



From German Philology to Local Usability: The Emergence of 'Practical' Arabic in the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa' 1913–48

Yonatan Mendel

To cite this article: Yonatan Mendel (2015): From German Philology to Local Usability: The Emergence of 'Practical' Arabic in the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa' 1913–48, Middle Eastern Studies, DOI: [10.1080/00263206.2015.1061508](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2015.1061508)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2015.1061508>



Published online: 26 Aug 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 10



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

From German Philology to Local Usability: The Emergence of ‘Practical’ Arabic in the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa’ 1913–48

YONATAN MENDEL*

The Hebrew Reali School in Haifa has been acknowledged in many works of academic and educational literature as an institution that has had a profound influence on Jewish education in Palestine/Israel before and after 1948. These included the teaching of all subjects, including technical school subjects, in Hebrew¹; the creation of original textbooks designed exclusively for the Hebrew student²; creating a link between education and military training, which culminated in Israel’s first Junior Command Preparatory School³; forming the relationship between the school and the civil service and highlighting the idea of *mamlakhtiyut* (Israeli statism)⁴; placing an emphasis on sports, training and discipline – which gave rise to the *Gadna* (Youth Corps)⁵; connecting nature studies, geography and outdoors tours which climaxed in the foundation of *Ha-Tzofim* (the Israeli Scouts)⁶; and, more generally, creating a Jewish, national, patriotic and nonpartisan Zionist educational stream, which derived its inspiration from German schools and from the German-Jewish origins of its founders, and from a unique interpretation of Judaism.⁷

The point of departure for this article, therefore, is that the Reali School has had a significance that extended beyond its physical boundaries and beyond the emerging Jewish educational system. With this in mind, the focus of this article – the crystallization of Arabic studies in the Hebrew Reali School – tells a story much greater than the boundaries of the school in which it developed. This is especially significant in light of the fact that the Reali was the leading school for Arabic studies in the Jewish educational system during the British mandate; that it maintained this status and became the leading school for Arabic studies in the Israeli educational system; that it persisted with Arabic studies in times when other Jewish schools did not teach it at all or decided to stop teaching it; that it was the school that promoted the composition of the first ever Arabic textbooks in the Jewish educational system in Palestine; and that

*The Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yitzhak Rabin Building, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel. E-mail: yonatan.mendel@mail.huji.ac.il

several of its teachers and students became key figures in the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the first, and for many years the only, higher education institution in the country dedicated to the study of Arabic language and culture. Due to all these reasons, and bearing in mind the Reali School as a driving force in the emerging educational system, this article analyzes the moulding of Arabic studies in the crucial years of educational institutionalization.⁸ It reveals a distinctive ‘practical’ approach that was shaped in the school with regard to Arabic studies, and highlights that this approach was the result of a clash between different pedagogical methods regarding the study of the language, and was propelled by another, powerful, clash: that of the heated political conflict in Palestine.

Focusing on the period of 1913–48 – from the school’s establishment at the end of the Ottoman rule in Palestine up to the end of the British Mandate in the country – and based on archival sources and analysis of Arabic textbooks produced in the school, this study traces a central debate about *Arabic* in the *Hebrew* Reali School. It centres on the tension between two main pedagogical approaches to Arabic studies. One was the German philological approach – with its connection to German Oriental research and propounded by the German-Jewish scholars who were among the school’s leading figures – which included emphasis on grammar, translation of classical texts and celebration of Jewish–Muslim historical encounters and Hebrew–Arabic reciprocal relations. The other was the ‘practical’ approach – a general term that has changed meanings as well as advocates over time – and that has called for the study of a range of ‘usable’ skills of Arabic, *vis-à-vis* general comprehension of contemporary texts, employing a simpler register of the language, insisting on experience in creative writing, and linkages created between the study of Arabic to current geo-political Middle Eastern developments.

All in all, the evolution of Arabic studies in the Hebrew Reali School shows how an educational institution whose genesis was rooted in the ‘Language War’ between Hebrew and German, also experienced a dramatic battle over the study of another language: Arabic. It reveals how the approach to the teaching of the language in the Reali School altered over the years in light of a changing political atmosphere and the arrival of new teachers and perspectives. It demonstrates the gradual process in which a unique ‘practical’ approach towards Arabic studies triumphed. Interestingly, this approach cherry-picked some elements from the initial German-Oriental approach and some from the original ‘Jewish-Arab’ approach, and has culminated in a new type of local, Zionist and distinctive approach towards the study of Arabic, which laid out leading principles for the study of the language in the Jewish school system and in the Israeli state to come.

Between Two ‘Sister’ Languages: Arabic in the Creation of the Hebrew Reali School

The origins of the Reali School go back to the Avtalya School, established in 1907, which was the first Hebrew school in Haifa. In 1911, the Avtalya School was appropriated by the *Ezra Association* (*Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*), a German-Jewish organization with no Zionist affiliations which aspired to advance the level of education in the Yishuv (the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine). *Ezra*’s educational ambitions, in line with the foreign policy of the German Kaiser at the time, which was to increase the German influence in the Middle East, was to establish in Haifa a

higher-education scientific institution (*Technikum*) and to transform the Avtalya School into a *Realschule*, which would be the feeder institute for the *Technikum*.⁹

The obstacle that prevented the actual initiation of the two German-oriented educational institutions was a principle decision regarding language. The directors of *Ezra* believed that German should be the main language of instruction in both the *Technikum* and *Realschule*, taking the position that ‘this cultural language can serve as a bridge [between the people living in Palestine] and the scientific developments of the new age’.¹⁰ This decision, to use German as a language of instruction, sparked the ‘Language War’ between members of the *Ezra* Association, headed by its director Dr Paul Nathan, and Zionist supporters of Hebrew, including Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and David Yellin from the Hebrew Language Committee.¹¹

In light of these events, the designated principal of the Reali School postponed his arrival in the country. Dr Arthur Biram, a promising 36-year-old educator who was working at the time in a Berlin high school (*Berlinisches Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster*) accepted an earlier offer from *Ezra* to head the *Realschule* in Haifa. However, following the ‘Language War’ and upon realizing the dominance of the German language in the school, Biram halted his preparations.¹² It was only at the end of 1913, when he was informed by one of the supporters of Hebrew, the Haifa-based Zionist industrialist Shmuel Pevzner, that ‘the “Germans” gave up’, conceding that Hebrew would be the language of instruction and that the school would be named *Beit ha-Sefer ha-Reali ha-Tvri*, that Biram made his final arrangements for leaving Berlin on his way to Haifa.¹³ A few months later, upon anchoring off the shores of Haifa, he wrote in his diary: ‘13 February, 1914 is the most important day of my life’.¹⁴

As briefly described here, the decision to establish the Hebrew Reali School was a culmination of ideological debates in which the question of language played a crucial role.¹⁵ In this light, the shift towards Hebrew not only turned the *Realschule* into the *Beth ha-Sefer ha-Reali* but also revitalized the school with different, socio-political, Hebrew content. Having said that, and despite the undoubted centrality of the Hebrew language, it was also the study of Arabic that received special attention in the school, and from its very beginning, the Reali School – headed by Biram – turned out to be the leading institution of Arabic studies in the Jewish educational system.¹⁶ An indication of the essential place of Arabic in the school is found in the first official *Programma* of the Reali School, which included the school’s rationale and its first curriculum. There, following a general explanation of the school’s objectives, which included ‘Hebrew national education’ and the ‘creation of a new generation... for the redemption of our country and the liberation of our people’, the *Programma* mentioned specifically ‘*the study of the Orient*’:

We decided to dedicate much time and effort to the study of human history as our sons grow up and study in a surrounding that is far away and separated from the centres of the world (lit. *sevivah reḥoḳah ye-nifredet mi-merkazei tevel*)... We will specially focus on the chronicle of the people of the Orient so our students will be able to benefit from the unique historical value of the region in which they are being educated and in which they set their future life.¹⁷

The emphasis put on the study of the people of the Orient (lit. ‘*amey ha-mizrah*’) together with the perception of the Haifa school as located far away ‘from the centres

of the world', and locating the establishment of the school as part of the 'redemption of our country', all testify to the foundations of the school generally, and its approach towards Oriental studies and Arabic more specifically. These stem from a German perception towards Oriental studies, as well as from Zionist thought and national-religious (that is, 'redemption') feelings.

These features characterized the school's decision-makers, and definitely those of Arthur Biram. The Saxony-born educator, who had earned two PhDs, one in Classical Studies and another in Muslim scholastic philosophy (*ilm al-kalām*) at the University of Berlin, was a product of German Orientalism. This meant that, for him, the study of the people of the Orient and Islamic/Arabic studies, together with a focus on Jewish studies, was closely bound up.¹⁸ This German Orientalist expertise emphasized the study of Semitic religions and viewed Biblical scholarship, for example, as a 'motivating force for the study of Islam',¹⁹ and saw Islam as a derivative of Judaism.²⁰ This combination, between the Hebrew-national identity, Islamic studies and Jewish religion constituted simple common sense for Biram, who, alongside his doctoral degrees, held a certificate of ordination as a rabbi from Berlin's Higher Institute for Jewish Studies (*Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*). This background shaped Biram's teaching philosophy, which highlighted the importance of humanistic values with a focus on Jewish studies and Jewish–Muslim historical encounters, and aimed to create a new generation of students 'who would function as the vanguard of the national enterprise'.²¹

In this context, the fact that the Reali was a *Hebrew* school headed by a German-Jewish Orientalist can explain the central place of Arabic studies in the school. This was evident in the school's first curriculum. According to this document, the Reali School was made up of ten grades and Hebrew was the language of instruction. From the second grade onwards, pupils took classes in Jewish prayers, blessings and Torah studies. From the third grade, pupils added national and 'homeland' classes (lit. *moledet*). German studies were to start in the third grade and Arabic in the fifth grade, which was the earliest grade in which Arabic was taught among all other Jewish schools teaching Arabic in the Yishuv.²²

According to the *Programma's* curriculum, the Arabic skills that the pupils were to acquire included the following:

Writing: [the pupils will learn] how to write the letters, firstly detached and then attached to one another; Reading: *Miftāḥ al-Qirā'a 1* and *Miftāḥ al-Qirā'a 2* ('the Key for Reading' 1 & 2); Speaking: Naming the closest things to the pupil and [practicing] easy sentences; Morphology: Verbs, and declensions of names with their pronouns.²³

It is interesting to note that these educational skills about Arabic studies were written in Arabic letters, and had no translation into Hebrew. It is also noteworthy that the textbook mentioned was written in Arabic by an Arab scholar, and was a textbook designated for Arab children in a lower grade. Another important element is that the *Programma's* point of departure was that Arabic should be taught through a combination of three language skills – writing, reading and speaking – including basic Arabic grammar but with an overt attempt to bring the pupils 'closer' to Arabic by teaching them, in Arabic, the 'closest things to the pupil' (lit. *aqrab al-ashyā' ilā al-*

tilmidh).²⁴ This attempt to bring the pupils closer to the language suggests a positive connection that the Hebrew-speaking pupils were encouraged to develop towards the study of Arabic, as well as an acknowledgement of a ‘practical’ need to learn Arabic in Haifa, a city dominated by Arab-Palestinian speakers of the language and in which the Jewish community constituted only about 12–15 per cent.²⁵

