

Abstract:

The following dissertation studies the idea and mythologization of the “Hebrew Sea” in the writings and political activity of Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the leader of the Zionist Revisionist movement, developed the concept of the “Hebrew Sea” as an ideal that was used in various fields of his Zionist activity. Within inter-Zionist politics it was utilized as a means of competing with the dominant ideological faction, labor Zionism, over contribution to the national revival and Zionist youth, and its greatest achievement was the establishment of the Civitavecchia Naval Academy in Italy. On the international-diplomatic level the “Hebrew Sea” was used in order to advance closer political relations between Revisionism and Italy – an endeavor Jabotinsky was interested in from an early stage of his Zionist career. The “Hebrew Sea” also played an important role in the development of Jabotinsky’s unique ideal of national identity, which sought to depict the Jewish people as a Mediterranean, and not a desert or Middle Eastern people. This vision drew from contemporary theories about Hebrew identity, which associated the Hebrews with the Phoenician empire and not necessarily with Jewish monotheism. Finally, economically this ideal supported the socioeconomic vision of Revisionism, which emphasized the role of international trade and the middleclass in the nation’s future, over agriculture, industry, and the proletariat. In addition, this dissertation studies the ways in which Jabotinsky sought to mythologize the “Hebrew Sea” as a means of stimulating political activity and the masses, by creating objectives such as the “conquest of the Hebrew Sea”, and associating this ideal with already established Zionist myths, such as “the cult of the fallen” and the Jewish Legion which fought alongside the British army during the First World War. The “Hebrew Sea” was consequently a multifaceted ideal in Jabotinsky’s Zionism, serving different policies and agendas, and representative as such of Jabotinsky’s and Revisionism’s ideology.

Keywords: Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky; Revisionist Zionism; myths; national identity; Zionism; Mediterranean