
Perspectives on the History of Cultures

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As early as the 1980s it became apparent that the mission of the CRFJ could no longer be restricted to archeology and prehistory. The Israeli universities, heirs of European universities, and seeded by American universities, had much to offer to French researchers, from doctoral students to senior investigators, working in those specific fields where being in Jerusalem was a must. It was clear that a whole range of topics in the social sciences and humanities were being extensively investigated on this side of the Mediterranean, and that the French had much to gain from exchanges with their Israeli colleagues. The latter were also extremely aware of the excellence of certain French research programs, for instance in history, philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, and ethnology and were interested in establishing more long- term joint research projects. The value of this cross-fertilization emerges clearly in projects under the direction of Frank Alvarez-Pereyre, who arrived in 1982.

The various archival collections established before the founding of the State continued to grow, and the eradication of centers of Jewish learning in Europe made Israel the capital of a network of fields related to it. In addition, these various collections contain a considerable amount of documents in French, the lingua franca of the Ottoman Empire as well as that of educated Jews in the Diaspora. Recall that Einstein gave his Jerusalem lecture in 1923 in French. Thus French researchers could embark upon a broad range of activities in Israel, and in the region, for the more adventurous among them.

In France, Jewish studies¹ blossomed, extending far beyond the traditional centers of excellence (INALCO, EPHE, University of Strasbourg). With new university chairs, centers such as the ones at Paris IV-Sorbonne, Aix en Provence, Toulouse and Montpellier were founded, and the CRFJ became their natural partner in Israel. For its Hebrew and Jewish studies, for its universities and specialized institutions (Yad Va Shem, Truman Institute, Vidal Sasson, etc)² Israel is obviously the pole of attraction. These institutions regularly call upon the CRFJ for their symposia and various projects.

When François Blanchetière took up his position in 1991, this facet continued to develop, with an emphasis on the history of religion, in particular Jewish and Christian. The thorny issue of the overly well-known Jewish roots of Christianity was tackled anew, for instance by establishing for the first time an accurate list of

¹ Frank Alvarez-Pereyre and Jean Baumgarten (eds). *Les études juives en France. Situation et perspectives*, Paris, 1990.

² Florence Heymann (ed). *Les études juives dans les universités israéliennes*, Jérusalem, 1992 (Lettre d'information du CRFJ, 10).

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the first bishops of Jerusalem. No one was surprised to find that the successor to Marcel Simon at the University of Strasbourg, once in Jerusalem, would focus on the sources of Christian anti-Judaism in particular in the second and third centuries. He identified three types: anti-Judaism by differentiation, installation and resentment. He thus drew a subtle distinction between the Nazarenes and the Judeo-Christians. He has just published a synthesis of his works.³

At the same time, corresponding to a certain French tradition, an epistemological inquiry was conducted conjointly with more speculative questions on memory, tradition and text. The Center also played a role as a showcase for the social sciences and humanities, hosting French Science Weeks in addition to classic symposia. In chronological order these were entitled: "Milieux and Memory" (1991) and "The Political and the Religious" (1993), which resulted in major publications.⁴ Specialized work on the Ethiopians, Jewish music, the anthropology of Judaism, Russian immigration and the politics of mental health was also launched during this period and continues to be among the interests of the Center.

When I was appointed in 1996, the mission of the CRFJ was redefined to cover three main areas: archeology and prehistory, Jewish studies and contemporary Israel. These areas needed well-defined frameworks since it is impossible to cover all research topics, but also had to be broad enough to avoid restricting the activities of the Center to a few well-documented and overly circumscribed topics which could not respond to the needs of colleagues working on subjects outside these longstanding projects and unable to launch new ones.

One of the major innovations was the instigation of the "Researcher's Month", which has been received enthusiastically. The idea is to host an advanced student, in most cases at the end of his or her PhD, for purposes of spending a few weeks in Israel. The doctoral student can take advantage of the Center's infrastructure but above all can meet specialists in his or her field immediately, head directly to the archives, etc. The permanent staff of the Center has also continued to establish ties and is often very closely involved in developments in Israeli research in the social sciences and the humanities. One telling example is the pioneering role of research on the New Historians.⁵ Six years of experience have demonstrated the multiple advantages of these "months" since the number of requests is constantly on the rise with this year more than thirty applications, more than the Center can accept. The laboratory attempts to award an equal number of research months to each of the three research areas. In addition, requests from foreign colleagues, in particular from Europe working with the permanent staff, are also awarded.

