of Israel's first statisticians and a former statistician of the British Mandate, wrote of the estimation of the population of the country's Northern region: »This number shouldn't be considered very far from reality, because it is based on the population census of 1931 which was no doubt accurate, as much as accuracy can be expected in an oriental country like ours [...]« *The Non-Jewish Population of the Jewish State – Statistical Review*, ISA: GL 3559/19, not dated.

41 On the first census, see Pinchas Yurman, *Curfew – and not Due to British Command: A Chapter on the Stabilization of the State*, in: *Hauma* (The Nation) 70-71 (1983), 90-101 [Hebrew]; Lustick, *Arabs in a Jewish State* (fn. 16), 177; Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (fn. 9), 174. Based on several sources, authors have presented varied estimates of the number of »Present Absentees«: Grossman puts the number at 81,000 in: David Grossman, *Present/Absentees*, Tel Aviv 1992 [Hebrew], 64f. Other estimates include those by Shafir and Peled (90,000) in: Gershon Shafir/Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*, Cambridge 1985, 110f., and Ian Lustick (75,000) in: Lustick, *Arabs in a Jewish State* (fn. 16), 64-72.

42 Roberto Bachi, not dated. *Arichat Rishum Hatoshavim* (Conducting the Population Registration [November 8, 1948]), file no. 44, Ben-Gurion Archives. Based on the details discussed in the document, it was probably written around 1950. See also: October 10, 1948, ISA 130.15(2), HZ 2564/22; October 24, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/2; November 29, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/22; November 28, 1948, ISA 49: G 302/110; December 28, 1948, ISA: HZ 2564/22.

occupation of their home locale simply because they were of ›military‹ age. The third major group that was not counted in the first census was some 40,000 residents of the Upper Galilee villages which the army had conquered just over a week before.«⁴³

Robinson argues that the first census was initially motivated by an urgent plan, based on a fear of demographic reversal – the authorities wanted to distinguish between those who were in the country during the census and those who had infiltrated afterwards. Why, then, were so many Palestinians and Bedouins not counted, if the motivation for counting them, as suggested by Robinson, was the struggle against infiltration? Based on the evidence presented earlier in this paper, common sense would dictate that authorities do everything in their power to include all the residents during the seven-hour curfew in the census, so as to avert future demands of Palestinians who were not registered to be included. The Committee's entire reason for contacting the CBS was to secure reliable numbers that could offer a clear picture of the Palestinian population at the particular moment of the census, which could be used as a means of identifying those who should be considered infiltrators and deported from Israel.⁴⁴ The Committee's members, who expected to receive these numbers after the census, were surprised to learn that they did not exist. When Shim'oni, for example, understood that his office could not use the census data to identify infiltrators, he wrote a letter to five different ministries, alerting them to the potential threat to the state's authority in not completing the registration:

»Since in the last few weeks there has been an increased [level of] illegal Arab infiltration – something which is dangerous and likely to cause complications, and since it is impossible to distinguish local residents from infiltrators in order to be able to act against the latter after the registration, it is our opinion that *the infrastructure of the registration is harmful and dangerous* and that we must do *everything* possible to carry out the registration immediately and without delay.«⁴⁵

The ability to take steps against infiltrators depends on a complete registry of the population. In that case, such infrastructure can be quite powerful, and its categories can come to be seen as objective over time. On the other hand, if the registry is incomplete, a state could mistakenly act against those who are rightfully entitled to citizenship, weakening the state's authority. Shim'oni's concern was over the inability to use the population registry as a clear-cut legal criterion for excluding infiltrators. The Minority Affairs Minis-

43 Robinson, *Occupied Citizens* (fn. 2), 53.

44 See, for example: Letter from the Foreign Ministry prior to the census: October 12, 1948, ISA: G 302/110; October 14, 1948, *ibid.*

45 December 20, 1948, ISA: G 302/110. Emphasis in original [Hebrew]; see also: December 7, 1948, *ibid.*

ter expressed the same concern when he wrote to officials at the various branches of his ministry that, in the absence of registration data, they should prepare a detailed report on every settlement of minorities, as well as abandoned villages.⁴⁶ Paradoxically, if the CBS had conducted the census in accordance with the Committee's demands, namely that all the villages and settlements of Palestinians and Bedouins in the country be included, the vast majority of Palestinians would have been eligible for citizenship, or, at the very least, it would have been exceedingly difficult to maintain exclusionary policies.

