

DYNAMICS OF CONTINUITY, PATTERNS OF CHANGE



Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt
September 10, 1923 – September 2, 2010

DYNAMICS OF CONTINUITY, PATTERNS OF CHANGE

BETWEEN WORLD HISTORY AND
COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

In memory of
SHMUEL NOAH EISENSTADT

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Preface

The present volume comprises expanded versions of papers read at two events in memory of Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt that took place at the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. On 22 November 2011, more than a year after Eisenstadt's death on 2 September 2010, Björn Wittrock delivered a key lecture on "Axial Civilizations and Multiple Modernities: Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and the Rediscovery of History in the Social Sciences." The other speakers at the event were Benjamin Kedar, Irit Meir, and David Shulman. On 14–15 October 2012 the first international colloquium in Eisenstadt's memory took place, on the theme of "Dynamics of Continuity, Patterns of Change: Between World History and Comparative Historical Sociology." The speakers were Elisabeth Clemens, Yuval Noah Harari, Benjamin Kedar, Wolfgang Knöbl, Gabriel Motzkin, Yuri Pines, Luis Roniger, and Björn Wittrock.

Professor Wittrock decided to combine his two lectures into a single paper, which appears here under the title "A Contemporary Classic: Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt's Research Program and Its Contexts." The other articles – quite diverse in style and each approaching the theme of the colloquium from a different angle – appear under their original titles. An updated list of Eisenstadt's publications, containing for the first time the articles he published in the Hebrew daily *Haaretz*, concludes the volume.

As reflected in its title, the volume pays tribute to Eisenstadt's persistent commitment to the interdisciplinary dialogue between sociology and history in general, and between comparative historical macrosociology and world historians in particular. Also in line with Eisenstadt, the intent is to challenge the still common tendency to associate the notion of dynamics with the idea of change, concomitantly applying the notion of patterns to issues of continuity. As he demonstrated repeatedly, continuity is never to be taken as simply static; rather, it needs be understood as the ongoing and ever unstable result of a specific configuration of forces and processes, themselves entailing the possibility of further dynamics and processes. These may either sustain the reproduction of aspects of a specific historical configuration or engender its partial transformation. Moreover, Eisenstadt saw significant macrosocietal changes as shaped by forces – with a

distinctive (if never exclusive) emphasis on forces of a cultural nature, such as religious axiomatics, ontological conceptions and soteriologies, traditions, ideological visions, and political programs – that had already started operating in the past, often a very distant past, but keep unfolding into the present, resulting in a deep interpenetration of trends of continuity and change.

The idea was thus to revisit the classic issue of continuity and change, so central to S.N. Eisenstadt's work, while inviting a mix of historians and sociologists known for their macro-orientations to revisit it from the point of view of new research topics or new analytical developments. We are glad to have been able to include participants reflecting a diversity of approaches, and in varying degrees of convergence or divergence with his own, thus also following Eisenstadt's predilection for creative, constructive debates and dialogical encounters.

It is also befitting that our project benefited from the cooperation of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, two institutions that were Eisenstadt's combined "second homes," and where he held so many local and international workshops. We therefore wish to thank Prof. Yosef Kaplan, Chair of the Humanities Division at the Academy, Prof. Gabriel Motzkin, former Director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and Dr. Yochi Fischer, Director of Advanced Studies at that institute, for their support, and express our hope to have thus contributed to future comparative projects, igniting further dialogue between various areas of the human sciences. We also thank Galia Finzi, former Secretary of the Humanities Division at the Academy, Dr. Shlomo Fischer and Prof. David Shulman for their helpful contribution, Ilana Brown for her sensitive copy editing, Dr. Tal Kohavi, Director and Executive Editor of Van Leer Institute Press, for valuable advice, and Tali Amir, Director and Chief Editor of the Academy's Publications Department, for bringing this volume to fruition.

Benjamin Z. Kedar, Ilana Friedrich Silber, Adam Klin-Oron
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