The approach of the Reali School towards Arabic studies was, from the very beginning, different from that of other Jewish schools in the Yishuv, which generally marginalized the study of the language.²⁶ Yet not only majority–minority concerns justified Biram’s special attention to Arabic, but also other considerations that stemmed directly from the German-Oriental approach which connected grammar studies, classical texts, disciplinary virtues and Jewish–Muslim interactions. Biram argued that through Arabic studies the pupils would be able to learn the compositions and creations of Jewish philosophers and intellectuals who worked in the Islamic and Arab world, especially during Medieval times. Hence, through Arabic, the pupils would become acquainted with Jewish–Muslim integrations, with humanistic values that were produced at the time, and with cultural values that prospered within the Muslim societies in which Jewish thinkers operated.²⁷

In parallel to this, Biram’s approach towards Arabic studies also included another German-oriented aspect, which presented Arabic as the *Latin of the Middle East*.²⁸ According to this notion, the study of Arabic grammar with its certain and logical set of linguistic rules, would have a positive and constructive effect on formal education. In that regard, the teaching of the grammatical Arabic concept of *Irāb* (inflection) was comparable to the teaching of Latin *casus*. This, according to Biram, would result in disciplinary values connected to the study of grammar, which would be based on a comparison between the virtues of Latin for European schools and the virtues of Arabic for Jewish schools in Palestine,²⁹ and would improve the pupils’ precision of thought.³⁰ ‘Arabic should become the Latin of the Orient!’ Biram used to declare in the Reali, emphasizing the importance of proper and compulsory teaching of Arabic grammar in the school.³¹

Finally, Biram supported the study of Arabic as it was linked, for him, with the study of Hebrew. Biram repeatedly highlighted the importance of the study of Hebrew through Arabic, and of the use of Arabic as an explanation for grammar and syntax difficulties that arose during the study of Hebrew. Biram believed that this kind of study would help to develop a ‘Semitic language sensation’ that would be needed for the study of both Hebrew and Arabic, altogether bringing them closer together, in sound and origin.³² This meant that through the study of Arabic, the Jewish pupils would be able to ‘return’ to their Semitic roots, on both spiritual and physical levels, and that Arabic would serve as fertile ground for the ‘awakening’ of Hebrew.³³

The evolution of Arabic studies in the Reali

When Biram arrived at the Reali School, however, many of its physical and educational foundations had still to be established. The first site of the school was in an Arab house in Stanton Street (today: *Shivat Zion Street*) on the border between the Wādi al-Nisnās Arab neighbourhood and the German Colony, and the school’s building was in a state of considerable disrepair.³⁴ With regard to Arabic too, the beginning did not go smoothly, and while the language was taught from the outset, it

was only in June 1914, following a period of six months with a temporary teacher, that Biram appointed the first full-time, permanent teacher of Arabic.

Salim al-Dawudi, the son of Rabbi Makhlof al-Dawudi,³⁵ was born in Safed in 1870. He grew up between Safed, Tiberias, Sidon and Beirut, and had acquired Arabic, French, English and Hebrew. By 1914, he had already had vast work experience as a language teacher, including as a Hebrew teacher in the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in Tiberias and Jerusalem, a teacher of Arabic in Cairo and Alexandria, of Hebrew in Tanta (Egypt), and of Arabic in the Zionist agricultural colonies Rosh Pina and Rishon Le-Zion. al-Dawudi was close to Zionism, and in his work as a translator, he attempted to demonstrate the revival of Hebrew for Arab-Jews in the Middle East.³⁶

In 1914, after a short interview at the Reali School, Biram offered al-Dawudi the position of the school's Arabic teacher, and the latter accepted it at once. The Arabic teacher who had taught in the school before him was then fired, and al-Dawudi started to teach at the school.³⁷ He soon gained the appreciation of the students and teachers of the Reali School, impressing them with his great knowledge of both Colloquial and Literary Arabic and familiarity with the Arab world. In conjunction with his teaching in the school, al-Dawudi began to give Biram private evening lessons in Arabic. According to al-Dawudi, 'Dr [Biram] studied Literary Arabic in a university in Europe, but when he came to Eretz Yisrael he couldn't understand the spoken Arabic language'.³⁸

Five months later, however, the private lessons stopped, as the First World War broke out and the situation in Haifa changed significantly. Biram was called up to serve in the German army and was posted to the Russian front. After a year, and due to his previous knowledge of Arabic, Biram was sent to Afula to serve as the head of the train station in the city, and was later sent to Damascus where he served in the military adjutancy.³⁹ During these years, in which Biram recalled how the military experience had deepened his belief in education for discipline and accuracy, Yoseph Ozarkovski ('Azaryahu) replaced him as the school's principal. The latter had to deal with keeping the school operating during the war's hardships, which included great poverty and Turkish military orders for 'Turkish subjects' to serve in the army, a command that forced the Reali School's teachers, as well as its older students, to live clandestinely in fear of being recruited to the Turkish army.⁴⁰

During the first two years of the war, al-Dawudi continued to teach Arabic in the Reali School. However, personal issues and the difficult situation in Haifa eventually compelled him, in July 1916, to resign from the school and move with his mother to Safed. This was a decision that he later regretted and which he remembered as having been made under 'the great madness of those chaotic days'.⁴¹ The Reali School had to find a suitable replacement for al-Dawudi, and following a few months in which Arabic was taught by temporary replacements, a new senior teacher of Arabic was found: Eliyahu Ḥabouba.

Born in Damascus in 1880, Ḥabouba was also a fluent Arabic speaker who received a conservative Jewish education in the city, and later graduated from the University of Beirut. In 1904, he immigrated to Palestine, and settled in Jerusalem with his parents. As he had a good command of Arabic, French and Hebrew, Ḥabouba acquired experience as a language teacher in various educational institutions in the city: as an Arabic and Hebrew teacher in the *Doresh Zion* school; as an

Arabic and French teacher in *The Alliance Israélite Universelle*; and as an Arabic and Hebrew teacher in the *Hebrew Gymnasium*.⁴² In 1917, Ḥabouba was offered the position of Arabic teacher at the Reali School, which he accepted without hesitation, and owing to which he moved to Haifa and lived a short walk from the school, in the lower part of Haifa, in a street that today carries his name.

Mikhael Dana, who was Ḥabouba's student, remembers his lessons as:

[A] source of 'Arab atmosphere' created by his natural and correct pronunciation of the letters, words and sentences... by his beautiful handwriting of Arabic on the blackboard that made us imitate him... and lastly – by his conversations in Arabic with us, which stimulated us to talk in Arabic and made us feel that we were absorbing this knowledge of Arabic from a primal and natural source...⁴³

Ḥabouba's command of both Colloquial and Literary Arabic, and the fact that most students in the Reali School were of Ashkenazi descent,⁴⁴ made his lessons, following al-Dawudi's, into a unique moment of connection to the Arab region in which the school was located, as well as to Damascus, Sidon and Beirut, where these two Arab Jews had grown up. Ḥabouba remained the only Arabic teacher in the school during the last two years of the war, and when it was over, in 1919, and upon Biram's return, it was decided that Ḥabouba would maintain his leading role in the new building of the Reali School too.

The building, designed by the German Jewish architect Alexander Baerwald (born in Berlin in 1877) who also designed the *Technikum*, was located on the Carmel Mountain (in the Hadar ha-Carmel neighbourhood) and began to operate as the new building of the Reali School in 1921.⁴⁵ The dormitories designated for the Reali's foreign students, in which about ten per cent of the students lived, were also relocated from lower Haifa to a building in the yard of the *Technikum*. These moves up the Carmel Mountain were considered a pioneering act in Haifa and were encouraged by Biram.⁴⁶ Together with several relocations that were made following the transfer to Hadar ha-Carmel, Ḥabouba too moved up the mountain, and became a member of the Hadar ha-Carmel neighbourhood's committee. He became a leading figure in the newly established Jewish neighbourhood⁴⁷ and strengthened his role as an important part of the Reali, which at the time had 300 students.

Yet Ḥabouba's teaching, colloquial, passionate and 'natural' as one can describe it, still did not cover all aspects of Arabic, at least as far as Biram was concerned. In 1924, Biram asked Shlomo Dov Goitein, who had just completed his PhD in Oriental studies at the University of Frankfurt and had begun teaching Bible at the Reali School, to join him and Ḥabouba to create the school's first 'Arabic committee'.⁴⁸ This was a critical moment in the study of Arabic in the Reali, and one could argue that this meeting, in July 1924, also had overarching ramifications for the study of Arabic in the Yishuv. Up until that moment, and following al-Dawudi's and Ḥabouba's pedagogic legacy, an important part of the lessons was the ability of the teachers to use both written and spoken Arabic, to connect the study to their Arab Jewish experience, and to devote a significant portion of the class to 'essay composition' (lit. *hibur ḥofshi*) in Arabic. These meant that the pupils practiced an active command of Arabic, and were also exposed to the fluent use of the language. Following the meeting, however, and based on the German philological approach of

both Goitein and Biram, the decision was made to abandon the emphasis on essay writing, and instead to focus on the grammar translation method. This was in line with the ‘Latin of the Middle East’ paradigm, which symbolized a decline in Arabic creative and active skills of the pupils in favour of a more structured, yet passive command of the language, and the beginning of a gradual shift from teaching Arabic through the medium of Arabic to teaching Arabic in Hebrew.⁴⁹

Another issue discussed in the meeting was the importance of teaching grammar due to its linguistic and disciplinary significances. The three emphasized the lack of grammar textbooks designed for the Hebrew pupil and concluded that an Arabic textbook for grammar should be composed. Biram took it on himself to contact the Education Department of the Zionist Executive and to push for the composition of such a book.