The same principles are applied to one-year fellowships at the Center as well as specific applications for the Lavoisier scholarship associated with the Ministry of

³ See Francois Blanchetière and Moshe David Herr (eds). *Aux origines juives du christianisme*, Paris-Louvain, Peters, 1993 (Cahiers du CRFJ, 2). Francois Blanchetière, *Aux sources de l'antijudaïsme chrétien*, Paris Louvain, 1995 (Cahiers du CRFJ, 4) and *id. Enquête sur les racines juives du mouvement chrétien*, Paris, Cerf, 2001.

⁴ Frank Alvarez-Pereyre (ed). *Milieux et mémoire*. Jerusalem-Louvain, Peters, 1993 (Cahiers du CRFJ, 1) and Frank Alvarez-Pereyre (ed). *Le politique et le religieux. Essais théoriques et comparatifs*, Jerusalem-Louvain, Peters, 1995 (Cahiers du CRFJ, 3).

⁵ Florence Heymann and Michel Abitbol (eds). *L'historiographie israélienne aujourd'hui*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 1998 (Mélanges du CRFJ, 1).

Foreign Affairs. Archeologists and prehistorians have had the lion's share, since Christophe Delage, Laure Dubreuil, and then Nicolas Samuelian were able to finish their PhDs at the Center. Depending on the political situation in the region - extremely tense as this issue goes to press - the groundwork has been set for collaboration, in particular as regards the exchange of information and personal contacts with the major French institutions around the Mediterranean, including Cairo, Amman, Tunis, Istanbul, Beirut, Damascus and San'a.

Considerable effort has been made in promoting the CRFJ in scientific circles locally: a number of researchers teach in Israeli universities and often participate in symposia organized by our Israeli colleagues, who are also regularly invited to the colloquia or workshops run by the Center.

Finally, a methodology seminar, launched and directed over the last two years by Sylvie Anne Goldberg (EHESS) has enabled French speaking doctoral students to meet: they can take advantage of the experience of more long-term researchers, and have a forum to present their findings in various fields, from Jewish cinema to the politics of violence in Israel, history and sociology of architecture to comparative musicology.

A seminar slated for this year should enable the Center to invite EHESS teachers regularly and provide possibilities for co-tutoring.

Much of the Center's activities focus on Jewish studies, since this field in France has expanded - remarkably almost as much as in Germany. History, philosophy, anthropology, anti-Semitism, have a preponderant place in the Center for the reasons mentioned above - contacts, archives, and even research fields: after Florence Heymann and Danielle Storper-Perez⁶, Sylvie Anne Goldberg has extended her work on time in Jewish culture⁷. She analyzes the processes that lead to the invention of the era of the creation of the world and to the establishment of a dual temporality (Jewish time/other time). Jean Baumgarten has continued his work not only on the Yiddish language⁸ but on all the Yiddish speaking cultures in Israel and in the world. He has for instance studied the *Batkhonim*, poets taking part in wedding ceremonies in Hassidic communities, and has extended this work to an analysis of Ashkenazi tales⁹. Jeffrey Barash, a specialist in the German philosophy of the twentieth century, has focused on the political thought of major German Jewish writers such as Ernst Cassirer, Karl Löwith, Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt. He is particularly interested in the theory of myths, exploring its impact on our century¹⁰. The present writer has continued his surveys of the major German Jewish figures from the Enlightenment (Moses Mendelssohn) to the twentieth century (Gershom Sholem), showing the different responses of Jewish German-speaking thinkers to the challenges of modernity they faced. I have used the outstanding manuscript resources in the major Jerusalem collections, which are far

⁶ *Le corps du texte. Pour une anthropologie des textes de la tradition juive*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 1997 (Cahiers du CRFJ, 5).

⁷ *Le clepsydre. Essai sur la pluralité des temps dans le Judaïsme*, Paris, Albin-Michel, 2000.

⁸ Jean Baumgarten and David Bunis (eds). *Le Yiddish. Langue, culture, société*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 1999 (Mélanges du CRFJ, 2).

⁹ Jean Baumgarten, *Récits hagiographiques juifs*, Paris, Cerf, 2001.

¹⁰ Jeffrey A. Barash, *Political Mythologies of the Twentieth Century in the Perspective of Hermann Heller, Ernst Cassirer and Karl Löwith*, in *Bulletin du CRFJ*, 6, (2000) pp.121-133.

