



A COAT OF MANY COLORS: Dress Culture in the Young State of Israel

Anat HELMAN



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Introduction

This book reconstructs and analyzes the emerging culture of Israel by viewing clothing, one of many fields in which culture is reflected, molded, communicated, and enhanced. It reveals how clothes played a part in the young state's central projects: overcoming the post-war crisis and establishing a thriving national economy; absorbing an unprecedented number of new immigrants; defending its volatile borders; establishing a state apparatus; and consolidating a national identity. It also explores how clothes and fashion embodied informal values, popular trends, and cultural options, which were not necessarily molded into formal ideological doctrines. Dress, as part of Israel's material culture, permits us to look into unexplored corners of social reality. It provides us with new angles from which the political, social, and military history of Israel could be revisited and viewed afresh. It helps us discover how central events and national processes were experienced, implemented, and negotiated in practice, in the daily lives of ordinary Israeli citizens.

The Young State of Israel

Although the state of Israel was founded on a specific day, May 15, 1948, the transition from a stateless community to a sovereign state was in many ways a gradual process. Zionist settlement in Palestine began in the 1880s, when the country was part of the Ottoman Empire, and increased after World War I, when the land was ruled by the British Mandate. Zionists did not view their move to Palestine merely as an act of immigration, but rather as a meaningful act of national deliverance, and called it "aliyah," which literally means ascent.¹ The Jewish community of Palestine, known as "the Yishuv," consolidated effective economic, political, cultural, and military institutions and organizations, creating a viable base for a future autonomous national home.² After the foundation of the state, certain institutions went through radical change, whereas in some fields Yishuv traditions continued uninterrupted after 1948, or altered only by degrees.³ Likewise, a number of Israeli dress phenomena discussed in this book originated in the Yishuv era, while others stemmed from the novel conditions of statehood.

The newly established Israeli state spent its first months in total war, defending its very existence. In January 1949 Israelis elected their first parliament. Although the last battles took place in March, by the beginning of 1949 the result of the War of Independence⁴ was already determined in Israel's favor, and cease-fire agreements were gradually signed with the Arab states. But the end of war did not bring about peace, and security remained a central and costly national concern. The IDF—Israeli Defense Force—hence became a central national institution, “an army of the people,” which carried out civilian assignments, such as settlement and education, as well as military tasks.⁵

A military rule was imposed on the Arab population who remained within Israel's borders. The Arab community of Palestine, numbering about 1,300,000 before the war (800,000 of them in the area that was to become Israel), was dispersed, dwindled, and was devastated by the war. About 160,000 non-Jews (mainly Muslim Arabs alongside Druze and various Christian minorities) remained in the state of Israel, eighty percent of them living in villages.⁶ The Jewish population, on the other hand, increased at an unprecedented rate. As soon as the state was established, Jewish immigrants started arriving in the hundreds of thousands. About 650,000 Jews lived in Israel in May 1948, and within one decade they numbered more than 1,800,000. This huge wave of immigration was titled “the great aliyah,” and was defined by the government as the state's primary mission.⁷ The great aliyah was characterized both by its rapid pace (between 1948 and 1951 the population of Israel doubled), and by the unusual ratio of newcomers to long-time residents. While 90 percent of the Zionist immigrants in the Yishuv were Ashkenazim (Jews of European origin), the great aliyah changed the ethnic composition of Israel, as less than half of the new immigrants came from Europe (mainly survivors of the Holocaust) and America, and more than half of the immigrants arrived from Asia and North Africa. Whereas most Jewish immigrants during the Mandate era were young people, more than half of the immigrants in the great aliyah were old people and young children.⁸

New immigrants had to be accommodated, so state authorities opened transit camps and created temporary settlements, but immigrants often stayed there much longer than originally planned, in isolation and in very poor conditions. The young state, with its fledgling economy, could not provide full employment for all newcomers. This problem was partly

solved by public works, but 10 percent of the workforce remained unemployed. Cultural differences between long-time, Ashkenazi Israelis and new immigrants from Asia and North Africa often resulted in misunderstandings, mistrust, and conflict. New immigrants from Europe, who came from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds as the long-time Israelis, usually adapted to their new life and acculturated into Israeli society faster and more successfully.⁹

The first years of Israel's statehood were marked by dire economic hardships and crises, though they were followed after 1954 by rapid economic growth. Due to the security threat, significant resources had to be channeled into defending the state, in addition to resources allocated for absorbing the mass immigration. Such high national expenses increased both the national debt and local inflation. Led by the labor party and influenced by post-war centralist economic tendencies, in 1949 Israel's government declared a rationing policy, which meant that the government rationed all vital products and fully controlled their prices. During its first two years, the rationing regime seemed to have achieved its main goals—prices were stabilized, the new immigrants were fed, and local investments and production increased. However, public support of the rationing regime soon waned, and the growth of the black market and other forms of disobedience undermined the system. Rationing was gradually cancelled beginning in 1953. It was only one among many interventional economic steps taken by the Israeli government during those years, but it strongly affected Israeli society, was deeply engraved into collective memory, and became a gloomy symbol of the whole period.¹⁰

In spite of economic and security difficulties, about three hundred new agricultural settlements were founded in Israel during its first three years of statehood, and by the end of the decade local agriculture achieved impressive results and supplied almost the entire food demand of Israel's increasing population.¹¹ Still, more than 70 percent of Israelis did not farm the land but rather resided in towns and cities. State authorities intended to "spread" the population throughout the country, especially along its volatile borders, and new development towns were established, populated with new immigrants. However, most Israelis gravitated to the larger cities—Jerusalem, Haifa, and especially Tel-Aviv.¹²

Socialist Zionism had already won a hegemonic status in the Yishuv

era, and after the foundation of the state the ruling elite of the labor party managed to maintain and enhance its dominance.¹³ The Israeli multi-party political system was led during 1949–1956 by the labor party Mapai, who won the majority of votes in all general national elections and headed the coalition governments. Its authoritative chair, David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), served as prime minister and as minister of defense, apart from a short period from late 1953 until early 1955, when he retired from politics and settled in a kibbutz (an agricultural collective community).¹⁴ As we shall see, all these military, demographic, economic, and political conditions were reflected in Israeli dress.

The Sinai Campaign, launched in October 1956, was not a total war like the War of Independence, but it disrupted the routine of the previous seven years and in hindsight could be viewed as the beginning of a new period in Israel's history. The Sinai campaign altered the military balance in the Middle East and changed Israel's relations with the Arab world. Until 1956, Israelis were terrified by constant infiltrations and by the armaments of some neighboring Arab states; they were concerned about the economic situation and the volatility of Israel's immigrant society, upset by the unsupportive policy of the superpowers and the United Nations, uncertain about the state's ability to survive. They felt acutely isolated and insecure. The Sinai Campaign proved Israel's military might and improved its international status. It gave Israelis a new sense of security, resistance, confidence, and power. It is therefore considered by several historians as the completion of the War of Independence and as the end of the first stage of Israel's statehood.¹⁵

During the inter-war period of 1949–1956, Israel started to practice its sovereignty and to consolidate its national identity. The task was not only technical—constituting a modern state and operating its tools of government—but also cultural: a new nation of Israelis had to be defined and molded,¹⁶ and garments too played a part in this ambitious project.

Clothing and Fashion

People live and interact with material objects; they produce, exchange, consume, and use artifacts. While fulfilling certain basic needs, material objects also satisfy less tangible desires and represent a network of social meanings or values. They make visible the categories that we use

to conceptually organize the world in which we live. Hence artifacts provide evidence for how ordinary people felt, thought, and lived. Historians can use material objects not merely as substitutes for verbal sources, but in order to reveal dimensions of political and social transformations that cannot be discerned in verbal and written articulation.¹⁷

Clothes relate to one's personality and feelings more than perhaps any other artifact. Although dress is a matter of individual choice, it can also mark group affiliation and social categories. After all, dressing for the public sphere involves the process of constructing the individual in the eyes of others, and thus clothing becomes a conduit that allows other people's intentions to penetrate into the intentions of the wearer.¹⁸ In his comprehensive study of clothing in the *Ancien Régime* in France, Daniel Roche suggests and demonstrates that one can penetrate into the heart of social history by studying the field of clothing. Purchase and ownership of clothing reveals changes in economic behavior, but also reflects religious, moral, and political norms.¹⁹ The immediate connection of clothing to the body gives it peculiar prominence in social interaction. Clothes are positioned between the individual self and the social world, and are therefore capable of lending simultaneous insights into overlapping themes.²⁰

According to Joan Entwistle, a tendency to find a general theory or an overarching explanation for fashion's presence in Western society often leads to reductive explanations that deny the complexity of fashion.²¹ This study does not attempt to find a new comprehensive explanation for the meaning of clothes, but rather uses fashion and clothing as a lens through which to observe Israeli society in 1949–1956. As Irene Guenther propounds, much can be learned “about a nation's vulnerabilities and insecurities, its inner workings, and its cultural confidence (or lack thereof) by studying its fashionings and its fashion debates.”²²

The terms “fashion” and “clothing” are sometimes used interchangeably.²³ The primary sources upon which this research is based, however, do *not* use these terms synonymously. Moreover, the difference between fashion and clothing emerges as one of the study's central findings, and therefore these two terms must be clearly differentiated from the very start. While “clothing” designates the more comprehensive and technical facet of covering the human body, “fashion” is more closely related to social norms and aesthetics.²⁴ Fashion historian Christopher Breward delineates fashion as

Clothing designed primarily for its expressive and decorative qualities, related closely to the current short-term dictates of the market, rather than for work or ceremonial functions.²⁵

Thus fashion, while including other fields in addition to clothing, does not cover *all* kinds of clothing.

Some writers regard fashion as a universal and basic human activity and include within it any and all use of clothing for interpersonal and social communication,²⁶ an approach that blurs, or even denies, the line between fashion and clothing. Yet another approach uses the term “fashion” only for a specific mechanism that has evolved in the west since the second half of the fourteenth century. Arguing that class rivalry and class distinction, although playing an important role, cannot fully account for fashion, Gilles Lipovetsky poses an alternative explanation. Fashion was introduced among the Western aristocracy only when arbitrary rapid change in dress became consistent and permanent. It was a new autonomous cultural demand for constant novelty. Lipovetsky views the appearance of Western fashion at the end of the Middle Ages as a departure from the logic of traditionalism: novelty was viewed as a positive value, and fashion asserted a self-confident ability of humans to change. Until the seventeenth century fashion remained an exclusive domain of the aristocracy, and thereafter gradually trickled down to the urban middle classes.²⁷ European travelers recognized constant fashion changes as uniquely Western. A French traveler to Persia and India in the seventeenth century, for instance, found that eastern people “are always made after the same fashion,” and in the nineteenth century Europeans noticed that fashion does not exist in poor societies.²⁸ Lipovetsky’s approach sharpens the difference between clothing, a universal human field, and fashion, a specific Western socio-historical phenomenon.

Fashion is thus a constantly changing mode of dress, lead by some “leaders of style” (*arbiter elegantiae*), for instance the French court since the seventeenth century or top fashion designers in the twentieth, and is accessible to some social segments. It is important to note that even when and where fashion rules, other forms of clothing abide; not only among those who cannot afford to join the fashion circuit, but also in

non-fashion clothing, which serve technical, religious, and other functions. Fashion combines an internal rhythm of ceaseless change affected by the clothing industry, the social structure, the ethical and aesthetic environment, and political and economic instability; it is neither entirely autonomous nor totally dictated by external forces.²⁹ Fashion historian Valerie Steele stresses that fashion occurs *mainly* for novelty's sake, changing more in response to previous and competing styles and less according to wider cultural attitudes.³⁰ Fashion is marked by rapid change within people's lifetimes, it is a continuous change and expected to be so, and it is non-utilitarian and occurs in elements that could be easily replaced by other functional alternatives.³¹

The ahistorical approach defines fashion as any type of change in dress style and as the prevalent clothing style among members of any certain group in any certain place at any certain time. While this definition is too broad for rigorous analytical use, the sharper and historical definition of fashion, as the specific arena of "vogue," a continual stylistic change unique to Western society since the fourteenth century, seems more helpful.³² Attacking the latter as "Eurocentric" and insisting on applying "fashion" to every form of dress paradoxically yields a much more rigid research, one that rather than viewing non-Western societies with fresh, unbiased, eyes transfers and forces Western notions on all societies. Assuming that every sartorial change is fashionable, and equating "modernity" in dress solely with fashion, misses other forms of change and modernity in non-Western cultures.³³ It might also blur finer distinctions of dress within Western societies. In the 1950s Israeli fashion existed alongside other non-fashion and even anti-fashion modes of dress, and so differentiating between these two terms allows for the examination of the intricate relationship between Israeli fashion and clothing.

Still, choosing to differentiate fashion from clothing neither precludes nor denies the expressive and symbolic facets of pre-fashion or non-fashion clothing. Clothes can be used both for personal expression and for marking social distinctions. Clothes are cultural, as they go far beyond the basic, biological, human need of covering the body. In addition to their practical role of support or protection, clothes can communicate various denotative and connotative social messages.³⁴

This leads us to the ongoing debate over clothing and fashion as language, launched by Roland Barthes, who bases his semiotic analy-

sis on texts about clothes in French fashion magazines.³⁵ Some writers thereafter modify and tone-down Barthes' claim that clothes could and should be read as a language. They agree that clothing is a kind of language, but a rather ambiguous and limited one, profoundly local and vernacular, a dynamic and sophisticated language open to endless settings, a tool for articulating and supporting words rather than substituting for them, a system of constantly shifting meanings, codes, and values, even within the same society. In the absence of any reliable or constant rules for decoding clothing, they might draw a wide array of speculations and guesses. The meaning of any particular item of clothing can be completely transformed when moved across time and space. "Dress," writes art historian Ulrik Ilg, "never reached the status of a completely self-sufficient system which could be universally read by whomever, wherever."³⁶

Anthropologist Grant McCracken goes even further and argues that the "clothing as language" cliché is less fruitful for research than pointing out the crucial *differences* between clothing and language. He claims that clothing has a limited vocabulary and limited sources for clear decoding. Being a conservative code, unlike language, clothing does not allow for complicated and new messages but rather enables society to present visually only existent values by embodying them into the everyday. The communicative power of clothing thus lies not in its resemblance to language, but rather in its vagueness and its indirectness.³⁷ The very ambivalence and imprecision of clothing permits it to touch upon issues that remain unarticulated verbally.³⁸ Whereas treating clothing and fashion as a straightforward language might lead to oversimplified conclusions, this study aims at exploring the complex communicative properties of Israeli sartorial culture ("sartorial" literally means "pertaining to the tailor," but is also used more generally as "related to clothing"). This book therefore traces both conscious ideals and unconscious values that were reflected in, and fortified by, Israeli forms of dress.

Those fashion experts who object to Barthes' heavy reliance on the verbal facet stress the potential visual power of clothes and their materiality. Garments, argues designer Ian Griffiths, can evoke responses even without the mediation of words. As long as academic work on fashion views it only "from the safe distance of the sociologically related fields or when dressed in garments borrowed from more exalted intellectual and

artistic fields,” it cannot grasp the material, visual, and practical facets of fashion.³⁹ Written texts on fashion represent the rhetorical organization and codification of fashion products, but fashion is both visual and discursive. Dress is a means of embodying social values, and this embodiment lies in the sphere of intuitive experience, not in the level of logical discourse.⁴⁰ Putting too much store on verbal descriptions of fashion might be misleading: not only does it neglect the non-verbal power of garments, but it might also overlook occasional contradictions between the visual and the discursive levels. Guenther, for instance, portrays some significant discrepancies between the written texts and the photographed designs presented in Nazi fashion magazines, and Gradskova describes similar contradictions between image and text in 1950s Soviet magazines.⁴¹

The logic that governs the production of discourse should not be automatically imposed on all social practices. A logo-centric inclination toward words rather than activities might hamper the reconstruction of social history, especially when dealing with material culture. Even though historians do not possess the skills of archeologists, they too could fruitfully use artifacts and visual documents besides their textual sources.⁴² Joan Entwistle writes that treating fashion merely as text has led to fashion research that ignores daily practices. She therefore advocates studying both fashion and clothing as situated practices: how do they relate to each other and structure dress in everyday life? How do people treat their involvement in the field of dress and what do they wear in specific situations? The experiences and practical understandings of fashion, writes Entwistle, should be studied alongside the factors that mediate it.⁴³

Following this advice, the present research uses visual images and artifacts as well as texts as its primary sources. It inquires about both what Israelis actually wore in various social situations and what they thought and wrote about dress. It explores Israeli dress and fashion both as articulated ideals and as enacted daily practice. It does not, however, cover *all* manifestations of dress in 1949–1956 Israel. Children and teenagers are occasionally mentioned, yet the research does not dwell on this age group and its special lifestyles and clothing cultures. Rather, it concentrates on the adult population of Israel, aged eighteen (the age of conscription and the legal right to vote) and older. It explores what Israelis wore during both weekdays and on special occasions, and focuses on

external dress rather than hidden and more private items of clothing, such as underwear and night-wear.

The first chapter views the simple, stark and unadorned style of dress, strongly associated with 1950s Israelis, and explores both the material and the ideological motivations for wearing it. The second chapter studies an entirely different style of Israeli dress—fashionable, smart, and decorated. It investigates the makers and the consumers of fashion in 1950s Israel and explains why they often felt compelled to justify this elitist, luxurious, field with apologetic national reasoning. Geographically located in the Middle East, Israel included an indigenous Arab minority and a rapidly growing number of new Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries. At the same time, the Zionist ideal originated from Europe and Israel aspired to become an advanced, Western-like, modern state. The third chapter situates Israeli dress on this complex crossroad between East and West. The fourth chapter focuses on the unique subculture of the *kibbutzim*—Israeli collective communities, where the socialist ideal and lifestyle were effectively reflected in dress. The last chapter discusses the use of formal clothes, folk dress, and military uniforms to represent the young sovereign state, and to consolidate the national identity of its ingathered people.

NOTES

1. On the use of the term see Halamish (2003), 179 n. 1.
2. See, for instance, Horowitz and Lissak (1977).
3. Reinharz (1991), 39; Horowitz and Lissak (1977), 239; Fine (2009).
4. The 1948 war is known by different Israeli/Palestinian terms. The one used here—after when discussing the Jewish and Israeli viewpoints—the War of Independence—follows the common term used in most 1950s Israeli documents.
5. Drori (1995); Horowitz and Lissak (1990), 241; Cohen (2010), 243.
6. Ozacky-Lazar (2006), 5–21; Greitzer (1997), 151–168.
7. Lissak (1998), 13; Enoch (2001), 84–87, 90.
8. Enoch (2001), 91–94.
9. Enoch (2001) 95–105; Giladi (2002), 10; Rozin (2008), 178–188, 215–222, 256–257.
10. Giladi (2002), 9–16, 25–29. Also see Gross (1995), 231–241.
11. Giladi and Shwartz (2001), 11–15, 73; Golan (1997), 83–102.
12. Giladi and Golan (2001), 77–143; Efrat (1997), 103–112.
13. Dowty (2001), 25–27, 39–44.
14. Weitz (2001), 5–77.
15. Hadari-Ramage (1995), 355–373; Bar-On (1997), 26; Bar-On (2001), 250–251; Weitz (1998), 241–244; Rosenthal (1997), 192–193.
16. Lucas (1995), 297, 307; Shavit (1992a), 61; Dowty (2001), 11, 33–39.
17. Vannini (2009), 23; Fortunato (2007), 47; Esperdy (2008), 148; Kien (2009), 29; Smulyan (2007), 68; Allman (2004), 4.
18. Buckley (1999), 59; Martin (2004), 227; Woodward (2005), 22.
19. Roche (1994), 5, 42, 502.
20. Allman (2004), 5; Martin (2004), 229; Richardson (2004), 8–9; Shannon (2006), 13.
21. Entwistle (2003), 55.
22. Guenther (2005), 10. Also see Wilson (2003), 2.
23. For instance Guenther (2005), 10; Allman (2004).
24. Webster's (1997), 127, 243.
25. Breward (1995), 5; Eicher and Sumberg (1995), 299; Davis (1992), 193–194.
26. For instance Craik (1994); Cannon (1998), 23–25.
27. Lipovetsky (1994), 16–35, 41–43. Also see Bell (1976), 105; Hunt (1996), 170.
28. Stannek (2003), 839; Benjamin (1999), 71. Also see Sekatcheva (2004), 77–91; Finnane (2008), 1.
29. Lowe and Lowe (1985), 205. Also see Wilson (2003), 3; Entwistle (2003), 44, 49; Bell (1976), 28, 105; Lynes (1954), 305; Zdatny (2006), 244.
30. Steele (1985), 247. Also see Hunt (1998), 248; Lieberman (2000), 14–17, 273–275.
31. Lowe and Lowe (1985), 193, 194.
32. Stern (2004), 2; Lowe and Lowe (1985), 193, 194; Eicher and Sumberg (1995), 299.

33. Compare Allman (2004), 2, with Finnane (2008), 12, 14.
34. Cannon (1998), 24, 26, 35; Wilson (2003), 3; Black (1985), 3; Holman (1980), 9; Breward (1995), 1; Finnane (2008), 16.
35. Barthes (1991), 432–445.
36. Ilg (2004), 47; Maramotti (2004), 93–94; Mandoki (2003), 601; Davis (1985), 16–19; Davis (1992), 3, 5–6, 8–11, 14; Allman (2004), 6. Also see Edwards (2000), 46.
37. McCracken (1988), 65–69.
38. Black (1985), 3.
39. Griffiths (2004), 89–90, 77–79. Also see Woodward (2005), 21.
40. Paulicelli (2004), 61; Van Wolputte (2004), 256–260. Also see Mandoki (2003), 610–614, 601.
41. Guenther (2005), 213; Gradszkova (2007), 149. Also see Gordenker (2001), 5.
42. Chartier (1995), 95–96; Daniel (1996), 362; Schlebecker (1982), 108.
43. Entwistle (2003), 65–66, 70–71, 55. Also see Paulicelli (2004), 61.

Chapter One: Simplicity by Necessity and Choice

The Austere Model of Dress

If asked nowadays about dress in the 1950s, most Israelis, whether born before 1949 or after 1956, would probably reply that the period was marked by stark simplicity. In Israeli collective memory, the 1950s are visually associated with the figure of “Srulik,” a local icon created by cartoonist Dosh (Kariel Gardosh, 1921–2000). Srulik, like British John Bull and American Uncle Sam, served as a symbol of the modern state. A young innocent boy, Srulik wore shorts, a simply cut shirt, high working shoes or sandals, and the floppy “tembel” hat. Although Srulik received his name and his final shape only in late 1956, earlier versions of his image had been drawn by Dosh since the early 1950s.¹



Figure 1.1: Trade negotiation between the USSR and Israel in January 1954. Srulik is saying: “We need fuel, timber – and two million Jews.” Dosh portrayed both states by using their “typical” dress.

From Dosh (1956), 49. Courtesy of the Gardosh family.

Srulik's outfit represents a common sartorial style in 1950s Israel. The main feature of this Israeli austere model of dress² was a combination of long or short cotton pants, mainly dark blue or khaki, with a cotton shirt or chemise. The shirt, as a local fashion reporter mentioned in 1956, was the most popular dress in Israel, and "has become our classic clothing item." Men's shirts had long sleeves, which were rolled up in summer. Women wore various designs of simply-cut chemises. Khaki was the dominant color in men's clothes, but later they also wore checkered flannel shirts. In winter both men and women added a jumper or a buttoned knit sweater over this basic combination. Men wore simple loose jackets that could warm them without hindering their informal appearance. Both men and women wore the plain double-striped sandals in summer and flat and solid black or brown shoes in winter. The austere model demanded clean abundant hair in unfussy hairstyles: the men wore their hair short with a prominent forelock; women either cut their hair to neck or shoulder length, or kept their long hair tied or braided.³

Placed at the highest point of the body and framing the human face, head covers are particularly conspicuous items of dress. In addition to their practical role of protecting the head, headdresses can signal status, lifestyle, and religious or political affiliations concisely and clearly.⁴ Male pioneers from the founding Yishuv generation often covered their heads with a Russian peaked cap made of felt. This item, imported to Palestine with Zionist immigrants since the Ottoman period, signified their socialist ideals, because such caps, "*casquettes*," became the emblem of male workers in Europe and had been a recognizable visual political statement of class since the late nineteenth century.⁵

Another prominent hat in the austere model was the *tembel* hat—that floppy bell-shaped cotton cap worn by Srulik. The word "tembel" means "stupid" in Hebrew slang.⁶ The tembel hat has been worn since the 1920s by agricultural workers, road constructors, and builders. Its origin is unknown. Some argue that it was a Templar cap,⁷ imitated by the Jewish pioneers, its name changing from "Templar" to "tembel"; others argue that the name derives from the Turkish word "tembel"—meaning "lazy"—an ironic description of the training pioneers who wore it in the 1920s.⁸ The tembel hat, usually khaki or dark blue, was worn in the 1950s by many Israeli natives, members of youth movements and kibbutzim, as well as soldiers in the army reserve forces. Since the second half of the decade—partly due to Srulik's image—the tembel hat won

an iconic status as a symbol of Israeli culture.⁹ Tembel hats were sometimes worn by young women as well as by men, whereas other women clad in the austere model covered their heads with a kerchief, or—in the case of young women—with an Arab *kafiya*.¹⁰



Figure 1.2: Members of a religious Zionist new settlement, Bnei-Darom, in 1949. Both settlers are wearing the unisex working shirts and the man—a new immigrant from the United States—is wearing the tembel hat. KKL-JNF Photo Archive, d3010-092. Photo by Fred Cheznik.

According to the standards of the austere model of dress, simplicity was maintained on festive occasions, when both men and women wore dark pants with white shirts and chemises. Women sometimes replaced the pants with a dark, straight-line, skirt. Whether it was Independence Day or an international soccer match—the importance of the occasion was declared by the gleaming though simple white tops worn by many participants. The embroidered Russian shirt and the dark *sarafan*—a sleeveless dress covering a chemise—were popular as festive clothes as well, especially among young people.¹¹

A locally famous clothes manufacturer named “Ata” produced quality items according to the austere model’s style. Ata was founded in 1934 and by the mid-1950s became the largest textile manufacturer in Israel. Its products were renowned for their simplicity, practicality, high quality, and modest prices. Ata specialized in unadorned daily wear and was famous for items such as khaki shorts, pants for men and women, men’s

shirts, simple-line chemises, working overalls, aprons, casquettes, and tembel hats. Ata also produced dresses, jackets, and coats, but these too maintained a typical unelaborated, somewhat military, cut.¹² During the rationing regime of the early 1950s, Ata's durable yet cheap products were commended as particularly fitting the circumstances, aesthetically as well as technically. But Ata remained popular in the mid-1950s, even after the rationing was over. Although it specialized in simple casual wear, it continuously renewed its models and maintained the high quality of its products. When its new dresses were presented in a 1954 fashion show in Jerusalem, for example, a fashion reporter stated that "Ata's cheap and pretty dresses deserve to be owned by every woman as her morning outfit."¹³

"In our country," wrote a local journalist in that same year, "the simplicity of dress has reached dimensions unknown in other countries."¹⁴ And indeed, the austere model was casual, informal, seemingly careless, yet clean and not too shabby. It pretended to mark a disregard for appearance. However, let us keep in mind that a defying style, supposedly unheeding to the dictates of fashion, might in fact require a lot of attention. It is not the result of indifference or absent-mindedness, but rather involves awareness and consideration.¹⁵

The austere model of dress in Israel was a direct continuation of the style sported by the pioneers in the Yishuv era. Fashion historian Ayala Raz describes the development of the pioneers' dress since the beginning of the twentieth century. First, the European fashionable garments brought with the Jewish immigrants to Palestine had to be folded, cut, and adjusted to the hard manual labors carried by the pioneers. Gradually, female pioneers adopted men's items such as pants and peak caps, and some cut their hair short, years before short hair became a 1920s women's fashion. Among male pioneers, the Russian folk shirt (*rubashka*), with its asymmetrical collar and embroidery at the openings, was worn in various shades and manners. Men also signified their absorption into the local land by covering their head with the Arab kafiya. During the 1930s the kafiya was becoming a national Arab symbol, and was therefore abandoned by Jewish pioneers in favor of peak caps and wide-brimmed straw hats. Heavy brown and black working shoes were worn by both men and women in winter, plain double-striped sandals and short pants were worn in summer. In the 1940s men's khaki shorts became very popular for both work and leisure. Since the 1920s, women

pioneers had adopted the Russian sarafan as their festive dress.¹⁶

Pioneers' dress had its technical grounds—it suited the local climate, fitted hard manual labor, and could be afforded or hand-made by poor settlers. Still, opting for Russian folk shirts and sarafans even for their leisure wear, rather than following the latest Western fashion, indicates that Zionist pioneers were also using dress in order to visually affirm and manifest their socialist revolutionary ideology.¹⁷

During the Yishuv era, the pioneering dress was worn specifically by a minority of agricultural and urban pioneers. However, after the foundation of the state, the austere model spread to wider sections of society, especially among Israeli men. It was more common among workers and in agricultural settlements, but the austere model's basic combinations were also often worn by people who lived in cities, worked in white-collar professions, and had a middle-class lifestyle. Sometimes a single smarter item, such as a tie, was added, and the casquette or tembel hat was replaced by a homburg hat. Although small, these items indicated that the wearer was *not* adopting the austere model in its entire, extreme form, and identified him as belonging to the middle class. Staunch supporters of the socialist ideology were loath to wear such unmistakably bourgeois hats and ties.¹⁸

In Israeli imagination and lore, the austere model was primarily associated with the Israeli natives—the “Sabras.” From the 1930s, Jewish natives in the Yishuv were nicknamed Sabras, after the fruit of a common local cactus. The title indicated the natives' rough and prickly exterior and their sweet interior. Once the pool of potential new pioneers was eradicated in the Holocaust, the Sabra replaced the pioneer as the ultimate national hero. Moreover, the Sabras' share as fighters in the War of Independence was prominent and culturally stressed, and thereafter they were covered with national feelings of gratitude and admiration.¹⁹

Sabras (who comprised about a third of the Israeli population²⁰) were depicted both in formal and in popular culture as markedly different “from other Jewish children” and from newly arrived immigrants. Most of them were described as jovial and laughing, disobedient to their parents and doing as they liked.²¹ Historians and sociologists define the Sabras, who grew up in the Land of Israel in the 1920s and the 1930s, as a generational group with its own specific style. The Sabras could be recognized by their distinct form of speech and their Hebrew accent,

their special body language and typical dress. The Sabra was perceived as the extreme opposite of the Diaspora old Jew: healthful, brave, active, tough, group-orientated, deeply rooted in his native land, direct, informal, spontaneous, uncomplicated, anti-intellectual, and unostentatious.²² It is therefore no wonder that Srulik, the cartoon incarnation of the state of Israel, was depicted in the shape of an archetypical Sabra.

Israel's sub-tropical Mediterranean climate probably contributed to the informal attitude in dress and encouraged the preference for the austere model. In August 1949, when temperatures in Tel Aviv reached over 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), the street was described as taken over by khaki: "Even distinguished citizens, professors and doctors, who often dress up in formal evening suits, do not shun nowadays from wearing the austere dress—khaki shorts."²³ Yet the widespread popularity of the austere model of dress in the 1950s was probably interrelated first and foremost with economic circumstances—the meagerness of resources in post-war Israel—and with the ideological values of the national Centralist ethos.

Simplicity by Necessity: Post-War Rationing

Textile was one of the Yishuv's main industries and it flourished during World War II. During the first years of statehood, however, the Israeli textile industry faced a rapidly growing demand on the one hand (due to the spectacular growth of Israel's population), and an acute shortage of basic raw materials and necessary equipment, on the other. The need to supply cheap clothing hurriedly and under restricted conditions—imported materials and goods were strictly restricted and supervised—meant that the quality of products deteriorated sharply.²⁴

In January 1949 the Israeli government launched a local program for manufacturing cheap clothes and shoes. These subsidized products, titled *Lakol* ("for all"), were at least 30 percent cheaper than equivalent products sold in the free market. *Lakol* was supposed to continue the success of the local *Utility* program, implemented in Palestine by the British government during World War II. In Britain itself, the subsidized and supervised items of *Utility* had been manufactured since 1941 and during all the years of austerity, until the program was finally cancelled in 1952. Designed by the best British stylists, *Utility* products were quite popular in Britain, even as late as 1950.²⁵ The *Utility* program in

Palestine, running from 1942 until 1946, eventually covered 80 percent of all locally manufactured clothing, and it too provided consumers with cheaper, yet reasonably satisfying and fashionable, shoes and clothes.²⁶

The Israeli *Lakol* program, however, was neither as successful nor as popular as its predecessor. *Lakol* items were of poor quality, limited by a restricted amount of fabric per item, and stylistically resembled the *Utility* designs. The latter were in vogue in the mid-1940s but totally out of fashion by the end of the decade. Thus, in spite of *Lakol*'s low prices, Israeli women preferred paying higher prices for better, unsupervised, items.²⁷ The *Lakol* program was promoted vigorously by the government and reluctant merchants were ordered to present unattractive *Lakol* products in their shop windows. Still consumers were unconvinced. The unpopularity of *Lakol* products was reflected in contemporary slang: unattractive girls were described in the terms "austerity face" and "*Lakol* figure."²⁸ Even staunch supporters of simplicity, like the editor of a left-wing women's bulletin, voiced their discontent: a woman can't find nowadays, she complained, a proper *Lakol* dress made of good fabric or designed in good taste.²⁹

The deterioration of locally made clothes was part of a much wider economic plight. Post-war Israel faced serious economic challenges: the war affected local production and cut the young state off from its neighboring Arab markets, while the absorption of mass immigration put huge pressure on the country's limited resources. In April 1949 the Israeli government launched an austerity policy ("*Tzena*"). Rationing was one of many intervening economic steps taken by the centralist government, led by the Mapai labor party. It was influenced by centralist economic policies, embraced at that time by many post-war European countries. The austerity policy also leaned on local precedents: rationing was declared by the British government during World War II, and later by the sovereign Israeli state during the War of Independence. The austerity policy was meant to decrease consumption, increase production, and ensure the supply of vital products, especially food, to the entire population – including needy new immigrants.³⁰

At first the austerity policy was accepted willingly by the Israeli public, who viewed it as a necessary step, as a temporary and inevitable restriction of consumption, and as a means of achieving important national goals in the long run. However, the policy gradually met with growing objection and discontent.³¹ In her research on austerity in Is-

rael, historian Orit Rozin describes how during its first nine months food rationing seemed successful, but by January 1950 the government was struggling to supply sufficient quantities of protein and began to cut down ration sizes. Black market activities were on the increase and the government reacted by stricter enforcement, intrusive inspections, and invasive supervision. But to no avail: the system was eroded by the consumers' noncompliance.³²

Rationing usually focuses on the most vital product—food,³³ and the Israeli austerity policy, too, started with the rationing of food and raw materials. But in July 1950, more than a year after the launch of food rationing, the Israeli government published its decision to ration clothes and footwear as well.³⁴ Each item received a certain point value, according to the price of the imported materials required for its production. Due to local shortage of raw materials, deficient foreign currency, and insufficient production by the local industry, the government could assign only a small portion for each citizen. It allocated 100 annual points for clothes and 50 points for shoes, enabling the purchase of few basic products. Men, for example, could afford to buy with their annual portion a short wool coat, short khaki pants, a khaki shirt, underwear, and a pair of cotton socks; women could purchase a short coat, a cotton skirt, a cotton dress, a viscose blouse, synthetic stockings, and a pair of socks. Choosing to follow the British coupon-points system permitted Israelis some flexibility. They could save their clothing points in order to buy a costlier product, and use their clothing coupons in any shop they chose. Food purchase, in comparison, was much more rigid: food coupons referred to specific products and could be used only in the consumer's local store.³⁵

When the austerity policy was launched, a special “Rationing and Supply” office was founded, headed by Dr. Dov (Josef) Yosef (1899–1980).³⁶ After clothes were added to the rationed products in July 1950, Dov Yosef gave a speech on national radio (television broadcasting began in Israel only in the late 1960s, so radio played a central role during the state's first two decades³⁷). In his speech, the Minister explained that rationing was the only way to prevent injustice and want; just as food rationing secured a portion of food for every citizen, so would the rationing of shoes and clothes guarantee that all Israelis get their fair share of these vital products. The Israeli public, said the minister, must realize that:

We cannot afford to keep on living without accounting and without self limitation. Due to the shortage of foreign currency we have no choice but to adjust to a wider and stricter austerity regime.