Over the years 1924–26, Biram corresponded several times with the head of the Education Department, Yoseph Lurya, but despite general consent, the latter did not convene the Arabic teachers of the Jewish schools in the country, as requested by Biram. An official report of the Reali School that surveyed the year 1926, mentioned that, at the time it was still ‘lacking a systematic pedagogy in the teaching of its two foreign languages, English and Arabic... and that most language textbooks used were written for children whose mother tongue is English and Arabic respectively’.⁵⁰ In the report, Ḥabouba is mentioned as the Reali’s only teacher of Arabic, alongside two teachers of English (Joseph Bentwich and Meyer Dingot). This was because, following the beginning of the British Mandate in Palestine, both German and French were marginalized in the school, and Arabic became a mandatory ‘second foreign language’, after Hebrew and English. Furthermore, according to the report, the lack of textbooks especially designed for the Jewish school implied that the values that are associated with the study of a foreign language and culture were not maximized. The report mentioned specifically that ‘the situation is worst in the teaching of Arabic’, and hinted at uncertainty regarding the ‘correct’ approach to the study of the language, stating that ‘the situation in Arabic studies is so severe because the aims and scope of its study are not yet determined’.⁵¹

Over the next couple of years, Biram did not cease trying to find a way to advance the project of an Arabic grammar textbook designated for Hebrew pupils. Eventually, with the help of David Yellin, the head of the Society for the Hebrew Teachers’ College in Jerusalem, he managed to create ‘the committee for Arabic studies in high schools’. The first meeting took place at David Yellin’s house in 1927, and included Biram, Ḥabouba, six Arabic teachers from various Jewish schools and also Dr Levi Billig (a researcher at the Hebrew University’s Institute of Oriental Studies) and Dr Avino‘am Yellin (the son of David Yellin, an Arabic and Oriental researcher who at the time worked for the Government Department of Education as the supervisor of the Hebrew school system). Biram was undoubtedly the motivating force behind the meeting, and, as he believed that the revival of the Jewish educational system would be achieved ‘with books, not with literature’ (lit. *sfarim ye-lo safrut*⁵²), he insisted that producing Arabic textbooks for the Jewish school system was crucial. The meeting concluded with the decision to compose an Arabic Reader (an edited compilation of texts) to be edited by Billig and Yellin. On the one hand, it was not exactly the grammar textbook Biram had wanted, but, on the other hand, it was primarily due

to his persistence that the path was cleared for the first Arabic textbook designed particularly for the Jewish school system in Palestine.⁵³

In 1929, violent clashes, known in Hebrew as *Me'ora'ot Tarpaṭ* and in Arabic as *Thawrat al-Burāq*, broke out around the country. These clashes did not halt the preparation of Billig and Yellin's textbook, but did hint at difficulties liable to arise on all levels, and, most importantly, foreshadowed the continued deterioration of relations between Jews and Arabs in the country. In the events that began in Jerusalem in August 1929 but spread to other cities including Haifa, more than 200 Jews and Arabs were killed, and the political tension in Palestine was both evident and bloody. According to Cohen, the year 1929 was 'Year Zero of the Jewish–Arab conflict', following which different voices – like Arabic-speaking Jews who called for peaceful Jewish–Arab coexistence or the ultra-Orthodox who opposed Zionism for religious reasons – disappeared, consequently marking a clear differentiation between two communities: Jewish-Zionists on the one hand and Arab-Palestinians on the other hand.⁵⁴

The 1930 'Official Report' of the Reali School began with a description of the situation in Haifa during the 1929 violent events, and highlighted 'the bloody clashes that have shocked the Yishuv... In Haifa, violent clashes occurred including onslaughts (on Jewish people)... and the main building of the school became a shelter for about 800 refugees'.⁵⁵ During the events, six Jews were killed in Haifa, and the environment in the city deteriorated significantly. In the summary of the Zionist paramilitary *Haganah* organization, it was stated that 'Haifa was the first instance where Jews moved from defence to attack... and it can be argued that from 1929 onwards the fight over hegemony in the city (between Jews and Arabs) began, to end only in 1948'.⁵⁶ This situation and the growing separation in the city have also had repercussions for the place of Arabic in the Jewish community, as it was gradually no longer perceived as the language of the neighbour but also as the language of the enemy.

The 1930 'Official Report' also mentioned Arabic studies including a statement regarding 'the unsatisfactory level of the pupils' and an explanation that this deficiency was caused by the lack of appropriate textbooks. The report mentions that the Reali School contacted 'experts' to compose a textbook designed for the Hebrew student (The Arabic Reader), and that this textbook 'will aim to give Arabic in the Hebrew school the same value that Latin has in an intermediate European school'.⁵⁷

Soon after the publication of the report, the two experts, Billig and Yellin, finished working on the various Arabic manuscripts for the Arabic Reader they co-edited. It was entitled *Collections of Readings* (lit. *Liḳuṭey Kri'a*), and was published in 1931. Titled in Arabic *Mukhtārāt al-Qirā'a*, the two editors mentioned in their introduction that the book aspired to facilitate Arabic studies through reading and grammatical comprehension, which were organized in the book according to their level of difficulty. The two mentioned that the texts compiled were chosen 'according to their cultural value in the life of Arab people, and their general cultural value... as well as Arabic literature that relate to the history of the people of Israel'. They also highlighted the direct support and encouragement of Biram in the making of the book.⁵⁸

The Arabic Reader, the first ever educational material designed for Hebrew students, brought together classic compositions from the history of Arabic writings,

and included works from the Pre-Islamic era, through the period of the Prophet Muhammad and the era of the first Caliphs, to the Umayyad period and the late period. It was a unique reader, published in a Hebrew and an English edition, both reprinted again before 1948. The variety of works in the anthology indicate the knowledge that Billig and Yellin wanted Jewish students of Arabic to acquire, which was a profound combination of classical Arabic writings from all times. Works such as those of al-Bukhārī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Shahristānī introduced the student to the profundity of Islamic and Arab thought, and other works – such as the travelogue of the great fourteenth-century Arab explorer Ibn Baṭūṭa, and especially his journey to the ‘country of Palestine’ (lit. *Bilād Filasṭīn*) which included a visit to the city of ‘Asqilān (Ashkelon), Al-Ramlah (Ramla), Nablus and ‘Akka (Acre) – attempted to bring the Jewish pupils closer to the region on a historical, geographical and cultural level.

The pioneering educational spirit of the Reali School, and Biram’s uncompromising efforts, were behind the creation of the Arabic Reader, which was already in use in the Reali during the 1931 school year. In 1933, another Arabic textbook was produced in the Reali School. It was Ḥabouba’s ‘Introduction to Arabic Syntax’: a short publication, which, unlike the Arabic Reader, was an internal textbook that was not printed in a publishing house, but reproduced internally in the school using stencils.⁵⁹ It was perhaps another development in Biram’s vision to create a textbook designated for Jewish students, but it was still far from the grammarian approach Biram wanted to develop.

In between these two publications, in 1932, Biram was gratified to learn that the Reali School was found by an inspection of the Government Education Department to be ‘the best Jewish secondary school in the country’ which can ‘compete with the foremost schools in Europe’.⁶⁰ With regard to languages, the report noted that English was the main foreign language taught at the school, but referred to Arabic studies as compulsory for all students born in the country (lit. *le-kol ha-talmidim bney ha-arets*). On top of this, Arabic was also mandatory for all eleventh and twelfth grade students who chose the ‘humanistic programme’ for their higher education.⁶¹

The compliments given to the Reali School were probably as pleasant for Biram as another development related more directly to Arabic studies in the school. In 1933, a young and promising German Jewish scholar of Oriental Studies, Dr Martin Plessner, was appointed as a teacher of Arabic in the Reali School, soon after he arrived in the country. Unlike al-Dawudi and Ḥabouba, Plessner’s first language was German and not Arabic, and he was educated at some of the best German Oriental institutions. Born in Posen in Germany in 1900, Plessner studied at the University of Berlin where he majored in Semitic languages and Islamic studies, and at the University of Breslau where he completed his PhD degree (titled ‘*Der Oikonomikos des Neupythagoreers Bryson und sein Einfluss auf die Islamische Wissenschaft*’⁶²) under the supervision of his mentor, Professor Gotthelf Bergsträßer. At the time, Plessner was also affiliated with the Oriental department at the Berlin State Library (headed by Prof. Gotthold Weil⁶³). After completing his studies he had held several positions, including at the Seminar for the History and Culture of the Islamic Orient at the University of Hamburg, the Institute of the History of Medicine and the Natural Sciences at the University of Berlin,⁶⁴ the Institute of Oriental Studies at Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University (headed by Prof. Paul Ernst Kahle with whom he kept up a

correspondence⁶⁵) and the Oriental Seminar at the University of Frankfurt (headed by Prof. Josef Horovitz, the founder of the Hebrew University's Institute of Oriental Studies).⁶⁶

At the beginning of 1933, after the Nazis came to power, Plessner was dismissed from all his academic positions, and a few months later, in spring 1933, he immigrated to Palestine. Plessner's profound knowledge of Semitic languages and evident academic excellence in Oriental studies, the Greek legacy in Islam, and especially Arabic grammar, captured the attention of Biram. He offered Plessner a position as an Arabic teacher at the Reali School, with an understanding that Plessner would continue his academic research; Plessner accepted the offer, moved to Haifa, and began his pedagogic career in the Reali School almost as soon as he arrived in the country.

The expeditious hiring of Plessner at the Reali School was probably due to the fact that his experience and approach were exactly what Biram – his former colleague from the University of Berlin – was looking for. Biram was familiar with Plessner's scholarly prowess – he was a genuine Renaissance Man – but no less importantly, he was aware that they both shared a view of some ideological, pedagogic elements. These were not because of their German origin as much as it was the legacy of German Orientalism, which posited that a focus on grammar has both practical relevance to understanding a language and 'an additional educational value due to its disciplinary and acculturating effect on the mind'.⁶⁷

This shared approach signalled the strengthening of the study of Arabic grammar in the Reali School, which directly followed Plessner's arrival. These patterns were evident in the teaching of Arabic, and in the project that Biram assigned to Plessner from his first day in the school: the preparation of a comprehensive and inclusive Arabic grammar textbook for the Hebrew student in Palestine, the project that Biram had wanted to accomplish for more than a decade.

The book was completed two years later, in 1935. Entitled *Theory of Arabic Grammar: A Guidebook for Hebrew Schools* (lit. 'Torat ha-Diḳduḳ ha-'Aravi: Sefer 'Ezrah le-Vatei Sefer 'Ivriyyim'), the textbook connected Arabic German philology to the emerging Jewish educational system in Palestine. This was evident on a few levels, from the book's dedication in memory of his 'teacher and spiritual guide, Gotthelf Bergsträßer',⁶⁸ through the rationale of the textbook and up to its very content. In the explanation to the book's rationale, Plessner expressed his appreciation to Biram, saying 'I owe him, first and foremost, my gratitude... for putting pressure on me and encouraging me to start and finish this project...'.⁶⁹ Plessner emphasized the unprecedented character of the act of composing this kind of textbook designed for Arabic Jewish pupils. 'I would like my readers and critics to remember', he wrote in the preface, 'that I did not have any similar example to follow' (lit. 'lo haya li mofet'). Plessner meant that in making Arabic grammar studies coherent for Hebrew students, he had to find ways to connect and clarify similarities between the two Semitic languages. This, he explained, 'will bring the students to even deeper understanding of Hebrew... through focusing on the systematic grammatical structures of Arabic... and through highlighting how the language of the Bible can be better understood through the study of Arabic'.⁷⁰

Following this explanation, which emphasizes similarities between Plessner's and Biram's perspectives, the former went on to clarify the sources on which he based his

textbook. In line with the pedagogic explanation, there was a strong German influence in the shaping of the textbook. Plessner mentioned the following books as those that had inspired and guided him in writing the textbook: *Arabische Grammatik* by Adolf Socin and Carl Brockelmann (Berlin, 1918); *Die Syntaktischen Verhältnisse des Arabischen* by Hermann Reckendorf (Leiden, 1895); *Arabische Syntax* by Hermann Reckendorf (Heidelberg, 1921); *Arabische Grammatik* by Carl Paul Caspari (Halle, 1887); *Grammaire Arabe* by Donat Vernier (Beirut, 1891) and *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* by William Wright (Cambridge, 1896).⁷¹ These references show even more clearly the connection with the philological German approach to Oriental studies, which were evident in the textbook and included a large number of tables, a division into three separate sections ('writing and accentology', 'morphology' and 'syntax') as well as the decision to write all the book's explanations in Hebrew.