Robinson rightly argues that the intentions of the Committee in relation to the census were exclusionary. They wanted to delineate the Palestinian population and prevent illegal returnees from obtaining citizenship. Her detailed account also convincingly demonstrates the way in which the entire populations of Palestinian villages were subject to random eviction and expulsion, even when their residents held registration certificates, meaning that they had been registered and counted during the census.⁴⁷ Moreover, in order to continue the policy of not granting citizenship to those Palestinians who were counted, (i.e., to make the practice of not granting them citizenship legal), the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab Affairs worked with the Military Government to create a new system of demographic regulation. This was the Temporary Residency Permit, later known as the »red identification card,« as opposed to the blue identification cards held by most Israelis. The Permit would enable the government to freeze the legal status of its Palestinian bearers.⁴⁸

Still, Robinson's assertion that the registration of Palestinians was the sole or central motive for conducting the census fails to consider the role of the CBS and first statisticians as a separate group, with interests distinct from those of both the Committee and »the state.« The first statisticians were not merely an extension of the »will of the state«; among the mundane motivations for conducting the census at the particular moment at which it was conducted – first elections, taxes and military conscription – was the desire to create a rare representation of a very unique moment in the history of Israeli society, after the mass exodus of Palestinians and before the mass immigration of the Arab-Jews, while consolidating the country's Jewish citizenry. However, the fact that the Palestinians were not fully represented in the census limited the CBS' ability to create a coherent and well-defined statistical object. Yet this fact was not mentioned in most of the documents of the CBS describing both the establishment of the CBS in general, and the first census in particular. By glossing over the serious methodological limitations regarding the enumeration of the Palestinians from the history of the

46 December 24, 1948, ISA: G 302/110.

47 Robinson, *Occupied Citizens* (fn. 1), chapter 1.

48 *Ibid.*, chapter 2.

CBS, the latter contributed to its own status as the exclusive and the most comprehensive statistical agency in Israel.

Conclusion

The political and demographic situation of Israel-Palestine in 1948 afforded the CBS a central role in the mapping and management of the population. Though its role in the formalization of Israeli citizenship is nowhere to be found in the historiography and sociology of Israeli society, the CBS was central in the formation and definition of Israel's citizenry, determining who was to be included and who excluded. This was not the result of a premeditated decision; the political conception of Israeli citizenship was affected by the coercive power of government institutions such as the Military Government's control over national minorities, as well as the more mundane practices of such agencies as the CBS. This paper has sought to call attention to negotiation practices, methodological difficulties and the scientific ambition to create a pure scientific object that could be perceived as a reflection of society, *sui generis*, rather than an artifact motivated by political interests.

The case at hand illustrates the way in which a government agency, in this case the Central Bureau of Statistics, can be subject to some of the same expectations as any scientific laboratory, namely the expectation to produce »objective knowledge.« This goal may be threatened by any of a number of factors: political pressure to interfere with the statistical representation, or simply the complexity of an unstable and uncertain phenomenon. These factors may interact with the practice of statistics, and may even play a role in censuses.⁴⁹ The ethnic complexity of Israel-Palestine prior to and during 1948 lent a certain political charge to the numerical representation of each national group. Ethnic diversity also influenced methodological considerations, as can be seen in the decision to conduct an exhaustive enumeration of the population, under curfew, at a time when sampling was already a widely-used technique in censuses worldwide. Yet it was nevertheless impossible to cover the entire population of the country in the census; this weakens the exhaustiveness of the census and its claim to »truth.« For the CBS, the perceived variability of the Arab population as a phenomenon was an obstacle to precision in representing the population, and undermined the objectivity of the data it produced.

49 Theodore Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, Princeton, NJ 1995.