Local industry and agriculture would gradually develop and free Israel from its need to import ready-made clothes and raw materials, such as cotton and wool. These steps, said Yosef, as well as increased export, would eventually bring about prosperity, but in the meantime the public must be patient and endure the inevitable restrictions.³⁸

The austerity policy was described by the government as a continuation of the War of Independence: in order to build the state and secure the peace, the national economy must be stabilized and therefore citizens should comply and sacrifice their personal comfort.³⁹ Yet in spite of preparations, promotions, and lofty rhetoric, the public response to the rationing of clothes and shoes was extremely negative. By the time Dov Yosef presented the clothes and shoes rationing decree, more than a year after the introduction of food rationing, many Israeli consumers were already hostile toward the rationing policy, or at least toward the manner in which it was implemented in practice.⁴⁰

The rationing of clothes and shoes overthrew the last remnants of public trust in the government's economic control. Therefore when the forthcoming decree was announced, consumers flooded the shops and hoarded stocks, especially items that they feared would soon disappear, such as nylon stockings. In fact the public started buying clothes as soon as the plan to ration clothes was first rumored in the spring of 1949. The government promised reduced prices and asked the public to wait and refrain from panicked purchase for overcharged prices, but in vain: after experiencing food shortages, Israeli consumers mistrusted the government and did not heed its calming declarations.⁴¹ Traders, who from the earliest days of rationing became the main target of consumers' angers and frustrations, headed the objection to the rationing of clothes and shoes. The decree forced them to sell their wares only for coupons, and their stock could be renewed only after all consumers' coupons were checked. When the decree was first announced, traders of clothes and shoes launched a general protest strike and closed down their shops.⁴²

Surprised by this harsh reaction, the government established a spe-

cial committee to investigate the new rationing decree. Following the committee's conclusions, the government increased the ration size. A revised and more detailed decree was published, with updated lists of products, points, and prices. The Ministry of Rationing and Supply also made some concessions to the original decree: additional points were allocated to pregnant women and babies, veteran soldiers and war casualties, to the sick and the disabled.⁴³

Whereas food rationing was first accepted by the general public as the inevitable need of the hour, the rationing of clothes was received ambivalently and unfavorably from its very announcement in July 1950. The difference lies partly in the rationed product itself. A certain amount of food, with a specific nutrition value, is considered a universal and measurable essential need that must be distributed in times of emergency among the population. Needs of dress, on the other hand, are perceived as more relative, changeable, and subjective. The editor of a women's journal, for instance, wrote that the new decree puts even the supporters of rationing in "an emotional and economic dilemma." She objected to an equal distribution of points, claiming that unlike food, needs in dress may vary according to class, profession, and location. Under such a restraining decree even law-abiding citizens, she insinuated, might resort to buying their clothes in the black market.⁴⁴ Indeed, some Israeli consumers reacted to rationing simply by breaking the law and buying goods in the growing black market. The black market might undermine the whole rationing system, and could serve as an indication of consumers' compliance. Alongside formal denunciations of the black market and its profiteers, in practice it continuously grew and expanded.⁴⁵

In order to enforce the rationing decree, producers, merchants, and consumers were all inspected. The ministry's supervisors were authorized to interrogate anyone, to conduct searches, and to confiscate material evidence. Policemen made sudden inspections in shops, buses, and even in the consumers' homes, to check whether shop owners sold their merchandise only according to the law—namely for rationed points and after checking the buyers' identities—and whether consumers exchanged their purchase for the proper coupons, as requested by law. Supervisors seized illegal raw materials (fabrics, strings) and clothing items that were sold illegally in the black market. Yet transgressions were still on the increase.⁴⁶

The Ministry of Rationing and Supply also founded a special branch

to address complaints. Citizens expressed their personal opinions about the rationing system and sent the ministry suggestions and advice. Many writers asked for special permits and extra points, detailing their specific circumstances and needs. Among them were war veterans, who after long years of army service had been left with no civilian clothes; reserve soldiers who ruined their last civilian dress in military training; civilians whose wardrobes were destroyed during the war; manual workers whose jobs required special clothing; young couples about to get married and new immigrants, who described their troubles in broken Hebrew.⁴⁷

Such letters exemplify the sartorial plight of many Israelis during the first years of statehood. A veteran soldier, who was wounded and hospitalized for a whole year, had gained twenty kilos in hospital and so he couldn't put on the *Utility* suit he had received five years earlier, and his three-year-old shoes were torn. Another veteran described his entire wardrobe as containing two pairs of khaki pants, two khaki shirts, two white shirts, one pair of wool pants, and no winter clothes whatsoever.⁴⁸ A clerk in a government office wrote that her summer shoes had been torn for the last four years, and that the shoe-mender can mend them no longer; she must therefore wear her heavy winter shoes in summer as well. Out of the four summer dresses she owns, two are torn beyond repair. She couldn't afford a winter dress and has been wearing only skirts and sweaters during the past few winters. Her bosses and colleagues at work, she wrote, can attest to her difficult situation. Now, after she has finally managed to save enough money to buy two summer dresses, summer shoes, and some fabric for sewing a winter dress, she is restricted by the new rationing regulations. She therefore requested a special permission from the Ministry of Rationing and Supply to purchase these items, and "since I renew my wardrobe only once in three years, I believe it is not an exaggerated request."⁴⁹

Rationing affected marketing and advertising too. In a time of set prices, no special sales could be held. During the rationing period many ads stressed the relevant virtues of the product, namely its cheap price and availability. Advertisers called on consumers to show good judgment and frugality in their choice.⁵⁰ In July 1950, an ad published in the daily newspaper *The Jerusalem Post* depicted three items of clothing emerging from a rations coupon-book. *Matzkin*, a successful local manufacturer, promised its clients full value for their new rationed points.⁵¹

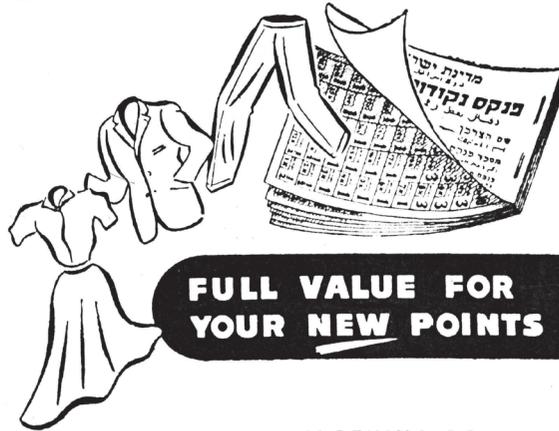


Figure 1.3: Matzkin ad in *The Jerusalem Post*, July 5, 1951.

A prominent men's clothes firm even promised to save its clients from one of rationing's annoying side-effects, the inconvenience of waiting in long queues,⁵² but a photo taken in one of its branches only one month earlier provides a contradictory picture:



Figure 1.4: Customers waiting at the entrance of the OBG clothes shop branch in Tel Aviv in July 1951.

Government Press Office, NPC, D720-091. Photo by Hans Pinn.

Indeed, Rozin mentions that the flaws that characterized food rationing were also apparent in the rationing of clothes. The dire shortage of raw materials and products meant that even basic items were hard to find, long queues were gathering before the entrances of the shops, and the quality of available products was deteriorating.⁵³ Cheap daily clothing items, such as working garments or warm tops, were hard to find, whereas luxury items, such as evening gowns or imported hats, could be purchased for a tiny amount of ration points but for astronomical prices, affordable only by the richest.⁵⁴

Humor, as Rozin mentions, was one of the ways by which Israeli society dealt with the hardships of rationing, a safety valve into which consumers could channel some of their frustrations.⁵⁵ Comic aspects of the grim economic situation were often formed into written satire, verbal jokes, and cartoons.⁵⁶ When clothes rationing was introduced, a cartoon portrayed the stage scene from Shakespeare's *Othello* when he demands his wife show him the incriminating handkerchief. "Slow now, my friend," replies the fair Desdemona, "Do you have the necessary points?"⁵⁷ Another cartoon predicted the use of newspaper-hats as actual head-covers for an entire family.⁵⁸

In the national folk-dance festival of 1951, one dancing troupe performed a dance titled "Rationing," in which each dancer wore only one boot.⁵⁹ A woman from Tel Aviv related how a man whispered to her on the street, "Excuse me, Madam, but your seven points is showing." Seven was the number of points allocated for an imported poplin bra.⁶⁰ Some jokes focused on specific aspects of rationing, for example consumers' dependence on scarce rationed points:

Uri and Yonatan meet in the street. "Why are you walking in these huge strides?" asked Uri.

"Because I don't have enough points to buy new shoes, and I am trying to save the soles," replied Yonatan.

Two weeks later they met again. "What happened to you," asked Uri, "and why have you suddenly decreased your stride?"

"When I used big strides my pants were torn," replied Yonatan, "and I have no points to buy new pants."⁶¹

Sarcastic descriptions of the scarcity of clothes were even heard in the

Israeli parliament and its committees. When the head of the right wing opposition party Herut attacked the kibbutzim in one of his speeches, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion replied: “Put off thy shoes from thy feet when you speak of the kibbutzim” (namely: show them some respect). A female member of Herut then retorted that “Due to the rationing of clothes and shoes, we are left shoeless as it is.”⁶² Her response literalized the biblical expression and used the unpopular decree to attack Mapai’s centralized economic policy.

Ironic presentations of rationing could sometimes be seen in shop windows: A shoe shop window with signs that supposedly hailed Dov Yosef in late 1949, or naked mannequins wearing only fig leaves when the rationing of clothes was introduced in the following year.⁶³



Figure 1.5: Shop window display in Tel Aviv, April 1950.
Government Press Office, NPC, D720-101. Photo by Hans Pinn.

Humor could help consumers face their plight, but it could not improve their economic conditions. By July 1952, two years after the introduction of clothes rationing, the local dress market reached an unprecedented depression. Prices of quality items in the free market were much too high for the average consumer, and, on the other hand, consumers refused to buy rationed items, which were cheap but of dreadful quality. In late 1952, when the turnover in the clothing trade reached a

new low, and as the national economic policy was changing, it was decided to remove rationing gradually from dress items, until the cancellation of the points system in early 1953.⁶⁴

When rationing was cancelled, Israelis noticed the reappearance of abundant and various supplies that had vanished during the last couple of years, but in practice consumers still struggled to obtain textile products. A left wing journalist wrote that:

Different kinds of fabrics suddenly appeared in the shops: wool, linen, silk, curtains, upholstery materials of all colors and sorts, things that have not been seen in the shops for years.

However, she added, although the shelves and shop windows are filled with goods, people have no money and the prices are so very high. How can one buy a sweater, a coat, a curtain, or a summer dress, when the provider of the family is unemployed or hardly earns enough to buy food and pay the taxes? “Women stand in the street and talk in front of the shop windows: everything is here—they say—but for whom?”⁶⁵

Yet by 1954 Israel was starting to recover from its economic crisis and the economic growth was clearly felt by consumers, as both supply and purchasing power increased. Once controlled prices were removed, producers and merchants started to compete, and consumers enjoyed reduced prices. During the years of rationing consumers were totally dependent on suppliers, but now the tables were turned: now suppliers had to persuade their customers and vendors had to show them more courtesy (the latter was a rare virtue in Israeli culture⁶⁶). As the quality of clothes and shoes improved, consumers “realized with what inferior quality we had been ‘fed’ during the Yosef era.” Soon the days of rationing were depicted as a gloomy chapter from the past and compared unfavorably with the happier present.⁶⁷

The shortcomings and widespread unpopularity of the rationing regime notwithstanding, we should not lose sight of its primary purpose: to ensure that even the neediest Israelis were minimally clothed. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion clarified that although social equality was a noble goal, the rationing in Israel did *not* intend to impose equality, but rather to ensure that all citizens were supplied with essentials.⁶⁸ The rationing policy equalized Israeli society more than ever before or after,⁶⁹ but it

preserved and even fortified the line between the upper middle class and the majority of the population. Clothes rationing hardly affected the richest population, who was better equipped in the first place and could also afford to pay the astronomical prices for un-rationed high quality clothes. Less wealthy Israelis and the poor, who had fewer shoes and clothes to begin with, were dependent on their rationed coupons and could afford only low quality rationed products.

So while it lasted, austerity affected Israeli dress materially and technically, because it limited and even dictated what many Israelis could actually wear. On a moral level, rationing also justified and supported the austere model of dress as part of a general frugal lifestyle. Luxuries had been frowned upon since the Yishuv era, because they seemed to contradict and subvert the dominant ideal of pioneering. Rozin maintains that the Israeli rationing policy was not meant to enhance ascetic lifestyles, but was rather chosen for practical reasons, mainly the absorption of the great aliyah. Moreover, one of the goals of austerity was to allow future economic growth. Still, once implemented, the policy was also described as “proper” in moral terms.⁷⁰ Whether ascetic ideals were truly adopted by Israelis or not, they were often evoked in support of the austerity policy and the public was called to avoid any waste and luxuries. “Excessive extravagance” in dress was rebuked as unsuitable for “these times,” not only because it hindered economic recovery, but also because it reflected and visibly displayed inequalities within a State that tried to promote civil solidarity.⁷¹ Thus even Israelis who were not severely restricted by economic circumstances, sometimes opted for the austere model of dress on ideological grounds, because it reflected the county’s dominant value system.

Simplicity by Choice: The Centralist Ethos

Israel’s centralist ethos was consolidated and championed by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. The Hebrew word coined by Ben-Gurion, “*mamlakhtiyut*,” was probably inspired by a similar Russian notion and cannot be translated accurately into English.⁷² Unlike “Statism,” a notion indicating centralized *state* institutions and policy, Ben-Gurion’s centralism stressed the *civil* obligation to the state. It was meant to draw respect towards the authority of the state and its laws, to excite Israelis with a feeling of public commitment, and to unify the nation.

Ben-Gurion regarded the state as the only political and symbolic factor that could bond together the fragmented Jewish people. He wished to consolidate the new Israeli nationality, its collectivity and solidarity, around the state. From its onset the Zionist movement aimed to create a strong, brave, and active “new Jew,” the utter opposite of the stereotypical weak and passive “old Jew” of the Diaspora (the latter’s image was clearly influenced by anti-Semitic notions). Ben-Gurion viewed the new sovereign state of Israel as the tool that could and should build the new Jews—free and upright Israelis. The centralist ethos was intended to constitute a novel Hebrew character and to shape the mass of new immigrants, described by Ben-Gurion as “human dust,” into proper Israelis.⁷³

Another goal of the centralist ethos was to unite long-time Israelis as well. Although sharing a comprehensive Zionist ideology, Yishuv society was marked by political factionalism and organizational fragmentation. After the foundation of Israel, various sub-centers were required to surrender their former roles to the state. Ben-Gurion saw state building as a replacement of pre-state Zionist institutions and identifications. Thus the centralist ethos helped to re-shape Yishuv society. The state, governed by Ben-Gurion’s labor party Mapai, held a centralized policy in practice (Statism); but rather than relying solely on enforcement, citizens were also being *persuaded* about the primacy of the state. State institutions, the educational system, the media, the intellectual elite, and other factors and agencies, all worked to convince Israelis that they should transfer their loyalty onto the state and cooperate willingly with its demands.⁷⁴ Ben-Gurion’s centralism managed to unite society and solidify the authority of the state. Even factions that strongly opposed Mapai on political and partisan levels accepted the primacy of the state and the importance of national unity. In spite of some religious, ethnic, and political rifts, the first years of the state were marked by political stability.⁷⁵

Centralism was supposed to play yet another national role—to incite a disciplined voluntarism among all Israeli citizens.⁷⁶ In this respect, the Israeli centralist ethos was a modified version of the former pioneering ideology that reflected the values of Socialist Zionism and eventually became the dominant ideal in the Yishuv. During the pre-state era, only a minority of Jewish immigrants actually fulfilled the ultimate pioneering ideal, settling in agricultural frontiers and sacri-

ficing their personal comfort and well-being for the sake of building a just society and a future national home. Yet the entire Yishuv, including the majority of Zionists who settled in towns and cities and led a middle-class lifestyle, acknowledged the pioneers' important contribution to the nation. The pioneers were widely regarded as the Yishuv's true elite.⁷⁷ After the foundation of the state, the centralist ethos was supposed to replace the Yishuv pioneering ideology and, furthermore, to extend it unto the entire Israeli population. Agriculture and manual labor were still viewed as vital for developing the land, but now Ben-Gurion broadened the notion of "pioneering" to envelop all sections of society and to cover whatever mission, task, or occupation could benefit the state. Ben-Gurion wanted to subordinate and centralize the voluntary spirit of the pre-state era; the Yishuv avant-garde revolutionary pioneer was now to be replaced by an obedient pioneer, who would serve the state dutifully.⁷⁸

Interestingly, the centralist ethos was in fact an attempt to counter an actual relaxation and dwindling of the Yishuv's pioneering spirit. The main pool of potential pioneers—young East European socialists—was wiped out in the Holocaust. After 1948, many new immigrants did not adopt the collective message of the centralist ethos, because it did not coincide with their original cultures. Former pioneers and Israeli natives were exhausted after years of national struggle and a total war. Many long-time Israelis—even those who supported Ben-Gurion, Mapai, and the centralist ethos politically and ideologically—were gradually enjoying a higher standard of living and moving upward in the occupational scale, while new immigrants replaced them as the new working class. All in all, pioneering seemed to have lost some of its former "trendy" appeal; the sacrificing facet of the centralist ethos remained mainly ideological, and was translated into actual behavior only in part. Ben-Gurion and other leaders were bitterly disappointed and frustrated by the decline of the pioneering spirit in Israel. Between late 1953 and early 1955, Ben-Gurion withdrew from politics and lived in a new kibbutz in the Negev desert, where he worked, at least part time, as a shepherd. But even his personal example was not followed by the masses.⁷⁹



Figure 1.6: David Ben Gurion working in Kibbutz Sde Boker, 1954. Government Press Office, NPC, D683-042. Photo by Fritz Cohen.

Though not implemented in practice by most Israelis, the centralist ethos did manage to win general public agreement and thus achieve a hegemonic status on the ideological level. Hegemony is a wide agreement and a general support of the existing order, implemented by the ruling elite in society at large. Parliamentary regimes do not have to rely on the state apparatuses of force, as long as the ruling group achieves moral authority and public legitimacy. Rather than applying enforcement or oppression, the ruling group can lean on its economic power and spread its own definition of reality among all other groups in society. The latter are convinced and hence they adopt the ideology—which actually represents the interests of the ruling group—as the “natural” and permanent order of things. Hegemony is spread by various agents such as the family, the educational system, the media, and cultural and religious institutions. It is dependent on successful *persuasion*; hence, in order to gain public legitimacy and secure it, the hegemonic system must adjust itself to constant change and must alter dynamically and pragmatically. Only when hegemony crumbles and public agreement is lost, does the parliamentary regime resort to the use of force.⁸⁰

Israel’s hegemonic ethos was expressed, among other ways, in dress.

Tying any certain manner of clothing to hegemonic values is based on the assumption that people try to act—and dress—according to their chosen ethos. Unlike rooted automatic behavior, a willed and conscious act is conceived by the performer as ethical and moral. Personal action is not meant just to impress others, but also serves as a self-justification. Even when people don't put too much effort into fulfilling their ideology in their personal lives, they do nonetheless attempt to act, every now and then, in a manner that confirms their ethical worth. Thus, in addition to their practical facet and their social role, clothes can also serve to justify and strengthen the wearer's ideological self-image.⁸¹ Israelis' choice of the austere model of dress could therefore serve to signal both their social and political leanings to observers, and at the same time to assure *themselves* of their ideological commitment.

Like other national movements, Zionism adopted classical standards of beauty, and the "New Hebrew" was therefore supposed to be the total opposite of the stereotypical "Old Jew" of the Diaspora in his looks, as well as in his mentality and his lifestyle. If, for instance, the old Jew was usually depicted as white-skinned and pale, then the new Hebrew was deeply suntanned.⁸² Sociologist Oz Almog claims that the Sabra was commonly described as handsome according to classical, European notions: tall, thin but muscular, strong, fair (rather than dark), with a straight nose (rather than the stereotypically long Jewish nose). Almog also notes that this prevailing image was based on certain facts: Sabras' bodies and looks—especially those who were raised in agricultural settlements—were truly affected by a different climate, by physical activity from childhood, and by a healthier diet. Almog also mentions the thick forelock as one of the ideal Sabra's main attributes. He argues that wearing the hair loose and long was a reaction both to the old Jew and his religious head-cover, and to the tidy hairdo of the decadent Western bourgeois. The new Jew's hair, like the biblical examples of Samson and David, indicated his freedom, his new openness to the world, and his connection to nature.⁸³

The austere model upheld the Zionist and centralist aspiration of creating a new Jew by negating visually the look of the old traditional Diaspora Jew. Rather than covering the body and hiding it, as was customary among ultra-Orthodox Jews, the loose and bare austere model emphasized the body. Socialist Zionists also objected to the lifestyle of cosmopolitan assimilating urban Jews,⁸⁴ and indeed the simple and in-

formal austere model of dress contradicted the ostentatious bourgeois style of dress. The comfortable austere model enabled free movement, unlike the physical restrictions imposed both by the long and thick garments of the traditional old Jew, and by the strictly-cut contours of the bourgeois suit. Hence the austere model propagated the merits of the new Jews—it exhibited their healthful, upright bodies, intended for active, bold tasks.

Like the pioneering style which preceded it, the austere model of dress in 1950s Israel can be viewed as an “anti-fashion” that reflected the values of simplicity, equality, labor, and settlement. Anti-fashion involves awareness and alert response to fashion. Clothes that intentionally contradict fashion derive their meaning only from their apposition to prevailing aesthetics, dictated by fashion. Any “alternative” style of dress poses an alternative to the dominant style and is often connected to an entire lifestyle. Anti-fashion is therefore not indifference toward fashion, but rather an intentional and active reaction to it. Unlike individuals who dress unconventionally for various personal reasons, group anti-fashion occurs when members of a subculture, sharing the same political, social, or other agenda, choose to dress in a particular manner in order to embody and symbolize their goals.⁸⁵ If fashionable urban dress mirrored ideals of gentlemanly leisure, then the Israeli austere anti-fashion hailed the value of active, manual, work.⁸⁶

Zionism placed the hard-working pioneer on top of its national scale. Although most Jewish immigrants settled in cities and towns and many maintained middle-class lifestyles, Zionist ideology regarded manual labor—agricultural work in particular—as the summit of the national revival in the land of Israel. Thus, during the Yishuv era, working clothes assumed a special cultural position: they testified to a low economic income but at the same time signified a high social status.⁸⁷ After the foundation of the state, Israeli citizens were called to continue the project begun by the pioneers. Working clothes were a visible indication of fulfilling the centralist ethos by literally building the young state. Central items of the austere model of dress—khaki pants, high shoes, tembel hats—were worn by actual manual laborers, and the latter’s husky images were celebrated as a towering national icon in posters and ads.⁸⁸



Figure 1.7: Workers laying a water pipe in the Negev, 1949.
Government Press Office, NPC, D592-077. Photo by Zoltan Kluger.

But not just manual laborers, whose physical work demanded freedom of movement, wore simple clothes in 1950s Israel.⁸⁹ Clerks, both male and female, were expected to maintain an unadorned, somewhat informal, style of dress.⁹⁰ When clothes were rationed in the summer of 1950, the workers of the Ministry of Rationing and Supply were required to set a personal example to all Israeli citizens:

Even on special occasions, such as representative meetings etc., there is no need to assume any look of grandeur, and a modest appearance—such as a khaki outfit, an unbuttoned shirt, and no overcoat—would be highly appreciated.⁹¹

All civil servants were requested that year to “appear at work, and even in parties, with clothes befitting our situation (and no ties!).”⁹² Secretaries in the private sector were also recommended to maintain a tidy appearance at work, but at the same time to refrain “from a fancy look and from excessive vanity.”⁹³ The economic constraints certainly influenced the dress code, but opting for the austere model of dress also signaled na-

tional dedication and social consciousness. Hence even people who held high ranks or managerial positions would sometimes “dress down” and flaunt their informal dress. When reporters visited the Bedouin market in the southern town Beer Sheva, they encountered “a tall Jew, wearing khaki pants and a light blue shirt.” Assuming he was a casual passer-by, they were much surprised to learn that the man was in fact the mayor of Beer Sheva.⁹⁴ Even the manager of a luxurious hotel thus went among his elegantly-dressed visitors wearing a simple shirt with its sleeves rolled-up. “Here the tie doesn’t count,” he stated, and was probably trying to refute the snobbish image attached to luxury hotels in 1950s Israel.⁹⁵

A direct continuation of the pioneering style, the Israeli austere model of dress also played a nostalgic role within the emerging national culture.⁹⁶ By the 1950s it was associated with long-time Israelis, and especially with local native Sabras, and therefore—as we shall see—could signify successful acculturation among new immigrants. After the foundation of the state, when Israeli society was dramatically changing due to mass immigration, and when most of the population continued to settle in cities and towns, the agricultural field and the Yishuv period were surrounded by nostalgic notions. Long-time Israelis tended to describe the pre-state era in idyllic terms, and to inaccurately ascribe a simple lifestyle to the whole Yishuv society, rather than to a small minority of pioneers.⁹⁷ As one fashion columnist lamented in a daily newspaper in early 1951:

Indeed there was once a time, when the Yishuv not only adorned itself in its khaki clothes, but also took pride in this frugal and humble style ... but these days are gone and never to return. Khaki shorts were replaced by long, woolen pants, ironed according to the rules of elegance; whilst our fair sex is following fashion and even competing with Paris ... At present no one is willing to return to the khaki clothes of old, and even high-school girls would not give up their nylon stockings.⁹⁸

As a matter of fact, the popularity of khaki shorts among growing segments of society *increased* after the foundation of the state. Urbanites in the Yishuv era were often keen followers of fashion, a tendency that continued among some women but actually *decreased* among Israeli men. Nylon stockings were indeed a coveted article during the years of

scarcity and rationing, but silk stockings were worn by fashionable women during the Yishuv era as well. Nevertheless, and historical facts aside, as the austere model of dress now held a high status and epitomized the values of the hegemonic centralist ethos, it was covered with renewed admiration. Moreover, from the viewpoint of Israel's 1950s present, the Yishuv past was colored in nostalgic shades and the aspired-for simplicity was attributed to former days. Although at the time the pioneers' dress was implemented in reality only by a minority, it was now longingly regarded as a general symbol of the Yishuv era, a reminder of lost purity and innocence.

The austere model of dress also manifested and strengthened evolving notions of masculinity and femininity. Like the pioneers' dress before it, the austere style expressed unassuming, uncouth toughness. This may explain why this model of dress was adopted by more men than women. Rozin also suggests that women's marginal place in society made them less obligated and committed than men to the centralist ethos and its austere code.⁹⁹ Indeed, dress patterns both in Revolutionary France and Fascist Italy reveal a similar division: men, politically central, were required to dress according to the ruling political ideals whereas women, politically marginal, were not limited to the same degree and enjoyed a greater "freedom of dress."¹⁰⁰

In Israel, as in other contemporary societies, men were put under pressure to avoid what was considered "excessive" male vanity. Men who took obvious care of their appearance were presented comically as effeminate.¹⁰¹ Since the 1940s, many middle class Israeli men adopted less formal dress, and the years of rationing might have enhanced this tendency. While women felt that the conditions of rationing limited their proper scope of dress, men were already required to embrace stylistic moderation and simplicity as an aesthetic choice, and therefore the poor material conditions of war and rationing could paradoxically "assist" them in achieving stylistic unfussiness.¹⁰²

But what about *female* Sabras and other Israeli women who dressed according to the codes of the austere model? From the outset, Zionist ideology and culture—like most national movements—nurtured the image of the "new Jew" while the "new Jewess" remained marginal and vague. The same continued in Israel, where the Sabra image concentrated on the male native. To be sure, the image of the mythical male Sabra was complex and included some unclear elements and contradictions; but the

mythical female Sabra was even less distinct and almost insignificant. Her image was based on a couple of stereotypes regarding her physical appearance, a general commitment to contribute to the national mission, and her passive role as the fighter's girlfriend, waiting for his return from the battlefield.¹⁰³ Similarly, the female version of the austere model of dress looked like a slightly modified adaptation of the male version. The austere model of dress thus accentuated men's manliness, while toning down women's femininity.

So did the austere model, with its restrained vanity and tom-boyish qualities, empower Israeli women? Was the woman who dressed according to the austere model, namely more similar to men, closer to fulfilling the Zionist ideological notion about more equality between the sexes?¹⁰⁴ If "dress equality" is practiced merely by making women's clothes more like men's, it might deny women the capacity to manipulate the gaze and use it for their own advantage. In the Israeli case, women who gave up fashion for ideological reasons and adopted the austere model of dress were fulfilling their national duties but probably paying not just an aesthetic price, but also yielding some of their potential power of choice, expression, and influence.¹⁰⁵

Although the voluntary sacrifice advocated by Ben-Gurion's centralist ideal was fulfilled in practice only by a minority, the austere model of dress became a widespread costume in Israel, especially among men. It was identified with the country's hegemonic values and with its pre-state pioneering heritage. It suited the local climate and the limiting economic conditions. It was regarded as an authentic, nostalgic, local dress, unifying visually the heterogeneous society of the young state. Former pioneers might have forsaken their ascetic lifestyle, but at the same time the wider Israeli public could indicate its loyalty to the centralist ethos by adopting the austere model of dress, with or without fulfilling other, and more demanding, pioneering commandments.

Thus the austere model of dress reflected both economic necessity and ideological choice. Although this style was inexpensive and affordable, it should be noted that it clearly differed from the dress worn by paupers. Photographs of the country's poor show them wearing shabby, tattered clothes, sometimes torn or patched. Often the size did not fit the wearers, and garments hung on their bodies like a sack. These clothes sometimes looked as if they were once rather smart but had been worn out by long over-use. Conversely, the austere model looked like a vol-

untary ideological self-denial, an intentional anti-fashion. Even when it was actually chosen out of material necessity—, being less costly than smarter clothes, it enjoyed the advantage of signaling hegemonic power rather than economic weakness, and was therefore worn with pride, like a badge of honor, with a kind of haughty modesty.¹⁰⁶

NOTES

1. For instance Dosh (1956), 19, 23, 34, 36, 38, 42, 55–56, 60, 65, 78, 116, 121, 129. On iconic figures representing the modern state, see Hobsbawm (2006), 7.
2. On ideal-types as helpful analytical tools for deciphering the tangled everyday experience see Bauman (2007), 24.
3. Quotation from *Laisha*, April 18, 1956. Photos by Fritz Cohen, 1951 – NPC: D544-086, D218-088. Photos from 1952 and 1954 – CZA: 1278596, 1278174. *Geva* newsreels, 1955 – SA: VT GE 07. Photos in *Dvar hashavu'a*, February 22, 1951, August 23, 1951, July 17, 1952. On Israeli hairstyles see Almog (2003), 86, 89. And compare with communist China's palate of blue, green, or grey in Finnane (2008), 205.
4. Steele (2005a), vol. 2, 177, 181, 192.
5. Hobsbawm (2006), 287–288; Chenut (2005), 218, 252; Yahav (2003), 78.
6. Rosenthal (2006), 154.
7. Protestant Templar Germans (Tempelgesellschaft) settled in Palestine since the late nineteenth century.
8. Yahav (2003), 77; Raz (1996), 160. Also see “Pardon My Turkish”, *Forward*, October 24, 2003.
9. For instance *Hamodi'a*, October 19, 1951. Illustration in *Zmanim*, September 1, 1954. Sketches of Ata hats, 1955 – SCA. Also see photo in *Bamachaneh*, June 10, 1954, and cartoon in Dosh (1956), 19.
10. Photo in *Bamachaneh*, May 31, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1952, 1954 – SA: VT GE 01, VT GE 07.
11. *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 6, 1949. *Hedei hanegev*, May 1952. *Min ha'ir el hakfar*, 4-5, August 1956. *Geva* newsreels, 1952 – SA: VT GE 01. 1950s white chemises – SCA. Ad in *Ha'olam hazeh*, April 15, 1954. Photo from 1949 – CZA: 1010020. Photo by Fritz Cohen, 1955, and photo from 1956 – NPC: D726-107, D448-093. On various meanings of white clothes see Anderson (2009), 60.
12. Raz (1996), 150–151. Photos from 1950 – CZA: 1011645, 1011646, 11331123. Correspondence from 1950 – ISA: 47/c – 225/48. Poster from 1953 – CZA: KRA 1390. 1950s Ata clothes and 1955 designs – SCA.
13. *Kolno'a*, November 4, 1954. Cartoon in *Haaretz*, August 18, 1950. Photo from 1952 – CZA: 1278581. Poster from 1953 – CZA: KRA 1390. On the history of Ata see Bar Or (2009).