In correspondence between Plessner and Richard Koebner,⁷² the former mentioned the work pressure in the school in the first year of his teaching, highlighting the workload under Biram's demands.⁷³ Yet elsewhere, when Plessner updated Koebner on the writing of the Arabic grammar textbook, one can sense the pride he took in the innovative nature of his project. *Hier im Lande*, Plessner wrote, *'bin ich auch Schulbuchautor geworden und habe eine arabische Schulgrammatik in hebräischer Sprache verfasst, ein Novum auch für Palästina.'*⁷⁴ Indeed, this was a milestone in the study of Arabic in the country, and one with a special focus on grammar. This achievement, however, symbolized the short-lived pinnacle of the grammarian approach in the Jewish school system in Palestine, especially as a great wave of violence was on the horizon, bringing with it new challenges and new approaches to the teaching of the language.

The rise of a new 'practical' approach

While Plessner's textbook opened up new opportunities for the study of Arabic language and culture, other, more powerful, developments were having a less auspicious effect on Jews and Arabs in Palestine. The year 1936 marked the beginning of a three-year period of violent clashes in Palestine, later known as the Great Arab Revolt. The clashes, which followed an Arab-Palestinian general strike and protests, resulted in thousands of casualties. The initial impetuses for the strike were Arab-Palestinian resistance to British rule in Palestine; a protest against the growing waves of Jewish immigration to the country, during the 1930s, which in many cases were related to the rise of Nazism in Germany;⁷⁵ and a protest against the proliferation of land purchases by Jewish-Zionist organizations which negatively affected the Arab-Palestinian *fellaḥīn* (peasants).⁷⁶ The deterioration in the relationship between Jewish and Palestinian communities in the country was expressed in increased hatred, fear and growing physical segregation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, which, according to British authorities, was linked, among other reasons, to the rise of nationalist education on both sides.⁷⁷

The field of Arabic studies was also hit by the same events, and not only on a psychological level. During those three bloody years in Palestine, the scholars who wrote the first Arabic Reader for the Jewish educational system – Billig and Yellin – were both murdered, in two separate incidents.⁷⁸ One can argue that their deaths – in a symbolic way – also marked the 'death' of the spirit of the first Arabic

Reader for Jewish schools, which attempted to bring Jewish students in the country closer to the Arabic language and culture. Other, more powerful and less educational processes, which took Palestine by storm at that time, signalled a different path for the life of Jews and Arabs in the country, and for the approach towards Arabic studies in general.

This political situation was, not coincidentally, coupled with the gradual decline of the grammarian approach to Arabic studies, and the steady strengthening of a more 'practical' approach, with a new and different focus than seen before. In line with other changes that occurred after 1936–39 (for example, the shift in the field of physical training in the Reali School⁷⁹), Arabic studies also 'reacted' to the political situation and to the upcoming changing needs of the Jewish political administration.

The field of Arabic studies was at a crossroads, and the situation in the field of Arabic at the Reali School in those years was at the same junction, in light of a series of successive, dissonant events: Plessner's grammar textbook was published in 1935, highlighting its aim to 'bring the students closer' to understanding Hebrew and the Bible; in the same year, Yellin published a Memorandum to all Jewish schools highlighting that a 'practical' approach should be taken in the teaching of Arabic, to enable Jewish pupils to express themselves in Arabic for daily needs;⁸⁰ in 1936, clashes began to beleaguer Palestine; in the same year, Billig was murdered, and his funeral evidently shook the world of Jewish Orientalism in Palestine to its foundations.⁸¹ In 1937, the official British Peel Commission published its recommendation, officially acknowledging that partition, and the creation of a Jewish state, was the solution for the ongoing unrest between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. In 1937, Yellin himself was murdered. In the same year, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the head of the Jewish National Council (and the future President of Israel), decided for the first time to take part in the meeting of the Arabic teachers of the Jewish Yishuv, to which Moshe Sharett (Shertok), the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency (and the future Prime Minister of Israel), was also invited.⁸²

These developments had an influence on the field of Arabic studies in the country, and it is evident that, in the wake of the Great Arab Revolt, the study of Arabic in the Yishuv had become more politically and security oriented.⁸³ This was a general change, which also included the engine of Arabic studies in the Yishuv, the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa. In light of the violence, it was clear that the grammarian approach could not be fully adhered to. It was also clear that Yellin's approach, and especially the acknowledgement of the utilitarian importance of Arabic for everyday life, had suffered a blow, as relationships between Jews and Arabs reached a nadir. Therefore, while in a May 1937 educational report on Arabic studies in the Reali School, an external committee stated that 'the level of the proper grammar education is indeed very high, as one can see in the achievements of the students in the grammatical verb cases... verb conjugation and derivatives...'⁸⁴ the school was actually in the midst of a change. Even Plessner himself, writing to his friend Ernst Simon,⁸⁵ mentioned that he intended to change the second edition of his grammar book as he had realized that 'school teaching is not science', and that he had been told his textbook was 'too academic'.⁸⁶

In the same vein, and at the very same time, the Reali's second Arabic teacher, Ḥabouba, was instructed by Biram to write a new Arabic textbook, whose approach would be somewhere between Yellin's and Plessner's. With a title that alludes to this

new approach (*Al-Dalil al-Ḥadīth* – ‘The New Teacher’), this textbook was later re-published in five more editions. It was a Primer for Arabic studies, which strikingly was not based on grammar manuals for the teaching of Arabic but on an approach based on English grammar studies.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the textbook’s pedagogic approach was different from Plessner’s: it was one that adapted techniques used in the study of English grammar to the teaching of Arabic grammar; it contained a relatively small number of new words in each of its 30 chapters, with great emphasis on repetition in each one; and it was not designed for the Jewish Hebrew student in the sense of identifying Semitic similarities between Hebrew and Arabic, between Arabic and Biblical language, and between Jews and Arabs, but was clearly intended primarily ‘for Hebrew students’ since all explanations were given in Hebrew.

Biram was satisfied with Ḥabouba’s book, yet he never explicitly expressed a direct pedagogical preference for ‘practical’ Arabic over the grammarian approach. This might have been due to the tension between subordinating himself to the emerging needs of the Zionist political establishment, on the one hand, and his German philological tradition of Oriental studies, on the other hand. One way or another, and in light of the changing political winds in the country, and in the field of Arabic studies *per se*, another development, which took place in the school in 1938, further supported the emerging new ‘practical’ approach at the Hevri School. In that year, a new teacher joined the Arabic teaching staff at the Hevri School: Ms Aviva Torovsky-Landman.

Born in Haifa in 1914 to Zionist parents who had emigrated from Russia, Torovsky was educated at the Hevri School and graduated in 1931. She was therefore an educational ‘product’ Biram was proud of: a *Sabra* woman, intelligent and outspoken, who had completed her studies at the Hevri successfully, and had evinced interest in the Arabic language. Following her high school graduation, she went on to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she studied Hebrew literature. In 1934, upon graduating, she began her Master’s degree at the American University of Beirut (AUB), joining her partner, Amos Landman. In Beirut, they both studied at the university, and in parallel carried out secret missions for the Political Department of the Jewish Agency.⁸⁸

Upon returning to Palestine in 1937, and following their marriage, Aviva Torovsky-Landman started working at the Hevri School, first as a private Arabic teacher for students of Plessner and Ḥabouba who were experiencing difficulties studying the language, and after a couple of years as a full member of the teaching staff. According to Glassman, during those years, and in conjunction with her work at the Hevri School, Torovsky-Landman continued to conduct ‘many missions for the Political Department of the Jewish Agency’.⁸⁹ These activities, even if kept secret, were definitely a new element in the field of Arabic studies at the Hevri School, which were not part of Plessner’s, Ḥabouba’s or al-Dawudi’s world of Arabic.

In line with this, as Torovsky-Landman became more involved in the field of Arabic studies in the school, three patterns that up until that moment had not existed, were emerging. The first was that publications began being sent to the school from the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, in a serial publication entitled *Yalqūt ha-Mizrah ha-Tikhon* (lit. ‘The Middle East Collection’).⁹⁰ This pioneering journal dealt with geo-political issues and addressed items in Arabic newspapers, and generally focused on social and political developments in Arab countries in the Middle

East. This was an important basis for the emerging Jewish-Zionist local Oriental research and especially for political developments in the region.⁹¹

The second pattern was related more specifically to Arabic studies. From the early 1940s, the Reali School launched an intensive Arabic class [lit. *ḵurs le-‘Aravit murḥevet*]. It was a stream of studies taught by three teachers: Plessner, who was in charge of the Classical Arabic part of the studies, and Ḥabouba and Torovsky-Landman, who were in charge of the ‘practical part’ (lit. *‘ha-lashon ha-shimushit’*).⁹² The course also gradually came to include socio-political information about the contemporary Middle East, such as lectures in Hebrew given by scholars from the Institute of Oriental Studies that dealt with current Middle Eastern politics, Arab folklore and society. This intensive Arabic class laid the foundations for the ‘Oriental Classes’ of the Reali School.⁹³

The third pattern was the decision to make a collection of newspaper articles (lit. *‘ḥoveret likuṭim’*) published and printed internally by the Reali School in 1939. This was most likely related to the new ‘practical’ approach towards Arabic studies, which emphasized current geo-political affairs and was influenced by the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. Strikingly, this collection of articles signalled the inception of a series of such publications, which included, among others, Moshe Brill’s *The Basic Vocabulary for Daily Arabic Newspapers* (lit. *Otsar Milot ha-Yesod Ba-‘Itanut ha-Yomit ha-‘Aravit*);⁹⁴ a project entitled ‘Selections from the Arabic Press’ (in Hebrew: *Leḵeṭ min ha-‘Itanut ha-‘Aravit*), which was a short pamphlet published monthly by the Arabic Department of the Jewish educational system and distributed among Jewish schools;⁹⁵ and three more textbooks that focused on Arabic newspapers and political vocabulary, published in 1945–46.⁹⁶

These newspaper-oriented textbooks, which began in the Hebrew Reali School, were all part of a pattern that gained pace from the end of the 1930s, and that linked socio-political and geo-political affairs to the study of Arabic in Jewish schools. This linkage was expressed by Yisrael Wolfensohn (Ben-Ze’ev), a leading figure in the field of Arabic studies and the Supervisor of Arabic studies in Jewish schools in the years 1941–64.⁹⁷ According to Ben-Ze’ev, in 1939, in the period following the 1936–39 great political violence, he arranged a meeting with Shlomo Dov Goitein (in his capacity as Supervisor of Jewish schools in the government Education Department), David Zvi Baneth (the Institute of Oriental Studies) and Arthur Biram (the Hebrew Reali School), in which he insisted that the study of Arabic should not be for academic purposes only – ‘as if the aim of Arabic studies in high school is to train students for future studies in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Hebrew University’ – but also to enable the pupils to use Arabic in a ‘practical way’ on everyday matters, without having to resort to using the ‘dead Classical language’.⁹⁸