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from having been exploited to the fullest. For instance, I have worked for years on editing and translating from them. Eva Telkes-Klein, after finishing a prosopographic work on the professors at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem¹¹, has launched a research project on Emile Meyerson (1859-1933) whose papers have finally been classified and archived. A historian and philosopher of the sciences, a committed Zionist, his work is at the core of an intellectual network uniting part of Europe as well as Palestine. Florence Heymann brought her long inquiry into the memory and history of the Jews of Cernowitz to fruition, tirelessly intertwining interviews and archive documents, memories and the data drawn from rarely examined collections. She brought Bukovina, a province that vanished without a trace back to life, and continues to work on the rich and today defunct enigma that was the Jewish *Mitteleuropa*¹².

In the area of contemporary Israel, three major avenues of exploration guide current research: Europe and France in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, the history of the different communities in Jerusalem, the migratory movements which enrich them and the memories which inspire them, and finally, the Other in Jewish society - Israeli Arabs and Bedouins.

Dominique Trimbur was the major artisan of research in the Center on the French, German and European presence in Palestine and in Jerusalem during the Ottoman and Mandate periods. This was a religious, commercial and scientific presence, where nationalities and theologies clashed in order to despoil an Empire tottering on the verge of collapse. The great powers transferred their quarrels if not their antagonisms to the Holy Land¹³, while constructing another antiquity than Athens or Rome.

Sossie Andezian is specialized in the Armenian memories of Jerusalem where the community has been clustered since the 5th century around the St. James monastery. More than a religious history, the anthropologist shows how a whole imaginary of the Armenian space has been built up by successive layers in the center of a multi-religious city. It is also a part of the history of Jerusalem, which is restored here¹⁴. Nelly Zilber investigates the socio-cultural dimensions of the mental health of two groups of migrants - the Ethiopians and the Russians¹⁵. These two groups have been investigated specifically by Danielle Storper-Perez¹⁶ and are the focus of Lisa Anteby, the co-organizer along with William Berthomiere (MIGRINTER), a former fellowship awardee of the Center, of a symposium on "2000

¹¹ *L'université de Jérusalem à travers ses acteurs. La première génération de professeurs 1925-1948*. forthcoming, Champion, 2002.

¹² *Le Crépuscule des lieux. L'identité des juifs de Cernowitz*. Doctoral thesis EHESS 2001, forthcoming, 2002, Stock.

¹³ Dominique Trimbur and Ran Aaronsohn (eds), *De Bonaparte à Balfour. La France, l'Europe occidentale et la Palestine 1799-1917*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2001 (Mélanges du CRFJ, 3).

¹⁴ Sossie Andezian, *Armenian Memories of Jerusalem. Research in Progress*, Bulletin du CRFJ, 9, (2001) pp. 88-97.

¹⁵ Nelly Zilber, *Psychological Distress among Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union to Israel: Risk Factors*, Bulletin du CRFJ, 4, (1999) pp 109-126.

¹⁶ Daniel Storper-Perez, *L'intelligentsia russe en Israël. Rassurante étrangeté*. Paris, 1998, CNRS Editions (Cahiers du CRFJ, 2).

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Years of Diaspora" held in Poitiers in February 2002. His book will be published this year¹⁷.

The two most recent fellowship recipients, Laurence Louër and Cedric Parizot, both conducted innovative studies, one on the Israeli Arabs of Haifa and the other on the Bedouins of the Negev. Both received their PhDs several months ago¹⁸.

At a pace of two symposia per year, the CRFJ has strengthened its ties with the major local institutions. Dozens of researchers in the social sciences and humanities have already been invited to the Center to present their work at round tables or conferences including Andre Laks, Jacques Mercier, Tobie Nathan, Elisabeth Roudinesco, Jean Louis Fabiani, Gilles Kepel, Frédéric Gugelot, Philippe Burrin, François Laplanche, Silvia Cresti and others.

All this makes it more than apparent that the Center should indeed continue to enhance its scientific relationships with France and Israel around these three focal directions. Its program is an ambitious one since it must cope with a growing number of requests. Its two overseeing bodies, the CNRS and the DGCID, should continue to assist it in its development, in order to reap the benefits of this demanding but rewarding cooperation.

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¹⁷ Lisa Anteby, *Voies de l'intégration, voix de la tradition. Itinéraires socioculturels et pratiques de la communication parmi les juifs éthiopiens en Israël*, Paris V, 1996.

¹⁸ Laurence Louër, *Les citoyens arabes d'Israël : analyse d'une communautarisation*, IEP, Paris, 2001. Cédric Parizot, *Le mois de la bienvenue : réappropriation des mécanismes électoraux et réajustement des rapports de pouvoir chez les Bédouins du Néguev*, EHESS, 2001.