14. *Lagever*, January 20, 1954.
15. James (2000), 9; Browne (2000).
16. Raz (1996), 47–51, 85–87, 122–123; Hason (1997), 19. On embroidery in Slavic folklore see Kononenko (2007), 66–67.
17. Paradoxically, during these very same years, when Yishuv pioneers were donning Russian folk items, rural Russian dress was used in *Soviet* propaganda to indicate stagnation, and traditional folk dress was presented as an object of necessary reform. See Gradskova (2007), 130.
18. Raz (1996), 136, 158–159. Photos from 1952, 1954 – CZA: 1278581, 1278165, 1278166. Photos in *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 2, 1951, September 4, 1952, October 1, 1952. 1950s election poster – PC: V1885-5. Also see *Sport yisrael*, November 25, 1951.
19. Gelber (1996), 453–454. Also see Sivan (1991).
20. Schor (1956), 48; Raz (1996), 160.
21. Radai (1956), 78–79. *Dorot*, October 20, 1949, 8–9. For a less idyllic view of the Sabra see *Zmanim*, September 27, 1954, October 1, 1954, October 6, 1954.
22. Shapira (1997), 174; Almog (1997).
23. *Ma'ariv*, August 10, 1949.
24. Shavit (1992b), 142–144; Raz (1996), 144. And compare with Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2002), 157, 180, 259; Eaton (2004), 124.
25. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, (2002), 50–51, 94–95; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 111–112, 114; Tarrant (1994), 142, 144; Ewing (1992), 142–146.
26. Raz (1996), 105–109. Letter from April 25, 1949 – ISA, 47/c-43/223. And compare with Zweiniger-Bargielowska, (2002).
27. Raz (1996), 137–139. Photo from 1949 – ISA: 47/c-33/200. *Lakol* regulations, 1949 – ISA: 47/c-15/222. Production reports, 1950 – ISA: 47/c-29/223.
28. Raz (1996), 137. Compare with Stitzel (2005), 56–57, 71, 132; Stitzel (2008), 257.
29. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1951. Also see *Haaretz*, March 24, 1950.
30. Rozin (2005a), 58; Gross (1997), 138–139; Naor (2009), 63–105.
31. Gross (1995), 232–239; Gross (1997), 140, 142; Giladi (2002), 40–42.
32. Rozin (2005a), 58; Rozin (2008), 21–47, 58–59; Rozin (2005b), 273–290; Rozin (2002); Ben-Uzi (2008).
33. “Rationing” in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2003); Osokina (2001), 198, 200–201. Also see Trentmann (2006), 12.
34. Compare with wartime clothes rationing in other countries: Osokina (2001), 197, 199; Guenther (2005), 28, 30, 131–137, 205, 212–232; Schallie (2007), 99–104; Veillon (2002), 40, 55; Ewing (1992), 145, 147; Hill (2004), 70–72. Also see Mee and Safronova (2003), 143–144.
35. Rozin (2008), 37–43; Rozin (2002), 97; Raz (1996), 140; Shavit (1992b), 142–144. *Haaretz*, July 31, 1950.
36. Shavit, Goldstein, and Beer (1983), 252.
37. Penslar (2003).
38. *Haaretz*, July 31, 1950, August 15, 1950. Also see *Ma'ariv*, August 4, 1950. And

- compare with Stitziel (2008), 264.
39. Letter from December 25, 1949 – ISA, 47/c-33/200. Rationing poster, 1950 – CZA: KRA 600.
 40. *Haaretz*, July 31, 1950. *Ma'ariv*, August 4, 1950. See Rozin, 2006, 58–59. Compare with Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2002), 48–49, 96–97.
 41. Rozin (2002), 97; *Ma'ariv*, August 6, 1950, August 7, 1950. *Yediot aharonot*, August 23, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 12, 1950. *Herut*, October 6, 1950. Correspondence from 1949 – ISA: 47/c-33/200. Compare with Stitziel (2008), 258.
 42. *Yediot aharonot*, January 6, 1950, August 23, 1950. *Ashmoret*, August 10, 1950, October 19, 1950. *Ma'ariv*, August 6, 1950, August 7, 1950, August 9, 1950. *Ha'aretz*, July 31, 1950. *Haboker*, August 21, 1950. Ben-Porat (1999), 124.
 43. Rozin (2002), 97–98. *Haboker*, August 13, 1950, August 21, 1950, September 19, 1950. *Yediot aharonot*, August 23, 1950. *Ma'ariv*, September 5, 1950. *Hador*, October 12, 1952. Document from September 1950 – TAA: 1795/31. Report from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-29/201. Correspondence from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-34/222, 47/c-45/223. Correspondence from 1951 – ISA: 47/c-36/222. *Geve* newsreels, 1953, 1954, 1956 – SA: VT GE 04, VT GE 05, VT GE 07, VT GE 08.
 44. *Haisha bamedinah*, September 1950. And compare with Rozin (2006), 65–66.
 45. Rozin (2006), 61–64; Rozin (2008), 35–37, 44–46, 61–65, 78, 192–193. Photo in *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 19, 1950. And compare with black markets in wartime and post-war Germany and Britain: Guenther (2005), 229–232; Stitziel (2008), 264; Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2002), 157, 177, 259; Kynaston (2007), 111.
 46. *Haboker*, July 6, 1951, July 13, 1951. *Ma'ariv*, July 9, 1951. Letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-31/222, ISA: 47/c-33/22. Letter from 1950 – TAA, 1844/31. And compare with Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2002), 155, 157.
 47. Letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-34/206, 47/c-31/222, 47/c-36/222, 47/c-35/222. And compare with Stitziel (2008), 265, 272–273.
 48. Letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-36/222.
 49. Letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-31/222.
 50. Ads in *Ma'ariv*, October 7, 1949, November 17, 1950; *Jerusalem Post*, July 1, 1949, July 8, 1951; *Haaretz*, August 14, 1950, October 6, 1950.
 51. *Jerusalem Post*, July 5, 1951. On *Metzkin* see Raz (1996), 80, 115, 147–148.
 52. Ad in *Ma'ariv*, August 15, 1951.
 53. Rozin (2002), 99; Raz (1996), 142. *Dvar hashavu'a*, December 20, 1951. Photo from 1951 – NPC: D720-091. Election Poster from 1951 – PC: V2158-7.
 54. Raz (1996), 142. *Dvar hashavu'a*, December 20, 1951. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1951.
 55. Rozin (2006), 61; Rozin (2008), 31; Rozin (2005a), 174. And compare with Kynaston (2007), 225; Stitziel (2008), 256, 265, 267; Lewis (2008), 3; Smulyan (2007), 59. On Jewish humor as a way of dealing with hardship and suffering see Kerman (1995), 181; Penslar (2007), 175, 185.
 56. For instance *Haboker*, August 10, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 1, 1951. Front cover of satirical pamphlet from 1950 – NNL. Cartoons in *Ashmoret*, August 10, 1950; *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 24, 1951; *Tafrit*, September 1950, December 1950;

- Ma'ariv*, July 15, 1949, August 18, 1950, October 11, 1950; *Bamachaneh*, June 2, 1949. Jokes in *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 10, 1950, August 17, 1950, September 19, 1950.
57. Cartoon in *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 10, 1950.
58. Cartoon in *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 10, 1950.
59. *Haaretz*, August 23, 1951.
60. *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 17, 1950. Ministry of Supply and Rationing list, September 1950 – TAA, 1795/31. Also see *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 24, 1951.
61. *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 5, 1951.
62. Zidon (1951), 35. Also see pages 47, 109.
63. Photos by Fritz Cohen and Teddy Brauner, 1950 – NPC: D140-126, D720-110, D720-102, D720-101. On the history of mannequins see Ganeva (2008), 153–154. On humor in advertising see Gulas and Weinberger (2006).
64. Raz (1996), 142. *Yediot aharonot*, February 26, 1951, October 17, 1952, July 23, 1953. After The General Zionists, a political party supporting a freer market, won many votes in the general elections and joined the coalition government, the economic policy was changed in 1952 – see Rozin (2008), 130–196; Ben-Uzi (2008). Rationing was formally cancelled in 1959.
65. *Alonekh*, February 1953. Also see ad in *Zmanim*, December 27, 1953. And see Esperdy (2008), 151, 179–180.
66. For instance *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1952. *Yediot hitachadut baalei hakolno'a beyisrael*, August 18, 1953. Almog (1997), 332–334.
67. *Ma'ariv*, July 23, 1954. *Haaretz*, January 6, 1954. *Yediot aharonot*, February 26, 1954. Election poster from 1955 – PC: V2156-2(13).
68. Quoted by Segev (1984), 299. Also see Rozin (2008), 78.
69. Alexander (1992); Lissak (1998), 41–42.
70. Rozin (2005a), 158–159; Rozin (2006), 52, 56–57; Rozin (2008), 23–24. On attitudes toward luxury in the Yishuv see Helman (2010), 91.
71. Government poster from 1950 – CZA, KRA 600. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-3/159. *Haaretz*, August 24, 1950, January 23, 1951. Rozin (2002), 99, 103.
72. Details on the notion “mamlakhtiyut”, its origins and development, see Kedar (2002).
73. Dowty (1995), 36–37; Don-Yehiya (1995), 176, 180. On the characteristics of the Zionist “New Jew” see Shapira (1996), 427–441; Segev (1984), 277.
74. Dowty (1995), 37; Alatout (2008), 44; Bareli (1999), 25–27, 36–37.
75. Dowty (2001), 5–64.
76. Drori (2000), 30, 32.
77. Gelber (1996), 450–451; Ben-Avram and Near (1994).
78. Near (1992a), 116–125; Zachor (2007), 137.
79. Bareli (1999), 38–39; Zachor (2007), 153–155; Rozin (2005a), 188; Rozin (2008), 136–139, 191–195; Ben-Porat (1999), 113–114; Lissak (1998), 38, 53–54; Giladi (2002), 60; Gelber (1996), 453.
80. Gramsci (1997), 15; Lears (1985), 571–575; Hall (1979), 332–334; Hebdige (1993), 366.

81. Campbell (1994a), 44-48, 55. Also see Campbell (1994b), 43, 46.
82. Helman (2003), 81-83.
83. Almog (1997), 132-135, 326-328. On the looks of the ideal man in European nationalism see Mosse (1985), 31.
84. On this double negation in Socialist Zionism, see Peled (2002), 28-29.
85. Simmel (1997), 195-196; Wilson (2003), 3, 5, 12-13; Entwistle (2003), 48; Davis (1992), 161 n. 2; Lind and Roach-Higgins (1985), 184.
86. Compare with Berger (1991).
87. Giladi and Shwartz (2001), 11-13; Helman (2010), 150-154.
88. *Geva* newsreels, 1951-1956 – SA: VT GE 01, VT GE 03, VT GE 07, VT GE 08. *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 10, 1950. *Jerusalem Post*, July 15, 1952. *Davar*, September 30, 1955. And compare with Maynard (1994), 171-173, 176; Chen (2001), 153; Stern (2004), 52-53.
89. Compare with Berger (1991).
90. *Haisha bamedinah*, November 1949. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 22, 1956. Photos in *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 25, 1951; *Hedei hanegev*, August 1952.
91. Letter from October 20, 1950 – ISA: 47/c-223/38.
92. Letter from – ISA: 47/c-200/33.
93. *Haisha bamedinah*, November 1949.
94. *Matzpen*, September 15, 1954.
95. *Yediot aharonot*, September 13, 1951. On luxury hotels and their image see *Hador*, May 20, 1955. *Al hamishmar*, July 3, 1955. *Herut*, August 24, 1955. *Davar*, September 7, 1955. *Haaretz*, June 12, 1955, September 16, 1955, August 3, 1956. Also see Segev (1984), 272.
96. Compare with the cultural role of the Australian “bush” costume: Maynard (1994), 159-164, 170-180.
97. Shavit (1992a), 70; Miron (2001), 177.
98. *Yediot aharonot*, February 26, 1951.
99. Rozin (2005a), 188; Rozin (2008), 43.
100. Hunt (1998), 227-228, 231, 235-236, 241; Gori (2004), 172. Also see Shinar (2000), 383.
101. Bradley (2007), 25; Davis (1992), 42. Cartoons in *Ashmoret*, September 1, 1949, May 4, 1950. *Bamachaneh*, June 21, 1951.
102. Raz (1996), 143, 159-160. And compare with Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 114-115; Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2002), 91-93; Maynard (1994), 171-173.
103. Horowitz (1993), 81-82. Also see Bernstein (2008), 36-41. And compare with Finnane (2008), 203.
104. Elboim-Dror (1993), 185-193.
105. Compare with Mattingly (2002), 54, 140, 143. Also see Pinker (2004), 429; Young (1993), 273.
106. Cartoon and illustration in *Herut*, February 22, 1952, January 13, 1956. Cartoons in *Ashmoret*, December 29, 1949, March 8, 1951. Photos in *Ashmoret*, March 29, 1951, April 26, 1951. Photo in *Dvar hashavu'a*, September 25, 1952. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA: VT GE 05.

Chapter Two: Fashion Makers and Consumers

Producing, Presenting, and Selling Fashion

In April 1949—the very same month that the Israeli government launched its austerity policy—a grand fashion show was presented in one of the country’s largest and most luxurious hotels. In the front row, in full evening dress, were seated the United States Ambassador Malcolm Macdonald and his wife, alongside Zipora Sharet, wife of Israel’s foreign minister Moshe Sharet.



Figure 2.1: Gala fashion show at the Sharon Hotel in Herzliya, 1949. Government Press Office, NPC, D541-082. Photo by Teddy Brauner.

We have defined the austere model of dress in 1950s Israel as an anti-fashion; yet many Israeli newspapers and journals published regular fashion columns throughout the post-war crisis and fashion shows were performed. Moreover, although this fact is less imprinted in collective memory than Srulik’s image and the austere model of dress, visual sources such as newsreels and photographs clearly reveal that many Israelis did *not* opt for such simple apparel. Instead they chose to dress smartly and to follow cosmopolitan fashion. Even Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, renowned for his simple and informal dress, chose to wear elegant outfits on certain occasions.¹ What, then, were the roles of fashion during the early years of the Israeli state?

How did this elitist and luxurious field fit into Israel's national goals and its centralist ethos?

Fashion, as noted in the book's introduction, is a specific field of clothing, a process of constantly changing styles of dress that first emerged in Renaissance Europe. Sociologist Georg Simmel describes fashion as simultaneously enslaving and liberating the individual. On the one hand, it dictates unified lines of dress for all its followers; on the other hand, within the limits of these dictates, it allows each person to choose specific nuances, which can express and manifest one's own personality. Fashion is an ever-changing process, though in each and every moment it relies on an illusion of permanency.² At the end of the nineteenth century, sociologist Thorstein Veblen noticed how people adore contemporary fashion and deem it "beautiful" as long as it maintains the element of novelty. However, this attributed beauty is temporary, and once the fashion changes the former mode is considered ugly and grotesque. Fashion's illusion of permanency includes a dislike and contempt for past modes, especially the most recent one that has just been replaced. Every new fashion relates to its predecessor in some way, but novelty is based on a rapid transformation, in which the strange becomes familiar while the familiar becomes strange. New and daring styles might evoke social objection, but social censorship is also aimed at styles that are regarded as "passé." Once a certain style goes out of fashion, some time has to lapse and the style must be forgotten, before it can be accepted anew and "revived" back into fashion.³

Fashion began in the fourteenth century only among the elite, but gradually spread to wider sections of Western society, and went through particularly rapid democratization after World War II. Though haute couture became the exclusive domain of a small and extremely rich clientele, many top designers launched new lines of mass-produced and more affordable clothes. Paris recovered from the war crisis and became once again the center of fashion, and women all over the world treated its dictates as an obligatory command. The most influential post-war designer was Christian Dior (1905–1957), who introduced in 1947 what was immediately dubbed the "New Look." A dramatic stylistic change, Dior's New Look was the intentional and extreme opposite of the style that preceded it;⁴ it was an escape from, and a rejection of, the hard years of the recent war. Whereas the former style was manly, boxy,

military-like, practical, and austere, the New Look was feminine, soft, lavish, romantic, and accessorized. Dior's clothes highlighted women's busts, waists, and hips. The 1930s' and 1940s' high and padded shoulders were replaced by a sloping low shoulder-line, and the short and thin skirts of wartime were replaced with longer skirts, either in the narrow "pencil" line or in the wide form, with generous pleats and underskirts. "I designed clothes for flower-like women," said Dior, "with rounded shoulders, full, feminine busts, and hand-span waists above enormous spreading skirts."⁵

Local fashion industries are tied to local textile industries.⁶ As we recall, in Israel this industry faced many obstacles and difficulties during the first years of statehood, and the quality of products for the local market deteriorated.⁷ But even during the post-war depression, some of the existent local textile factories were enlarged and developed, adopting American methods and techniques. The long-term involvement of Jews in the garment industries of Europe and the United States is well known,⁸ and some new immigrants who owned and ran textile and fashion businesses in their countries of origin opened new textile industries in Israel after their arrival. The government tried to improve the national balance of payments by supporting production for export and, therefore, while clothes manufactured for the local market were outdated and of very low quality, those manufactured for export remained fashionable and well-made.⁹

Cut off from the neighboring Egyptian cotton market, and due to the high cost of transporting cotton from afar, in 1951 the first attempts were made to grow cotton locally, and four years later the yield reached commercial quantities. By mid-decade the textile industry was starting to recover, with the help of local and foreign loans. The quality and variety of fabrics and clothes produced for the local market were gradually increasing and improving while their prices decreased. While improvement of products for local consumption started only in the mid-1950s, Israeli-made products for export, such as rain coats and evening dresses, were coveted by foreign consumers since the beginning of the decade.¹⁰ Fashion reporters celebrated this export success in superlative terms of hyperbole, presenting it as a wonderful national triumph.¹¹

"Israeli fashion is conquering the world" overstated an economic reporter in one of the local newspapers in 1951, and joyfully described the presence of locally made products in international exhibits. A similar

tone was taken by a fashion reporter, who described the success of a local firm in exporting its Jersey dresses abroad as a national feat; she emphasized that successful export is “*our gladness*” while its failure is “*our concern*.” In 1953 another reporter was happy to announce that Israeli fashion for export “has proved once again that it is as good as world fashion.”¹² If Zionists claimed that Jews were “a people like all other peoples,” then Israelis wanted to demonstrate that Israel was a state like, and as good as, all other states. Successful export of fashion also fed another local need: it proved that the talent for creating high quality fashion had not been lost, so even if at present Israeli women could not enjoy its fruit, they would be able to do so in future. In 1955, for instance, a fashion reporter praised Matzkin’s brocade and velvet coats; true, these expensive coats were made for export, but she comforted her readers, stating that “We hope that in time we, the women of Israel, will also be able to afford such coats and the right to be an ‘elegant lady’ will not be reserved for European women alone.”¹³ A certain noticeable gap remained between the well-made and expensive fashion products for export and the cheaper products for the local market, but from mid-decade, with the improvement of the economic situation, this qualitative gap was diminishing steadily.¹⁴

During these years of economic recovery, textile and fashion merchants returned to promotional techniques such as sales, competitions, and prizes, which had disappeared during the days of rationing. Yet clothes and shoe stores varied according to their locations, from tiny dark hovels in poor neighborhoods to modern shiny shops in the high streets of larger cities.¹⁵ According to a survey from 1956, Israelis tended to buy their pants and simple dresses mass-produced, whereas wool suits and fancier dresses were usually custom made for the clients: for the petit bourgeois by a private seamstress and for a rich minority (“high society”) in a few famous fashion salons.¹⁶ This hierarchy of sartorial shops and services reflected and reinforced the local class structure.

Locally made fashion was presented in fashion shows, held in Jerusalem, Haifa, and most often in Tel Aviv and its environs.¹⁷ Most shows were performed in fancy hotels, rare sites of luxury in 1950s Israel.¹⁸ An expensive event, the fashion show became a status symbol, its spectators including “society women,” foreign diplomats, local officials, and tourists. The lavishness of the event enveloped stage and audience alike, and the fashionable, elegant, and extravagant clothes worn by the spec-

tators were sometimes described by journalists as meticulously as those presented in the show itself.¹⁹ But fashion shows were an exclusive and elitist event, while women from different classes, in Israel as elsewhere, could be continuously informed about fashion novelties through fashion magazines and fashion columns.²⁰

Indeed, in Yishuv society, articles reported about the latest fashions and advised readers about dress and grooming. They were published not only in the middle-class press, but also in the socialist faction's newspaper. The stylistic revolution of the New Look was hardly felt in Israel during its first years, due to the total war and its economic devastation, but still the local press kept reporting about the latest Parisian modes.²¹ Israeli and world fashion shows were sometimes edited into local newsreels and screened in Israeli cinema houses. *Vogue* and other foreign fashion magazines, imported in increasing numbers, were sold for high prices, but a few attempts to publish local fashion magazines were short-lived.²² Fashion columns in established Israeli newspapers and bulletins, on the other hand, were growing, adding illustrations and photographs to the texts, and sometimes moving from the back pages to less marginal locations. Even bulletins affiliated with Mapai, the leading party, and promoting the centralist dominant ethos, did not neglect fashion.²³

Local women's organizations offered some sewing lessons from the early 1940s on, but these were aimed at housewives, whereas professional training in fashion design began only after the foundation of the state. In 1948, ORT, the Jewish organization for vocational training, began arranging in Israel professional courses, and eight years later it founded a technical college which trained young Israelis for the local textile industry. The college was named after Arie Shenkar, president of the Industrialists Association, who had been a central pioneering figure in the Yishuv's budding industry, including his successful management of the local Lodzia textile factory.²⁴

In 1949, Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization of America, opened a fashion institute in Jerusalem, combining theoretical studies with practical training. Its two-year program offered courses in management and commerce alongside courses in fashion and textile design. At the end of the first year of the institute's existence, the students presented their designs, ranging from sportive daily wear to ballroom gowns. One fashion reporter claimed that they showed great originality:

“Rather than copying models from abroad, an attempt was made to infuse novel motifs into our fashion and to contribute something new to world fashion.” Other reviewers also praised the school’s achievements and its high standards. The fashion show that was held one year later, when the first class graduated, was equally applauded: it demonstrated that there was plenty of young talent in Israel for feeding and developing the local fashion industry.²⁵

While a new generation of fashion designers were being trained in these newly opened schools, Israeli fashion in the 1950s was still dominated by designers from the former generation, women who received their professional training in Europe, some of whom had opened their businesses and won their reputation back in the Yishuv era.²⁶ The two leading Israeli designers of the period were Fini Leitersdorf, whose attempts to create a unique Israeli style will be discussed in the next chapter, and Lola Ber.

Ber, a professional and experienced designer, immigrated to Palestine from Czechoslovakia in 1940. She employed excellent seamstresses from Czechoslovakia and Vienna in her Tel Aviv haute couture business, and due to her refined and restrained style quickly became the elite designer of the country’s “women of society,” including the wives of Arab dignitaries and high British officials. After World War II Ber went to Paris and watched the 1947 show in which Dior first introduced his New Look. She was deeply impressed and was the first designer who “imported” the New Look to Tel Aviv, Israel’s fashion center. During the 1950s, when employing thirty-five workers in her “salon,” Ber designed outfits for Vera Weizmann and Paula Ben-Gurion, wives of Israel’s first president and first prime minister, respectively, whom she befriended. She was sought after by society women, a narrow social layer who could afford her prices. When asked in 1953 whether a country like Israel, in a state of national recruitment, really needs fashionable dress, Ber replied that fashion does not detract from, but rather elevates, the quality of the people.²⁷

Ber was generally considered as Israel’s “queen of fashion.” According to a male reporter, “Her name shakes the hearts of more Israeli women than the names of Gary Cooper or Robert Taylor.” Fashion writers and critics described Ber’s designs as elegant, perfectly-executed, never too ornamented or too showy. They admired her “supposedly ‘simple’ and wonderful line” and praised her for managing to capture

the essence of French design—“the strongest effect that is achieved by utter simplicity.”²⁸

Minimalist designs can be as elitist as dazzling designs or even more so. Whereas ostentatious fashion requires only economic capital, restrained elite fashion also requires cultural capital, namely a thorough understanding of the rules of good taste. Richness and ornamentation were once the privilege of the few, but in modern times they gradually came into the hands of larger sectors, especially the new-rich. The old elite could thereafter maintain its edge by adopting “refined” simplicity and reproaching richness as “vulgar.”²⁹ Thus in order to appreciate Ber’s exquisite designs, both critics and customers needed to own the appropriate cultural capital, namely an acquired understanding of high-quality dressmaking and stylistic complexity. Such capital could be owned by those who emigrated to the Land of Israel from affluent backgrounds and urban centers in Western or Central Europe.³⁰

But even less wealthy and refined women than Ber’s clients often strove to follow cosmopolitan fashion as far as their limited economic and cultural capital allowed them to do so. Not all Israelis were satisfied with the tembel hat and the stark outfit of the austere model of dress, its hegemonic status notwithstanding.

The Smart Model of Dress

Uncelebrated by local lore and collective memory, yet clearly visible in photographs and film footage from 1950s Israel—especially in the cities and especially among women—was the smart model of dress. The archetypical female version of this fancy, fashionable model of dress included dresses, skirts, suits, and high-heeled shoes. Style was achieved not solely by the fashionable cut of the dress but also by the use of accessories: gloves, belts, handbags, scarves, jewelry, hats, stylish haircuts, manicured and painted fingernails, and the use of makeup. The archetypical male version of the smart model included suits, tailored jackets, elegant shoes, homburg hats (over well-brushed hair), and ties (over fully buttoned shirts). In contrast with the monochrome austere model of dress, the smart model often included colorful fabrics, striped, dotted, or otherwise printed. In winter the smart model could be recognized by the fabric and the cut of the coat. Expensive fur coats—like evening gowns and evening suits—were associated solely

with the smart model in its most extreme form.³¹

According to some 1950s questionnaires, the average urban middle class Israeli men's wardrobe could include ready-made summer and winter suits, various coats, khaki and other kinds of pants, khaki and other kinds of shirts, sweaters and pullovers, working clothes, underwear and pajamas, socks and various shoes, bathing suits, accessories and hats. Urban middle class women's wardrobes could include suits, winter and summer dresses, shirts and skirts, various coats, sweaters and pullovers, long wool pants, underwear and dressing gowns, pajamas and night gowns, bathing suits, socks and various shoes, accessories (including aprons), hats and handbags.³² Whereas some of these items, especially in the men's wardrobe, fit into the austere model of dress, others, especially in the women's wardrobe, were markedly smarter and fancier. The smart model "allowed" more lavishness, albeit within the limits of Israeli standards. Thus a fashion magazine presented enjoyable yet practical clothes for work in 1955, and clarified that

A secretary in the foreign office should refrain from gaudy dress, a social worker should dress modestly, and an independent woman [a woman who does not work for her living – A.H.] can permit herself—if it gives her pleasure—extravagant dress as well.³³

A short-lived men's magazine stated in 1954 that men too were "allowed" to dress elegantly, and informed that today's suits are tighter and that vests have made a comeback. However,

We do not expect to see our readers wearing an emerald vest with a blue or dark grey suit, or a white or green vest with a brown suit, like the mannequins seen in the windows of every shop for men's fashion.³⁴

In other words, even smartly dressed Israelis were expected to follow the general direction of fashion only mildly and moderately, rather than implementing it to its fullest, most ornate, form.



Figure 2.2: A central street in Jerusalem, 1950: Men and women dressed according to the smart model.

Government Press Office, NPC, D400-038. Photo by Teddy Brauner.

If the austere model was a continuation of the Yishuv's pioneering style of dress, then the smart model directly continued the urban style of dress worn by many members of the Yishuv before the foundation of the state. Whereas the austere model was a stable anti-fashion, inspired by Russian lore and Soviet ideals, one of the main traits of the smart model of dress was an attempt to follow Western fashion and its constant changes. If the austere model intentionally created a feeling of informality and carelessness, then the smart model was supposed to portray gentility, good manners, and elegance. The word "elegance" derives from the Latin verb "eligere" that indicates meticulous choice, and indeed smart dressers expressed visibly the careful attention that they paid to their clothes. The smart model signaled that the wearer had both the economic ability to buy well-made clothes, and also the awareness, knowledge, and discretion to choose them tastefully and according to the latest fashion.³⁵

For Israeli fashion followers, limited by shortage and rationing, the lavish New Look arrived at the worst time possible. The New Look was an expensive look, demanding great quantities of rich fabrics, decorations, and accessories, and keeping up with stylistic changes dictated by Paris every new season put additional strain on the shriveled Is-

raeli purse. Women who cared about fashion and physical appearance therefore had to be extremely creative in order to maintain their stylish looks.³⁶ They tried to renew old clothes by dyeing them and sewed old items into new ones. Modular features such as pockets, belts, sleeves, scarves, and collars were sewn or knitted, and used to change and vary the look of a single dress. High quality ready-made clothes were very expensive, so many women preferred to buy fabrics that were less expensive, and hire a seamstress.³⁷ Women who knew how to sew could make and mend their own clothes, while others took sewing lessons. A special powder was used to dye the legs and give them the appearance of nylon stockings, and when real nylon stockings were torn, they were mended by special experts.³⁸ Although a relatively new invention, by the early 1950s nylon stockings were already regarded as a “must” by elegant Israeli women.³⁹ Those who wore the austere model of dress in its extreme form needed fashion only as a foil against which to demonstrate their own anti-fashion; but women who opted for the smart model tried to follow fashion, and were left with the question of how to materialize it despite recession and rationing.

Some practical advice was provided in fashion columns. In 1950 Lola Ber recommended abandoning fabrics that were either too expensive to purchase with rationing coupons, like wool, or had simply vanished from the Israeli market, like silk; instead, she advised looking for fine examples of available affordable fabrics, and using them cleverly and fashionably.⁴⁰ After depicting a lavish show of high fashion in 1951 (“the woman sitting next to me whispered that she could have sewn an entire coat from a single fur sleeve”), one fashion reporter admitted that it is unlikely that the average Israeli woman would be able to dress according to the described fashion.

Still, if you’ll manage to sew even one single dress during this entire winter, why not sew it according to the latest fashion? And you could mend your dresses from the “former season” in the same lines as well.⁴¹

The following year the same reporter forbade her readers to throw away their old garments. Even the oldest dress, she wrote, can be altered to better suit the current fashion. “Then take out your clothes and do your best with them. No doubt you can achieve some compromise be-

tween the old clothes and the new fashion.”⁴²

Many visual and textual documents from 1950s Israel contrasted the austere and the smart models of dress, assuming that they represent two different, even opposing, lifestyles and ideologies.⁴³ The differences between the two models were probably most noticeable within Israeli youth cultures. Members of Israeli youth movements were very particular about maintaining the austere model of dress in its most extreme form; “culprits” who deviated from the normative codes of the austere model were sanctioned and could even be expelled from the movement. On the other hand, many urban youths who did not join the organized youth movements followed the rising American youth culture instead, including American youth fashions such as the wide “princess” skirts for girls, and the tight pants and brilliantine-covered hair for boys.⁴⁴ Whereas members of youth movements were highly appreciated and applauded in Israeli society for their devotion to the centralist ethos and their dedication to the national goals, non-committed teenagers were frowned upon as un-ideological, and sarcastically called “the salon youths” or “the golden youths,” to indicate their inactivity, decadence, and vanity.⁴⁵

A religious national newspaper published an article in early 1955 condemning excessive vanity in children’s clothes. Mothers should educate their children and teenage daughters by providing a personal example, and teach them that clean and well-kept clothes should suffice, even if their classmates are wearing new clothes. “It is not just a matter of saving expenses,” explained the concerned writer, “but a matter of building the girl’s character and toughening her for the future.” Simplicity, she wrote, should be embraced rather than luxury.⁴⁶ Only one year earlier, a couple of fashion designers, immigrants from Czechoslovakia, opened in Tel Aviv a salon specializing in teenage fashion. They named it “Seventeen,” after the popular American teenage magazine of the same title.⁴⁷ “Seventeen” offered teenage girls high fashion in American and Hollywood style. When the salon used Ata’s fabrics, for instance, it assured its clients that these excellent fabrics were printed with original patterns and designed into clothes of a very different style from Ata’s typical austere aesthetics. “Seventeen” high quality products were expensive, aiming at a small rich clientele.⁴⁸ One fashion reporter praised “Seventeen” products but criticized their high price and their foreign titles, and wondered whether such artificiality is the right thing “for our teenage girls.”

There's no room for such a salon in Israel. We have not yet become a people that can allow itself only the concern for beauty and prettiness. Our youngsters have other missions and other occupations. Any such salon is an alien element in our midst.⁴⁹

Another fashion reporter, however, disagreed, and wrote that a particular fashion for teenagers is not an excessive vanity. On the contrary: it prevents young girls from dressing like older women and using unnecessary jewels and accessories.⁵⁰

The debate concerning styles of dress and their correlated lifestyles was applied to men as well. An article titled "Is there a men's fashion in Israel?" was published in a men's magazine in 1954, attempting to show the heterogeneity of Israeli society as expressed in men's dress. Among the eight interviewees, picked randomly on Tel Aviv's streets, were Adir and Albert. Adir was a Sabra, freshly graduated from an agricultural school. He was a member of a socialist youth movement and was planning to serve in a settlement-and-combat army unit ("Nachal"). Albert, on the other hand, was born in Libya and had immigrated to Israel six years previously. Adir was wearing his cotton khaki clothes, whereas Albert was wearing a well-cut suit and a tie.⁵¹ When asked about his clothes, Adir claimed that:

My dress is the most comfortable, beautiful, and practical dress that a young man should wear. It is suitable for all times and is not expensive. My dress reflects the simple and healthful life for which I aspire.

Adir said that the decorated "golden youths," who try to imitate movie stars in their dress, only expose their inner shallowness because "the lavish dress does not make the man." Albert, on the other hand, explained that "in our places" (Libya) people spend most of their salaries on dress. "A nice dress makes a man more dignified. He is considered important and is greeted respectfully everywhere," and therefore one should invest in one's clothes. When interviewed, Albert "had been unemployed for more than a month,"⁵² but true to his belief that "clothes make the man," he maintained a dignified, impressive, appearance.

Adir and Albert were probably chosen by the journalist due to the

fact that each was wearing a very typical, extreme, version of the two opposing models: Adir looked like the incarnation of the austere model, and Albert wore the smart model in its most meticulous form; in fact, the journalist stated that Albert was the most elegantly dressed man whom he had met that day. Adir was a native Israeli, whereas Albert arrived in Israel after the foundation of the state. Even the men's private names stressed the comparison: "Albert" is a foreign (European) name, while "Adir" is a modern Israeli name, a Hebrew word meaning "mighty." Adir described clothes as unimportant, whereas Albert regarded them as socially crucial. Yet it should be remembered that the austere model, in spite of its aesthetic simplicity, was an intentional and well-nurtured anti-fashion. Their contrasting views regarding dress and the opposing styles of their outfits notwithstanding, both Adir and Albert looked similarly proud and self-satisfied with their appearance.

Plenty of sources from 1950s Israel rebuke the smart model of dress as a visual expression of social ills, especially—though not solely—during the economic crisis that lasted until 1954. Smart and decorated clothes were described as an external layer covering internal "coldness, hollowness, and aloofness" and as a vulgar expression of snobbery.⁵³ Cartoons depicted improper behaviors of profiteering, selfishness, and lack of social solidarity, performed by smartly and extravagantly dressed characters.⁵⁴ One journalist defined 1949 Israel as "the country of contrasts": the local so-called "aristocracy," he wrote, bursts forth with its snobbism, its tuxedos and its furs; on the other hand, veteran combat fighters from the recent war gather for their unit's reunion, in which only khaki dress is allowed.⁵⁵

Members of Mapai and of other socialist parties, who became wealthier after the foundation of the state, sometimes expressed their social-economic rise in their lifestyle, including their dress. They were attacked by the party's opponents, who accused Mapai leaders of being hypocritical, of preaching austerity to the people while living extravagantly themselves. Once, wrote an ultra-Orthodox journalist sarcastically,

The socialist was imagined as a long haired "idealist," wearing khaki pants and a shirt with no buttons, sandals with no socks on his feet summer and winter alike, living in the malaria-infested swamps, eating bread and olives, and detesting the bourgeoisies who live in luxuri-

ous apartments on the expense of the workers.