This helps to put the Hebrew Reali School in the greater context of the Jewish educational system, and to highlight the external pressures that drove the new ‘practical’ approach. For example, in a letter Ben-Ze’ev sent to Avraham Arnon, the Director of the Education Department of the Jewish Agency, the former complimented the teaching of Arabic at the Reali School, but also criticized it. According to Ben-Ze’ev, the Reali School in Haifa was definitely the best Jewish school for Arabic studies, yet ‘even in this institution the direction of studies must be changed: the current direction has scientific and research characteristics, rather than practical ones [lit. *‘ha-kiyun bo hu mada’i ve-mehḵari yoter me-asher ma’asi’*]. This method of teaching might suit

Arabic studies in a European university, but we need Arabic for real practical needs...'.⁹⁹ It is unclear what Ben-Ze'ev meant by 'real practical needs' (lit. *'tserakhim ma'asuyim shel mamash'*) but this top-down 'professional encouragement' that was directed at the Hebrew Reali School, the leading institute of Arabic studies in the Jewish educational system, resembled a similar process that was simultaneously taking place at the Hebrew University's Institute of Oriental Studies, the leading institution of its kind in the country.¹⁰⁰

These pressures were also indicative of the changes the Reali School was undergoing, such as the arrival of Torovsky-Landman, growing links to the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, and growing support for the study of Arabic by means of newspaper-oriented materials.¹⁰¹ This was part of a new 'direction', to use Ben-Ze'ev's words, which was gradually becoming more 'practical' than before. In line with this, it was Ḥabouba's textbook, 'The New Teacher', which gave voice to a more 'practical' approach towards studies; it was republished in 1941 both because the first edition had sold out and because Biram encouraged him to compose a second part.¹⁰² A similar indication of the growing 'practical' direction was seen in another publication put out by the Reali School: the second edition of Billig and Yellin's Reader. This edition, published by the Reali School in 1943, had a foreword written by Biram, followed by an 'Introduction to the Second Edition' written by Torovsky-Landman. There, she mentioned that '[in this second edition] many chapters have been omitted... Almost one-third of the (original) Reader was omitted. This was done as it was found to be difficult to study all these texts in the second and third year of Arabic studies, and especially as in the [Hebrew] schools a considerable part of the lessons is now dedicated to practical Arabic'.¹⁰³

These 'second edition' publications help to demonstrate the strengthening of a specific 'practical' approach towards Arabic studies which was introduced in the Reali School. This could be due to the changing political atmosphere in the country, the need of the establishment for pupils with basic Arabic skills, changes in the Reali teaching staff, external pressures, or a combination of all of the above. One way or another, the progression towards 'practicality' was one that altogether marginalized former educational processes such as those relating to Arabic grammar, the focus on similarities between Hebrew and Arabic, and the use of Arabic for the understanding of the Bible.

It is not clear whether it was these developments or perhaps obvious academic aspirations that prompted Plessner to leave the school. Whatever the reasons were, in 1945 he announced his departure, and moved to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ Plessner's replacement at the school was Meir Jacob Kister, who arrived at the Reali in 1945 and was in charge of the study of Classical and Literary Arabic. Born in 1914 in Mościska, still under Austro-Hungarian rule, Kister grew up in a religious Jewish family and was educated at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Przemyśl. He pursued his BA studies at the Hebrew University's Institute for Oriental Studies, following which he was appointed as a press attaché at the Polish embassy in Beirut.¹⁰⁵ In Lebanon, Kister honed his Arabic skills, and according to his former student, the Israeli journalist Yehouda Litani, it was there that Kister – like Torovsky-Landman – was first involved in missions with a security-political orientation.¹⁰⁶

Upon moving back to Palestine, Kister started his MA studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University and began working as an Arabic teacher

at the Hebrew Reali School. Kister was moving between two significant Oriental-Arabic spheres of the Jewish Yishuv at the time, both of them undergoing some sort of change. At the Hebrew University, he stood out as a prominent scholar working on *Ādāb al-Šuḥba* (composed by the tenth-century Damascene jurist al-Sulāmi). In parallel, he began teaching at the Hebrew Reali School, where he was a proponent of a philological approach towards Arabic studies that emphasized reading long, full-length, Arabic compositions.

Kister slightly differed from Plessner, yet the two maintained very good relations.¹⁰⁷ The Kisterian approach was evident in his focus on Literary Arabic texts (some composed by him) through which the language was learned together with its grammar. This meant that Kister had a slightly different approach to the German philological tradition of Oriental studies as ‘grammar for discipline’ and the ‘Latin of the Middle East’. Being a product of the Hebrew University and especially of the Institute of Oriental Studies during the years that followed the Hartog Committee’s recommendations¹⁰⁸ may suggest that Kister, as great and thorough scholar as he was, encapsulated a modified perception regarding the ‘boundaries’ of Oriental and Arabic studies and the appropriate way to serve both ends: Arabic for academic, philological, and historical research, as well as in the service of the emerging Jewish state. As such, it can be argued that the ramifications of the Hartog Committee, and its support for ‘contemporary’ research, have had far-reaching effects.

Interestingly, similar shifts towards more ‘practical’ or ‘contemporary’ study of Arabic, or the new double ‘aims’ of Oriental studies generally – for research and for state needs – was a pattern evident not only in Palestine, but also in other Oriental departments. This can be seen, for example, in the Oriental research in Germany and the 1935 Report prepared by Paul E. Kahle¹⁰⁹; in the change of ‘direction’ in Oriental studies at the University of Bonn after the end of the Second World War¹¹⁰; as well as in research studies conducted by Oriental studies’ departments in the US.¹¹¹ Strikingly, and in light of the aforementioned geo-political situation, Gil Eyal also highlighted similar changes that took place in the field of Oriental studies in the Jewish community in Palestine, and mentioned Kister as one of the scholars who was influenced by the changing needs of the state and the lure of urgent political and even intelligence needs.¹¹² In this light, and paraphrasing David Myers, the German Jewish Orientalists in Palestine were indeed ‘successors’ – not only to the intellectual heritage of German Orientalism, but also to parallel shifts that were taking place in this field in the West.¹¹³

The emerging combination of Arabic studies in the Reali School, which included Torovsky-Landman (the ‘practical’ approach), Ḥabouba (‘The New Teacher’) and Kister (the academic scholar who later established the ‘Oriental Classes’) was lauded by an external governmental committee that looked into Arabic studies in the Reali in 1947. In its report, the committee concluded that the ‘different approaches’ towards Arabic that co-existed in the school as represented by its three teachers was actually the best ‘and most balanced’ way to study the language.¹¹⁴ What was not mentioned was that along the way, and from 1913 until 1947, the general ‘balance’ had shifted: from one that indicated how Arabic can be used for humanistic knowledge and for highlighting the Jewish–Muslim shared history and values, as well as the closeness between Semitic Hebrew and Arabic, to one that was ‘practical’, a result of the changing political situation, and one that has gradually tended to place

more emphasis on political and current affairs. This changing balance shows that at the end of the day, the field of Arabic studies, as shaped in the Hebroni School, did not bring Jews and Arabs closer together but did quite the reverse. As such, and as delineated by Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, the field of Arabic studies was part and parcel of the emerging Zionist thought that did not challenge the dichotomy between Europe and the Orient and only corresponded to the desire to be in the Orient physically in a way that would help it to further assimilate into the West.¹¹⁵

Epilogue: Arabic studies at a crossroads

Aviva Torovsky-Landman used to welcome me with her typical verbal provocation (lit. *ķinṭur ofyani*). ‘Aren’t you part of the *Ta’abbata Sharrans*,¹¹⁶ she used to ask, using her special code-word for the Kisterian gang of those addicted to Classical Arabic studies. She used to say it, as Aviva – despite being chronologically part of the ‘old generation’ – was by any other criteria part of the ‘new generation’. This was evidenced by her understanding, her attitude, and her definition of the new Arabic pedagogy... No longer ‘the Latin of the Middle East’ as the great educator Biram used to say, but a daily, living, vigorous language... first and foremost the language of media, way of life and customs, a language of dialogue with enemies who are neighbours.¹¹⁷

The above quote from Lea Glassman, one of Torovsky-Landman’s students, seems to capture well the ‘regime change’ in the field of Arabic studies – from the focus on Grammar or Classical Arabic to the gradual rise of a new ‘practical’ Arabic. This shift was the outcome of the crucial period analyzed here, in which the pedagogical tensions over the ‘correct’ approach to Arabic studies culminated in a unique approach that gained in popularity and that has influenced the Jewish educational system at large.

This approach towards Arabic studies, the Arabic of the ‘new generation’ to use Glassman’s words, was however not totally ‘new’. It was based on a curriculum that included established elements, such as classical texts and verb conjugation, and that was connected to the ‘Latin approach’ initially promulgated by Plessner, Biram, Kister and, generally speaking, by their traditional German philological approach. At the same time, it included elements from a different approach towards Arabic, which focused on a simpler register of language and on ‘modern’ Middle-Eastern Arabic. This created the special amalgam of Arabic studies, which was shaped in the Hebroni School, and which was extolled by the government committee in 1947, at the very end of the period discussed here.

This ‘combination’, however, was not simply the co-existence of different approaches alongside each other, but the emergence of a new approach towards Arabic studies that emphasized its importance for understanding contemporary socio-political events. These shifts – from traditional philology and historical texts to ‘practical’ Arabic and contemporary materials – were evident among German Orientalists even outside the Jewish sphere in Palestine. There, as here, the shifts related to changing political environments and interests of national bodies, which resulted in new considerations that affected academic Oriental research (the 1934 Hartog

committee in the case at hand). As shown in this study, it also formed part of the shifts relating to Arabic studies in the school system.

The scrutiny of the Hebrew Reali School provides evidence of the emergence of a new 'practical' approach towards Arabic studies on many levels. Examples of this are Plessner's decision to adapt the second edition of his grammar book so that it would not be 'too academic' (1937); or his support for the newspaper project (1941); Ḥabouba's attempt to adhere more closely to the new 'practical' approach for the second edition of his book (1941); the growing support of Goitein and Biram in the news items' textbook edited by Torovsky-Landman and Dana (1946); or the school's changing Arabic curriculum which in the late 1940s also included socio-political lectures, in Hebrew, about Arab folklore and Arab people.

The new 'practical' approach towards Arabic studies, which gradually became predominant, was therefore not one that ignored the Oriental Grammar approach or its scholars – including Plessner and Kister – and also not one that ignored other approaches – such as the natural Arabic orientation of Ḥabouba and al-Dawudi. Instead, the new 'practical' approach towards Arabic, as pushed forward by Torovsky-Landman, was based on elements taken from both sources – from practices that the German scholars brought with them from Berlin and Frankfurt, and from methods that the Arab-Jewish teachers brought with them from Beirut and Damascus. Yet, in the moulding of this new 'practical' approach, some crucial elements of both were 'forgotten'.