But now, claimed the writer, the same “idealist” is enjoying a life of luxury and wearing extravagant suits, starched shirts, and colorful ties, as he preaches about socialism to tattered and hungry Yemenite immigrants in the transit camps.⁵⁶ The latter satirical narration might have been intentionally extreme, but material luxury among members of socialist parties was also criticized internally, by other members of these same parties, who regarded extravagant dress as a sign of moral compromise and ideological laxity.⁵⁷

Whereas the austere model tended to blur the visual differences between the sexes, the smart model clearly differentiated between men and women. Fashion historians often dwell on “the great male renunciation” of the nineteenth century, the process during which men’s fashion became considerably more unified and simplified. Former sumptuary laws were canceled, but a new cultural code restricted men’s apparel into graver and darker modes, leaving variety, vivid colors, decorations, and rapid change only within women’s fashion. Before the nineteenth century it was often men who initiated new fashions, but thereafter fashion became identified particularly with women, while men distanced themselves from this supposedly feminine sphere. Rather than signaling high status by elaborate dress, as was the custom among the old aristocracy, the male members of the new middle class elite dressed in marked simplicity, and could demonstrate their wealth through the elaborate dresses of their wives and daughters.⁵⁸

The modern association of women alone with fashion, appearance, decoration, and grooming was enhanced during the first decades of the twentieth century. Mass culture, especially through cinema and advertising, promoted more specific ideals of beauty, and women from all social classes were encouraged to implement these ideals with the help of new fashion and grooming products and services.⁵⁹ Whereas women’s fashion of the 1940s included masculine and military elements, post-war fashion was hyper-feminine, highlighting women’s busts, waists, and thighs. Men’s fashion, on the other hand, remained conservative and changed rather slowly.⁶⁰

By following contemporary fashion, Israelis who wore the smart model of dress were automatically adopting the pronounced difference of appearance between men and women, which had characterized West-

ern fashion at least since the nineteenth century, and clearly so during the 1950s.⁶¹ Although the middle class man could dedicate as much time, energy, capital, and thought to his dress as did a woman, he was required to hide this concern and to pretend indifference.⁶² The smart model, in Israel as elsewhere, thus required men to behave as if their elegant, tasteful, fashionable, look was achieved without much fuss. This differed from the austere model of dress that required both men *and* women to express their supposed indifference to vanity in the actual style of their clothes, namely in their simple-line, unchanging, mutely-colored dress.



Figure 2.3: A hostel in the northern town Nahariya in 1950: Women dressed according to the smart model.

Government Press Office, NPC, D233-111. Photo by Fritz Cohen.

The field of dress and grooming played an aesthetic role in the Israeli cultural division between a nationally active man, whose physical beauty was only an unintentional “by-product” of his healthful lifestyle, and a woman who was expected to be pretty and graceful without “excessive vanity”. Still, when it came to clothing, the Israeli woman was supposed to be much more active than the man, to dress her spouse and family in addition to herself, and thus to beautify her national surroundings.⁶³ Elegant women were instructed to make sure that their husbands too were dressed properly, or else their partner’s

disheveled appearance might cramp their own style.⁶⁴

Israeli men were associated with production, whereas women were associated with consumption.⁶⁵ Fashion columns referred to men as holding the purse strings, and women alone as able to judge in matters of dress. Fashion was financed by men, though it fascinated and drew women. Husbands were depicted as stingy and wives as doing their best to waste their spouses' money on dresses and hats. Furs were considered romantic because men presented them to their women, but even simple daily clothes were supposed to be paid for by the male provider. A cartoon from 1950 illustrates this gendered dichotomy. A middle class couple is looking at a shop window. On the right is "what she sees"—the clothes—and on the left is "what he sees"—the prices of these clothes.⁶⁶

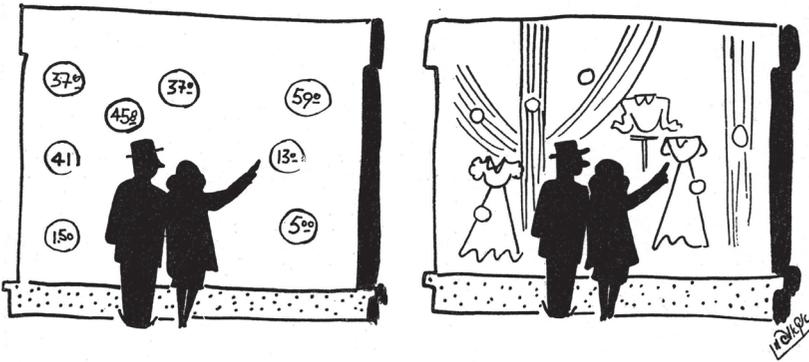


Figure 2.4: Cartoon by Kaufman in *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 10, 1950.

Since fashion was regarded as a feminine field, Israeli fashion columns addressed women alone. A woman writer of a column titled "For the Woman and the Home" once joked about dedicating a similar column for men: such a column could instruct men to hang their coats and brush their dusty shoes. A special beauty column for men could teach them how to take care of their hair and avoid untimely baldness, how to prevent dandruff, to shave properly, to tie their ties, to dress well inside the house, and to engage in sports rather than grow a "sexy" potbelly.⁶⁷ The journalist was listing some typical unattractive characteristics of middle class middle-aged Israeli men, but her call to establish a special beauty column for men was probably made only in jest: in 1950s Israel only women were regarded as potential readers about matters of grooming and fashion. A 1954 short-lived magazine for men, aimed at a middle

class readership, was the only exception, and its fashion column opened cautiously and apologetically, presenting men's fashion as critically different from women's. Men, it clarified, should neither care about their outfits nor change them as often as women. Their dress should never be too conspicuous. A disheveled man is repulsive, but a man who is too vain evokes uncomfortable feelings among men and women alike. Excessive care for a man's appearance discloses his lack of confidence, and nothing could be more unmanly. Unlike women's fashion, explained the columnist, men's fashion is inspired by utility and practicality.⁶⁸

The New Look is commonly described as part of the post-war retreat to traditional gender roles, and, indeed, when it was first introduced there were feminists in the United States and elsewhere who viewed it as politically regressive and protested against its impractical romanticism.⁶⁹ Yet in 1953 Israel, the local fashion writer Helena Avital offered a completely different interpretation, describing the New Look and its accentuated feminine lines as a testimony of a gender equality that had already been achieved. According to Avital, when women just began fighting for their freedom, "their wish to be equal to men was followed by a wish to look like men," and therefore masculine lines were adopted in women's dress, a tendency that reached its peak during World War II. Since an extreme fashion is usually followed by an extreme in the opposite direction, after the war women were tired of looking like men. Avital claimed that women's efficiency and their freedom are by now well-established facts, so they do not need to stress such qualities visually by imitating men's dress any longer, and therefore opt for a style that is overtly feminine.⁷⁰

Photographs and films reveal that in Israeli fashion shows women spectators wore very smart clothes and accessorized outfits, whereas the minority of men spectators sometimes wore evening dress or three-part suits, but mostly opted for the white shirt, namely for the best-dress according to the austere model. Even in an exclusive, glamorous, fashion event, we can see that Israeli men were generally more influenced by the austere model, while their spouses not only attended the show, but also dressed fashionably themselves.⁷¹ And since the smart model of dress was regularly condemned as a sign of moral laxity and as a lack of national commitment, fashionable women in particular were blamed for these vices.

Shortly after food was rationed, a Mapai weekly published a cartoon

titled “Rationing Remedy.” Two women—perhaps a mother and daughter—are seen enjoying themselves in a café with their pet dog. One woman is telling the other “...And I have heard of some Dr. Yosef, who invented a tested cure that maintains a modern figure...”⁷²



Figure 2.5: Cartoon by Kaufman in *Dvar hashavua*, May 26, 1949.

These well-fed women were portrayed as so disconnected from Israeli reality, from the harsh economic crisis and the plight of their fellow citizens that they believed Dr. Yosef, the Minister of Rationing, to be a physician, and regarded the rationing of food as a new beauty device. The cartoon dealt with food rationing, but the characters were significantly dressed according to the smart model, in a decorated, fashionable style. Similarly, a cartoon from 1950 showed two pampered and dressed bitches, one of them saying to the other “You’ll see; soon we’ll have to go naked due to these points.”⁷³ Since the Yishuv era, spoiled pet dogs had become a local symbol of a decadent lifestyle, a testimony of lack of social solidarity, as these dogs’ owners seemed more concerned about their welfare than about the welfare of their human brethren.⁷⁴ Thus during the rationing regime, when many humans suffered from a shortage of clothes, the cartoon admonished a social layer that could afford to dress its dogs. Interestingly, just as it was usually human females who were accused of extravagance and waste during this time of want, the two hedonistic canines too were portrayed as females.⁷⁵

A support of a simpler style of dress could also be exemplified in a cartoon by Dosh. In the early 1950s Dosh published a comic strip

titled “Ruti,” depicting the adventures of a charming young urban Sabra. Unlike Srulik, Ruti did not become a symbol of the young state or an Israeli icon, perhaps due to the fact that she was a female and an urbanite. In March 1951 the strip was entitled “Ruti tries to be modern [i.e., fashionable].”⁷⁶

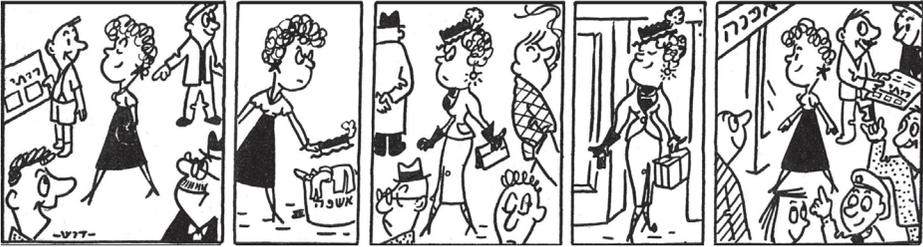


Figure 2.6: “Ruti tries to be modern” by Dosh, *Ha’olam hazeh*, March 15, 1951.

Like the Hebrew language, the comic-strip too should be read from right to left. In the first panel Ruti enters a “Fashion” shop wearing her normal manner of dress, a style that combines the austere and the smart models: her hair is worn naturally curly, and the basic items of her dress are a dark skirt and a white shirt. However, Ruti is wearing high-heeled shoes and earrings, both items associated with the smart model. The men on the street are dressed according to both the austere and the smart models and they are all looking at Ruti approvingly. In the next two panels, Ruti is wearing her newly acquired fashionable look: her hair is piled on her head rather than flowing naturally, and topped with a fashionable hat; she is wearing an elegant and tightly-fit suit along with gloves, a scarf, and a handbag; she is also wearing stockings and has replaced her former earrings with larger, shinier, ones. When Ruti first comes out of the fashion shop wearing her new clothes she seems self-satisfied; alas, she soon realizes that all the men are now ignoring her completely. In the next panel she therefore angrily discards her new clothes and resumes her usual style; happily, in the last panel of the comic-strip she is once again the center of male attention and admiration. The comic-strip attacks the extreme form of the smart model and advocates a simpler form of dress, but still it does not support stark austerity and allows its heroine, Ruti, to maintain her high heels and her simpler earrings.

Israeli women faced a confusing social-cultural message regarding

their looks. Women were associated with fashion and, moreover, expected to “represent the country’s grace,” but due to the dominance of the austere model of dress women’s grooming was also somewhat restricted. The ideal Sabra girl was depicted as natural and unaffected in her dress and in her manner, as a woman who avoids pretentious airs and coquetry. She was supposed to wear neither makeup nor perfume, just as she had to refrain from smoking and alcohol. Her outfit included either the items of the austere model—shirts and skirts and sarafans, short or long pants—or a simple “sportive” dress, plain sandals and no high heels. Conversely, smart suits, jewelry, cocktail dresses, and evening gowns were associated with the “salon” lifestyle and deemed quite unsuitable for an ideal Sabra.⁷⁷

However, alongside the common ideal of the graceful-but-artless Sabra, 1950s Israeli popular culture also enveloped a very different feminine ideal, linked with the cosmopolitan urban girl. This ideal originated in the Yishuv’s middle class culture, it was inspired by Hollywood films, and strongly promoted by advertisers. It contradicted the starkness of the Sabra aesthetic ideal and although it was not accompanied by any formal ideological doctrine, its visual presence challenged hegemonic notions.⁷⁸ Whereas the grace of the ideal Sabra was expected to be natural and effortless, the competing feminine ideal supported and encouraged self-grooming, trimming, and adornment. It upheld physical beautification as a worthy and central feminine cause.⁷⁹

Makeup provides an illustrative example of the contradictory messages presented to Israeli women. Whereas in the nineteenth century makeup was commonly regarded as undignified and associated with prostitutes and actresses, in the twentieth century it assumed a new respectability. Demand for cosmetics increased, and makeup was depicted as one of the many devices that could help women fulfill their duty of maintaining their good looks and seeming youth. According to research conducted in the West in the late 1940s, two-thirds of the female population (and 90 percent of the younger female population) were using makeup on a regular basis. Moreover, since the 1950s makeup was promoted, somewhat paradoxically, as exposing the woman’s hidden “natural” beauty.⁸⁰

A local cosmetic industry, launched during the Yishuv era, developed further after the foundation of the state of Israel, alongside expanding services of trained cosmeticians. Beauty columns in women’s magazines

and other newspapers supplied female readers with detailed cosmetic advice. They were told to apply makeup elegantly and moderately, in order to avoid ridiculous vulgarity, but at the same time to maintain a young, fresh, and attractive appearance.⁸¹ Some ads covered cosmetics with a supposedly-scientific hallow, and presented it as a serious field that requires deep knowledge, and as a health device alongside diet and exercise. Other ads portrayed its effects as miraculous and life-changing. Skincare products supposedly turned spotted skins into smooth ones, and more importantly, they could metamorphose lonely ugly ducklings into desired, popular, and sexy swans.⁸² Beauty columns and ads alike harped on the frightening prospect of looking old, especially in a sunny country like Israel, where the skin ages faster. Yet they tried to assure the readers that a woman can look nice even after the age of thirty, and that she can avoid bitterness and depression even after the age of forty, if only she takes attentive cosmetic care of herself.⁸³

A fashion magazine claimed that “an intelligent woman knows that a properly nurtured skin can improve her looks and her character,” and mentioned that statistics show that women who take good care of their appearance achieve the highest social and commercial ranks.⁸⁴ A family column in the religious-Zionist newspaper legitimized the use of makeup by reassuring the readers that the times have indeed changed:

The question of cosmetics would not have come up in the days of the second aliyah [1904-1914]. Then, influenced by revolutionary ideas in the world, people believed that they need to protest against any “artificiality” in life and return to simplicity and austerity. Women loathed the use of makeup and discarded their jewelry. Youths were educated according to collective values and supposed that they were rebelling and defying the norms of women all over the world. But today notions have altered. Nowadays you’ll encounter once again women and girls wearing long earrings, and you’ll hardly meet women who do not use some eye shadow and lipstick.

Makeup, explained the writer, is meant to complete whatever nature has left incomplete, and whatever had been damaged.⁸⁵ Another woman columnist in the very same newspaper, however, stated that women

who go out to do their daily food shopping wearing makeup and jewelry, “as if they had decorated themselves for a ball,” evoke general ridicule “among us.”⁸⁶ Fashionable “made-up” Israeli women were sometimes compared unfavorably with combat soldiers: while the latter were risking their lives in order to guard the country’s volatile borders and shield its citizens, the former were shunning national responsibility, absorbed in their vain pursuits.⁸⁷

Israeli socialists might have moderated their revolutionary spirit, but did not necessarily change their views regarding the artificiality of makeup and its relative unimportance. One writer in a left wing women’s bulletin compared a woman whose face is like a smooth and cold mask of makeup and color, with a village woman of the same age whose face is wrinkled. “I said to myself: honor the face that was wrinkled by a decent life of work.” Another writer in the same bulletin rebuked the women’s magazines that dedicate their content to external issues alone. “I am not a wrinkle lover,” she wrote, but when a popular paper devotes its pages to instructions for smoothing every wrinkle, “then, perhaps, the face is smooth but the wrinkle lies in the soul.”⁸⁸ Even young children who were raised within the workers’ ethos associated makeup with very specific entities. A father related how his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter was feeding her doll:

Suddenly she asked me, “Daddy, is my doll an auntie?” [in Hebrew slang “auntie” meant an aging, vain, busy-body lady⁸⁹]. When I said that she wasn’t, the child asked “Then why are her lips colored red?”⁹⁰

According to hegemonic notions makeup was condemned as a sign of decadence and frivolity, but at the same time another aesthetic ideal presented it as an inseparable part of feminine beauty. Israeli women were thus caught confusedly between two conflicting images. Movie stars, whom they saw in films and photographs, as well as illustrated figures in ads, were well-groomed, decorated, made-up, and titillating. The verbal message they encountered in formal culture, on the other hand, glorified the austere model of dress and the unassuming, natural, Sabra. The same makeup that according to ads was able to save women from the misery and degradation of aged looks was frowned upon by the dominant value system as the height of artificiality. Moreover,

makeup—lipstick in particular—was associated with aging women, trying unsuccessfully to disguise their age. Conversely, unadorned women were associated nostalgically with the pioneering spirit of the pre-state era, and makeup was particularly censored in the kibbutzim, where it was considered to be the worst form of bourgeois vanity.⁹¹

Yet when the government levied a special “luxury tax” in 1950, a woman journalist attacked the new tax, claiming that fur coats and diamond rings were no doubt luxury goods and justly taxed, whereas makeup, which had been also included in the new luxury tax, was only a “small luxury” and a necessity for women, and therefore should not have been taxed.⁹² The definition of luxury is always relative, and may vary according to changes in the technological, economic, religious, moral, ideological, and political systems.⁹³ In wartime austerity Britain, for instance, lipstick and makeup powder were regarded as vital goods, necessary for maintaining morale among women in the home-front. Moreover, due to the shortage of clothes, women tended to concentrate their efforts on their hair and their faces, and made more use of cosmetics.⁹⁴ In 1950s Israel, makeup was regarded as a daily feminine “need” by some but as an unnecessary decadent “luxury” by others.

As we saw in the former chapter, the austere model was gradually worn by many Israeli men, even by those who neither followed nor supported Mapai and its ideology, and was often treated as the typical and “proper” Israeli dress.⁹⁵ At the same time, the smart model enabled members of the middle class, especially women, to express different values visually. On the political and ideological level, 1950s Israeli bourgeoisie were marginalized and attacked by the dominant Mapai party and its hegemonic worldview, and therefore often found themselves in apologetic situations.⁹⁶ But here we find a striking example of the unique communicative potency of dress: as noted in the introduction, the very ambivalence and imprecision of the clothing “language” permits it to touch upon issues that remain unarticulated verbally. Israeli bourgeoisie could thus express their worldview, as well as their increasing economic power, with the help of their dress, even when they could not or would not do so directly and verbally.

When discussing the austere and smart models of dress, we should keep in mind that like every model, these two styles of dress are ideal types. They are situated in the two far opposing edges of a scale, whereas in reality one’s dress could move along the scale: one could wear either

style according to changing circumstances, or even combine austere and smart elements in the same outfit. Although the austere model was particularly associated with agricultural settlements, it was also worn by many Israeli urbanites, while the smart model of dress, usually associated with the cities, was sometimes worn by people who lived in the countryside.⁹⁷ Specific styles were commonly associated in 1950s Israel with specific classes or groups, but in historical reality people could move easily between the extreme poles of the absolute “model.”⁹⁸ Israel’s first foreign minister and second prime-minister, Moshe Sharet, dressed in smart suits and ties, his socialist political views notwithstanding.⁹⁹ On the other hand, many middle class Israeli men opted for the basic items of the austere model, adding only a few smart accessories, such as a homburg hat or a tie, if any. Although rhetorical expressions and cartoons tied styles of dress to specific segments, in daily life the smart and austere models were neither divided strictly between clearly-cut social classes or age groups, nor according to ideological and partisan affiliations, nor between the city and the village.

Fashion Attacked and Justified

Since its advent, fashion has been satirized, ridiculed, and condemned. Since the “male renunciation,” attacks on fashion assumed a stronger misogynist hue, associating its “capriciousness” with the silliness and irrationality of women. Humorous attacks on fashion could take on a more serious and even harsh nature under extreme political circumstances such as revolutions, or when fashion was considered harmful rather than helpful to local economy.¹⁰⁰ During the first years of Israeli statehood, fashion was treated ambivalently. On the one hand, it was associated with modernism and Western sophistication; on the other hand, fashion was conceived as antithetical to the main national goals, as a wasteful, decadent, and distracting luxury, quite unsuitable for a society with much graver priorities.

The notion of fashion as inappropriate and blatantly clashing with Israeli reality was so wide-spread and common that it was often expressed even by fashion reporters. Some writers posed moral uncertainties about the field they were covering and frequently assumed an apologetic tone to justify it.¹⁰¹ Israeli women, wrote a fashion reporter in 1950, “are fighting the hard war of survival; these times of constructing a home-

land demand sacrifice, sweat and blood” and therefore women cannot become the slaves of fashion.¹⁰² During the rationing regime in particular, fashion reporters and other women columnists asked their readers to “avoid excessive extravagance, which is inappropriate for these times.” They called for more solidarity, simplicity, and uniformity, even among those who could afford expensive clothes, because dressing lavishly during a period of rationing was dreadfully tactless.¹⁰³

Even after rationing was over, and the economic conditions were improving gradually but noticeably, high fashion still seemed somewhat out of place in the Israeli context. Is there any room for luxurious fashion “here, in our little country, still fighting for our sovereign independent economy?” wondered a fashion reporter in 1955. There’s an embarrassing contradiction, she admitted, between the reality of transit camps and urgent security issues on the one hand and the presence of fashion shows, furs, jewelry, lavish dress, and luxury on the other.¹⁰⁴ Why are all the fashion salons in Israel thinking about their profits, wondered another fashion reporter, instead of creating nice products for reasonable prices? She called on local fashion designers to take on a pioneering role and create an affordable fashion, as befits the modest local conditions.¹⁰⁵

Fashion shows, as the most direct and glamorous performance of the field, were notably targeted. They were described as contradicting the circumstances of the economic crisis and the rationing regime—as befitting bored aging women but totally unnecessary for fresh pretty girls—as a sign of snobbery and a chance for the local rich to flaunt their own dresses. The public viewed the presence of Israel’s president and prime minister’s wives at grand fashion shows as evidence that the country’s leaders were not living as humbly as the people. Even fashion reporters partly joined the general criticism, admitting that fashion shows were snobbish, pretentious, and not entirely in tune with the Israeli national mood. Reporters sometimes complimented the local designs presented in the show itself, but at the same time criticized the falsehood and vulgarity of the event and its spectators, the local “golden society.”¹⁰⁶

How, then, could the luxurious field of fashion be justified within Israeli reality and vis-à-vis the country’s dominant ideology? A common defense was to stress the national economic value of fashion as a leading branch of export. The centralist ideal measured different fields according to their potential contribution to the young state, and therefore

fashion could be justified by noting the role it could play in the national economy. We have seen that successful export of Israeli fashion was presented as a proof that Israel was as good as other states. Paradoxically, this self-conscious attitude toward statehood and the insatiable need to be recognized and approved is precisely what distinguished Israel from other, long-established states that were more secure and more “relaxed.”



Figure 2.7: A suit by the local fashion firm “Elanit,” 1956. Government Press Office, NPC, D435-037. Photo by Fritz Cohen.

Another way of legitimizing fashion was by adapting cosmopolitan trends to the humbler local circumstances. A salient example is the fashion column written and illustrated by Helena Avital in 1953–1956 for a left-wing women’s bulletin, *Dvar hapo’elet* (“word of the working woman”). The column first appeared in the bulletin only after the rationing of clothes was over. Avital revealed deep knowledge and understanding of fashion, as well as a creative ability to adjust the latest modes not just to a hotter Israeli climate, but also to her readers’ limited budgets and their lifestyles as working women. She tried to explain basic rules of good taste and provided practical advice.¹⁰⁷ She suggested hiring the services of seamstresses, avoiding the 1940s lines “that have become

a taboo,” and choosing moderate patterns and colors (since one is fed up with bright colors and daring prints much sooner). Whereas high fashion distinguished between morning, afternoon, and evening wear, Avital knew that working women had no time to change, and guided her readers about clothes that would serve them well all day long and for different occasions.¹⁰⁸ As long as fashion was properly amended according to local restrictions, it could serve larger social groups, not just the rich, and thus fit nicely even with a socialist lifestyle and ideology.

A similar line of defense was applied to fashion shows, because even these glimmering, exclusive, and “snobbish” events could be toned down. The demand to supply better and more fashionable clothes to a wider socio-economic circle increased since 1954, when the economy was starting to recover and products for local consumption were improving. And, indeed, in 1956 a couple of volunteer women and consumer organizations arranged “popular fashion shows” of local products, aiming to explain to the wider public how to dress nicely without extravagance and waste. The spectators were mostly housewives and working women with limited resources, and rather than displaying haute couture, these shows presented ready-to-wear items, made of fabrics that could withstand many washings and were easily ironed, therefore “suitable for the working woman at work and at home and truly inexpensive.”¹⁰⁹



Figure 2.8: Designs from the “Popular Fashion Show,” *Dvar hapo’elet*, April 1956.

Yet perhaps the commonest way of legitimizing fashion shows, even the most exclusive and glimmering events, was by dedicating their profits to a “worthy” cause: needy children or women, new immigrants in the transit camps and new settlements, children with polio, the blind and the deaf, and tuberculosis patients.¹¹⁰ The dedication of fashion shows to creditable goals somewhat mellowed the events’ snobbish and alienated image. In addition, the organizers of the events and the journalists who reported about them stressed the economic importance of the products displayed in the shows and intended for export, by contributing to the whole country’s balance of payments. In order to shed more positive light on fashion shows, social and national reasoning had to be employed.

When the New Look was first presented after World War II, European countries were still in the midst of the post-war depression, yet numerous women did their best to implement the novel designs, despite their material wastefulness. In Britain, for example, local Members of Parliament and designers described the New Look as an irresponsible Parisian whim, unaffordable under the rationing regime. Nevertheless, the New Look could not be stopped and it swept “like a tidal wave” among British women of all classes.¹¹¹ But in Israel it was not *just* material constraints that hampered the adoption of the lavish new style, but also some ideological considerations. Fashion in general, and a magnificent mode such as the New Look in particular, seemed to clash visually and morally with the centralist ethos, by conveying exclusiveness, inequality, individual egotism, and impractical spending.

Israelis, however, did not compose a total ideological negation of fashion, as did Marxists in East Germany and elsewhere. The latter claimed that capitalist designers such as Christian Dior deliberately stimulated the “unreasonable fickle moods of fashion” to create “false needs” for new clothes among the masses, and thus increase their profits. Alongside the official lip service to a “socialist aesthetic” and militant attacks on capitalist fashion and lifestyle, citizens of Soviet-bloc countries were trying to follow or imitate Western fashion. Haute couture and extravagant apparel raised ambivalent responses—mockery on the one hand and ecstatic admiration on the other.¹¹²

In Israel, even at the height of the recession, no public call was issued in the press to renounce fashion altogether and to shun it entirely due to the economic and national circumstances. But a similar ambivalence about fashion, a combination of attraction and negation,

was expressed vividly in the Israeli press, where righteous condemnation of high fashion, fashion shows, and beauty queens was presented alongside excited and exciting reports and photographs of high fashion, fashion shows, and beauty queens, sometimes by the very same writers. The discursive-rational message was thus undermined by the visual-emotional implication.¹¹³ Even feminist bulletins that called for women's equal rights and started by opposing female "enslavement" to fashion, gradually gave in and their fashion columns, especially since the mid-1950s, became larger and more detailed, moving from the last pages to more prominent locations. Thanks to Avital's exceptional talents and awareness, *Dvar hapo'elet* managed for a while to combine the chic of the latest modes with local conditions and socialist ideology. Other women's magazines, however, unconsciously revealed a discord within Israeli culture, a clash between formal ideals of social solidarity and national responsibility alongside a persistent longing for cosmopolitan luxuries and fashions.¹¹⁴

Although rarely stated consciously by contemporaries, when we now look back on the role of fashion in 1950s Israel, it seems probable that this glamorous field provided Israelis with a rare and much-needed route of escape from their humdrum daily reality into the realm of enchanting fantasy. Modern consumer culture does not seek sensual pleasure as much as it seeks romantic pleasure by indulging in self-illusions. The consumers do not desire the newest product for its own sake, but rather for the daydreams, imagined associations, and meanings that they can spin around it. According to sociologist Colin Campbell, the never-ending cycle of inventing new consumer "needs" is based on the attempt to experience romantic imagined pleasures in real life.¹¹⁵

This facet of modern consumer culture is apparent in the field of fashion, which can provide an aesthetic stimulus for romantic fantasies both for those who actually consume and wear its modes and for those who can only afford to watch it and day-dream about it from afar.¹¹⁶ In times of hardship, fashion and its fantastic aura can become a channel for mental escape from the drudgery of reality,¹¹⁷ and the romantic New Look in particular was often regarded as a stylistic escape, sharply turning its back to the hardships of the recent war and its unpleasant consequences and memories. In 1950s Israel, especially during the grey years of rationing, fashion played an escapist role, offering Israelis a touch of aesthetic glamor. Fashion could provide a pleasant daydream even for

those who could not experience their stylistic fantasies in reality due to economic constraints, and even for those who would not do so due to ideological reservations.¹¹⁸

During the years of recession and rationing, implementing fashion became extremely difficult. Yet the local press kept reporting about the latest innovations, presenting illustrations and photographs of lavish evening dresses and fur coats. Rozin assumes that fashion reports continued during this period because they were aimed at a tiny social segment who could still afford expensive clothes. They were also based on the belief that fashion was interesting even for women who could not put it into practice and offered them an escape from the difficulties of daily life. Reports from Paris could point in a general direction, to be followed by Israeli women the best they could even under the limiting conditions.¹¹⁹ Both economically and morally, rationing clearly matched the austere model of dress, but one of the *indirect* outcomes of the years of want and the rationing regime was an escapist tendency that bred yearnings for a more lavish lifestyle, including fancier dress. Another indirect outcome of the rationing of clothes was that consumers sometimes became more fastidious than before: since they could buy only a limited amount of clothes, they insisted that these items be fashionable and of sufficient quality.¹²⁰

The role of fashion as an escape into a glamorous fantasy was most conspicuous in fashion shows. The few who frequented the shows and the larger population who later read about them in the press were seeking and finding abundance, allure, splendor, innovation, cosmopolitanism, and elegance.¹²¹ The fantasy provided by these shows was reflected in the terminology that was repeatedly used in their description in the press, with words such as “glamor,” “dream,” and “vision,” as well as depictions of the fashion show as a perfect Arcadian micro-cosmos.¹²² Fashion shows created a dream-like atmosphere of brilliance and plenty and their escapist facet was especially apparent during the first years of statehood, when these events diverged so sharply from the scarcity and greyness of the average daily life.¹²³ When the Jewish French fashion designer Alexander Maggie accepted an invitation from a middle class women’s organization and visited Israel in late 1949, a reporter stated that this visit by “the great magician” electrified the women of Tel Aviv, and praised the idea of inviting him “during these days of rationing and longing for glamor,” when such an event is doubly attractive.¹²⁴

During the years of rationing, fashion shows could serve as a short respite from bleakness. After rationing was over, the very same glamor could reflect economic recovery. Hence a fashion reporter who gave an excited review of a 1953 show mentioned that she was particularly impressed and surprised by the sight of the spectators: the women in the hall, not just those on stage, testified to the end of rationing and its boring simple skirts and shirts; these local socialites were beautifully attired, following the latest Parisian modes, wearing elegant hats and even a couple of furs.¹²⁵ Of course most Israeli women could not afford furs, and fashion shows remained an exclusive privilege of a tiny social layer. For the majority, both long-time Israelis and especially newly arrived immigrants, high fashion was only available as a passive fantasy, transmitted through the papers and the cinema.

Cosmopolitan fashion clashed with local economic conditions and countered the centralist ethos and its cry for social solidarity, material simplicity, and national frugality; yet it was never totally absent from Israeli society, despite the post-war shortage and the increasingly dominant place of the anti-fashion austere model of dress. This ambiguity was mirrored in “an open letter to women in Israel” published in the *Jerusalem Post* in late 1953. The writer, Nan Adams, was a fashion consultant and a former associate editor of the Paris *Vogue*. This was her second visit to the country, and she felt that women who had been fashionable in 1945 now looked “slipshod” and “depressed.” Very few Israelis can indulge in high fashion, wrote Adams,

And I think it commendable and proper that this indulgence should somehow be frowned upon by “the people who matter”: for this is the spirit that won your State and built it.

However, women are those who create the atmosphere and the mood of a place, and Israeli women should face the long-term economic and social difficulties with more attention to their looks. Adams did not believe that grim epochs should necessarily be conducted “without comeliness, color or vivacity.” Admittedly, she wrote,

Your country is not the right setting for “fashion plate” women; but how much brighter it would be if the heads

standing in the bus-line were sleek and brushed, if shoes shone, if frocks were crisp.

Adams believed that “women with standards have a job to do all over the world, and perhaps nowhere are they as badly needed as here.”¹²⁶

However, the consultant offered Israeli women no practical advice. She neither explained how to materialize fashion in a harsh economic situation, nor did she clarify how to settle aesthetic priorities with the tough puritan spirit “that won your State and built it.” The craving for high fashion thus remained an unresolved inconsistency, one of many contradictions experienced by Israelis during the early years of the state.

NOTES

1. Bar-Zohar (1980), 332, 336–345, 369, 397. *Smol-Shavu'a Tov*, February 27, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1952, 1953, 1954, and 1956 – SA: VT GE 02, VT GE 06, VT GE 07. Photo by Teddy Brauner, 1951 – NPC: D680-051, and photo by Fritz Cohen, 1954 – NPC: D683-042.
2. Simmel (1997). See also Gordon et al. (1985), 164, 172–173; Finkelstein (1996), 108. On Simmel’s “trickle-down” theory of fashion and its modifications see Simmel (1997); Bourdieu (2000), 200–202, 378; McCracken (1998), 93–96, 102–103; Ganeva (2008), 31; Dant (1999), 102–10; Davis (1992), 68–77. Also see Worth (2002), 109; Styles (2007), 95, 189–193.
3. Bell (1976), 66, 182–183; Davis (1992), 131, 150–151; Benjamin (1999), 64, 79. Also see Paulicelli (2004), 65; Calefato (2004), 20; Bauman (2007), 99.
4. Attempts to measure or predict the pace and the frequency of “fashion cycles” have not been very successful so far, but it has been noticed that extreme changes in a certain direction are often followed by equally extreme changes to the opposite direction—See Simmel (1996), 204; Lowe and Lowe (1985), 194–200, 205. On the mechanism of new styles’ acceptance and diffusion see Sproles (1985), 56; Davis (1992), 121–158.
5. Hill (2004), 75–76; Gundle (2008), 199–202; Raz (1996), 127–128; Peacock (1998), 7–8; Taylor (2004), 123; Studlar (2000), 160–161, 165; Craik (1994), 212; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 128; Peacock (1997), 7, 128, 130–131; Ewing (1992), 156–160, 166–167; Burman (2002), 90; Wilson (2003), 225–226; Ribeiro (2003), 161–162; Pedersen (2004), 70; Steele (2005b), 160; Roscho (1963), 178–179; Buxbaum (1999), 74, 78; Beevor and Cooper (1994), 312–316.

6. Compare with White (2000), 25; Buxbaum (1999), 60; Schneider (2000), 109.
7. Shavit (1992b), 135-139, 142-145, 164-168; Raz (1996), 143-145. Letters from 1949 and 1950 – ISA: 47/c-24/224, 47/c-14/224, 47/c-22/244, 47/c-17/222. Correspondence from 1950 – JCA: 1872/30.2. Protocol from 1949 – TAA, 1049/31. Letter from 1950 – CZA: 239/276.
8. For instance see Weissman Joselit (2001a); Weissman Joselit (2001b); Loschek (2007); Helfgott (1961).
9. Shavit (1992b), 135-139, 145-156, 164-169, 245-254; Raz (1996), 147. *Geva* newsreels, 1955 – SA: VT GE 07. “Survey of Garment and Ready Made Clothing Industry in Israel”, October 1956 – CZA, S39/276. Compare with Stitziel (2005), 70.
10. Raz (1996), 116-117, 145-148. *Geva* newsreels, 1953 – SA: VT GE 04. *Haaretz*, October 17, 1950, December 25, 1950, August 20, 1951, December 23, 1955, June 8, 1956, September 5, 1956. *Yediot aharonot*, July 15, 1954. Correspondence from 1949 – ISA: 47/c-222/18. Photo from 1950 – NPC: D402-052. Textile magazine from November 1956 – TAA, 31/1059.
11. Correspondence from 1951 – CZA, S39/276. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, August 6, 1951. *Haaretz*, December 30, 1955. *Ashmoret*, September 12, 1952. *Hayei sha’ah*, March 11, 1954. *Zmanim*, July 2, 1954. *Yediot aharonot*, February 27, 1953. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, October 14, 1955.
12. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, August 26, 1951. *Haaretz*, January 7, 1952. *Yediot aharonot*, February 27, 1953. Also see *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, October 14, 1955. Correspondence from 1951 – CZA: S39/276.
13. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, November 11, 1955. *Haaretz*, January 7, 1952. *Geva* newsreels, 1953, 1955 – SA: VT GE 04, VT GE 010.
14. *Hayei sha’ah*, March 11, 1954. *Zmanim*, July 2, 1954. *Yediot aharonot*, July 15, 1954. *Haaretz*, December 30, 1955.
15. Raz (1996), 151. Photos by Fritz Cohen, David Eldan, Zoltan Gluger, and Teddy Brauner from 1949, 1950, 1952 – NPC: D362-070, D824-030, D207-065, D228-037. Photos from 1951 – CZA: 1176378, 1176391.
16. “Survey of Garment and Ready Made Clothing Industry in Israel”, October 1956 – CZA: S39/276. Also see *Ma’ariv*, July 21, 1950.
17. Raz (1996), 51-56, 67-83, 100-109. *Haisha bamedinah*, August 1951. *Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 1953. *Dvar hashavu’a*, March 22, 1951. *Tevel*, June 2, 1954. *Kolno’a*, November 22, 1955. *Geva* newsreels 1954 and 1955 – SA: VT GE 06, VT GE 010. Carmel newsreels from 1951 and 1953 – The Axelrod Newsreel Collection: II-117-D, II-079-D. Photos from 1949 – CZA: 1325204, 1325205. Photos from 1953 and 1954 – NPC: D376-114, D435-043.
18. *Laisha*, July 19, 1955. *Rimon*, October 10, 1956. *Ha’olam hazeh*, January 6, 1955. Carmel newsreels from 1954 and 1955 – The Axelrod Newsreel Collection: II-143-E, II-175-G. On the history of fashion shows see Ganeva (2009).
19. *Hazofeh*, December 24, 1954. *Tevel*, June 2, 1954. *Laisha*, December 22, 1954. *Matzpen*, November 17, 1954. *Ha’olam hazeh*, January 6, 1955. Photo from 1949 by Teddy Brauner – NPC: D435-045.

20. Compare with Tarrant (1994), 145; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 139–140; Ganeva (2008), 21. Also see Purdy (1998).
21. Raz (1996), 77, 109–112, 156, 158.
22. *Geva* newsreels, 1955 – SA: VT GE 07. Photo from 1954 – CZA: 1278167. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, September 24, 1956. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, February 1955, March 1955, April 1955. Yossfer (1955).
23. For instance *Herut*, February 8, 1950. *Haboker*, February 9, 1950. *Hazofeh*, June 25, 1954. *Davar*, February 22, 1955, May 31, 1955.
24. Raz (1996), 116–117. *Yalkut lessivim vetekhnologyah shel tekstil*, April–May 1956, 27. *Haaretz*, June 6, 1956.
25. Correspondence from 1949 – ISA: 47/c-18/222. *Haisha bamedinah*, October 1949, July 1950, August 1951. *Jerusalem Post*, July 28, 1950. *Haaretz*, August 20, 1951.
26. Raz (1996), 152–154.
27. Raz (1996), 118–119. *Hayei sha'ah*, November 26, 1953. And compare with *Hai-sha bamedinah*, October 1950.
28. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, April 1955. Yossfer (1955). *Zmanim*, February 11, 1955. *Haaretz*, December 25, 1950. Dresses from the 1950s – SCA.
29. Entwistle (2003), 125–129; Wilson (2007), 97; Shannon (2006), 130, 132; Arnold (2004), 171–173; Davis (1992), 63–64.
30. On the elegance of Central European Jews see Loschek (2007).
31. Photos from 1949, 1951, 1953 – CZA: 1278571, 1278602, 1176378, 1278551. Photos by Fritz Cohen, Teddy Brauer, Hugo Mendelshon, and Hans Pinn, 1949, 1950, 1956 – NPC: D207-088, D207-068, D207-076, D400-038, D362-020, D844-097, D207-069. *Geva* newsreels, 1951, 1954, 1955 – SA: VT GE 03, VT GE 06, VT GE 07. Election poster, 1955 – PC: V2156-2(13). 1950s locally made accessories – SCA. Ads in *Yediot aharonot*, March 13–14, 1949; *Ma'ariv*, October 7, 1949; *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1950; *Zmanim*, December 24, 1954, May 4, 1955; *Davar*, September 8, 1955. On social meanings of colorful dress see Hunt (1996), 129; Chenut (2005), 225.
32. Survey from 1952 – ISA: GAL-15/3557. Also see survey from 1956–1957 – ISA: GAL-22/3551.
33. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955.
34. *Lagever*, February 3, 1954.
35. Ads in *Palestine Post*, July 1, 1949; *Yediot aharonot*, December 10, 1949, March 14, 1950; *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 22, 1951; *Ha'olam hazeh*, September 17, 1953, October 20, 1955; *Hava laisha velaofnah*, February 1955, April 1955.
36. Compare with European women during World War II: Veillon (2002), 50–52, 67–71, 82; Ewing (1992), 141, 144–145; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 110, 115–116; Buxbaum (1999), 91, 185; Guenther (2005), 227–228; Reynolds (1999).
37. Dankner and Tartakover (1996), 195. *Laisha*, September 6, 1950. *Jerusalem Post*, December 8, 1950. *Ma'ariv*, March 26, 1950. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-19/222. *Haaretz*, September 3, 1951, September 17, 1951. *Yediot aharonot*,

- April 20, 1954. *Dvar hapo'elet*, July 1953. And compare with Mee and Safronova (2003), 153; Stitziel (2008), 260.
38. Ads in *Ma'ariv*, July 19, 1950, November 29, 1950, August 25, 1951. *Gazit*, November-December 1952. Dankner and Tartakover (1996), 124. Compare with Stitziel (2008), 260–261; Stitziel (2005), 49.
39. Compare with Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 109; Veillon (2002), 50–52; Pedersen (2004), 62–63; Smulyan (2007), 53, 57, 66.
40. *Haaretz*, October 6, 1950. *Laisha*, September 6, 1950.
41. *Yediot aharonot*, November 2, 1951.
42. *Yediot aharonot*, April 4, 1952.
43. *Ha'olam hazeh*, June 10, 1954. Ads in *Yediot aharonot*, March 4, 1949, March 31, 1950; *Ma'ariv*, May 21, 1950; *Beterem*, April 30, 1954. *Geva* newsreels, 1953 – SA: VT GE 04.
44. Raz (1996), 135, 160–162. On Israeli youth movements see Dror (2007). On the consolidation of a unique youth-fashion see Jay (2002), 178; Tarrant (1994), 145; Buxbaum (1999), 74, 77; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 152–153; Jacobson (2004), 127–159.
45. *Ha'olam hazeh*, February 18, 1954. Dankner and Tartakover (1996), 42, 79, 130; Almog (1997), 328–332.
46. *Hazofeh*, January 28, 1954.
47. Jay (2001), 179, 195 (note 10).
48. *Laisha*, January 6, 1954, August 3, 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, July 1, 1954. *Kolno'a*, September 9, 1954, October 21, 1954, June 8, 1955, July 20, 1955, July 27, 1955, August 9, 1955, August 16, 1955. *Zmanim*, July 29, 1955.
49. *Zmanim*, December 31, 1954.
50. *Yediot aharonot*: 7 *yamim*, April 13, 1956.
51. *Lagever*, January 24, 1954.
52. *Lagever*, January 24, 1954.
53. *Yediot aharonot*, December 16, 1949, June 29, 1956.
54. Cartoons in *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 26, 1949; *Jerusalem Post*, July 30, 1950; *Hazofeh*, August 13, 1950; *Bamachaneh*, April 5, 1951, May 20, 1954.
55. *Yediot aharonot*, December 16, 1949.
56. Rozin (2008), 41, 119. *Herut*, December 1, 1950, December 8, 1950. Cartoon in Dosh (1956), 15.
57. *Hamodi'a*, April 30, 1954.
58. Hunt (1998), 236; Bell (1976), 126, 141–142, 156; Sarti (2002), 209–210; Bailey (2007), 131–132; Gordenker (2001), 33; Breward (1995), 13–123; Smith (2002), 25–62; Kuchta (1996), 54–78; Zakim (2003), 200, 203; Davis (1992), 38–39. Also see Hunt (1996).
59. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001), 185. Also see Bell (1976), 143. On fine nuances in men's grooming and dress see Shannon (2006); Breward (1999).
60. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2002), 91. Ribeiro (2003), 162–163; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 126–157; Osgerby (2001), 76–78.
61. *Lagever*, January 20, 1954, February 3, 1954.

62. Shannon (2006), 37.
63. Compare a 1936 poster with a 1950s poster – CZA: KRA 1717, KRA 285.
64. Bradley (2007), 147, 151–152. *Yediot aharonot*, February 9, 1949. *Tevel*, May 12, 1954, June 2, 1954. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, March 1955. Advertisements in *Palestine Post*, December 9, 1949. *Laisha*, January 13, 1954. *Davar*, September 23, 1955. Photo from 1951 by Hans Pinn – NPC: D720-091.
65. On the gendered notions of production / consumption in modernity see Boden (2003), 9.
66. *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 10, 1950. Also see Raz (1996), 134. *Haaretz*, December 23, 1949. *Yediot aharonot*, April 26, 1950. Cartoons in *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 17, 1950, February 15, 1951, June 7, 1951. On furs' special status see Hunt (1996), 126.
67. *Matzpen*, September 15, 1954.
68. *Lagever*, January 20, 1954, January 24, 1954, March 17, 1954. And see Stanley (2008), 80, 83; Sparks (1995); Shannon (2006), 37.
69. Ewing (1992), 158; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 130. Also see Hill (2004), 78.
70. *Dvar hapo'elet*, April 1953. Also see Bergler (1987), 123; Raz (1996), 127.
71. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 16, 1951. *Rimon*, October 10, 1956. Carmel newsreels from 1951 and 1955 – The Axelrod Newsreel Collection: II-85-F, II-175-G.
72. Cartoon in *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 26, 1949.
73. Cartoon in *Bamachaneh*, September 7, 1950.
74. Helman (2007a), 53–55, 128.
75. Compare with Gradskova (2007), 147.
76. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 15, 1951.
77. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 19, 1956. And compare with a reverse hierarchy in Friedman (1994), 178. Also compare with Maynard (1994), 176; Gradskova (2007), 114; Stitzel (2005), 58; Gori (2004), 172.
78. Advertisements in *Palestine Post*, December 23, 1949; *Haisha bamedinah*, March 1949, May 1949, September 1952; *Haaretz*, August 24, 1951; *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 15, 1951, November 22, 1951; *Ha'olam hazeh*, April 15, 1954, December 16, 1954; *Davar*, February 11, 1955; *Kolno'a*, March 16, 1955; *Maariv*, May 31, 1950, December 26, 1955; *Herut*, August 31, 1956; *Laisha*, November 27, 1956.
79. *Hazofeh*, June 11, 1954. *Kolno'a*, May 4, 1955. *Laisha*, January 4, 1956. Advertisements in *Yediot aharonot*, December 2, 1949; *Jerusalem Post*, July 21, 1950. And compare with a similar contradiction between the formal, revolutionary, feminine ideal and an informal and more traditional alternative in the Soviet Union: Gradskova (2007), 148–149.
80. Bell (1976), 166; Black (2004), 20, 30, 33, 35; Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001), 188; Featherstone (1991), 178–179; Peiss (1996), 322–323; Gourley (2008), 96–98.
81. *Kolno'a*, January 19, 1955. *Hazofeh*, July 23, 1954, February 18, 1955. *Laisha*,

- July 19, 1955, July 27, 1955, August 10, 1955. *Hayei sha'ah*, April 15, 1954. *Geva* newsreels, 1955 – SA: VT GE 07.
82. Advertisements from *Baderekh*, August 18, 1950; *Haisha bamedinah*, December 1949, July 1950; *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 29, 1951, December 11, 1951, July 8, 1952; *Ha'olam hazeh*, September 17, 1953; *Jerusalem Post*, July 8, 1952. And compare with Stanley (2008), 90; Boden (2003), 9; Mennell (1997), 333.
83. *Jerusalem Post*, July 14, 1950. *Haisha bamedinah*, July 1950, July 1952. *Haaretz*, August 15, 1950, August 19, 1951. *Hayei sha'ah*, July 30, 1953. *Hu vehi*, September 1954. Advertisements in *Haisha bamedinah*, June 1949; *Alonekh*, June 1955.
84. Yossfer (1955).
85. *Hazofeh*, February 18, 1955.
86. *Hazofeh*, July 23, 1954.
87. Cartoons in *Bamachaneh*, July 21, 1949; *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 29, 1953. *Gazit*, May-June 1949. *Ma'ariv*, June 14, 1950. *Ha'olam hazeh*, November 17, 1955.
88. *Dvar hapo'et*, October 1952, December 1952.
89. Rosenthal (2006), 75-76.
90. *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 8, 1951.
91. *Dvar hapo'et*, October 1952, July 1952, December 1952. *Hazofeh*, January 28, 1955, February 18, 1955. *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 6, 1950. *Laisha*, January 4, 1950. *Herut*, October 14, 1955. Afikim bulletin, March 5, 1954 – KAA. And compare with Gradskova (2007), 116–117.
92. Israeli government (1951), 32. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-24/222. *Laisha*, March 22, 1950. And compare with Stitzel (2005), 121.
93. Mason (1998); Berry (1994); Appadurai (1986), 38; Fox and Turner (1998); Berg and Clifford (1999); Roche (2000). And see local debates about the definition of “needs” and “luxuries”: letters and protocols from 1949 and 1950 – ISA: 47/c-24/224, 47/c-15/195, 47/c-15/222, 47/c-26/224.
94. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, (2002), 185.
95. *Ma'ariv*, October 27, 1950. *Matzpen*, September 15, 1954. *Herut*, January 6, 1956. Election pamphlet, September 1951 – Jabotinsky Archive, k-24, 3, 16.
96. Ben-Porat (1999), 106–107, 122–123, 129.
97. On modern fashion and urban lifestyles see Wilson (1990), 33; Ewen (1988), 72; Featherstone (2007), 75.
98. For example see Crane (2000), 64.
99. For example, photos by Hugo Mendelshon, Fritz Cohen, and Moshe Pridan, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955 – NPC, D685-038, D671-044, D685-039, D667-026.
100. Powell and Roach (2004); Purdy (1998); Hentsdhell (2004), 50, 57; Gradskova (2007), 140; Finnane (2008), 227–255.
101. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, October 7, 1955, December 30, 1955. *Dvar hashavu'a*, December 14, 1950, June 21, 1951, July 19, 1951, January 27, 1955.
102. *Haisha bamedinah*, October 1950.
103. Rozin (2002), 99, 103.

104. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, December 9, 1955.
105. *Zmanim*, October 22, 1954, December 31, 1954.
106. Rozin (2008), 42. *Ma'ariv*, November 24, 1949. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 6, 1951. Cartoon in *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 25, 1951. *Haaretz*, November 5, 1951. *Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 1953. *Yediot hitachadut baalei hakolno'a beyisrael*, May 2, 1954. *Zmanim*, October 22, 1954, December 31, 1954. *Matzpen*, November 17, 1954. *Al hamishmar*, July 3, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 and 1955 – SA: VT GE 07, VT GE 010.
107. *Dvar hapo'et*, April 1953, May 1953, September 1943, May 1954, August 1954.
108. *Dvar hapo'et*, November 1953, January 1954, October 1954, December 1954.
109. *Zmanim*, October 22, 1954, December 31, 1954. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 8, 1956. *Dvar hapo'et*, April 1956. *Haaretz*, December 7, 1956.
110. *Haaretz*, November 19, 1954, November 26, 1954, June 3, 1955, June 17, 1955, June 24, 1955, December 9, 1955, May 25, 1956, June 15, 1956, June 29, 1956. *Laisha*, December 23, 1953. *Zmanim*, June 11, 1954, February 11, 1955, June 17, 1955, July 22, 1955. Rozin (2002), 103. And compare with Palmer (2001), 237.
111. Kynaston (2007), 257–259.
112. Stitzel (2005), 51–52, 55, 65, 68.
113. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 11, 1954, October 20, 1955, November 17, 1955. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, March 12, 1954, August 17, 1956.
114. Rozin (2002), 102. And see for example *Alonekh*, May 1951, July 1951, October 1953, March 1955, April 1955, January 1956, February 1956, March 1956.
115. Campbell (1987), 203–206.
116. Ewen (1990), 41; Ganeva (2008), 156; Gundle (2008), 9–10.
117. Guenther (2005), 274; Stitzel (2005), 50.
118. For example *Haaretz*, February 3, 1950. *Yediot aharonot*, September 30, 1955, March 2, 1956.
119. Rozin (2002), 99–101. And compare with Eaton (2004), 124.
120. *Haaretz*, September 3, 1951. Report from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-3/196.
121. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 6, 1955. *Haaretz*, November 26, 1954. *Yediot aharonot*, November 2, 1951.
122. *Haaretz*, October 30, 1953. *Laisha*, December 22, 1954. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, December 16, 1955. *Hayei sha'ah*, March 11, 1954. Carmel Newsreels from 1952 and 1954 - The Axelrod Newsreel Collection: II-99-H, II-143-E.
123. *Haaretz*, April 23, 1951. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, June 3, 1955.
124. *Ma'ariv*, November 21, 1949, November 24, 1949. Letter from 1949 – ISA, 47/c-200/33. *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 2, 1952. *Davar*, April 28, 1955. Photo from 1956 – NPC: D783-047.
125. *Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 1953.
126. *Jerusalem Post*, December 4, 1953.

Chapter Three: Israeli Dress between East and West

East: Disdain and Inspiration

The attitudes of Zionist immigrants of European origins toward the East were reserved and ambiguous. Ariel Hirshfeld writes that they were looking at the Land of Israel and its inhabitants through a thick, colorful, and romantic prism of European Orientalism, an acquired blindness, which was maintained long after an authentic contact with the East had been made. As the Jewish settlement went on, the tension between the Western and the Eastern civilizations was increasingly unavoidable. It was manifested both by the Arab-Jewish clashes of the 1920s and 1930s and by the obvious urban and modern character of the Jewish waves of immigration during these decades.¹ The East was depicted as primitive and backward, with the mission of Zionism being cast as an effort to bring advanced Western culture to the region. The Jews, therefore, had to preserve their Western character and avoid effacing themselves before the “wild culture” of the East.² Among native elites in the Middle East, the word “Levantine” could indicate a fruitful and dynamic multicultural combination of Eastern heritage and Western influence; but among Zionists, like European colonialists in the Levant, the word was used in a derogatory sense. It pointed to a shallow adoption of external modern traits while maintaining a regressive, primitive, Eastern character in essence.³

After the foundation of the state, the revulsion toward the East increased. It was intensified by the traumatic war with the Arabs, the ongoing hostility of the Arab states, and the mass of new Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries. The latter were perceived by long-time Israelis of European origins as a cultural threat. In 1950 a worried journalist warned that,

We are facing a revolution in the composition of the Yishuv. Immigrants from Eastern countries are “taking over” the Jewish street and “threatening” to become a majority within a few years time. These immigrants will inevitably change our values, ways of life, customs and manners—in the street, the office, and the cinema. They

might change our tastes in clothing and food.⁴

The complex attitudes toward the East and its inhabitants notwithstanding, Israelis of European origins and Western aspirations could not escape a very basic, immediate, geo-physical, fact: the local climate. Israel was located in the Middle East and Israeli dress had to fit its subtropical weather. The sunny landscape fitted nicely into the romantic European notions of the exotic East, but the harsh climatic conditions posed immediate physical hardships for immigrants who arrived from cooler environments.⁵ European garments had to be adjusted to the new atmosphere and as we recall, one of the advantages of the light and informal Israeli austere model of dress was its suitability to the local climate.⁶ When the Ministry of Rationing and Supply attended to the populations' sartorial needs, it insisted that imported and locally produced fabrics suit the Israeli weather.⁷

In Israel's coastal plain, the summer heat was accompanied by high humidity, so Israelis had to deal with the consequences of pouring sweat. In one summertime bus trip in 1954 Tel Aviv, for instance, a young woman, wearing a fashionable dress with a low neckline in the back, left her seat, leaving on its back an unpleasant sweaty patch. An observer noted disgustedly that the seat had to be wiped off carefully by the next passenger before he could take it.⁸ Israelis were advised to wear cotton and tricot clothes, soft and absorbent underwear, light shoes, and protective head covers, to avoid tight outfits, and to use talcum powder and deodorant.⁹ Sweating profusely meant that clothes had to be washed often, resulting in rapid wear and tear. Colorful fabrics also faded quickly in the blazing sun. Addressing working women, Avital mentioned in her fashion column that, "In the reality of our country's summer, we need many more dresses than we can possibly afford."¹⁰

Still unaware of skin cancer, Israelis nevertheless noticed that, "In our country wrinkles appear on the skin much earlier than they do in Europe." Beauty columns and ads warned women to protect themselves from over-exposure to the strong sunlight, and suggested refraining from "excessive sun-tanning" during the "steaming summer."¹¹ On the other hand, the heat drew many to the sea shore, and bathing suits became a common sight and a specialty of several local designers and manufacturers.¹² In July 1951, a local magazine presented on its front

cover a photo of a pretty blond in a bathing suit, laughing heartily. “Aviva,” read the caption “is having fun in spite of the rationing and the heat.”¹³

Clothes could be technically adjusted to the local weather, but it was harder to implement the exact aesthetic dictates of cosmopolitan fashion in Israel’s climate. In the 1950s high fashion changed according to the four European seasons, whereas Israeli fashion followers were faced with longer and hotter summers, shorter and milder winters, and extremely short springs and autumns. Fashion reporters wavered between their loyalty to Paris rulings and their practical inclinations. They praised fashionable styles that accorded with the Israeli climate, such as cotton dresses and skirts, but when the latest modes were unfit for local conditions, they advised their readers to use common sense and to modify the mode. Fashionable elegance, they admitted, was not always applicable in a country “of permanent summer.”¹⁴

Sartorial climatic adjustment, however, did not involve a cry to “go native” and adopt the traditional attires of the Middle East. On the contrary: Israelis usually associated Eastern dress with the romantic yet regressive image of the Orient. Still, while the majority of Israelis sported the austere and the smart models, there were certain populations in the young state whose dress was a constant reminder of Eastern reality. 1950s centralism notwithstanding, Israeli society—more than the society of the Yishuv era that had preceded it—was in fact extremely heterogeneous and enveloped many sub-cultures.¹⁵ Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling claims that during the first years of the state, Arab citizens, some of the new immigrants (especially, though not solely, those who came from Muslim countries), and ultra-Orthodox Jews lacked neither the ability and power, nor the concepts and the language, to communicate with the rest of the Israeli collectivity.¹⁶ Membership in these marginal sub-cultures was often manifested in a unique, non-Western, traditional dress.



Figure 3.1: A Bedouin visitor with members of Kibbutz Sde Boker, 1954. Government Press Office, NPC, D296-105.

Mandate-ruled Palestine was a bi-national society, where within one state the Arab and the Jewish communities lived side by side. The 1948 War created a dominantly Jewish territory and crushed the Arab community. The non-Jewish minorities who remained in the Jewish state of Israel after the war—mainly in the northern district—included Muslim Arabs and Bedouins, as well as Christian Arabs, Druze, Circassians, Bahaians, Karaites, Samaritans, Maronites, and Armenians.¹⁷

Israeli Arabs composed a separate group. Cut off from the Palestinian collectivity, they were not included in the Israeli collectivity either, in spite of their Israeli citizenship. State authorities and the Jewish majority did not demand that the Arab minority accept the Jewish lifestyle or integrate into Jewish society. Israeli Arabs took no part in the centralist project of nation building. They were isolated and supervised, governed by a special military rule, which enacted emergency defense regulations from the Mandate period. The military rule was founded in September

1948, during the war, and eventually enveloped those areas densely populated by Arab citizens. Israel's Ministry of Interior also founded a special department to deal with non-Jewish minorities. The relationships between the state department and the military governors were often strained. Moreover, the very necessity and morality of a military rule imposed on the Arab population within a democratic state was disputed and debated by the Israeli public, the political system, and within the army itself.¹⁸ Israeli Arabs' cultural separation from the rest of society was often manifested in their dress.¹⁹

Urban Arabs—first men and later some women—started adopting Western clothes during the nineteenth century, with additional Turkish items such as the men's tarbush, a flat-topped brimless cap. But the rural majority could be recognized by its traditional attire. Bedouins held their own tradition of dress, and regional and local variations could be detected in the dress of the Arab villagers.²⁰ Men's clothes were sober and rather uniform, and usually consisted of long underpants, a tunic, and an over-garment, such as the striped *kumbaz* coat or the *abaya* cloak. Women's attire was much more colorful, and their dress (*thobe*) was decorated with rich embroidery. Yet even this hand-made traditional dress was changing in the twentieth century, when new colors of European aniline dyes were being used, and new patterns of embroidery were adopted from foreign samplers and magazines.²¹ The kafiya, a large square head-cloth, often held in place by a circling cord (*'aqal*), was originally a Bedouin item. It was increasingly adopted by Arab men as a national symbol since the 1930s, replacing the Turkish turban and tarbush that were sported thereafter only by older men.²²

During the first years of the state, Israeli Jews described their visits to Arab villages and Bedouin camps as a glimpse into a far-away, unknown, mysterious land. Minorities were described as going through a positive modern transformation ("The past is donning a new coat"), yet photographs that accompanied these textual descriptions showed the local residents wearing traditional dress, or at least some traditional items, especially the kafiya and the veil. In other photographs taken during these years, Israeli Jews and Arabs could be often told apart by their clothes.²³



Figure 3.2: Fares Hamdan, Arab member of the Israeli Parliament since 1951, visiting the village Baka alGarbia (where he was born in 1910) in 1955. Government Press Office, NPC, D299-057. Photo by Fritz Cohen.

Like European settlers in America and Australia, Zionists did not regard the local native culture as a worthy example to follow. Zionist settlers used Arab items of dress only partly, selectively, and temporarily, and excluded Arab dress from the everyday norm by using it as a fancy costume.²⁴ If Arab dress was not regarded as a normative daily dress for Jews during the Yishuv period, it probably evoked stronger antagonism and hostility after the traumatic War of Independence. Apart from some rare exceptions to be detailed later, traditional Arab dress signaled that the wearer was an Israeli Arab, an outsider rather than an integral part of the Israeli Jewish collectivity.

When Arabs and Bedouins wore modern dress, Jewish observers regarded the change as a sign of progress that occurred either during the Mandate era or, more recently, after the foundation of Israel. In 1949 a Jewish reporter depicted a certain Arab-Maronite village in the Galilee as going through a process of modernization. He noted that the young leader of the village, the *mukhtar*, wears “the khaki uniform of an Israeli soldier.” Children in this village have on pants and shirts like those worn by children in a Jewish agricultural settlement, and some of the women

don modern dresses “bought in the city,” as opposed to home-made traditional garments.²⁵ Such change of clothes was more common among young and educated Arabs, for example teachers in training, described by a Jewish observer in 1950:

I noticed the girls. They looked just like girls in a Hebrew seminar. They sat bare-headed (even the Muslim girls!), wearing light summer dresses with short sleeves. White shoes on legs with no stockings. I recalled some of my Muslim acquaintances before the war, who had to cover their faces in the heat of the summer with a veil and to hide their bodies from head to toe in dark garments. Indeed, these young girls have made a considerable leap.²⁶

The writer tied the foundation of Israel with the liberation of Arab women, as indicated in the change of their dress. For modern Jewish women, the Muslim veil in particular was a proof of Arab women’s repression, a costume that “binds them to their husbands and homes.”²⁷ Controversy about veiling (*hijab*) broke out in Egypt and other Muslim countries in the late nineteenth century, but it should be mentioned that veils were worn by middle-class urban women, whereas peasant villagers, as well as the poorest urban women, went about unveiled for centuries. Hence, urban Arab women in Palestine and later in Israel veiled their heads and faces in public, but the veil was a rarity among the majority of Arab Israeli women, who resided in villages.²⁸

While Israeli Arabs were hardly included in the cultural molding of the Israeli national collectivity, the sharpest line of demarcation within Israeli *Jewish* society in the 1950s was probably the line that separated long-time Israelis and post-1948 newcomers, who comprised almost half of the population. During the first three years, the majority of the new immigrants were European, but in 1951 most arrived from Asia, and in 1952 most immigrants came from North Africa. Cultural differences between various groups of immigrants, and between long-time Israelis and new immigrants, were apparent in their different languages, forms of prayer, degrees of religiosity, gender and generational roles, levels of education, patterns of leisure, and in their dress.²⁹

European new immigrants often arrived from the same places and from similar cultural backgrounds as did the majority of European

immigrants during the Yishuv era. Hence the dissimilarities between long-time Israelis and European newcomers were milder, and were reflected in mild differences in their clothes. Many immigrants arrived as dispossessed refugees, who owned only old and tattered garments, but others—especially women from Central Europe—made efforts to dress smartly and fashionably, so much so that long-time Israelis stated admiringly that they looked like “Parisians” or like “tourists from Hollywood.”³⁰

A greater cultural and economic divide gaped between long-time Israelis of European origins and new immigrants from Muslim countries.³¹ This wider discrepancy was reflected in heightened differences in dress. Even before the great aliyah, during the Yishuv era, the dismissive Zionist view of the East included derision for the “Eastern” Jews who came from Muslim countries. Sometimes this attitude manifested itself as something closer to pity than scorn, but even then it was characterized by a patronizing approach and certainty of European superiority.³² Many Jews went through modernizing processes in their native Muslim countries and were therefore dressed in Western clothes. Others, especially from certain communities in Yemen, Kurdistan, India, Morocco, and Persia, arrived in Israel arrayed in unique traditional dress.³³ Such colorful non-Western attires differed strikingly from the clothes worn by European new immigrants and from the dress of long-time Israelis. In the mind of many Israelis, traditional outfits were soon associated with other demographic and economic characteristics of immigrants from Muslim countries—poverty, illiteracy, squalor, unglamorous occupations such as cleaning, teenage marriage, and a large number of children.³⁴



Figure 3.3: An immigrant from Kurdistan with her baby, upon arrival at the Israeli airport, 1951.

Government Press Office, NPC, D199-125. Photo by Teddy Brauner.

The traditional Jewish dress worn by some of the new immigrants from Muslim countries was received somewhat ambivalently. On the one hand, it reminded long-time Jewish Israelis of the Arab dress, and strengthened the image of the newcomers as naïve, primitive, and backward. As one long-time Israeli described the newcomers in a transit camp, “They speak Arabic (...) and their dress, particularly the women’s, also resembles Arab dress.” On the other hand, it was conceived as expressing an ancient, authentic, deeply rooted Jewish tradition, a part of a rich folklore that should be preserved and cherished, at least in museums.³⁵ Drawings in posters, ads, and cartoons depicted new immigrants in their typical attires as a visual testimony of the country’s rich diversity; stereotypical images of Yemenites, renowned for particularly colorful costumes, were often used to represent the entire great aliyah.³⁶

Israeli Jews viewed Arabs who forsook their traditional dress favorably, but they actively encouraged and pressured new Jewish immigrants

from Muslim countries to replace their traditional clothes. Unlike Israeli Arabs, Jewish newcomers were expected to become an integral part of the national collectivity; they had to shed the remains of their Diaspora culture and to be forged into new Israelis, and change of dress was conceived as one of the means to achieving this goal.

Long-time Israelis considered the great aliyah as the young state's cardinal project, but at the same time they had some reservations about the new immigrants. Ben-Gurion described them as "... a mixture of human dust, with no language, no education, no national roots, tradition or vision."³⁷ Historian Orit Rozin describes the complex attitude of long-time Israelis towards the newcomers as a sense of duty and obligation, mingled with, and abated by, recoiling disdain and at times even disgust.³⁸

The centralist ethos was intended, among other things, to unite the diverse Jewish people, and to create a new Israeli culture, one that would erase the remnants of the newcomers' diasporic traits. This aspired-for Israeli culture, a continuation of the Yishuv pioneering culture, blended modern and East European elements. A proper acculturation of the newcomers, especially of the young generation, was conceived as a national goal, a necessary step in creating a unified nation and securing its modernity. A war was therefore waged against the numerous ethnic cultures, imported by new immigrants from their countries of origin. The pressure to assimilate into the culture of long-time Israelis was weighty and many new immigrants—especially young ones—succumbed to it and tried to imitate and adopt local norms, customs, and habits. Furthermore, some newcomers internalized the dominant viewpoint about the inferiority of diasporic cultures, became ashamed of their original ethnic culture, and tried to conceal it. Other new immigrants—especially older ones—reacted to the pressure of the melting pot by turning their back to the local alternative, by seclusion and segregation within their original ethnic cultures.³⁹

If traditional Eastern dress signified the new immigrants' strangeness, then replacing it with local costumes signified absorption, acculturation, and integration into Israeli society.⁴⁰ Thus newcomers and long-time Israelis alike described change in the dress of new immigrants as a token of their successful adjustment and absorption. Moroccan mothers were appalled at first to see their young daughters in shorts, but were later reconciled. A young immigrant from Yemen testified how his life was changed for the better, including a daily shower and "the

clean new clothes we received, Israeli clothes.” A long-time Israeli of Yemenite origin, who worked as a guide in an immigrant camp, related how newcomer women cast off some of their strangeness when they discarded their “peculiar” old dresses. Another long-time Yemenite was glad to see how newly arrived Yemenite women hurried to change their clothes, looking glorious even in the simplest modern dresses that they bought.⁴¹ The transition from traditional Eastern clothes to modern local attire was perceived as a visible sign of a deeper change: the transformation “from diasporic degeneration to a life of creation.”⁴²



Figure 3.4: A trained nurse teaching new immigrants from Yemen how to take care of their babies in an immigrant camp in 1949.

KKL-JNF Photo Archive, D381-041. Photo by Zoltan Kluger.