With regard to the German Orientalist traditional approach, this included the notion of Arabic as 'the Latin of the Middle East'. This formerly central element of Arabic studies used to symbolize the vital significance of Arabic grammar in the creation of a disciplined, cultured Jewish elite, a concept that totally disappeared in the 1940s. The new 'practical' approach also neglected the ability of Arabic studies to bring the Jewish pupils closer to Hebrew through highlighting the similarities between the two Semitic 'sisters' as an integrating, almost romantic, ideal. On top of this, the new 'practical' approach also marginalized the linkage initially proposed by German Jewish educators, between Arabic studies and Jewish and Muslim rapprochement and shared history. These were all German Oriental notions that were crushed on the shores of Palestine and in the furnace of the heightened Jewish Arab conflict.

Interestingly, central elements that were evident in the original 'practical' approach to Arabic studies, as shown by the Arab-Jewish teachers al-Dawudi and Ḥabouba, were also marginalized. The skills they initially propounded included mastering spoken Arabic, a focus on independent essay composition in Arabic, and a belief that studying Arabic is connected to Jewish existence as part of the Arab world as well as to Jewish religious texts (both Ḥabouba and al-Dawudi were observant Jews). These ideas, however, were marginalized along the way, and the new 'practical' approach has retained mainly the study of 'Arab folklore' as well as the influence of Colloquial Arabic on the reading of the text. In other words, the 'practical' approach, which precluded the insertion of Jewish and Muslim elements into German scholarship, also did not allow for the inclusion of the Jewish and Arab elements of the Arab Jewish teachers. In this way, the elements that were evident in both original approaches to Arabic and which revealed intimate interactions between the people and their languages, and which had implications for the way Arabic

studies can bring Jews and Arabs closer together, were marginalized on the backdrop of the growing separation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, the dividing political moments of 1929 and 1936–39, and the emergence of two national movements in Palestine, hostile to one another, each of which saw the outcome of the conflict with the other as a zero-sum game.

In this process, both traditional methods, the German-philological and the Arab Jewish one, were stripped of their respective positive ideological contexts to create a new, local, Zionist, ‘practical’ mode of Arabic studies. This pattern, for example, was still in need of grammar studies in order to be able to understand Arabic texts, but these texts were gradually more connected to newspapers. In other words, while the initial phase of Arabic studies in the Reali School was concerned with the ability to get closer to the Jewish ‘self’, the later phase of Arabic studies, on the eve of the 1948 War, was one that was more preoccupied with the way Arabic studies can help understand the Arab world, the Arab ‘other’.

In conclusion, this paper has underlined the educational tug-of-war that shaped the field of Arabic studies in the Hebrew Reali School. It has shown how the period analyzed here included central dilemmas relating to language study, and how the clash between approaches generated a new ‘practical’ approach. This approach was the sum of the ‘concessions’ made and the compromises found to enable a ‘combined’ pattern of Arabic studies in the school that would correspond to the changing needs in light of a changing political environment. It shows that the Reali was a pioneering institution in another sense too; in this case, not only in its products, but also in the ideological and pedagogic clashes that created a new leading ‘practical’ attitude to the study of Arabic. The Reali School, one can argue, indeed served as a compass for the emerging educational system with regard to Arabic studies, but whether this approach has been able to show the Jewish student the right direction towards due North is a question that remains open.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

This work was supported by the ISF (Israeli Science Foundation) under grant 633/12. It was written as part of my post-doctoral research conducted at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I would like to thank the Director of the Center, Prof. Yfaat Weiss, for her wise and helpful comments. I would also like to thank Adi Livny for her help with translating some of the texts from German to English.

1. A. Biram, ‘How I Established the Reali School’, *The Aviezer Yellin Archives of Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora – Tel Aviv University (AYAJE)*, 8.41/3182 [in Hebrew], p.2.
2. A. Biram, ‘The Training of Teachers and the University’, *The Hebrew Reali School Archive (HRSA)* [in Hebrew].
3. In: *Yedi’ot la-Morim (News for the Teachers) of the Hebrew Reali School* 122, HRSA (Nov. 1955), p.4.
4. Y. Shapira, *In an Educational Service* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1987), p.11 [in Hebrew]; *Yedi’ot la-Morim* 83, HRSA (Feb. 1950), pp.7–9; *Yedi’ot la-Morim* 153, HRSA (March 1964).

5. The transcript of Arthur Biram's speech, on his 80th birthday, 1958. *HRSA*. For further reading on physical training in the Reali School, see: O. Ashkenazi, 'Biramschule in Context – The "German" Influence on Jewish Body Culture in Mandate Palestine', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* (2013), pp.17–39.
6. A. Carmeli, *One Hundred Years of Achievements in Metropolitan Haifa, 1906–2006* (Haifa: Nir, 2010), p.230 [in Hebrew].
7. 'Beth-Sefer Reali, Haifa', Report (Jan. 1932), *Central Zionist Archives (CZA)*, J17-6601.
8. See, for example: Y. Dror, 'Hebrew Education in Haifa during the British Mandate: Three Representative Examples', *Idan*, Vol.12 (1989), pp.208–23 [in Hebrew].
9. Y. Shapira, 'About the Late Dr Biram and the Origins of the Hebrew Reali School', *HRSA* (March 1973) [in Hebrew]; B. Spolsky, 'Hebrew and Israeli Identity', in: Y. Suleiman (ed.), *Language and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp.186–7; S. Halperin [in Hebrew], *Dr A. Biram and His 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1970), p.73.
10. J. Bentwich, *Education in the State of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Chachik Publishing House, 1970), p.27 [in Hebrew]. See also: S. Haramati, *The Pioneer Teachers in Eretz Yisrael* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 2000), p.45 [in Hebrew].
11. These figures perceived the 'revival' of Hebrew as a crucial part of the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. See, for example: D. Yellin, 'The Rebirth of the Hebrew Language at the Rebirth of the Nation in General', *Leshonenu*, Vol.10, No.4 (1940), pp.275–7 [in Hebrew]. For further reading on the 'Language War', see: B. Spolsky, *Language Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.186–8; A. Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012), pp.61–2.
12. A. Biram, 'How I established the Reali School', *AYAJE*, 8.41/3182 [in Hebrew].
13. Mentioned in: E. Meltser, *The Hebrew Reali School's 90th Anniversary* (Haifa: The Hebrew Real School, 2004), p.104 [in Hebrew].
14. S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.80 [in Hebrew].
15. For further reading on the connection between language, society and political conflict, see: Y. Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); J. Blommaert (ed.), *Language Ideological Debates* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999); B. Spolsky and E. Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology, and Practice* (Cleveland: Multilingual Matters, 1999).
16. Mentioned in a letter sent by the Supervisor of Arabic studies, Yisrael Ben-Ze'ev, to the Director of the General Stream of education, Avraham Arnon, dated 3 June 1943, *CZA*, J17/322. See also: N. Kinberg and R. Talmon, 'Learning of Arabic by Jews and the Use of Hebrew Among Arabs in Israel', *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol.20 (1994), pp.38–9.
17. 'Programma: The Hebrew Reali School', 1913, *AYAJE*, 8.105/2.
18. On the centrality of Jewish studies in German Orientalism, see: A. Raz-Krakotzkin, 'A Few Comments on Orientalism, Jewish Studies and Israeli Society', *Jama'a*, Vol.3, No.2 (1998), p.36 [in Hebrew].
19. R. Irwin, 'Writing About Islam and the Arabs,' *Ideology and Consciousness*, 9 (1981–1982), p.108.
20. S. Heschel, 'German Jewish Scholarship on Islam as a Tool for De-Orientalizing Judaism', *New German Critique*, 117 (Fall 2012), p.91. See also: A.B. Sapsonik, 'Europe and Its Orients in Zionist Culture Before the First World War,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.49, No.4, 2006, pp.1105–23.
21. O. Ashkenazi, 'Biramschule in Context – The "German" Influence on Jewish Body Culture in Mandate Palestine', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, (2013), pp.20–21.
22. 'Programma: The Hebrew Reali School', *AYAJE* (1913), 8.105/2.
23. *Ibid.*
24. This could be related to *Ezra's* planned programme for Arabic studies in the *Technikum* and the *Realschule*, which was presented during the 'Language War' but never implemented. According to *Ezra's* plan '*Arabisch und Türkisch wird so intensiv getrieben, dass die Schüler mit der eingesessenen Bevölkerung des Orients und den ottomanischen Behörden in enge bürgerliche und geschäftliche Beziehungen zu treten vermögen.*' In: Dr Paul Nathan's '*Jüdisches Institut für Technische Erziehung in Palästina*', Berlin, dated 27 Oct. 1913, *CZA*, A63/1.

25. Haifa was at the time a city of roughly 30,000 people, out of which the Arab-Palestinians (Muslims and Christians) made up the majority of more than 25,000, while the Jewish residents (most of them Sephardim who had emigrated to the city from Turkey, Northern Africa and Syria) made up about 12–15 per cent of the population and were estimated at 3500 people. See: M. Yazbak, *Haifa in the Late Ottoman Period, 1864–1914: A Muslim Town in Transition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p.95. See also: S. al-Dawudi, *Memoirs of Salim (Shalom) al-Dawudi the son of Rabbi Makhloof al-Dawudi* (Haifa, 1950) [in Hebrew].
26. Compare with: S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Realī' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.442 [in Hebrew].
27. See, for example: M. Milson, 'The beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem' *Judaism*, 45 (Spring 1996), p.177; S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and his 'Realī' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.442 [in Hebrew]; For a general analysis of this line of thought, see: M. Kramer, *The Jewish Discovery of Islam* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1999), p.20.
28. On the perception of Arabic as the 'Latin of the East', see: G. Dagmar and W. Reuschel, 'Status Types and Status Changes in the Arabic Language', in: U. Ammon and M. Hellinger (eds.), *Status Change of Languages* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), pp.85–6, 94.
29. Mentioned in: 'Official Report: 1928–1929 – The Hebrew Realī School', *AYAJE*, 8.45/3236, p.9 [in Hebrew]. See also: M. Milson, 'The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem' *Judaism*, 45 (Spring 1996), p.177.
30. M.J. Kister, 'Summary: The Teaching of Arabic in High School Classes', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 123–124, *HRSa* (March 1956), p.15.
31. S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Realī' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.443 [in Hebrew].
32. M. Milson, 'The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem' *Judaism*, 45 (Spring 1996), p.177.
33. This was also the approach of the 'revival' of Hebrew, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. See: E. Ben-Yehuda, 'Filling the Missing Parts in our Language,' in *Proceedings of the Hebrew Language Council*, Vol.4 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew Language Council, 1912), p.9 [in Hebrew].
34. S. al-Dawudi, *Memoirs of Salim (Shalom) al-Dawudi the Son of Rabbi Makhloof al-Dawudi* [in Hebrew]; See also: 'Arthur Biram's Retirement Speech', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 76, *HRSa* (Oct. 1948).
35. Born in Morocco, the former Ḥakham Bāshī (Chief Rabbi) of the Acre region and the former Chief Rabbi of Haifa.
36. This is why al-Dawudi chose to translate into Arabic the first Hebrew modern novel, *Ahavat Tsiyon*, written by Avraham Mapu. Information from: S. al-Dawudi, *Memoirs of Salim (Shalom) al-Dawudi the Son of Rabbi Makhloof al-Dawudi*, pp.193–195 [in Hebrew]; M. Kayyal, 'Salim al Dawudi and the Beginning of Translations into Arabic of Modern Hebrew Literature', *Target*, Vol.20, No.1 (2008), pp.58–9; I. Ben Dor, 'My Term in the Realī School', http://media.wix.com/ugd/ba31cc_7e3dbab30d1a48958cd5de428fc70229.pdf (accessed: 9 Oct. 2014).
37. S. al-Dawudi, *Memoirs of Salim (Shalom) al-Dawudi the Son of Rabbi Makhloof al-Dawudi*, p.269 [in Hebrew].
38. *Ibid.*, p.194.
39. Information is taken from: 'Übersiedlung des Direktors der Haifaer Realschule Dr A. Biram aus dem Deutschen ins türkische Heer im I. Weltkrieg 1915', *CZA*, Z3-1568; Letter sent from Biram, Damascus, dated 6 March 1918, *The City of Haifa Archive (CHA)*, 2364; G. Gara, 'Their Days on the Carmel', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 3 (Summer 1994), *AYAJE*, 8.45/3247, [in Hebrew]; Y. Dror, 'The Influence of the Realī', *Panim*, 42 (2008), p.14 [in Hebrew].
40. A. Biram, 'In Memory of Yoseph 'Azaryahu', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 4 (May 1945), *CZA*, J17-4073, p.1 [in Hebrew]. For further reading, see: M. Ma'oz, *Muslim Attitudes to Jews and Israel* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), p.6; T. Segev, *Palestine Under the British* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1999), pp.20–26.
41. S. al-Dawudi, *Memoirs of Salim (Shalom) al-Dawudi the Son of Rabbi Makhloof al-Dawudi*, pp.1–282 [in Hebrew].
42. Information from: Eliyahu Ḥabouba, 'The Photo Album of the Hebrew Realī Teachers', *The Hebrew Realī School Archive*; 'Eliyahu Ḥabouba (Ḥabib)', *Encyclopaedia of the Founders and Builders of Israel*. <http://www.tidhar.tourolib.org/tidhar/view/12/4098> (accessed: 10 Oct. 2014).