Since the Yishuv era, Yemenite women often worked as house cleaners, and this custom was fortified after the great aliyah. Women and young girls from Yemen and other Muslim countries who worked as cleaners were documented and described as wearing recognizable outfits: tattered dresses with a thin jacket or sweater, clogs or sandals over short socks, and kerchiefs tied under the chin.⁴³ In late 1951 an Ashkenazi long-time Israeli boasted of the supposedly good rapport be-

tween herself and her cleaner Shoshana, a new immigrant from Yemen. According to her employer (a woman affiliated with a socialist party), Shoshana's improvement as a worker went hand in hand with her modernization and the renovation of her personal appearance:

... And when I recall that shadow of a woman from only one year ago, that old sagged face and that bony body, stuck into traditional pants. When I compare all that to her face today, blooming with youth—in spite of her hard labor at times ... – I can hardly believe that it is the same Shoshana. Her taste is more refined and she has learnt how to take care of her appearance. Now she won't leave the house without a glance in the mirror (she is only twenty years of age). If one year ago she did not know whether the under-shirt is worn underneath the dress or on top of it, today she already knows. She knows that a dress has to be washed before being sent to mending, that wool should not be washed in water too hot or too cold, that a sweater should not be hung on a rope to dry, and other such elementary facts of housekeeping.⁴⁴

Some changes of dress and grooming were forced on the newcomers. Yemenite women, for instance, traditionally wore under their gowns long pants that covered their ankles. When these religious women were given modern dresses by the secular Israeli guides in the gathering-points in Yemen, on their way to Israel, they embarrassedly tried to hide their naked legs whenever they saw a man approaching.⁴⁵ An Ashkenazi guide misunderstood the ritual henna ornaments on Yemenite children's hands and made them wash it off. Another guide combed the hair of Kurdish children on the Sabbath, although according to Jewish tradition in Kurdistan and in other places, combing hair was considered a violation of the Sabbath rest.⁴⁶

In 1950, a special committee investigated charges that immigrant children from religious families were receiving an anti-religious education in the transit camps. The committee stated in its report that long-time Israelis who guided and taught new immigrants should be more sensitive to the latter's stricter notions of modesty, for instance their objection to exposing arms, legs and knees. Dancing Israeli folk dances

in shorts might have been uplifting for Yishuv pioneers from European backgrounds, the committee noted, but religious Yemenites regard such practice as promiscuous. In some immigrant camps, secular teachers and guides cut off the side-locks of Yemenite children, sometimes using the danger of lice as an excuse, but usually as part of a wider secularizing endeavor. These actions horrified the children's religious parents and outraged the religious parties in Israel. The investigating committee concluded that

Those who wish to remove the barriers separating the Yemenite children from the local children should not have hastened the process and acted as soon as the immigrants had arrived. Time will take its course. One of the children was questioned by the head of the committee and replied that "I was laughed at in Kfar Saba [the town near his camp] and took off my side-locks of my own free will."⁴⁷

The committee clearly approved of sartorial and cultural acculturation of Yemenite immigrants into the Israeli melting pot, but assumed that the process should occur naturally, gradually, and voluntarily, and objected to any acts of forceful coercion. Like the boy who was laughed at in Kfar Saba, new immigrants could be pressured informally and ridiculed out of their traditional dress rather than being ordered and compelled to do so.

One volunteer guide in an immigrant camp depicted in 1949 the change of Yemenite women's clothes as an arbitrary useless act. The new dresses do not compliment them, she wrote, so—

Wouldn't it be wiser to buy them some fabrics and let them dress as they are used to? This might also teach them sewing and free them from the idle life of the camp. If they eventually settle in the city, they will gradually adjust to our dress anyway. And if they settle in the village—they can hold on to their traditional dress as long as they like.⁴⁸

But such tolerance to cultural diversity was rare and exceptional.⁴⁹

We should keep in mind that aesthetic issues were often pushed off and totally marginalized by immediate technical difficulties. The rate of the great aliyah posed a titanic challenge for the small and economically devastated state.⁵⁰ Long-time Israelis who worked as the newcomers' guides often misunderstood the immigrants, and tended to automatically transfer their own needs and preferences unto populations whose sartorial culture was different. Moreover, most guides believed that changing the newcomers' traditional dress would help them adjust to their new country and ensure their easy blending into Israeli society.⁵¹

If immigrants from European countries had to adjust to Israel's heat, some of the new immigrants from Muslim countries arrived unequipped for the Israeli winter. To make things worse, the winter of 1949 was particularly cold and rainy, and the winter of 1950 was the coldest winter ever measured in Israel, with rare snow falling all over the country.⁵² Even long-time Israelis were unprepared for snow and had to find inventive solutions to deal with the cold, but the new immigrants—living in temporary huts and tents—were badly affected by the winter.⁵³ As one reporter put it, "Some are playing in the snow and others are freezing":

While the children of Israel enjoyed the snow, playing with snow balls and snowmen, their eyes shining with the thrill of this rare game, there were other children, deprived by fate, whose hands turned blue and whose eyes watered, their thin clothes supplying no warmth.⁵⁴

The head of the government department in charge of the new immigrants complained about their sartorial plight. "Most of them are penniless, owning only the shirts on their backs and the shoes on their feet." As winter approached, the immigrants—unused to the cold climates in high locations such as Jerusalem or Safed—and especially Yemenite children, had to be supplied with warm winter dress. "It is hard to describe the suffering of these dear poor immigrants, who accept their hard fate with love," he wrote.⁵⁵ Long-time Israelis were asked to collect their old winter clothing and send it to the immigrant camps.⁵⁶



Figure 3.5: Jewish immigrants from Iraq at the Afula bus station, 1954. Government Press Office, NPC, D233-085. Photo by Fritz Cohen.

The Eastern garments of both new immigrants from Muslim countries and Israeli Arabs indicated, and became associated with, their low social-economic status. During the Yishuv era, Zionist immigrants were commonly divided between “pioneers” and “mere immigrants,” namely non-pioneer settlers. The pioneers were located higher on the social ladder although, and even because, they were usually located lower on the economic ladder. Yet after the foundation of the state, the social hierarchy changed. Israeli society was now divided primarily between long-time residents and new immigrants. Long-time Israelis, whether former pioneers or middle class, enjoyed social and economic advantages over the newcomers, and composed a new, wide, and heterogeneous dominant stratum.⁵⁷ Clothes signified and accentuated this new Israeli social hierarchy. Most members of the dominant group donned the smart or the austere models of dress or one of their intermediate variations. New immigrants and Arabs who adopted these dominant models of dress

were therefore regarded as assimilating successfully into Israeli society, whereas those who wore traditional Eastern dress were visually marked as socially marginal or even as outsiders.

Another group in Israel clung consciously and defiantly to its non-Western non-modern mode of dress: the Haredim—ultra-Orthodox Jews—advocates of tradition who asserted their connection to the ways of the past.

Religious Israelis were divided into different ideological, cultural, and political segments. Religious Zionists combined Judaism with modern Hebrew nationalism. The Haredim included a moderate non-Zionist religious group and an extreme anti-Zionist group. The former cooperated with the state and were part of the coalition government, whereas the latter remained isolated and sometimes took violent and unlawful steps against the secular state. Each of these groups was further divided into sub-groups,⁵⁸ each of which held specific traditions of dress. Generally speaking, religious Zionists retained modesty (refrained from excessive exposure) and covered their heads as demanded by Judaic custom, but otherwise their dress was quite similar to that of secular Israelis.⁵⁹ Haredim, on the other hand, could be easily recognized by their traditional items of dress, such as long black coats, specific hats, small fringed prayer shawls, and unshaven beards.⁶⁰

The dress of the Haredim—like the austere model—was originally an anti-fashion. In the Middle Ages European Jews tried to avoid or hide the “Jewish signs” that were imposed on them by the Christian majority. Yet by the eighteenth century, East European Jews were voluntarily wearing a singular dress, and they were dismayed when the Russian czar forced them to abandon this unique dress in the mid-nineteenth century. The eighteenth century Jewish-Lithuanian-Polish dress had been adopted by Central and Western European Haredim since the nineteenth century, as a reaction to increasing trends of modernization and secularization. While members of the Jewish Enlightenment movement (*Haskala*), assimilating Jews, and Reform Jews followed Western fashion, Haredim fortified their loyalty and signaled their group borders by resisting change and sanctifying tradition.⁶¹ Contemporary studies claim that Haredi dress challenges the hegemonic conception of beauty common in Western secular society. Moreover, it counters the instability of fashion and its ever-changing styles with an alternative, timeless, ahistorical, unchanging mode of dress.⁶²



Figure 3.6: Houses ruined during the war in the northern city of Safed, 1949. Unlike the men in the background, the elderly couple in the foreground is dressed in Haredi style.

Government Press Office, NPC, D839-086. Photo by Zoltan Kluger.

After the Holocaust and the founding of the Israeli state, the reduced and dwindling Haredi community faced a demographic, economic, organizational, and ideological-religious crisis.⁶³ Firmly maintaining its traditional dress was thus part of the community's attempt to defend its cultural existence when facing a threatening tide of nationalization and secularization.

The Haredi community held a “chastity watch” and published notices, calling on Haredi women to refrain from wearing licentious clothes, as those shamelessly worn by secular Israeli women.⁶⁴ Women and girls were rebuked if they ventured out of their houses in short dresses, short sleeves, a deep cleavage, barefoot, or wearing transparent clothes or stockings, and married women were ordered to cover their hair meticulously.⁶⁵ The chastity watch distributed posters calling the daughters of Israel to refrain from immodest dress: “We cannot endure wanton women passing in our streets and in our neighborhoods wearing pro-

miscuous clothes.”⁶⁶ Some contemporary sociologists claim that Judaic religion, presenting a masculine point of view, envelopes both positive and negative attitudes regarding feminine beauty. Women receive ambivalent messages, because they should be attractive only to their husbands without looking too seductive, and their physical appearance is subject to control and regulation by the community male leaders.⁶⁷

In the 1950s Haredi women were not immune to fashion, and they were offered fashionable dresses in modest variations (for instance with longer sleeves) and wigs of stylish hairdos. Yet excessive vanity and wanton behavior was described in the Haredi press as a specifically secular weakness. Secular Israeli women were depicted in the Haredi newspaper as materialistic and hollow, dreaming about Hollywood careers and Parisian night clubs, caring only about their personal gratification and their “independence in dress, fashion, femininity, and seduction, anything that isn’t Judaic.” Whereas Haredi girls, claimed male Haredi writers, can be immediately recognized by their modest looks.⁶⁸

Short pants, worn by Sabras and other Israeli young women and exposing the entire thigh, seemed particularly immoral according to Haredi standards. One rabbi wrote that chastity had always prevented the Jewish people from assimilating and had protected Jewish women. Alas,

Have we ever seen in the Diaspora lands of our former residence our women (or even a foreign woman) roaming about in such wantonness? Let us walk along the streets of any city in the world—shall we encounter girls wearing short pants for all to see? It is a shame and a disgrace that in our country a bathing suit has become the common dress on the street.⁶⁹

Another Haredi wrote that women in Israel have adopted immoral dress to an alarming and disgusting extent. Religious guests in weddings, he wrote, feel embarrassed and unwelcome because some of the female guests are dressed so immodestly. He praised the American Jewish custom of adding to wedding invitations a request that the ladies arrive “in modest dress according to the tradition of Israel,” and suggested implementing this custom in Israel too.⁷⁰

Secular Israelis, however, saw things differently. Many non-religious Jews, especially young ones, did not distinguish between non-Zionists

and anti-Zionists, and associated all Haredim with the extremity and violence of the latter.⁷¹ They conceived of the Haredim as internal aliens, as fifth columnists, fanatics who were trying to compel religion on a secular majority. If Zionists attempted to create a new Jew, in dress as in other matters, then the Haredi population of Israel was seen as holding on obstinately to the deplorable ways of the old pre-national diasporic Jew.⁷² Haredi neighborhoods were described by secular visitors as anachronistic medieval Polish Ghettos, whose residents dress and think just like their ancestors.

They know that they are under siege, that a harsh war is waged against their lifestyle. The new nation has become accustomed to seeing them as remnants of a dead race, reminders of a hateful past, an obstacle in the way of reviving a young nation and a new state.⁷³

The Haredim's unique dress evoked revulsion and hostility among secular Israelis because it reminded them of a detestable facet in the image of the old Jew, a facet that Zionists deplored and had supposedly forsaken and buried.⁷⁴

Some verbal and visual descriptions of Haredi dress by non-religious Israelis were very hostile. In 1951 a reporter and young member of Mapai described a Haredi man in Jerusalem in the following words:

On the pavement, among people of definite dress and age, an ageless man steps hurriedly with his head to the ground. A hairy *shtreimel* [fur hat] on his head, his ascetic thin body is covered by an estranged long coat, his legs in squashed felt shoes.

Young secular residents of Jerusalem explained to the reporter why they hate this man "and all those like him," namely

Ignorant fanatics who wear black, those same clothes that Jews were forced to wear in the middle ages, so that they could be told apart from other human beings, denounced and stigmatized.

One medical student even confessed “I would never have imagined that I could hate a man for his dress, hate a Jew just because he wears the clothes of the stubborn Diaspora.”⁷⁵ Echoes of anti-Semitic stereotypes can also be detected in the manner in which Haredi men were portrayed in political cartoons that condemned anti-Zionist Haredi violence.⁷⁶

A Haredi journalist claimed in 1952 that the religious Jew, “with his beard and his Judaic dress” is hated in Israel. Secular Israelis, like the anti-Semites before them, associate “Jew” with “dirty” and assume that Haredi dress is unhygienic. If the religious man would have changed his appearance, shaved his beard, and thrown away his skullcap, secular Israelis would accept him rather than hate and discriminate against him.⁷⁷ But Haredi Israeli Jews held on to their anti-fashion as a sign of religious loyalty, even though secular Israelis kept connecting this unique dress with the diasporic old Jew and with religious fanaticism.



Figure 3.7: Religious men choosing an Etrog (yellow citron) for the Sukkot holiday at a stand near the Great Synagogue in Tel Aviv, 1951.

Government Press Office, NPC, D528-095. Photo by Teddy Brauner.

The Haredi dress, like the traditional garments worn by some Arabs and new immigrants, signified poverty and marked social marginality.⁷⁸ However, whereas the Haredi dress evoked in secular Israelis unmistakably hostile emotions, colorful Eastern garments could generate more ambiguous notions. Traditional Arab dress was considered by many Israelis as a sign of “primitiveness,” yet the same exoticism also evoked fascination and was sometimes described favorably. “Armed Bedouin riders and scores of tribal dignitaries,” who took part in Independence Day celebrations in the southern city of Beer-Sheva in 1952, gave the event “an exotic oriental character.” Three years later, when journalists were wondering why tourists do not flock to visit Israel, they suggested that European visitors want to find romantic and colorful dress in the land of the Bible, and therefore should be greeted by “real” Arabs in their traditional costumes, accompanied by camels and horses.⁷⁹ Modern tourism often trades in local exoticism, but this process might also reflect and enhance internal notions of collectivity.⁸⁰ The viewing of Arab dress as a useful attraction for tourists therefore indicates not just the separateness of Arab–Israelis from the Jewish collectivity, but also that, in Jewish eyes, the Arab natives were “authentic” representatives of the land.

Although Arab dress was viewed by many Jewish Israelis unfavorably, there were a few exceptions to this rule, cases of “going native” in the field of clothing: the kafiya, the ‘aqal, and a few other Arab accessories were worn by members of the 1907–1920 Jewish defense organization “The Watchman” (*Hashomer*); the kafiya covered the heads of many male pioneers until the 1930s; and later the kafiya was worn by members of the Palmach military organization and the youth movements. Yael Zerubavel interprets the latter as a visual expression of the “Hebrew Bedouin” identity, an affirmation that Jews have acclimatized physically and mentally, and have become part of the local landscape.⁸¹

From a European viewpoint, the Orient was not just a repulsive cultural threat, but also an exotic cultural muse. Some Zionists regarded Eastern culture as a source of inspiration for the new Hebrew culture they were trying to create. In this view, what was Eastern was native to the Land of Israel, and what was not was an import from the European Diaspora. Eastern elements were thereby incorporated into the creative arts, albeit selectively and superficially.⁸² In the eyes of the long-

time European Israelis, oriental dress, especially that worn by Jews from Yemen, looked particularly exotic. Alongside attempts to modernize all newcomers and acculturate their dress as well as other daily habits, their folk traditions were appreciated as authentic remnants of ancient Hebrew culture, to be kept in appropriate niches such as artistic performances and museums. Yemenite embroidery and jewelry, for instance, were regarded by long-time Israelis as a unique national asset to be maintained, developed, used in local craft and industry, and for representing the country's ethnic accomplishments in the international sphere.⁸³

In 1956 a journalist described the traditional dress worn in Bareket, a new settlement of immigrants who arrived from the city of Haban in south-eastern Yemen: white gowns and head-covers for men, many braids, heavy jewelry, and facial paintings for women. The Habanic immigrants have learnt new ways in their new homeland and their children will be absolute Sabras, the journalist reassured her readers, but in the meantime they still hold on to their deeply rooted ethnic customs and "their picturesque lifestyle and folklore."⁸⁴ Whereas the young generation was supposed to integrate thoroughly and adopt the Sabra lifestyle and dress, the transitory phase of maintaining traditional dress among the older generation was portrayed by the journalist favorably, and she defined Bareket as a colorful piece of ancient authenticity within the new modern state. Folklore researcher Carmella Abdar claims that while most Yemenite immigrants replaced their traditional clothes on their way to Israel, the Jews of Haban were instructed by their Israeli guide to wear their best festive clothes and Jewelry, thus winning the reputation of "princes from a wonderland." The Habanic Jews settled together in Bareket and managed to maintain their unique tradition alongside their social acculturation. Thus four years after the foundation of Bareket, its settlers could still be seen wearing their traditional "picturesque" attire, although thereafter it was maintained only in bridal wear.⁸⁵

Art historian Yael Guilat traces the prominent role of the Yemenite ideal as representative of the Oriental Jew back to the Yishuv era. She describes the appropriation of Yemenite embroidery and silverwork in the Bezalel art academy and in workshops and cottage industries, founded and run by Ashkenazi women's volunteer organizations such as Wizo (Women's International Zionist Organization). After the founda-

tion of the state, the prestige of Yemenite handiwork greatly surpassed that of the artisan cultures of other immigrant groups from Muslim countries, and Guilat argues that the available, familiar, functional Yemenite model served the Israeli elite as a “boundary marker” vis-à-vis the mass wave of newcomers from Muslim countries. Accessible and approachable, it facilitated Israeli culture in absorbing the recently arrived immigrants of the 1950s.⁸⁶

Although the exact meaning of “Israeli style” remained rather vague, a prevailing notion identified Israeli style with some mixture of West and East. The graduates of Hadassah Fashion Institute were highly praised in 1950, when their show consisted of “pretty and somewhat original dresses, combining dainty French taste, American technique, and an Eastern Hebrew inspiration.” The evening dresses in the show implemented the latest cosmopolitan fashions, executed in rich fabrics, but they included some variations of Oriental lines and were decorated with Yemenite embroidery and silverwork.⁸⁷ In the following years colorful Yemenite embroidery was employed to embellish evening gowns and cocktail dresses; this was considered to be an authentic Israeli touch, without sacrificing the items’ “European taste” and their “Western lines.”⁸⁸

Most successful in consolidating an original Israeli fashion was Maskit, a firm founded in 1954 by Ruth Dayan (first wife of famous warrior and IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan). Dayan wanted to achieve two goals simultaneously—to provide employment for new immigrants, and to save traditional ethnic crafts and apply them to salable artifacts. But Maskit’s Israeli style was not based solely on the use of oriental Jewish ethnic crafts. Its designer, Fini Leitersdorf, was considered the most inventive Israeli fashion designer. Unlike Lola Ber and other leading designers, who merely adapted and adjusted Parisian designs, Leitersdorf conveyed in her models shades and hints of the local landscape and nature. She combined Jewish, Biblical, and Mediterranean motifs into fashionable patterns. Maskit’s products, made solely of locally made high-quality fabrics, were sold successfully abroad (especially in the late 1950s and the early 1960s), and became well known representatives of authentic Israeli fashion. Leitersdorf claimed that Israel should not copy Western fashion but should rather combine “Sabra simplicity, Eastern colorfulness, and Western sewing techniques.” However, although Leitersdorf’s designs were usually original and simple (minimalist),

and included Eastern elements, they did often disclose strong aesthetic influences of Western (especially American) fashions, and not merely Western techniques. In spite of its reliance on folk tradition, Maskit's refined products could actually be afforded only by wealthy connoisseurs.⁸⁹ Moreover, Maskit attempted to erase the ethnic origins of its products and did not emphasize the cultural identity of its craftsmen. Guilat claims that the inclusion of Jewish-Yemenite craftsmanship in Israel's visual culture was a selective adoption and standardization of isolated and neutral elements, rather than an incorporation of authentic Yemenite culture.⁹⁰



Figure 3.8: Ruth Dayan presenting a hand-made oriental style blouse to the 1956 national beauty queen, Sara Tal, in the Maskit shop in Tel Aviv. Government Press Office, NPC, D707-097. Photo by Hans Pinn.

It should be noted that 1950s fashion, especially American fashion, often incorporated various ethnic motifs and decorations, inspired by Chinese, Turkish, Spanish, and Mexican elements. Such styles did not constitute an entire ethnic costume, only bestowed an “exotic” quality to a fashionable Western look.⁹¹ As part of this cosmopolitan “folklorist trend,” Maskit's products could actually enhance the consumers' cosmopolitan identity as sophisticated fashionable women of the world, toying knowingly with Oriental elements.⁹²

West: Admiration and Reluctance

Zionist selective enchantment with the East waned since the 1930s, in tandem with the growing tension between the Arabs and the Jews.⁹³ Although Zionist nationalism was influenced by romantic ideas, from the outset it also strongly stressed progress and technological efficiency. Zionists intended to import Western modernity into the under-developed East and to elevate it from its lowly condition. Zionism conceived itself as a modern movement and Zionist settlers tried to create a democratic and well-informed society. In practice as well as in theory, Zionist settlement in Palestine was heavily based on science and advanced technology.⁹⁴ After the foundation of the state, Israel was acutely isolated within its immediate surroundings; this local seclusion might have enhanced the country's yearning to be part of the big modern world that lay far beyond its narrow geo-political borders. It seems as if fashion played a role in the young state's endeavor to become, and to be internationally acknowledged as, a well-run and cultivated society.⁹⁵ Moreover, the adjective "modern" was often used in 1950s Hebrew as a synonym for "fashionable," thus identifying fashion with modernity.⁹⁶

In the field of fashion, Israel's Western ambitions and its Euro-centrism focused, not surprisingly, on the French capital. Paris' status as the world's most dominant fashion center was reflected in the Israeli press, which frequently presented Parisian novelties as a law that had to be obeyed by all followers of fashion.⁹⁷ Fashion writers reported about all the cardinal fashion shows in the city of lights, and local fashion designers who actually attended these shows were eagerly interviewed as soon as they returned from Paris.⁹⁸ Paris was commonly associated with prestige and stylishness, French women were depicted as examples of good taste, and Parisian fashion was described as an expression of "French genius."⁹⁹ Paris was evoked, and the French language was used, in many local ads as a supposed guarantee for the high quality of the promoted products (clothes and cosmetics) and services (haircuts, cosmetic treatments).¹⁰⁰

Israelis who visited 1950s Paris were surprised to see that, even in the City of Lights, luxuriously dressed women stood out: haute couture was so expensive that only rich American tourists could afford to buy and wear it, whereas the French mass-produced affordable garments were of a much lower quality.¹⁰¹ But a few disappointed impressions

from Parisian daily reality could not spoil the solid status of Paris as *the* fashion center and the positive aura that surrounded its style. Local fashion was therefore expected to follow Parisian chic, albeit with a few essential adjustments. Local designers were praised if and when they managed to adopt Parisian designs and modify them according to the local climate and to Israeli economic circumstances.¹⁰²

Ber's towering stand in Israeli fashion was also related to her strong French connection. Not only did she idolize French designs and imitate them in her own work, but she also traveled to Paris at least twice a year, to watch the main seasonal shows and keep up to date. It should be mentioned that traveling abroad in 1950s Israel was no small matter: an official exit permit for leaving the country was required, and the amount of foreign currency that could be taken out of the country was restricted.¹⁰³ Ber's frequent travels testify to her exceptionally high economic and social status. In the 1950s fashion changes were treated by fashion followers as an obliging "decree," and women all over the world waited impatiently for the Paris fashion shows, to learn twice a year what the top designers "determined" regarding the new silhouette, the length of the skirt, and the colors they "must" wear in the forthcoming season. In Israel, Ber was regarded as an envoy and executor of Parisian fashion, the most updated, knowledgeable, and talented authority regarding the latest French styles.¹⁰⁴

Yet after World War II, and despite its revived supremacy, Paris was no longer the only fashion center of the world. Alongside accounts about Parisian fashion, the Israeli press occasionally reported about British fashion and about novelties produced in a new rising fashion center – Italy. Yet the main force that competed with Parisian fashion, in Israel as elsewhere, emanated from the United States of America.¹⁰⁵

The American textile industry and American technologies for producing high quality mass-manufactured clothes stood out and had been imitated elsewhere since the nineteenth century, but it was World War II that became the decisive moment for American fashion. Disconnected from the occupied and devastated Paris fashion, and alongside a striking growth in the home clothing industry, the stage was left in the 1940s for gifted American designers to promote their independent styles and enjoy the limelight without French inspiration and competition. After the war, with the recovery of French fashion and the introduction of the New Look, Paris once again dictated the main lines for fashionable

American women. But the economy of the United States was booming and fashion was consumed by a larger population than ever, including younger people. American demand affected Parisian designers who realized that their new clients did not necessarily covet elegance, but rather often wished to don a glamorous and “younger” look.¹⁰⁶

Even though the “golden age” of Hollywood cinema ended after the war, the American film industry sustained its influence over women’s fashion and contributed considerably to the spread of the New Look, in a moderated version, all over the world.¹⁰⁷ By the 1950s American designs completely dominated sportswear and youth fashions. American fashion also contributed innovations such as the cocktail dress to the sphere of evening wear. The impact of the American style, with its Hollywood glamor on the one hand and its informal, comfortable, and youthful traits on the other, was constantly increasing worldwide,¹⁰⁸ and Israel was no exception.

Like other countries in the world, Israel tried to follow the American example in its mass manufacturing of clothes. American machinery was imported and American experts served as advisors and guides for Israeli firms. American clothes and uniforms were considered comfortable and durable, but gradually American influence increased on the aesthetic level as well.¹⁰⁹ American fashion had a particularly strong impact on young people and teenagers, and in Israel it was “the salon youths” (or “the golden youths”) who tried to adopt and imitate American fashions.¹¹⁰ American fashion also affected adults, both in the field of sportswear and daily attire and in the field of high and evening fashion. Still, when a fashion column in an Israeli middle-class newspaper presented the cocktail dress in 1954, it first had to explain to its readers what exactly were the cocktail drink and the cocktail party. In mid-decade, the American “princess” style became very popular, so much so that even a pro-Soviet Israeli women’s magazine dedicated its fashion column to a positive portrayal of this style, without ever mentioning to its left-wing readers the capitalistic birthplace of the “princess” dress. Although French women were held as the epitome of good taste and elegance, American women, too, were described by Israeli fashion journalists as smart dressers.¹¹¹

Thus, since the beginning of the decade, the United States was mentioned alongside Paris in Israeli reports and discussions of fashion. Both “Paris and New York” or “Paris and Hollywood” were considered *the*

leading fashion and grooming centers of the world, and therefore those to be followed by Israelis.¹¹² Moreover, Israeli fashion followers were well aware of the competition between the Parisian center and its new American rival. Some fashion reporters hailed the American practicality and its younger, lighter, spirit. They admired its independence from “Parisian dictatorship” and supported “Hollywood’s rebellion” against some of Dior’s new suggestions. Yet other reporters preferred Parisian elegance and refinement over American “excessive” styles.¹¹³

The good reputation of American fabrics, clothes, and styles was reflected in ads. Whereas French was employed to associate the advertised product with good taste, American notions were increasingly used to suggest modernity, efficiency, abundance, and vitality. Israeli clothing firms and products were named after attractive American locations: Broadway, New York, California, Florida, and Miami. The adjective “American” was added to dresses, shoes, cosmetic products, and services, in order to infuse them with prestige.¹¹⁴ American fashion was initially considered more “suitable” to Israel than French fashion, being more casual and less formal. Still, some adjustments had to be made. In 1950 a local hair stylist, for instance, recommended that Israeli women avoid new American hairstyles in their original shortness, and cut their hair somewhat longer in the front, “as befits our women, who are not as slim as American women.” And when the full-skirted cocktail dress, with all its rich folds and underskirts, was discussed by a fashion journalist six years later, she warned local readers that in Israel, economic considerations should be taken into account even when buying an evening dress.¹¹⁵ In addition to ads and fashion columns, Israelis could see American fashion as portrayed in American movies, on American tourists who visited Israel, and in packages sent to Israelis from American friends and relatives.¹¹⁶

Hollywood movies were widely preferred in Israel in spite of the critics’ condemnation of their meritocracy, superficiality, banality, sentimentality, and vulgarity. With the lack of television broadcasting until 1968, cinema had no competition in the field of visual popular culture.¹¹⁷ When a couple of movie stars visited the young state, their stays received wide and detailed coverage in the local media.¹¹⁸ Movie stars were so well known among the Israeli public, and regarded as such uncontested examples of beauty and style, that a local soap manufacturer advertised its product by asking the readers if they looked like some

famous movie stars, and if so, recommended using its new shampoo as the one “suitable for you.”¹¹⁹



Figure 3.9: Shampoo ad: “Do you resemble Greta Garbo?”

Dvar hashavu'a, June 1, 1950.

A local movie magazine, targeting a young female readership, often presented Hollywood fashion. It published photographs of movie stars modeling fashionable swimming suits and clothes. A permanent column intimately shared with its readers (“dear girls”) the beauty secrets and tips of the stars. The magazine admitted that “most of us simple mortals” own neither the budget nor the figure of movie stars, but nevertheless encouraged its readers to make the best possible effort and to try emulating the looks of their favorite stars.¹²⁰ Other magazines, even one affiliated with Mapai, published photos of stars on their covers. Fashion columns and ads associated certain modes or fashion items with specific movie stars or with Hollywood in general.¹²¹ The appeal of the tough, scruffy man in Israeli society might also have been enhanced by the cinematic ideal of the worrier—the brave soldier as portrayed in Hollywood movies.¹²²

Cinema fashion was mostly an atmospheric influence, affecting desires and stylistic directions but implemented in practice only rarely, partly, and particularly among the “salon youth.” However, fashion fan-

tasies could be realized more materially and within wider circles once a year, in the annual holiday of Purim, a minor Jewish holiday which includes the custom of wearing fancy dress.¹²³ After the foundation of the state, Purim was described as an opportunity for the “tired and angry people” to briefly “shed off the tensions of these days,” a rare chance for Israelis to “give some relief to their (natural) desire to be happy.” Children were universally dressed up in Purim, but many adult Israelis also put on costumes when attending Purim parties.¹²⁴ Purim became an annual occasion in which excessive grandeur could be “justified.” Purim and the weeks preceding it became the Israeli “ball season,” and shop windows were filled with evening gowns, replacing for a while the more casual clothes usually on display.¹²⁵ Although Israeli Purim balls in the 1950s were not extremely licentious, they seemed to have maintained the traditional carnivalesque role of providing a break in normal morality standards, and enabled Israeli women to express their sexuality more openly—in their appearance though not in actual behavior.¹²⁶

Some thematic costumes in 1950s Purim celebrations, usually worn by children, presented contemporary local themes, like the rationing regime, the problem of accommodation, the newly introduced national lottery, and the search for oil in Israeli soil.¹²⁷ Yet most thematic costumes, among children and adults alike, were generic topics, removed historically, geographically, or socially from the wearers’ normal daily reality and therefore considered “exotic.” Foreign peoples were always a favorite. And just as costumes of Greeks and Turks in nineteenth-century England were inspired by Byron’s poetry more than by any actual Greek and Turkish dress, so such costumes in 1950s Israel reflected the popular images of foreign peoples as transmitted through literature, Hollywood cinema, and other media, rather than based on ethnographic knowledge. Cowboys and Indians (Native Americans), Chinese and Japanese, Indian Maharajahs, Cossacks, Spaniards, Mexicans, Hawaiians, Africans, and Arabs—all were molded into costumes.¹²⁸ When fashion journalists suggested thematic Purim costumes to its female adult readers, they depicted fashionable and complimenting outfits, accompanied by a few items popularly and stereotypically associated with the theme: an improvised Sari to indicate “an Indian,” a wide brimmed hat for “a Chinese,” and a sombrero for “a Mexican.”¹²⁹



Figure 3.10: Suggestions for Purim costumes in a fashion magazine: Although thematic—entitled the Geisha, the Bat, and the Roulette—these costumes were clearly affected by the latest mid-1950s fashion.

Hava laisha velaofnah, February 1955.

Whereas Purim provided an acceptable contained occasion for fulfilling cinematic fantasies, the permanent daily lifestyle in Israel was not supposed to follow the example set by the silver screen. True, the West was a coveted admired model, but some of its “decadent” aspects did not accord with the centralist ethos. Hence concerns were often voiced regarding the dangerous effects of Hollywood films, especially among youths and the new immigrants—two groups who were considered immature and in need of edifying patronage. Young girls who tried to imitate the looks of their favorite movie stars—as recommended in movie and fashion magazines—were described by various writers as deluded and ridiculous. Moreover, the authentic, natural, and dedicated Israeli girl was ideally portrayed as the very opposite of the “made-up glamor girl of Hollywood.”¹³⁰

One movie critic lamented the huge influence of worthless Holly-

wood movies, especially among impressionable youths. Therefore, he wrote, one should not be surprised when one's daughter almost bumps into the closet on her way out of the house: one of her eyes is covered by her forelock since she started imitating the haircut of movie star Veronica Lake.¹³¹ Young men who followed American youth fashion were also rebuked for trying to follow the looks, the mannerisms, and the behaviors of American movie stars.¹³²

New immigrants were regarded as particularly volatile, because it was feared that their estrangement from local culture might lead them to follow the hollow Western mass culture transmitted by movies, instead of becoming "true Israelis."¹³³ Critics attacked the emulation of American movie stars among adult long-time Israelis as well, depicting such practices as a decadent retreat from national duties.¹³⁴

Another American institution that was imitated in Israel and underwent public attack was the annual election of a national beauty queen. The competition, first held in 1950, received detailed coverage by the local media and the contest's winners turned into immediate celebrities.¹³⁵ Soon the event's reputation became wide enough to be used in puns, jokes, cartoons, and parodies.¹³⁶ In 1952, a woman journalist chronicled longingly the previous national ideals: the old Jewish ideal of learning and following the Torah, the new Zionist ideal of the visionary and hard working pioneer, and the ideal of the recent war—the beautiful brave fighter who sacrifices his life for the sake of national independence. And now, only four years after the foundation of the state, carped the writer, things have turned full circle and the essence of womanhood is supposedly embodied in a beauty contest. "Isn't it time we review our ways? Does the idealist pioneering girl really have to leave the stage for a beauty in an evening gown or a swimming suit?"¹³⁷

Several newspapers criticized the contest as silly, vulgar, commercialized, immoral, and flashy. The event lacks anything truly Israeli, wrote one critic in 1955, and wondered "How can such a tasteless ritual be performed in a state that aspires to sublime ideals?" But as if contradicting their own condemnations, many of the same newspapers published reports about the contest and photos of its competitors and winners.¹³⁸ Since the 1960s, attacks on American and world beauty contests center on feminist reasoning, whereas the beauty contests in 1950s Israel were attacked from a *national* angle. The beauty contest was disapproved not because it might hurt women's image and their status, but rather be-

cause it might damage the national spirit of dedication.¹³⁹

In order to refute such accusations, the women's magazine that initiated, sponsored, and arranged the contest, and a few other journals that supported it, justified the beauty contest with counter national reasoning. If Israel is to compete internationally and prove its worth, claimed a local film magazine, it should also demonstrate the beauty of its girls. Another magazine connected feminine beauty with the health of the nation and stressed that the candidates came from different ethnic backgrounds, expressing the Zionist ideal of bringing all Jewish Diasporas together.¹⁴⁰ In fact, in Israel as elsewhere, and alongside rhetorical celebration of aesthetic diversity, beauty contests actually consolidated and enhanced one single dominant ideal of beauty. Photographs of the contest's candidates clearly show that they all embodied the very same type of beauty, some variations in the shades of their skin and hair and eyes notwithstanding.¹⁴¹



Figure 3.11: The elected beauty queens of 1950 looking at a billboard in Tel Aviv. Government Press Office, NPC, D410-022. Photo by Hans Pinn.

It should be mentioned that in the same year when Israelis started choosing a national beauty queen, who later went to compete as Israel's

representative in international competitions, a local bodybuilding entrepreneur launched a local “Mister Israel” contest. Here, too, the muscular winner would represent Israel in international bodybuilding competitions. And just as the beauty queen contest was legitimized on national grounds, so was the parallel male contest described as part of building in Israel a new, healthful, and strong Jew. Although the beauty ideals promoted by both male and female contests were aesthetically and culturally foreign, whether old (Hellenistic) or new (American), both events were legitimized by presenting them as bearing national significance.¹⁴²

In 1956 an Israeli magazine initiated the election of “Sabra 1956.”¹⁴³ The new contest was supposed to pose an alternative to the annual election of a national beauty queen (sponsored by a competing magazine). The editor claimed that rather than “cheap advertisement” and the promotion of “vain luxuries,” the new contest would seek the Israeli girl who represents true Israeli values, a girl who combines national dedication with her native natural grace. She would be judged according to “her ability to epitomize the new Israeli type in her lifestyle, her ambitions, her moral stature and her physical appearance.” The first prize of one thousand pounds would be dedicated to some professional training abroad. The applicants had to fill in detailed questionnaires about their families, tastes, jobs, leisure activities, and ambitions. Contenders were pretty high school and seminar pupils excelling in sports or the arts, members of youth movements and kibbutzim, IDF soldiers and university students, kindergarten and school teachers, and medical nurses. Most contestants were Israeli natives, with the exception of two new immigrants—one born in Germany and another, a Holocaust survivor, from France.

The “Sabra of the Year” contest pretended to shun the superficial glamor of the beauty queen contest and tried to endorse different values. Indeed, if we look at the contestants’ photographs we can identify a different style of grooming and dress. All contestants were pretty women according to prevailing 1950s standards, but their hair was usually done in simpler styles than the hairdos of contemporary local beauty queens. Most of them were dressed according to the austere model of dress, albeit in its festive version, and some even posed with their working clothes or military uniforms. Still, whereas several contestants made a point of not using makeup and wearing no jewelry, a few others were photographed wearing makeup, jewelry, short fashionable Italian hair-

dos, and stylish though un-extravagant outfits.¹⁴⁴

In addition to members of the magazine's editorial board, the judges of the contest numbered leading local figures from the fields of music, dance, sports, cinema, theater, art, education, journalism, and law. The judges interviewed all contenders and had to be impressed not only by their looks, but also, and primarily, by their answers. The judges finally elected Ofira Erez as "Sabra of the Year." Twenty-year-old Erez was a graduate of a teachers' seminar, and at the time of her election served in the IDF as a reporter. Erez, who was in the past a member and a guide in a youth movement, wanted to become a teacher after her army service. She wore her dark long hair in a thick braid, and arrived at her interview with a well-chosen outfit: a blouse decorated with silver Yemenite embroidery. The judges were instantly impressed by her "bubbly Sabra grace."¹⁴⁵

As the winner of the national contest, Erez was invited to represent Israel in the international "Girl of the Year" contest held in Paris and sponsored by *Elle* magazine. Erez' letters, sent from Paris during her stay, were published in Israel. The glamorous events she witnessed included a fashion show by Christian Dior, who donated an evening gown for each contestant, although in formal events the contestants wore their "national outfits," in Erez' case the embroidered blouse. Eventually the "Sabra of the Year" contest, especially its continuation in Paris, was not devoid of the luxurious and fashionable values that the new contest was supposed to challenge.¹⁴⁶ However, Erez herself remained a local symbol of Sabra looks and values. When she returned to Israel after studying in the United States, she married the prime minister's private secretary, Itzhak Navon, who would later become Israel's fifth president.

According to its editor, the magazine that arranged the "Sabra 56" contest wanted to conduct a male competition as well; but this "unusual idea" seemed too daring. In future, he wrote, "we shall present to the world the new Hebrew man, the creator and conqueror, alongside the young woman who represents the country's grace."¹⁴⁷ His words reflect the prevailing division between the active national role of Israeli men—creators and conquerors, and the passive role of women, who were mere "reflections" of national grace. Even a competition that pretended to focus on the candidates' national contribution and worth actually endorsed common classifications and upheld widespread Western notions about feminine beauty.

The sartorial culture in Israel thus reflected the country's complex location between East and West. It embodied the relations between long-time Israelis and new immigrants, between Jewish and Arab Israelis, and between religious and non-religious Jews. The local elite dreaded the prospect of being "swallowed" by the East, although some selected Eastern elements were appropriated as marks of Israeli authenticity. Israelis admired the West and strove to be modern, although they expressed some reservation when Western components clashed with the main tenets of the dominant local ideology or threatened to engulf the uniqueness of the fledgling Israeli culture. Thus, when admiring a successful fashion show in 1953 Tel Aviv, the journalist stated that but for the Hebrew language it could have taken place in Paris, London, or Rome. Still, she ended her report with words uttered by a skeptical elderly man, who watched the lavish show, sighed, and muttered "perhaps we are losing something."¹⁴⁸

Since Israel is situated in the East and populated by a large percent of non-Westerners, there was something uneasy, strained, about the attempt to deny the Eastern and to assert the Western. This paradox—of making an effort and thereby disclosing cultural inferiority and discomfort—was manifested in the sphere of fashion.

Fashion could connect women in the Israeli province with the latest innovations of the world centers of style. Still, local fashion writers advised their readers to be selective rather than follow blindly each and every new fashion. One fashion journalist wrote that fashion has to be applied with good taste, so every woman should adjust Parisian modes to her specific budget, shape, and personality. Another fashion writer lamented the scarcity of well-dressed women, and tried to explain that good taste does not depend on expensive modishness. She urged her readers to choose only those fashionable patterns that suited them and made them look comfortable and natural. "There is one very important principle that you should never forget," wrote yet another fashion journalist: not every mode—even the most beautiful one—suits every woman, and "it is better to be un-modish than to look ridiculous."¹⁴⁹

In spite of such advice and warnings, however, Israeli followers of fashion tended to adopt new modes without much personal criticism or selection, simply because it was the latest fashion. A salesgirl from a Tel Aviv shop said that most of her clients wanted only the same dress worn by their neighbors and therefore "all the shop-windows along the street

display the very same models!”¹⁵⁰ When Helena Avital visited Paris in 1954, she noticed that women in Paris were more attentive to the details of their dress, but Israeli women “are more loyal to fashion.”¹⁵¹ In that same year Lola Ber said that Israeli fashion was as good as that produced in famous fashion centers, but on the Israeli street, in parties and receptions, one does not encounter many well-dressed women. “Israeli women have to learn that fashionable dress does not mean imitating all novelties,” said Ber. “Every woman has to imitate only the design that suits her and shows off her personality; if she does not do so, even the newest design will do her no good.”¹⁵²

Paradoxically, a field that was supposed to enhance Israel’s character and image as a sophisticated, well-informed, society, also visually expressed—and perhaps even enhanced—its cultural provinciality. Provinciality is not just about geographic distance from the center, but also about cultural inferiority.¹⁵³ Trying so hard to be part of the big Western world, Israeli fashion followers often tended to adopt fashion automatically, without applying aesthetic standards or personal judgment. Rather than behaving like “discriminative” sophisticated Westerners, they were thus being “Levantine” in the less complimentary sense of the word.

NOTES

1. Hirshfeld (2000), 154-155.
2. Helman (2010), 137.
3. Kahanoff (1978), 47-59.
4. *Yediot aharonot*, May 22, 1950.
5. Helman (2003), 71, 73. And compare with Maynard (1994), 151-159.
6. *Haaretz*, May 21, 1954. Ad in *Ma’ariv*, July 4, 1954.
7. Protocol from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-195/15.
8. *Hazofeh*, July 2, 1954.
9. *Dvar hapo’elet*, June 1949. *Kolno’a*, June 1, 1955. *Laisha*, July 19, 1955. Also see ads in *Haaretz*, August 24, 1949; *Jerusalem Post*, July 7, 1953, July 19, 1953, July 24, 1953.
10. *Dvar hapo’elet*, July 1953. Also see *Haaretz*, August 20, 1954, September 2, 1955.
11. Quotation from *Haaretz*, August 19, 1952. *Jerusalem Post*, July 14, 1950. *Hai-sha bamedinah*, July 1950, July 1952. *Hayei sha’ah*, July 30, 1953. *Ma’ariv*, Au-

- gust 13, 1953. *Hu vehi*, September 1954.
12. Photos from 1949 and 1950 by Teddy Brauner and Hans Pinn – NPC: D435-045, D332-094. *Zmanim*, August 20, 1954, July 8, July 19, 1955. *Kolno'a*, August 9, 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, July 5, 1956. *Haaretz*, June 29, 1956, July 27, 1956. On the design of modern bathing suits see Ribeiro (2003), 163-164; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 126.
 13. *Kol yisrael*, July 19, 1951.
 14. *Lagever*, March 10, 1954. *Haaretz*, November 12, 1954, September 3, 1955, May 13, 1956. *Dvar hapo'elet*, September 1953, May 1954, August 1954, April 1955. *Zmanim*, March 19, 1954, June 18, 1954. *Haisha bamedinah*, February 1950, October 1950. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 11, 1954. *Kolno'a*, October 4, 1954. And compare with Maynard (1994), 151-159.
 15. Shavit (1992a), 77. On sub-cultures see Gulick (1989), 182; Gans (1974), 13; Hall and Neitz (1993), 229-232; Jenks (2005), 9-10; Hebdige (1979), 17; Johnson and Lennon (1999), 5.
 16. Kimmerling (1999), 171. Also see Dowty (2001), 55-56; Enoch (2001), 98.
 17. Horowitz and Lissak (1977), 272-273; Ozacky-Lazar (1996); Greitzer (1997), 154-156; Schor (1956), 53.
 18. Ozacky-Lazar (1996), v-xx; Ozacky-Lazar (2001), 61-71; Peretz (1991), 100; Dowty (2001), 55-59; Gross (1997), 147-149; Korn (2008).
 19. On the separate mechanism of clothes rationing among Israeli Arabs see protocol and letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-31/222. Correspondence from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-26/223, 47/c-38/223. Photo from *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 11, 1950.
 20. Kalfon Stillman (2000), 162, 167; Rajab (1989), 16, 18, 86; Benzoor (1995), 35; Hason (1997), 3, 13-19; Tal (1995), 31-56. On sartorial variations within the Israeli Arab population see protocol from 1950 – ISA: 47/c- 31/222. Protocol from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-223/16. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-223/26.
 21. Kalfon Stillman (2000), 169-170; Rajab (1989), 16-18, 20-103; Benzoor (1995), 36-37; Raz (1996), 30-34.
 22. Kalfon Stillman (2000), 171; Hason (1997), 19.
 23. *Ashmoret*, July 28, 1949, September 11, 1950. *Matzpen*, September 15, 1954. *Hamodi'a*, December 7, 1951. Photos from 1950 and 1953 – CZA: 1012068, 1175567, 1278599. *Geva* newsreels, 1953, 1954 – SA: VT GE 02, VY GE 05, VT GE 06. Photo by Fritz Cohen, 1949 – NPC: D228-022.
 24. Rajab (1989); Raz (1996), 30-34; Helman (2006), 387. *Dagesh*, June 20, 1950. Compare with Moore (2001); Evans and Trayte (1999); Maynard (1994), 59-73.
 25. *Ashmoret*, July 28, 1949, September 11, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 11, 1950. Photo from 1949 – NPC: D299-036.
 26. *Dvar hapo'elet*, May 1950. Also see *Dvar hashavu'a*, June 8, 1950, February 22, 1951, August 16, 1951.
 27. *Haisha bamedinah*, June 10, 1949, November-December 1950. Also see *Palestine Post*, July 19, 1949. *Al hamishmar*, January 19, 1950. *Gazit*, July-August 1950. *Omer*, November 16, 1955.
 28. Kalfon Stillman (2000), 146-160, 168-169; Raz (1996), 32.

29. Lissak (1998), 15, 18, 31; Lissak (1999), 3–4, 8; Enoch (2001).
30. Photos from 1951 and 1952 – CZA: 1012566, 1278603. Photo by Moshe Pridan, 1956 – NPC: D229-031. *Ashmoret*, January 18, 1951, October 11, 1951. *Al hamishmar*, August 21, 1953. *Lagever*, February 24, 1954. *Zmanim*, September 14, 1955. Cartoons in *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 31, 1956. Illustration in *Ashmoret*, April 27, 1950. Radai (1956), 74; Sardhai (1953), 92. Also see Lissak (1998), 38, 41, 54; Ben-Porat (1999), 113.
31. Zachor (2007), 154–155.
32. Helman (2010), 137–138.
33. *Dvar hashavu'a*, February 1, 1951, June 28, 1951, July 19, 1951, August 2, 1951, April 29, 1952, April 26, 1956. *Ashmoret*, June 29, 1950, February 15, 1951, February 7, 1952. Photo from 1951 – CZA: 1333687. *Geva* newsreels, 1956 – SA: VT GE 08. Photo in Lador (1952), 167. And see Sahim (2002), 189; Juhasz (2003), 207–208, 210, 216; Ben-Ami (1970).
34. Cover photo in *Kol yisrael*, December 14, 1950. Photos in *Haisha bamedinah*, February 1951; *Dvar hashavu'a*, July 5, 1951, February 28, 1952. *Dvar hapo'et*, July 1950. *Bamachaneh*, May 31, 1951; *Hedei hanegev*, August 1952. Illustrations in *Omer*, July 9, 1951, July 23, 1951; *Sheluchot yotzei teiman*, September 1952; *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1952. Ads in *Gazit*, February–June 1954, April–May 1955. *Matzpen*, November 17, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1950 – SA: VT GE 01. Also see Dowty (2001), 51.
35. Quotation from Uri (1951), 100. *Dvar hapo'et*, December 1949. *Hazofeh*, February 8, 1950. *Haisha bamedinah*, December 1949, September 11, 1950. *Ashmoret*, June 29, 1950, May 10, 1951. *Bamachaneh*, December 6, 1950. *Kol yisrael*, April 19, 1951. *Omer*, January 24, 1952. *Matzpen*, December 1, 1954. Cartoon in *Sheluchot yotzei teiman*, July 13, 1952.
36. Front page illustration in Cornfeld (1949). Cartoon in *Ashmoret*, August 9, 1949. Cartoons in *Al hamishmar*, August 10, 1951; *Dvar hashavu'a*, February 15, 1951, April 26, 1956. Ads in *Davar*, June 30, 1955; *Omer*, October 18, 1954. Illustrations and cartoon in *Jerusalem Post*, December 15, 1949, December 1, 1952. Election poster, 1951 – PC: V2158-7. Guilat (2001), 26. And compare with Gradszkova (2007), 132.
37. Quoted in Lissak (1998), 28–29.
38. Rozin (2008), 177, 205–213, 242–243, 223–248, 245, 253–257, 263.
39. Shtal (1976), 14–17; Shtal (1979), 41, 43. Also see Enoch (2001); Segev (1984), 123, 129–131, 148, 155–160, 167.
40. Compare with sartorial acculturation of immigrants in the United States and Australia: Weissman Joselit (2001a), 2–3; Weissman Joselit (2001b); Heinze (1990), 89–104; Maynard (1994), 147, 173, 176, 179.
41. *Ashmoret*, August 4, 1949. *Dvar hapo'et*, July 1950. *Sheluchot yotzei teiman*, September 14, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 29, 1951. Cover photo in *Bamachaneh*, May 20, 1955. Nissim (1953), 24.
42. *Ashmoret*, May 10, 1951. Also see *Matzpen*, December 1, 1954
43. Illustrated articles and photos in *Hatzofeh*, January 30, 1953; *Matzpen*, Novem-

- ber 17, 1954; *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 1, 1956.
44. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1951.
 45. Segev (1984), 179.
 46. Shtal (1976), 15; Enoch (2001), 104–105.
 47. Zameret (1993), 204–210. Also see Segev (1984), 194–195; Almog (2003), 90.
 48. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1949. And see Abdar (1999).
 49. On rare “relativist” opinions at the time, see Rozin (2008), 248–289.
 50. Zur (1997), 69–70, 76.
 51. Compare with Ya'ar (2007), 74–76.
 52. Israeli Government (1951), 333–334; Israeli Government (1952), 322–323.
 53. *Yediot aharonot*, February 7, 1950. *Herut*, February 8, 1950. Correspondence from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-13/224. Cartoon from *Jerusalem Post*, February 10, 1950.
 54. *Ma'ariv*, February 7, 1950.
 55. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-35/222. Indeed, manufacturers were ordered to give top priority to clothes for the new immigrants in transit camps and in new settlements: Shavit (1992b), 143. Report and correspondence from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-24/244, 47/c-35/222.
 56. Moreover, urban families were asked to house new immigrants' children in their homes during the winter. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1949. Kiryat Anavim bulletin, November 11, 1949 – KKA. *Herut*, February 8, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, January 11, 1951.
 57. Rozin (2008), 194–195, 254; Lissak (1998), 38, 53–54; Giladi (2002), 60; Gelber (1996), 453; Ben-Porat (1999), 113–114. Horowitz (1993), 50–52.
 58. Don-Yehiya (1984), 55, 93; Bartal (2001), 241–244; Shalmon (1987), 279–283; Horowitz and Lissak (1977), 211; Segev (1984), 226–227. Also see Dowty (2001), 53; Cohen (1997), 227–242; Cohen (2001).
 59. *Hazofeh*, June 6, 1954, June 11, 1954, June 25, 1954, July 2, 1954, July 10, 1954, July 23, 1954, August 13, 1954, August 20, 1954, December 17, 1954, December 24, 1954, January 28, 1955, February 18, 1955, April 22, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1951 – SA: VT GE 03. Photo by Fritz Cohen, 1956 – NPC: D273-079. *Yediot aharonot*, August 11, 1955. Zidon (1951), 35, 67–68. And see Zalcberg and Almog (2009), 38.
 60. Cartoon in *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 23, 1950. *Hazofeh*, February 8, 1950. Photos from 1949, 1950, 1954, and 1955 – CZA: 1278170, 1334055, 1333981, 1780065. Photo by Zoltan Gluger, 1949 – NPC: D840-114. Photos in Uri (1951), 73, 77. *Geva* newsreels, 1951, 1953, 1954 – SA: VT GE 02, VT GE 04, VT GE 06. Letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-222/31, 47/c-224/27.
 61. Feingold (1992), 72; Mahler (1995), 304; Bloy (2006); Baizerman (1993), 98–99; Davis and Davis (1983), 19, 32; Nilsson Ben-Zvi (1982), 58. *Judaica*, 1997; Poper (2004), 181–189; Mansel (2005), 115–116; Steele (2005a), 2:288. Also see Pikar (2002), 595. And compare with Hunt (1996), 163.
 62. Zalcberg (2009), 32; Rubin and Kosman (2008), 151. On the special sartorial needs of the Haredim during the rationing regime see Letters from 1950 – ISA:

- 47/c-31/222, 47/c-38/223.
63. Friedman (1990), 38–41, 52–54, 58. I would like to thank Kimi Kaplan for drawing my attention to this historical crisis and its details.
64. *Hamodi'a*, October 12, 1951, August 1, 1952, July 3, 1953, September 23, 1953, November 26, 1954, April 6, 1955. Also see *Hamaor: biton neshei agudat yisrael* (undated).
65. *Ha'olam hazeh*, February 25, 1954.
66. *Hamodi'a*, May 19, 1953.
67. Bokek-Cohen and Davidovitch (2009), 106–112.
68. *Hamodi'a*, November 15, 1955, July 30, 1954. Also see ads in *Hamodi'a*, May 8, 1953, July 10, 1953, December 14, 1953, April 6, 1954, September 27, 1954, March 25, 1955, August 26, 1955, December 9, 1955, March 26, 1956. Ads in *Hamaor: biton neshei agudat yisrael* (undated). Letters from 1950–1951 – ISA: 47/c-222/31, 47/c-224/38. And see Nilsson Ben-Zvi (1982), 57; Shilo (1999), 143.
69. *Hamodi'a*, November 26, 1954.
70. *Hamodi'a*, August 1, 1952.
71. Friedman (1994), 231, 234, 236.
72. Don-Yehiya (1984), 74–75; Fund (1999), 88. Orthodox poster, 1955 – PC: V2255. Posters, 1949, 1955 – PC: V1817. *Hamodi'a*, September 10, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 1, 1950. *Omer*, October 5, 1952, October 18, 1954. *Davar*, January 25, 1955. *Haboker*, March 31, 1955. *Beterem*, September 1, 1955, October 1, 1955. Illustrations in *Haisha bamedinah*, December 19, 1949. Cartoon in *Ha'olam hazeh*, February 1, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA: VT GE 05. Protocols from 1954 – JCA: 1751/16, 1853/21-8.
73. *Ha'olam hazeh*, February 25, 1954. Also see *Omer*, July 9, 1951. *Dvar hashavu'a*, July 31, 1953.
74. On secular reaction to anti-Zionist demands see Segev (1984), 229–231.
75. *Ashmoret*, March 29, 1951.
76. *Ashmoret*, February 22, 1951. Cartoons in *Ashmoret*, October 6, 1949, January 18, 1951, February 1, 1951, March 29, 1951; *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 31, 1950. *Yediot aharonot*, June 16, 1951. Cartoons in Dosh (1956), 29, 46, 55.
77. *Hamodi'a*, April 25, 1952. Also see *Hamodi'a*, July 10, 1952, July 25, 1952, November 5, 1954, June 3, 1955.
78. For example letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-33/222.
79. *Hedei hanegev*, May 1952. *Yediot aharonot*, January 7, 1955. *Haaretz*, June 12, 1955
80. Walton (2005), 7.
81. Zerubavel (2008), 315, 325.
82. Helman (2010), 137.
83. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1949. *Haisha bamedinah*, September 11, 1950. *Herut*, May 22, 1952. And see Hirshfeld (2000), 173–176. Compare with Gradskova (2007), 132.
84. *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 12, 1956.

85. Abdar (1999), 113, 121-122.
86. Guilat (2001); Guilat (2010).
87. *Haisha bamedinah*, July 1950.
88. *Yediot aharonot*, February 27, 1953. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 19, 1951. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, November 25, 1955.
89. Raz (1996), 154-156. Also see Bat-Yaar (2010). *Haaretz*, December 16, 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, December 15, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1955 – SA: VT GE 010. Photo from 1955 by Moshe Pridan, photo from 1956 by Fritz Cohen – NPC: D435-041, D541-092.
90. Guilat (2001), 43, 45-46; Guilat (2010).
91. Melinkoff (1984), 27-28. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, November 30, 1953, October 28, 1955, March 2, 1956.
92. On the sentimental, nostalgic, romantic rediscovery of traditional elements and “naivety” among Western elites see Cruz (1994), 133-135; Hirshfeld (2000), 163.
93. Helman (2010), 137.
94. Cohen (1970), 4; Penslar (1991); Elboim-Dror (1993), 115-116, 160-166.
95. Compare with Martin (2004), 229; and Friedman (1994). On Israelis' sense of isolation see Rozin (2010), 156. On the cosmopolitan nature of high fashion see Lipovetsky (1994), 401; Black (1985), 10-13; Tarrant (1994), 146-147; Benjamin (1999), 78; Gordenker (2001), 29; Ganeva (2008), 26, 36, 38.
96. For instance *Hayei sha'ah*, November 26, 1953. *Matzpen*, October 5, 1954. *Haaretz*, August 17, 1956.
97. *Haisha bamedinah*, July 1952. *Yediot aharonot*, April 4, 1953. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, February 1955.
98. *Haaretz*, October 16, 1953, August 27, 1954, September 16, 1955, September 30, 1955, May 18, 1956, August 10, 1956, August 17, 1956. *Tevel*, May 12, 1954. *Zmanim*, February 20, 1954, October 29, 1954, November 5, 1954, March 4, 1955. *Alonekh*, February 1955, January 1956. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, February 1955. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, November 30, 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, October 20, 1954. *Kolno'a*, August 20, 1954, March 9, 1955, March 16, 1956. *Hazofeh*, June 25, 1956. *Matzpen*, November 24, 1954. *Dvar hapo'elet*, October 1954. *Rimon*, August 8, 1956.
99. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, March 1955. *Haaretz*, March 10, 1950, August 24, 1951. *Haisha bamedinah*, April 1953. *Dvar hapo'elet*, March 1952, May 1952. *Yediot aharonot*, May 25, 1950. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, August 17, 1956.
100. *Haaretz*, December 23, 1949. *Ma'ariv*, March 4, 1949, July 26, 1950, January 1, 1951. *Matzpen*, October 28, 1954. *Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 1953. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, April 1955. *Haisha bamedinah*, March 1949, June 1949. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA: VT GE 06, VT GE 07. *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 9, 1950. And compare with Stitzel (2005), 127.
101. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1954. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, September 21, 1955. *Zmanim*, June 3, 1955.

102. Raz (1996), 152–153. *Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 1953. *Haaretz*, November 5, 1950, August 27, 1954, March 19, 1955, October 12, 1956. *Laisha*, September 30, 1954. *Yediot aharonot*, November 2, 1951, April 5, 1953. *Zmanim*, March 19, 1954, June 4, 1954. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 11, 1954. *Dvar hapo'elet*, May 1954. *Haisha bamedinah*, February 1950.
103. *Palestine Post*, December 15, 1949. *Hazofeh*, January 24, 1950. Segev (1984), 304–305; Rozin (2008), 188–189; Rozin (2010).
104. *Haaretz*, March 31, 1950, October 6, 1950. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, April 1955. And see Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 39.
105. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, February 1955, April 1955. *Palestine Post*, December 23, 1949. *Haaretz*, April 6, 1956. *Zmanim*, August 12, 1955. *Hazofeh*, June 25, 1954. *Yediot aharonot*, April 30, 1954. Ads in *Ma'ariv*, February 17, 1955, December 16, 1955; *Ha'olam hazeh*, February 19, 1953.
106. Stewart (1954), 134–141; Roscho (1963), 109–111, 113–117, 120–122; Buxbaum (1999), 56; Oakley (1990), 8, 238–239; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 120–122, 145–150; Arnold (2004), 173; Arnold (2008), 344; Ewing (1992), 148, 154, 157, 168–169; Melinkoff (1984), 23–31, 41–44; Hill (2004), 66–70, 79, 82, 86.
107. Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 156; Peacock (1997), 7; Ewing (1992), 168–169; Melinkoff (1984), 35–38; Gundle (2008), 172–198. On Hollywood fashion also see Stearns (2006), 162; Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001), 185; Calefato (2004), 93–94, 98; Addison (2000), 26–27; Arnold (2008), 346–347; Berry (2000), xii, xvii, xxi, 15, 19–20, 94–95, 108, 153–154, 161–162; Featherstone (1991), 180; Fox (1999), 10, 20–27, 35, 43–48, 52, 60–64, 75; Buxbaum (1999), 54; Roscho (1963), 113–114; Ganeva (2009), 131.
108. White (2000), 42–43, 152, 154; Buxbaum (1999), 69; Ewing (1992), 170; Arnold (2004), 173. Photos in *Epoca*, September 2, 1956.
109. Raz (1996), 148. Photo from 1950 – NPC: D402-052. Photo from 1949 – CZA: 1010020. Photos and ads in *Dagesh*, July 1953; *Haaretz*, October 17, 1950; *Frontpage*, June 3, 1954, June 24, 1954.
110. Raz (1996), 134–135. Ads in *Beterem*, February 1949; *Ma'ariv*, June 21, 1950. Photo from 1955 by Ilan Brauner – NPC: D502-097. *Haaretz*, September 9, 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 7, 1954.
111. Hill (2004), 77. *Zmanim*, January 29, 1954. *Alonekh*, February 1956. *Haaretz*, April 9, 1954. Also see *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, February 1955, April 1955. *Hazofeh*, January 28, 1955. *Dvar hapo'elet*, October 1953. *Haisha bamedinah*, June 1952. *Dvar hashavu'a*, February 17, 1955.
112. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955, March 1955. *Haisha bamedinah*, April 1951. *Haaretz*, August 15, 1950. *Kolno'a*, July 1, 1954. *Ma'ariv*, December 3, 1954. *Herut*, January 13, 1956. Yossfer (1955).
113. *Haisha bamedinah*, June 1952. *Haaretz*, August 21, 1951, September 19, 1956. *Kolno'a*, September 9, 1954, April 21, 1955.
114. Ads in *Ma'ariv*, September 18, 1949, October 7, 1949, August 15, 1951, August 31, 1953, July 14, 1955; *Yediot aharonot*: 7 *yamim*, July 6, 1956; *Ha'olam*

- hazeh*, March 17, 1955; *Omer*, May 28, 1954; *Jerusalem Post*, July 22, 1953; *Al hamishmar*, January 28, 1953; *Laisha*, July 27, 1950; *Davar*, September 1, 1955; *Haaretz*, August 19, 1951, March 31, 1950. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA: VT GE 05. And see *Hasport haleumi*, April 18, 1949. *Kolno'a*, December 8, 1954. *Zmanim*, June 4, 1954. *Haisha bamedinah*, January 1951. *Laisha*, April 19, 1950. *Rimon*, October 31, 1956.
115. *Haaretz*, August 15, 1950, February 10, 1956.
116. Photos in *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 19, 1951, September 6, 1951. Ad in *Jerusalem Post*, December 1, 1952. *Geva* newsreels, 1951 and 1953 – SA: VT GE 03, VT GE 04. Also see *Ha'olam hazeh*, July 30, 1953. *Hayei sha'ah*, September 30, 1954, May 11, 1954. *Laisha*, July 19, 1955, January 20, 1954. And compare with Eaton (2004), 123.
117. Helman (2004), 83–86. Compare with the effect of TV on American fashion – Melinkoff (1984), 20–21. Also see *Ha'olam hazeh*, July 8, 1954, January 6, 1955. *Kolno'a*, April 23, 1955, October 11, 1955. *Haisha bamedinah*, April 1952. *Dvar hapo'elet*, September 1953.
118. For example *Kolno'a*, February 16, 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, June 22, 1950. *Jerusalem Post*, December 9, 1953.
119. Ads in *Dvar hashavu'a*, July 6, 1950, July 20, 1950, October 26, 1950.
120. *Kolno'a*, June 4, 1954, December 15, 1954, January 19, 1955, March 2, 1955, March 9, 1955, March 16, 1955, May 18, 1955, June 1, 1955, June 8, 1955.
121. *Dvar hapo'elet*, May 1949. *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 2, 1951, September 6, 1951. *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1952. *Hu vehi*, June 1954. *Laisha*, September 30, 1954. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, October 20, 1955. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, October 21, 1955.
122. Black (2004), 37. Also see Drucker and Cathcart (1994); Cohan (1997).
123. Helman (2006), 382–390. On Purim's history see Horowitz (2006).
124. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 2, 1950. *Ashmoret*, March 22, 1951. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 5, 1953, March 18, 1954. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 22, 1951, March 21, 1954. *Davar*, March 7, 1955, March 13, 1955. *Haaretz*, March 11, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1955 – SA: VT GE 07. Farhi (1956), 9–15. Also see Notices in *Ma'ariv*, March 4, 1949, March 11, 1949, March 3, 1950. Purim posters from 1949 and 1950 – PC: V1969-2. *Bamachaneh*, March 6, 1952. *Kolno'a*, March 3, 1953.
125. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, February 5, 1954. *Zmanim*, March 4, 1955. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 22, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1951 – SA: VT GE 03. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, February 1955. *Haaretz*, March 11, 1955, February 10, 1956. *Lagever*, March 17, 1954. Photographs in *Bamachaneh*, March 10, 1955; *Kolno'a*, March 25, 1954. Ads in *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 11, 1954; *Kolno'a*, January 25, 1955. And compare with the European fancy dress balls: Steele (2005a), 2:3–4, 393–394; Cohen (1999), 176–178, 201; Gordenker (2001), 41.
126. *Haaretz*, March 3, 1950, March 4, 1955, February 24, 1956. And compare with Bakhtin (1968), 368–436.
127. Letter (1950?) – ISA, 47/c – 33/200. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 20, 1952. *Ha'olam*

- hazeh*, March 25, 1954. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 22, 1951, March 21, 1954. Photograph in *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 28, 1956. Photo from 1951 by Hans Pinn – NPC: D376-116. *Haaretz*, March 11, 1951. Eldad and Nedava (1955), 223.
128. Photographs in *Ashmoret*, March 27, 1952, *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 3, 1952; *Bamachaneh*, March 10, 1955. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 5, 1953. *Kolno'a*, March 25, 1954. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, February 1955. *Haaretz*, March 3, 1950. *Geva newsreels*, 1955 – SA: VT GE 07. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 16, 1950.
129. *Zmanim*, March 4, 1955. *Haaretz*, March 3, 1950, February 24, 1956. *Kolno'a*, March 2, 1955. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, March 17, 1956.
130. *Laisha*, October 21, 1953. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 5, 1956. And compare with Gradskova (2007), 143.
131. *Ashmoret*, December 8, 1949. Also see *Alonekh*, February 1953.
132. *Herut*, October 14, 1955. *Lagever*, February 24, 1954.
133. Shachar (1963), 36–37, 164–166; Ya'ar (2007), 101.
134. *Al hamishmar*, December 12, 1951. *Herut*, December 1, 1950, December 8, 1950. On the strong effect of Hollywood style despite various attacks and rebukes see Gundle (2008), 189, 196, 202, 214; Veillon (2002), 128; Guenther (2005), 105; Paulicelli (2004), 50, 86, 129; Gori (2004), 169–171, 175; McKibbin (2000), 431–432; Gradskova (2007), 143; Jay (2002), 180; Fox (1999), 86, 99, 112, 115; Studlar (2000), 161, 169–170; Hill (2004), 78. Also see ad in *Epoca*, April 24, 1955.
135. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, August 26, 1951. *Laisha*, August 11, 1954, July 19, 1955, August 3, 1955. Cover photo in *Hayei sha'ah*, May 11, 1954. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 6, 1955, July 5, 1956. *Hadshot sport*, December 4, 1955. *Dvar hapo'elet*, June 1956. *Geva newsreels*, 1951, 1954, and 1955 – SA: VT GE 03, VT GE 06, VT GE 07.
136. Photo from 1950 by Hans Pinn – NPC: D410-032. Cartoon in *Tafrit*, March 1950. *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 3, 1950. *Ma'ariv*, August 28, 1953.
137. *Dvar hapo'elet*, July 1952. Interestingly, the previous ideals chronicled by the writer relate mainly to men, whereas the present deterioration is connected with the role of women.
138. *Hamodi'a*, February 1, 1952. *Haaretz*, May 29, 1952. *Dvar hashavu'a*, June 5, 1952. *Zmanim*, July 1, 1955.
139. Compare Banet-Weiser (1999), 32, with *Dvar hapo'elet*, July 1952, June 1956.
140. *Kolno'a*, June 22, 1956. *Bamachaneh*, August 10, 1950. *Dagesh*, July 13, 1950. *Yediot aharonot*, September 30, 1955. Photos from 1956 by Moshe Pridan – NPC: D362-016, D362-018, D362-019. On the single standard of beauty see Banet-Weiser (1999), 3, 55–56, 183, 202–203, 207; Wilk (1996), 217–218.
141. *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 3, 1950, August 10, 1950, January 4, 1951, September 28, 1951, June 5, 1952. Photo from 1954 – CZA: 1278167. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, May 28, 1954.
142. Announcements in *Yediot aharonot*, January 1, 1950, March 30, 1950, and *Kolno'a*, May 27, 1954. *Ha'olam hazeh*, April 27, 1955. *Rimon*, October 24, 1956.