43. M. Dana, 'Eliyahu Ḥabouba', The Photo Album of the Hebrew Reali Teachers, *The Hebrew Reali School Archive*.
44. Gershon Gara remembers that he was the only non-Ashkenazi student in Ḥabouba's class in the 1920s. G. Gara 'Their Days on the Carmel', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 3 (Summer 1994), *AYAJE*, 8.45/3247, p.141 [in Hebrew].
45. For information about Baerwald's contribution to the emerging field of architecture, See: G. Herbert and S. Sosnovsky, *Bauhaus on the Carmel and the Crossroads of Empire: Architecture and Planning in Haifa During the British Mandate* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 1993); M. Warhaftig, *Sie legten den Grundstein. Leben und Wirken deutschsprachiger jüdischer Architekten in Palästina 1918–1948* (Berlin and Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1996), pp.34–41; Alexandra Nocke, *The Place of the Mediterranean in Modern Israeli Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p.112. For further reading on Jewish settlement on the Carmel, see: Y. Ben-Artzi, *The Creation of the Carmel as a Segregated Jewish Residential Space in Haifa, 1918–1948* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 2004) [in Hebrew].
46. Shlomo Horowitz, who taught history at the Reali, remembers this move as a courageous decision of Biram, who 'had the vision to buy a large piece of land "beyond the mountains of darkness", at a time when only a small number of Jewish families' lived on the Carmel Mountain. S. Horowitz, 'On Biram's Character' *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 6 (Aug. 1953), *HRSA*, p.2.
47. For further reading on the establishment of the Hadar Ha-Carmel neighbourhood and the operation of its local residential council, see: Y. Weiss, *A Confiscated Memory: Wadi Salib and Haifa's Lost Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp.70–72.
48. S.D. Goitein's most famous scholarly work was published in six different volumes of his books *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* by University of California Press. For further reading about his work, see: M.A. Friedman, 'Prof. S.D. Goitein, The Person and the Scholar', *The World Union of Jewish Studies*, Vol.52 (1986), pp.51–66 [in Hebrew]; A.W. Hughes, 'The "Golden Age" of Muslim Spain: Religious Identity and the Invention of a Tradition in Modern Jewish Studies', in: S. Engler and G.P. Grieve (eds.), *Historicizing Tradition in the Study of Religion* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp.68–71.
49. The first meeting of the 'Arabic Teachers' Committee', 24 July 1924, found in: S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and his 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.444 [in Hebrew]. For an explanation of grammar translation, see: A. Fragman, 'The Grammar Translation Method in Arabic Language Teaching 2005–2006' [in Hebrew]. *E-mago: Israeli Online Magazine for Culture and Content* (24 Sep. 2006). <http://www.e-mago.co.il/Editor/edu-1260.htm> (accessed: 10 Oct. 2014); See also: K.M. Wahba, Z.A. Taha, and L. England (eds.), *Handbook for Arabic Language Teaching Professionals in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.14, 107–10.
50. 'Official Report: 1926 – The Hebrew Reali School', *AYAJE*, 1.3/11, p.2 [in Hebrew].
51. Ibid.
52. A. Biram, 'On Training Teachers and the University', undated, *HRSA* [in Hebrew].
53. See: Esco Foundation for Palestine, *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies*, Vol.1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p.587.
54. H. Cohen, *Tarpatl1929: Year Zero of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2013).
55. 'Official Report: 1928–1929 – The Hebrew Reali School', *AYAJE*, 8.45/3236, p.5 [in Hebrew].
56. Mentioned in: E. Meltser, *The Hebrew Reali School's 90th Anniversary*, p.167 [in Hebrew].
57. Ibid, p.9.
58. L. Billig and A. Yellin, *The Arabic Reader* (Jerusalem and London: Macmillan, 1931).
59. S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.519 [in Hebrew].
60. 'Beth Sefer Reali Haifa: Visited 25th–27th January 1932', *CZA*, J17-6601, p.18.
61. Ibid.
62. 'The Oeconomicus of the Neo-Pythagorean Bryson and Its Influence on Islamic Science' (Heidelberg, 1928).
63. See: S. Mangold-Will, "Gotthold Weil, die Orientalische Philologie und die deutsche Wissenschaft an der Hebräischen Universität", *Naharaim*, Vol.8, No.1 (2014), pp.74–90.
64. F. Klein-Franke, *In Memory of Prof. Martin M. Plessner* (Jerusalem: The Institute of Oriental Studies, 1975), p.7.
65. Y. Weiss, "'A Man with His Life at Both Ends of Time": Leah Goldberg, Paul Ernst Kahle, and Appreciating the Mundane' *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol.37, No.1 (2009), p.149.

66. R. Johnston-Bloom, 'Symbiosis Relocated: The German-Jewish Orientalist Ilse Lichtenstadter in America,' *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 58 (2013), p.4; information taken from: 'Plessner – CV', in: *Plessner Until 1958, The Hebrew University Archive (HUA)*.
67. In: U. Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p.107.
68. M. Plessner, *Theory of Arabic Grammar: A Guidebook for Hebrew Schools* (Haifa: The Hebrew Reali School, 1935) [in Hebrew].
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Wright's book was a translation from the German of Caspari's book, and it was mentioned that it includes 'numerous additions and corrections'.
72. Koebner was renowned social philosopher and historian; a leading figure in the establishment of the department of history at the Hebrew University; and a scholar who, like Plessner, was born in Germany, studied at the University of Breslau and at the University of Berlin, and was forced to leave his homeland following the rise of the Nazis in 1933.
73. Mentioned in a letter sent from Plessner to Koebner, dated 9 Nov. 1936, *CZA*, A-530/39.
74. 'Here in the country I also became a textbook author and composed an Arabic grammar textbook in Hebrew, which is a novelty for Palestine.' Mentioned in a letter sent from Plessner to Koebner, dated 16 June 1936, *CZA*, A-503/37.
75. Johnston-Bloom states that following the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, 25 per cent of all full professors and some 33 per cent of all academics in the field of Oriental studies at German universities were Jewish scholars dismissed from their positions. In: R. Johnston-Bloom, 'Symbiosis Relocated: The German-Jewish Orientalist Ilse Lichtenstadter in America,' *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 58 (2013), p.2.
76. U. Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p.5.
77. During the 1940s, Jerald Farrel, the British Director of the Department of Education, went so far as to state that the national aims of the Zionist-Jewish school system, as well as the attempts of Jamal al-Hussayni to influence the Arab-Palestinian school system, were comparable with the Nazi educational system. In: 'Notes on Jewish Education and the McNair Report', dated 30 Nov. 1946, *The National Archives – London (TNA)*, CO 733-476-2, p.2. See also: T. Segev, *Palestine Under the British*, p.317.
78. Billig was killed in the very first months of the clashes, in August 1936, when he was shot in his study in the Talpiyot neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Yellin was murdered a year later, in October 1937 – he was shot just outside his workplace at the offices of the government Educational Department in Jerusalem. See: H. Lavsky (ed.), *The History of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), Vol.2 (part 1), p.395.
79. O. Ashkenazi, 'Biramshule in Context – The "German" Influence on Jewish Body Culture in Mandate Palestine', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* (2013), p.26.
80. A. Yellin, 'About Teaching Arabic in the Hebrew High Schools,' in Jacob M. Landau (ed.), *Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language* Jacob M. Landau (Jerusalem: The School of Education of the Hebrew University and the Ministry of Education, 1934), p.75 [in Hebrew].
81. At his funeral, the following people eulogized him: Judah Leon Magnes, Shlomo Dov Goitein, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Mordechai Kosover, Avino'am Yellin, and Pesach Bar Adon (from the *Haganah*).
82. In the meeting, Ben-Zvi said that 'Arabic teaching is a big failure in Hebrew schools... and we need to create strata of young people who can speak Arabic for special state issues'. In: *Proceedings of the Arabic Teachers Committee*, dated 10 April 1938, *CZA*, J17/319.
83. Y. Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.30; See also: S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.455 [in Hebrew].
84. Meeting dated 5 Oct. 1937, in: S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.452 [in Hebrew].
85. Simon was a Jewish-German educational philosopher who had previously taught at the Reali School, and at the time was a researcher at the Hebrew University.
86. Plessner mentioned that the criticism was made by Alexander Duschkin, the German-Polish educator, the founder of the Hebrew University's Secondary School, and that this made him revise the

textbook. He wrote to Simon saying, 'Ich exemplifizierte auf meine arabische Grammatik und deren beabsichtigte Umarbeitung in der bevorstehenden zweiten Auflage, eben aus der Erkenntnis heraus, daß Schulunterricht keine Wissenschaft sei'.

'I exemplify this in my Arabic grammar textbook and its intended revision in the forthcoming second edition, which was made simply due to the realization that school teaching is no science.'

Martin Plessner's letter to Ernst Simon, dated 26 April 1937, *CZA*, A503-15.

87. Ḥabouba mentioned that the book was based on Michael Philip West's *New Method Readers for Teaching English Reading to Foreign Children* (London, 1936).
88. Among other missions, Amos Landman was described as 'a Jewish agent operating in Lebanon' where he collected information on Italian banks in Beirut that delivered money to the Arab-Palestinian leadership in the country. According to Muhareb, Aviva Torovsky's thesis at AUB, on 'The Arab Nationalist Movement', was her cover for monitoring and collecting information on Lebanese and Syrian political leaders. He found out that following their marriage in Beirut, Landman and Torovsky 'formed an espionage cell that remained active for a number of years'. For further reading, See: M. Muhareb, 'The Zionist Disinformation Campaign in Syria and Lebanon During the Palestinian Revolt, 1936–1939', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.42, No.2 (Winter 2013), p.9.; Y. Gelber, *The Roots of the Lily: The Intelligence in the Yishuv, 1918–1947* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Press, 1992), p.629 [in Hebrew].
89. L. Glassman, 'The Teaching of Arabic in the Reali School', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 3 (Summer 1995), *HRSA*, p.4 [in Hebrew].
90. Mentioned in: *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 10 (April 1938), *HRSA*.
91. See, for example: The report of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, titled 'Summary of the Activity of the Political Department During the War' (6 June 1945), *CZA*, S25/22201; See also: S. Schmidtke, 'Moshe Perlmann (1905–2001): A Scholarly Biography', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, Vol.36 (2009), p.31.
92. S. Halperin, *Dr A. Biram and His 'Reali' School: Tradition and Experimentation in Education*, p.456 [in Hebrew].
93. The 'Oriental Classes' (lit. *Ha-Kitah ha-Mizraḥanit*) was a stream of studies created by the Prime Minister's Office in the 1950s, and tied together Arabic studies with political and security considerations. For further reading on the creation of the Oriental Classes, see: Yonatan Mendel, 'A Sentiment-Free Arabic: On the Creation of the Israeli Accelerated Arabic Language Studies Programme', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.49, No.(3), 2013, pp.383–401. Interestingly, a report composed by the Advisor on Arab Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, which surveyed the beginning of the 'Oriental Classes', recalled that 'already at the end of the 1930s Biram started to create an intensified Arabic class, in order to train students to learn about the Middle East and to investigate Middle East issues.' In: 'Special Report of the Prime Minister's Office', dated 17 Sep. 1958, *Israel State Archives (ISA)*, GL-13912/5.
94. M. Brill, *The Basic Vocabulary for Daily Arabic Newspapers* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1940).
95. Information found in: *CZA*, J17/6734A.
96. These included: J. Joshua and P. Shuser, *Harvest of Arabic Press* (Jerusalem: J. Joshua, 1945) [in Hebrew]; Y. Kapliwatzky, *Selections from the Arabic Press* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1946) [in Hebrew]; and A. Torovsky-Landman and M. Dana, *A Selection from the Arabic Press* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1946). This publication, by Torovsky-Landman and Dana, received the blessing of both Shlomo D. Goitein and Arthur Biram. See: Biram's letter to Goitein, dated 21 Feb. 1946, *ISA*, M-1057/8; Goitein's complimentary letter to Torovsky-Landman and Dana, dated 27 Oct. 1946, *ISA*, M-1057/8.
97. Wolfensohn, born in Jerusalem in 1899, received a religious education as a child and graduated from the Arab Teachers' College in Jerusalem (1919–1921). He later studied at higher academic levels and became an Oriental scholar writing two separate doctorate studies: One at the University of Cairo in the years 1921–1926, and another at the University of Frankfurt in the years 1927–1933. For further information, see 'Wolfensohn's CV', *ISA*, P-1/2522. See also the unpublished Master's thesis of Aviv Deri (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2013) which analyzed the work of Dr Ben-Ze'ev in light of the changing field of Arabic studies.
98. This was mentioned by Ben-Ze'ev in the Jerusalem gathering of the Arabic teachers on 13 Aug. 1946, *ISA*, M-1057/8, p.6.

99. Ben-Ze'ev's letter to Avraham Arnon, dated 3 June 1943, *CZA*, J17/322.
100. In 1934, the President of the Hebrew University appointed the Hartog Committee to evaluate the work and influence of the Institute for Oriental Studies. The committee, headed by Sir Philip Hartog, concluded the following: 'Eretz Yisrael is surrounded by the Islamic World, and familiarity with this world is of crucial importance to the financial and political well-being of the land... in order to achieve this familiarity, research into pre-Islamic poetry alone cannot provide the answer... research into "living" Islam, and its geography, dialectology and trade, are much more important to the Jews in Eretz Yisrael than Islamic art or archaeology... While we believe that the Hebrew University, as an academic institute, should study the past, we also insist that it must cope with the present...'. In: E. Toledano, MEISAI Lecture 2007, 'Israel and the Middle East' [in Hebrew]. <http://www.meisai.org.il/?p=897> (accessed: 14 Oct. 2014).
101. In 1941, in a letter signed by all three Arabic teachers of the Reali School (Habouba, Plessner and Torovsky-Landman) and another teacher ('Ovadia Lalu from the Qala'i School in Giv'atayim) they requested that the 'Selections from the Arabic Press', published by the Jewish educational system once in a month, be published biweekly. The letter, dated 23 Jan. 1941, found in: *CZA*, J17/6734.
102. In: 'Textbooks published by the Hebrew Reali School this year', dated 6 July 1941, *CZA*, J17/4071.
103. Torovsky-Landman, 'Introduction to the Second Edition', in: Levy Billig and Avino'am Yellin (eds.), *The Arabic Reader* (Haifa: The Hebrew Reali School, 1943).
104. Plessner continued to teach Arabic in Jerusalem (at the *Ma'aleh School*) in parallel to his work at the Hebrew University. He later became a librarian at the Institute of Oriental Studies, a Teaching Fellow, a member of staff and eventually a full professor in 1963. In: 'CV – Martin Plessner', in: *Plessner Until 1958*, *HUA*.
105. 'Prof. M.J. Kister's Biography', In: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem official website: <http://www.kister.huji.ac.il/content/prof-mj-kisters-biography> (accessed: 14 Oct. 2014).
106. According to Yehouda Litani, who says he was deeply attached to Kister, the information about Kister's missions in the service of the SHAI was told to him in person by Kister. In an interview for this research, Litani said that, in one of their meetings, when telling him about the time he spent in Beirut, Kister recalled standing on a balcony in Beirut and looking out on a scene full of Arab people. He then said to himself, 'What am I doing here?' and then a comparison popped into his mind. He said to Litani that he recalled thinking about a scholar called Leopold Weiss, who, like him, was born to a Jewish family, in the same Austro-Hungarian province, in the same year, who, like him, was also interested in Islamic thought, and who, like him, also worked in the media. Weiss, however, converted to Islam and changed his name to Muhamad Asad. While standing on the balcony, Kister was pondering the similarities and differences between the two, thinking to himself, 'What am I doing here, in Beirut, an agent of the SHAI working in the guise of a journalist'. In: interview with Yehouda Litani, 16 Oct. 2014, conducted by the author. Litani also remembered that when he asked Kister what his exact missions were, and whether he delivered intelligence information from Beirut, Kister smiled at him and told him that 'the time for answering this has yet to come' (Ibid). It is worth mentioning that, during the 1948 War, Kister worked in the paramilitary Haganah radio, which broadcast from Haifa in Arabic. In: U. Dromi, 'The End of the Kister Era' [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, 27 Aug. 2010. <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1218567> (accessed: 10 Oct. 2014). Regarding Aviva Torovsky-Landman I will elaborate on her connection to the SHAI later in this article, based on Muhareb and Gelber.
107. In one of their written exchanges, dated 23 Jan. 1954, Plessner wrote to Kister that he had told the decision-makers in the Reali how 'happy I am with my replacement in the school, a young and bright scholar, that in his activities is doing much better than I did, and who send so many great scholars to the University'. In: *CZA*, A530-38.
108. See endnote No. 100.
109. In the document, published in 1935, Kahle did not support this shift but warned against this popular 'direction'. He warned 'against limiting the discipline to research on current topics oriented toward immediate implications...'. In: Y. Weiss, "'A man with his life at both ends of time": Leah Goldberg, Paul Ernst Kahle, and Appreciating the Mundane' *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol.37, No.1 (2009), p.151.
110. See: 'Antrag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn auf Genehmigung zur Abhaltung von Diplom – Prüfungen in Orientalischen Sprachen', dated 22 July 1947. In: *The Bonn University's Archive (BUA)*, PF 196-55.

111. Lockman analyzed the shift that occurred in departments of Oriental Studies in the US, from the Oriental philological approach to social sciences and contemporary analysis of events. See: Z. Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.148. Johnston-Bloom highlighted a report from 1949, composed by the American Council of Learned Societies, which argued that Oriental studies should expand their focus to include more contemporary events in the Middle East, with 'an urgent need for the transformation and expansion of the field' in light of the changing political situation following the post-war context. In: R. Johnston-Bloom, 'Symbiosis Relocated: The German-Jewish Orientalist Ilse Lichtenstadter in America,' *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 58 (2013), p.1.
112. In relation to these processes, Eyal argued that the Hartog Committee criticized the research of the Institute's professors for not responding to the changing needs of the Jewish Yishuv. According to Eyal, it was then that young scholars from the Institution – including David Ayalon, Meir Kister, Ya'acov E. Landau, and Moshe Piamenta – were attracted by the security and political contribution that their expertise had for the Yishuv. Eyal asserts that this stemmed from a desire of these scholars to use their knowledge in a more practical and contemporary way, and therefore they 'crossed the lines' and started to take different positions, including in the intelligence agencies of the Yishuv. In: G. Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: A History of Orientalist Expertise in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2005), pp.51–52 [in Hebrew]; Toledano, who disagrees with Eyal regarding some of his statements, agrees that the Hartog Committee laid the foundation for two founding motifs of the emerging Jewish-Israeli discourse on Middle Eastern studies: 'a small country surrounded by enemies' and 'know your enemy/know your neighbour'. In: E. Toledano, *MEISAL's Annual Conference – Middle Eastern Studies in Israel* (May 2007). <http://www.meisai.org.il/?p=897> (accessed: 10 Oct. 2014).
113. D. Myers, *Reinventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.177.
114. 'The Hebrew Reali School: A Report of the Governmental Supervisors', dated 24–26 Feb. 1947, *AYAJE*, 8.45, p.37.
115. A. Raz-Krakotzkin, 'Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective', in: Ivan Kalmár and Derek Pensler (eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005), p.166.
116. *Ta'abbata Sharran* (in Arabic: تائب شرار) was a sixth-century poet from the pre-Islamic *Jahiliyyah* period who lived in the Arab Peninsula. His name is used here to mock the students who followed Kister in a way that was allegedly 'archaic' and 'disconnected from reality', as well as from contemporary socio-political developments.
117. L. Glassman, 'Words About Aviva and in Her Memory', *Yedi'ot la-Morim* 278 (Summer 1994), *AYAJE*, 8.45/3247, p.221 [in Hebrew].