- Poster from 1956 – PC: V1985-8(18). *Hasport haleumi*, April 18, 1954. Cartoons in *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 6, 1950, and cartoon in *Dosh* (1956), 16. Rafael Halperin, an accomplished wrestler, completed his training in the United States, from whence he imported (in addition to new training machines and techniques) the ideal of a “self-made man.” In 1949 he founded the first professional body-building gym in Israel and named it “Samson” after the biblical hero. See Helman (2008b), 107.
143. Erel (2006), 127–128.
144. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 12, 1956, January 19, 1956, January 26, 1956, February 2, 1956, February 9, 1956, February 16, 1956, March 1, 1956, March 15, 1956, March 22, 1956.
145. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 15, 1956. See Guilat (2001), 39–40. And compare with Banet-Weiser (1999), 40.
146. *Ha'olam hazeh*, January 12, 1956, March 15, 1956, March 22, 1956, May 17, 1956, May 24, 1955, April 12, 1954.
147. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 22, 1956.
148. *Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 1953.
149. *Haisha bamedinah*, October 1950. *Dvar hapo'elet*, May 1953, September 1953, May 1954. Quotation from *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, January 8, 1954, December 12, 1955, July 27, 1956. Compare with Gradskova (2007), 113–155; Stitzziel (2005), 54–55.
150. *Davar*, March 1, 1955.
151. *Dvar hapo'elet*, December 1954.
152. *Hava laisha velaofnah*, January 1955. Also see *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, November 4, 1955. *Zmanim*, September 3, 1954. *Ha'olam hazeh*, April 21, 1954.
153. Azaryahu (2007), 170.

Chapter Four: Clothes and Ideology in the Kibbutzim

Kibbutz Dress and the Communal Clothing Institutions

In 1954, the Carmel wine manufacturer and the Israeli Office of Commerce and Industry arranged a Wine Festival in Zikhron Ya'acov, a town where vineyards used to be the main industry. The ball included performances, food and drink, and reached its climax with the election and crowning of a young beauty under the title of “The Wine Queen.”¹ That same year, the cartoonist and designer Dan Gelbert, a member of a kibbutz, published a collection of cartoons about kibbutz life.² One of Gelbert’s cartoons referred to the election of the Wine Queen:



Figure 4.1: The Wine Queen and the Harvest Queen.
From Gelbert (1954), 13.

On one side, slim and coquettish, sits “The Wine Queen.” On the other side, plump and unaffected, sits “The Harvest Queen.” The two feminine figures incarnate two contrasting lifestyles: the Israeli bourgeois lifestyle—hedonistic and frivolous—and the meaningful work-centered lifestyle of the kibbutz.

The Wine Queen³ represents external glamor and her beauty depends on meticulous attention: a neat hairstyle, an evening gown, high heeled shoes, manicured fingernails, makeup and jewelry. She wears an

artificial wide smile as she poses on a fanciful chair. Nothing about her figure, including the wine bottle topped on her head, is truly relevant to the grapes she holds up. The grapes, like the queen herself, seem like a mere decoration. Conversely, The Harvest Queen is sitting on a solid stool. She wears practical, comfortable and darned working clothes and heavy working shoes. All her charms are natural and her smile, though modest, is genuine. A productive working woman, she has earned the “Queen” title thanks to her skills as a laborer, and the grapes she had harvested and now holds in her hand are part of the agricultural process and about to be packed in the box.

Yet the cartoon avoids total idealization of kibbutz lifestyle by hinting at its price: although the Harvest Queen is portrayed with much more sympathy than the Wine Queen, the latter is more feminine, at least according to reigning aesthetic standards. Gelbert was not blind to the obvious attractions of the urban lifestyle which kibbutz members were missing, but his cartoon, while acknowledging these attractions’ external allure, depicts them as futile and hollow.

The kibbutz—a unique Israeli phenomenon—was a village where the means of production were owned communally and production carried out collectively. It was a voluntary society: current members could leave whenever they wished, and non-members could join at any time, provided their candidacy was approved by a stated proportion of the existing membership. The first kibbutz was founded in 1909 and during the 1920s and early 1930s the kibbutz movement was firmly established. The 1930s and 1940s saw the movement’s most rapid growth, as thousands of Zionists who immigrated to Palestine either joined existing kibbutzim or founded new ones. By 1951 there were 203 kibbutzim with a population of 65,000.⁴ Despite differences between specific kibbutzim and between four different kibbutz movements, the basic kibbutz ideology dictated a certain lifestyle, shared to a large extent by all kibbutzim.⁵

Kibbutz founders attempted to translate socialist principles into everyday life and tried to build a new society based on freedom, equality, mutual help, tolerance, and brotherhood. Their main ideal and motto was Marx’s “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” Kibbutz members were paid no wages: the kibbutz supplied their basic needs—education, health, food, social services, and so on. In the 1950s, some kibbutzim gradually introduced a personal allowance to all members on an agreed, equitable basis. With a small population of tens

to hundreds, all permanent adult residents knew each other personally, enabling kibbutz society to rely heavily on informal social control. The machinery of kibbutz decision making and control was based on a network of committees, headed by the general assembly, a central organ and an ultimate source of authority that consisted of all adult members and met regularly.⁶

After the foundation of the state, Israeli kibbutzim faced a crisis. Few new immigrants joined the kibbutzim, while many veteran members left for the cities in search of a higher standard of living. In the early 1950s, most kibbutz members were still poorer than the general Israeli population, but modernized agriculture and successful industries were making some kibbutzim richer. Wealthier kibbutzim were exposed to internal and external accusations of betraying their original ideals and neglecting their vanguard Zionist role. As the general postwar relaxation affected the kibbutzim and the pioneering spirit was dwindling, the kibbutzim were gradually losing their former elevated status, and no longer received the same government support as they did from pre-state Zionist institutions. In 1951 the main kibbutz movement was divided by a painful political and ideological conflict.⁷

This 1950s crisis notwithstanding, the kibbutzim were still regarded—by their own members and by many Israelis in general—as the ultimate fulfillment of the pioneering ideals and as Israel's social leaders.⁸ Although demographically the kibbutzim were only a small minority in Israeli society (around five percent and less), they maintained a dominant political, ideological, military, and cultural status. The sub-culture of the kibbutzim, molded self-consciously according to their ideological principles, included a recognizable unique culture of dress. The kibbutz style of dress could be defined as an extreme form of the austere model of dress; and if the austere model, like the pioneering style before it, is classified as an anti-fashion, then the definition certainly applies in the case of kibbutz dress.⁹

Ever since Thomas More described all the members of his "Utopia" as wearing identical, simple, practical white clothes, egalitarian utopias often suppressed visual differences and standardized the social body by using unique models of dress.¹⁰ In the nineteenth century, some religious communal societies in the United States connected stylish clothing with notions of sin and pride. Simplified dress could declare the community's separation from the world and differentiate believers from non-believ-

ers. Moreover, when communities were beginning to lose significant elements of uniqueness, leaders sometimes reinforced distinctiveness by resisting change in clothing style.¹¹ American utopian communes are often regarded as historical precedents of the kibbutz, but the Soviet Union—where fashion was attacked most vehemently—served as an immediate source of inspiration for many kibbutzim. Soviet revolutionaries advocated harsh anti-fashion since clothes—more than any other artifact—maintained class distinctions. They regarded Western fashion as a capitalist manipulation, a decadent bourgeois institution that must perish with the class society that had created it.¹² Socialist Zionists in the Yishuv and later in Israel, most of them born in Russia and other east European countries, were strongly influenced by Russian and Soviet cultures. Revolutionary socialism and its anti-fashion were clearly manifested in the kibbutz, both in the organization of clothes distribution and in the style of these clothes.¹³



Figure 4.2: Members of Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev, 1949. Note the Russian and Arab influences in the sarafan and the kafiya.

KKL-JNF Photo Archive, d3059-027. Photo by Fred Chesnik.

During the Yishuv era, the pioneering style of dress was often led by the kibbutzim with items such as shorts for men and women, plain sandals, and the Russian rubashka and sarafan. Kibbutz society was proud of

its material poverty, and excessive grooming or decoration was frowned upon as a sign of bourgeois decadence. Faced with the momentous task of building a Jewish homeland through utopian communities, kibbutz members deemed fashion unimportant.¹⁴ Moving on to the 1950s, Raz mentions that kibbutz dress was somewhat straying from the pioneering legacy. Although the kibbutz was a separate geographical entity, its members were exposed to fashion through different media. With the introduction of a personal allowance in some kibbutzim, members could exercise their freedom of choice and express their personal taste, and thereafter fashionable dress was sometimes seen in the kibbutz. However, in spite of these developments, Raz clarifies that kibbutz dress in the 1950s was still markedly different from city dress: a different lifestyle dictated different clothing, internal public opinion and social pressure upheld former codes, and the budget of kibbutz members was mostly smaller than urbanites' and limited their options.¹⁵

The Zionist ideology of manual labor assumed almost devout dimensions in the kibbutz, and was even named "The Religion of Labor." Ahaaron David Gordon (1856–1922), a member of the first kibbutz and the leading philosopher of the kibbutz movement, regarded hard work not merely as a means to an economic end, but as an end to itself, a way of connecting man to nature and creation, and the road to national regeneration as well as individual transformation and self-fulfillment.¹⁶ Kibbutz members were judged by their peers primarily according to their ability as workers. Manual labor was particularly esteemed and was informally but obviously placed at the top of the local social hierarchy.¹⁷

Typical male working clothes included a buttoned shirt, simple and often darned, pants that might be patched, and high-laced working shoes or rubber boots in winter. Heads were covered with quasquettes or tembel hats. The typical female working clothes included a straight-line short-sleeved or sleeveless working dress, an apron, and a head kerchief for mature women of the founding generation; shorts and a buttoned shirt for younger women. Working shoes and boots were unisex.¹⁸ This common kibbutz dress, a version of the austere model, was worn by members during their long working hours, and also during daytime meals in the communal dining hall. Working clothes became the "representative" kibbutz wear, serving both the technical needs of the community's lifestyle and its central values. Under Russian and Soviet influence, working clothes were regarded as the proper revolution-

ary reply to ostentatious Western bourgeois fashion. Working clothes granted their wearers a heavy, solid, look. They remained unchanged throughout the decade and united kibbutz members with their simple, untailed contours.¹⁹



Figure 4.3: Members of the newly settled Kibbutz Revadim, 1949. KKL-JNF Photo Archive, d1053-027. Photo by Avraham Malevsky.

Whereas the simplicity of working clothes could be attributed mainly to their technical functions, the aesthetic ideal of simplicity was also the main feature of kibbutz leisurewear, commonly known as the “Sabbath clothes.” These were usually newer and in better condition than working clothes but still maintained lines of restraint. The most prominent feature of the Sabbath clothes among both male and female members was the white shirt, sometimes embroidered but mostly unadorned. Men wore it with dark pants, adding a jacket or a cardigan in winter. Older women wore it with a dark skirt (or a simply-cut dress instead) and younger women mostly with dark pants.²⁰

It looks as if the female members of the Kibbutz founding generation chose, perhaps unconsciously, to channel their anti-fashion into a stylistic “freeze” of the previous two decades. The 1930s and 1940s were the heyday of the Kibbutz, the days when the founders were young, energetic, and hopeful. Yet apart from possible nostalgic reasons, aesthetically the 1930s and 1940s styles were more suitable for expressing

ideals of modesty and simplicity than were the elegant, feminine, and lavish styles of the 1950s. Thus, even the Sabbath dress could maintain its role as anti-fashion, both by its anachronism and by the particular choice of its inspirational period.

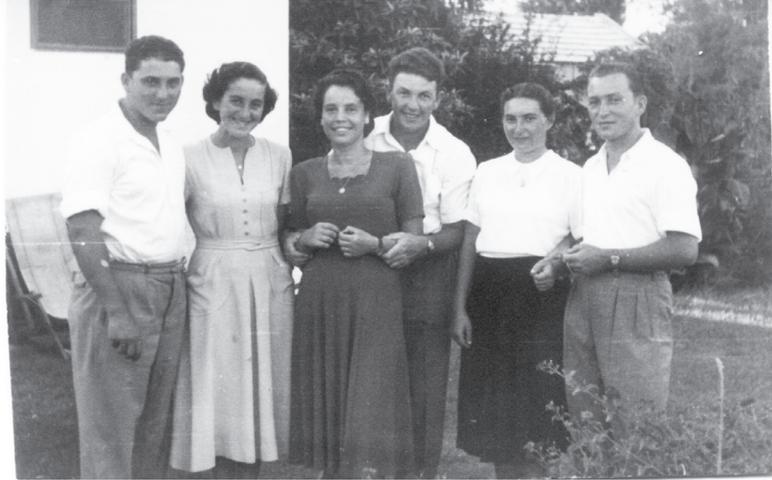


Figure 4.4: Members of Kibbutz Afikim in their Sabbath clothes, 1952. Kibbutz Afikim Archive, Photograph sheets 1950–1954.

Kibbutz Sabbath clothes neither replaced nor challenged the centrality and symbolic importance of the working clothes. Furthermore, work and Sabbath clothes were separated as distinctly different categories: the former were given by the communal storehouse whenever needed, while the latter were distributed according to a set “norm” or purchased by the members’ personal clothing allowance; the former were unchanged and preserved uniformity and equality, whereas the latter served a more aesthetic, personal, role. Shoes also mirrored the strict division into work/Sabbath-wear that divided clothes.²¹

The kibbutz initially strove to eliminate private property. Its members, who were paid no wages, were to own nothing of their own but receive whatever they needed from the kibbutz. Clothes and shoes were one of the basic needs provided for kibbutz members by the community. Decisions about clothes, like kibbutz policy in other areas, were determined by the general assembly of the members, after being summed and introduced by elected committees. Special “clothing committees” and “shoes committees” were founded to deal with the production, purchase,

distribution, cleaning, and mending of clothes and shoes. The committees had to manage clothing budgetary issues and to consider questions of general priorities and needs, then present their suggestions before the general assembly, where they were discussed and voted on.²²

The communal clothing institutions included the communal clothes storehouse, managed by a storehouse keeper. This branch was in charge of the communal sewing workshop and the public laundry. Every item of clothing was marked by the member's name or more commonly by his or her designated number. Members threw their dirty laundry into slots according to their material, color, or function, and they were washed by the workers of the public laundry, who also dried and ironed them. The storehouse interior was covered with wooden "pigeonhole" shelves, where each member or couple had their own compartment. Clean and mended clothes were folded and put into the compartments, from whence they were collected by the members. Many kibbutzim also had their own local shoemaker's workshop.²³



Figure 4.5: A member of Kibbutz Zikim working in the communal storehouse, 1956. Government Press Office, NPC, D293-039. Photo by Moshe Pridan.

In the kibbutzim, both male and female members worked during the day, and all services such as laundry and clothes mending were conducted by the community, intending, among other things, to liberate women from the drudgery of domestic work. However, most workers in the clothes storehouse, as in other kibbutz service branches (such as the communal childcare and the communal cooking and dining institutions), were women. Kibbutz ideology championed the equality between men and women, but this was never fully achieved in practice, not even during the kibbutz's most revolutionary era. Since the 1930s, as the number of singles decreased and the number and sizes of families increased, women were further marginalized into the (less prestigious) service branches. Even though services were not conducted privately as "housework" but rather communally and publicly as formal and organized branches, their local status was lower than production branches and agricultural fields in particular.²⁴

Thus, with the exception of some tailors or single male workers (who performed the heavier physical tasks in the public laundry), most workers in the kibbutz clothes storehouse were women. Many first turned to this service branch reluctantly, because they had had no other choice, after becoming physically unable to continue former work as manual laborers in more prestigious branches, such as the cow shed and other agricultural fields. Increasing mechanization (better sewing machines, new cutting, knitting and mending machines) and gradual specialization made work easier and more efficient; it also somewhat improved the workers' self esteem.²⁵ Still, working conditions in the clothes storehouse often remained uncomfortable. Many storehouses were understaffed yet poorer kibbutzim couldn't afford expensive machines to replace human labor and often lacked basic equipment, such as sufficient tubs or carts. Where there was no dryer nor a roofed space for hanging clothes to dry, workers had to stand long hours in the sun during summer, while clothes hung to dry remained unprotected from the rain during winter. The storehouse was sometimes located in a small, unventilated and hot shed, and as the kibbutz population increased, this small space became inconveniently crammed. In some Kibbutzim the storehouse and the public laundry were not situated in the same compound, entailing wasteful transport to and fro.²⁶

The service also involved frictions and tensions between the workers and the kibbutz members. Storehouses' keepers had to operate within

a limited budget, and sometimes supplies were in practice even scarcer than the formal agreed-upon standard, especially during the years of rationing. Members were often demanding and storehouse workers were often impatient.²⁷ When faced with constant complaints, one storehouse keeper apologetically detailed the difficult working conditions in the branch: members expect their weekly portion of clean and mended clothes to wait in their compartments each and every week. Huge piles of torn clothes have to be washed and mended, endless buttons sewn—a momentous weekly task that requires an “amazing working tempo” from a chronically understaffed team.²⁸

Another cartoon by Gelbert titled “The Storehouse Keeper” shows a female member hanging washed clothes to dry on a rope as five kibbutz members go by. Instead of recalling the members’ names, the storehouse keeper is thinking to herself in numbers: “83, 26-27, 394, 265.”



83 — 27 — 26 — 394 — 265

Figure 4.6: “The Storehouse Keeper.”

From Gelbert (1954), 30.

The storehouse keeper is associating all members with the numbers which mark their clothes and which she has memorized and internalized. Indeed, some storehouse keepers were accused of treating the members dogmatically and harshly, without showing enough sensitivity to their special and individual needs.²⁹

The cartoon also touches upon age and seniority in the kibbutz: since

laundry-numbers were given in running order, the older members own the smaller figures while younger members or newcomers own larger figures. Thus “26-27” belong to the old couple from the founding generation of the Kibbutz. “83” belongs to a middle aged member. The number “265” belongs to a younger man, whose particular hat, age, and posture indicate that he is part of the generation who fought in the recent War of Independence.³⁰ The largest number, “394,” belongs to a young woman. Both her colorful dress and her groomed hairdo are visibly atypical of kibbutz normative style, disclosing the fact that she is a newcomer who had recently joined the kibbutz from the city and is therefore still wearing urban attire.

The cartoon indirectly sheds light on yet another facet of kibbutz life, namely its lack of privacy. Gelbert’s storehouse keeper is looking at the passing members with an alert, keen smile, perhaps absorbing details for future gossip. The workers of the clothes storehouse, who remembered each member’s number, were closely familiar with people’s laundry and their clothes. This unavoidable and constant exposure within collective society was captured by Yoram Tehar-Lev, a kibbutz native, who pictures the kibbutz of the 1940s and 1950s in his poems:

On the shirt there’s a number
 On the undershirt there’s a number
 On the underpants there’s a number
 On the sheets there’s a number.

And the laundry workers probably know
 Who has lost her virginity and when
 Who is in love and how much
 Who has cried and for what reason.³¹

Equality, Conformity, Change, and Uniqueness

Social groups have to deal simultaneously with two dimensions: internal oriented characteristics, related to the function of the group itself, and external oriented characteristics, concerning relationships with those beyond the group’s borders, including public stereotypes and the group’s status.³² Kibbutz dress culture served both internal and external functions. Prominent among the former were issues of equality and conformity, although clothes also reflected gradual changes in kibbutz material

and ideological standards. Externally, kibbutz anti-fashion signaled its unique lifestyle and its special status within Israeli society.

In the early days of the kibbutz, any private property was strictly prohibited. Members were not only supposed to place all of their clothes in the communal storehouse, but items were not marked in any manner. The storehouse catered to no personal preferences; all clothes were shared by all and differentiated only by their three small-medium-large sizes. During the 1930s and 1940s, after long deliberations and arguments, the system was modified and clothes were marked by the members' personal numbers. Some kibbutz members objected to this change, fearing that marking clothes means violating the principle of communal property, but eventually it was determined that the adjustment, in addition to its obvious efficiency, would not harm the basic equality among the members. Differences in clothes remained minimal, yet the new system allowed more differentiation and "personal tastes could be detected among the female members."³³

In the 1950s, two optional methods of conducting the kibbutz clothing system came to the fore: the set "norm" on the one hand, and the personal clothing allowance on the other. The norm determined in detail the exact items which every member should receive from the storehouse within a set time limit.³⁴ Within its set structure, the norm system allowed some adjustability, as the clothing committee constantly reviewed the situation and made changes in the norm, such as adding or replacing certain items or altering the frequency in which they were distributed.³⁵ However, while male members were usually satisfied, female members demanded more freedom of choice in their Sabbath clothes and shoes.³⁶

Such freedom could be provided by a personal clothing allowance, which increased the members' freedom of choice and was supported by many storehouse keepers and shoemakers, who praised its practical advantages. Both the norm and the personal allowance did not include working clothes and shoes, which were to be supplied whenever needed. It was argued that the personal clothing allowance might free the storehouse keeper from her difficult task of implementing an equal standard, while at the same time showing enough sensitivity and flexibility toward different individual needs; then again, the personal allowance might harm the principle of communality, pose economic challenges to members who are unfamiliar with personal economizing, endanger the "appropriate style of dress" (no longer under the storehouse keeper's direct

control), and bring about “considerable differences in the level of dress” among kibbutz members.³⁷

Because it deviated from kibbutz principles, the personal clothing allowance was highly controversial, and those kibbutzim that opted for it executed the change in gradual and cautious steps.³⁸ The question of clothes distribution brought about serious debates concerning kibbutz values. When the move to a personal allowance was discussed in one of the kibbutzim in late 1953, for example, it served as an opportunity to air deeper questions regarding kibbutz ideals and their materialization in everyday life. One of the members wrote that past economic hardship led to extreme conservatism but the old ways of the kibbutz should not be sanctified. The small details of the everyday, including dress, play an important role in members’ level of satisfaction, especially the female members, probably indicating a regrettable waning of ideological and spiritual pursuits. However, adults cannot be changed and therefore their needs should be satisfied by a clothing personal allowance, not as a revolutionary act but merely as another “step in our natural development.” Another member disagreed and described the kibbutz as being torn between two poles: “the aspiration to change the world and build it upon new principles, and the aspiration for normalization.” He determined that the kibbutz should *not* give in to total normalization. The whole world, he wrote, has been losing its values during the last thirty years, and it is the duty of the kibbutz to uphold higher standards, even at the expense of a supposedly “natural development” such as a personal clothing allowance. A third member stressed that the kibbutz was still in the making. Collectivism should not reach absurdities and constrain the members within a rigid system of committees and communal institutions, and hence a personal clothing allowance would be merely an organizational change, but not a betrayal of kibbutz original principles.³⁹

Kibbutz ideology promoted material ascetic values and early kibbutzim took pride in their poverty. Pioneering entailed sacrifice of personal material comfort for the sake of the community and the whole nation, but kibbutz secular asceticism was never bleak, nor did it sanctify pain, sorrow or suffering. It was not about denying pleasure as much as it was about identifying with collective values. Moreover, austerity was not merely a personal sacrifice but also a means of guaranteeing the members’ spiritual freedom and their peace of mind. Still, as the kibbutz grew and changed, equality was moderated and members ex-

pressed new and increasing material demands.⁴⁰

Supporters of the personal clothing allowance in different kibbutzim wrote that, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" was part of a socialist revolution and an attempt to eradicate extreme capitalist inequality, but the intention was *not* to create a group of paupers; on the contrary, achieving a universal higher standard of living was part of the revolutionary target, as long as wealth was distributed fairly. The "essential minimum" keeps changing through time and fulfilling increasing needs does not entail inequality. As long as the allowance is distributed equally, its various uses by the members pose no threat to kibbutz life.⁴¹ Champions of the personal allowance also claimed that collectivism and equality were only means for achieving socialist justice, not ends by themselves. Uniformity was the result of the pioneering age, not an inherent part of socialism. People have inevitably different needs and cannot be squeezed into one norm. Assuring that all members will receive their various needs might prevent them from seeking these needs through unauthorized external sources and hinder them from leaving the kibbutz bitterly and attaining their unfulfilled wishes elsewhere.⁴²

While the personal allowance could potentially increase diversity, another factor was markedly threatening dress equality in the kibbutz: gifts. Storehouse keepers, especially in older and more established kibbutzim, complained that presents, received and worn by kibbutz members (in particular by female members and young female natives of the kibbutz) were violating the intended equality set by the norm.⁴³ Clothes distributed by the storehouse within the limits of the norm were not the members' private property: their wearers were holders rather than owners. Clothes purchased or sewn within the limits of the personal allowance were semi-private: they belonged to the members but were bought under an equal and agreed budget. Gifts, however, were external and unauthorized additions to the members' allocated lot. In some kibbutzim members were required to report any items of clothing given to them as presents to the storehouse keepers; the latter deducted these items from the member's norm, thus enabling members not to part from personal gifts while at the same time maintaining equality, at least in quantity.⁴⁴ Presents in general were viewed as a "social problem," but on the practical and particular level, a more lenient attitude resigned to the fact that members will keep and wear their gifts.⁴⁵

In spite of disagreements over the change in clothing distribution,

the move toward more personal freedom and less communal dictation was a one-way route: kibbutzim did not re-enter the norm system after introducing a personal allowance. Furthermore, more clothing items and other consumer goods were gradually included in the personal allowance system.⁴⁶

Alongside direct discussions of principles, followed by formal changes in the policy and the system of clothing distribution, other and less formal changes were also taking place in kibbutz society and affecting its dress culture. One of the challenges facing 1950s kibbutzim was how to maintain social unity and conformity as the community was becoming more heterogeneous. The ideological and age uniformity of kibbutz founders was giving way to a multi-generational society, in which newcomers sometimes brought ethnic-cultural novelties, and in which the unifying ideology played a lesser role.⁴⁷

On the one hand, kibbutz members described change as inevitable, declaring that, "We have to realize that male and female members won't be content, as they were ten years ago, with a light-blue shirt, a pullover and white socks." New needs, such as nylon stockings for women, should therefore be acknowledged and calculated in the clothing budget.⁴⁸ Note the use of the word "need," which was more appropriate and suitable to kibbutz austere ideology than the word "wish," legitimizing its content by connecting it to the kibbutz formal motto. Moreover, present "needs" in the 1950s covered items such as nylon stockings, which in the recent past were condemned as a symbol of bourgeois vanity.⁴⁹ In 1952, a veteran female kibbutz member was sharing her memories from the pioneering era of early Zionist settlement:

In those days we did everything we could to blur the lines between ourselves and the male members. If I tell you that I had never ironed a dress, it was not only because I had neither spare time nor an iron, but also because I believed that such "vanity" might distract our minds from the essence of our lives.

However, the writer who quotes this reminiscence, a younger kibbutz member, wonders, "Wouldn't it be forcing natural instinct to suppress any yearning for femininity and beauty? Could the aesthetic sense aid, rather than hinder, the creation of a better being?" Although the writer

objects to external appearances becoming a dominant feminine goal, she concludes that some changes are inevitable and not necessarily harmful: “Let’s admit that the days of the un-ironed dress are over.”⁵⁰

On the other hand, any change in kibbutz dress was accepted only as long as it was not considered improper. In 1956, a member of a religious kibbutz demanded “a bit of modesty.” He wrote that lately there appeared some outfits that clearly deviate from the acceptable dress. Although the kibbutz has moved to a personal clothing allowance and people can choose their outfits as they like, the member alluded to the biblical phrase “That when they shall see them, they may remember all the commandments of the Lord, and not follow their own thoughts and eyes going astray after diverse things” (Numbers 15: 39). He concluded, “A minimal consideration for public opinion is required even within the personal allowance. The deviants should return to the framework.”⁵¹ In a religious kibbutz, the term “immodesty” could mean either excessive luxury, contradicting the kibbutz value of simplicity, or sexually provocative apparel, contradicting the religious value of chastity. Significantly and typically, the writer did not have to specify or explain his exact meaning: kibbutz members who read their bulletin well knew their local codes of dress and easily recognized when these codes were transgressed; they also probably knew exactly *who* the “deviants” were. Local gossip and social pressure are powerful tools in small collective communities.

In 1950s kibbutzim, changes in dress were openly debated and judged according to whether or not they deviated from the kibbutz principles. The principles themselves were regularly deliberated. Persuasion was applied in local bulletins, committee meetings, and the general assembly, where decisions were made by a majority vote. If and when change of clothes was *not* regarded as harmful on the principle level, it was not resisted but rather allowed and implemented formally. The very need to institutionally legitimize and regulate change of dress indicated the centralistic and collectivistic character of the kibbutz. Yet due to the kibbutz’s voluntary and democratic structure, the process was not dictated by a leadership but rather negotiated within, and decreed by, the community.⁵²

Questions of change and conformity were especially poignant in heterogeneous and wealthy kibbutzim, such as Afikim. Founded in the mid-1920s and settled in its permanent location in the Jordan Valley in 1932, by the 1950s Afikim was one of the largest kibbutzim in Israel, number-

ing more than 500 members from twenty-seven different countries and a total population of almost 1,300. Afikim was also one of the wealthiest kibbutzim in Israel. In addition to its agricultural branches, in the 1940s its members founded a veneer factory and the kibbutz also ran a successful truck cooperative.⁵³

Afikim's outstanding economic success was brought into public attention in 1950, when a detailed article by Amos Eylon, headlined "Afikim: A Rich Kibbutz—And What Next?" appeared in one of Israel's leading newspapers. Eylon described how affluence was clearly felt in the members' lifestyle and questioned the possible long-term social and psychological effect of Afikim's enrichment. Among other forms of supposed extravagance, Eylon mentioned that members receive "luxury clothes"—silk kerchiefs and nightgowns, nylon stockings, and cosmetics. He wrote that

Wearing old and darned clothes was once a definite sign of proletarian life; the days are still remembered when people looked unfavorably on visitors, who entered the kibbutz wearing wool trousers rather than khaki.

However, he went on, today Afikim members order their clothes from urban tailors who visit the kibbutz, and the big clothes storehouse is known by some as "the headquarters of fashion":

Years ago, the members used to get a weekly portion of clothes, with almost no regard to size and taste; like everything else in the kibbutz—children, mules and tomatoes—all clothes belonged to all. Today the female members choose their spring dress or winter coat from the newest American and French fashion journals. I have seen a couple of "Vogue" copies on one table in the clothes storehouse, an unthinkable sight only five years ago. One of the storehouse workers, a champion of the old system, told me regretfully that the young girls in Afikim "think of nothing but embroidered shirts and dresses."⁵⁴

In its formal response, kibbutz Afikim announced that Eylon's article includes ludicrous exaggerations, incorrect interpretation, and a pathetic

ic lamentation over a natural process. It declared that poverty was an inevitable part of early kibbutz reality, but never an integral part of kibbutz ideology. There is nothing luxurious about female members choosing their dresses according to their size and taste within a limited budget; “And when a male member sets to work in the blazing sun of the Jordan Valley without a patch on his trousers, he does not sweat any less!” Higher standards of living might damage the pioneering tension, they argued, but no one is more vigilant about this threat than kibbutz members, who continue to serve the country as well as they did so far, both in battle and in settlement.⁵⁵ Their formal denouncement of Eylon’s accusations notwithstanding, Afikim members did have to deal internally with the delicate issues exposed in his sensational article. Although Eylon’s description was certainly tendentious and exaggerated, signs of laxity in kibbutz morality and manifestations of individualism and hedonism were on the increase.⁵⁶

The issue of dress in particular was raised and discussed in Afikim’s local bulletin in 1954, when an unidentified “female member” wrote a detailed article about undesirable social change reflected in dress. She claimed that “interesting” and anarchic developments in the area of style have been taking place among kibbutz adults and children during the last few years, and although they contradict “our lifestyle and the preferences of most members” these manifestations continue unchecked. It is wrongly assumed, she stated, that clothes are an individual and private matter in which the kibbutz should not interfere. It seems we have lost any distinction between good and evil, pretty and ugly, and things are determined entirely by the competitive “Mode” in its worst provincial urban form. We should be honest and admit that the problem exists mainly among female members and girls, rather than among male members and boys. The writer stressed that she was not moralizing and was not sorry that the old days of poverty and patches are over: it is only natural that tastes change and improve in time and the need of decoration, rooted in feminine nature, did not pass over the women of the kibbutz. She herself is not immune to the “weakness” of vanity, but she feels offended by what she views as extreme forms of vanity. How can long and manicured fingernails fit in the hands of a working woman? How can a female member who grows such nails work with the kibbutz children? Do we want our children to imitate such a style?

A few female members, continued the writer, wear on Sabbath eve-

nings huge long necklaces. This sort of jewelry is probably worn by women in “high” bourgeois society, so the phenomenon reflects a lack of taste and discloses a longing for a way of life that the kibbutz initially negated and contradicted. Thankfully makeup, another unneeded accessory, has not yet taken root in the kibbutz. General public pressure should put an end to any extreme forms of petit-bourgeois vanity. But in addition to eradicating undesirable forms of dress, more effort should be put in developing a unique dress suitable for kibbutz ideas and lifestyle. Without such intentional efforts by kibbutz assembly and institutions, dress will inevitably be dictated by alien urban modes.⁵⁷

The article was answered two weeks later by another female member. Life flows onward and changes constantly, she wrote, so there is no point in pining for the so-called “beautiful past.” Once the kibbutz determined even the names of the newly born children, rather than leaving this private decision to their parents; a female member was almost voted out of her membership because she owned a private pair of stockings. Thankfully, things have changed and today such extremity seems ridiculous and pathetic. When we first moved from a general clothes distribution to marking clothes for each member, some objected to the change as heretic, but now everyone agrees that it was a just and efficient move. Once kibbutz members had no private clothes; now each one of us is a “private owner” of some clothes and does not regret it. Our clothes are similar to those worn by other workers in Israel, perhaps slightly more modest. What exactly are those “extreme manifestations of vanity” that enraged the former writer? Why should groomed fingernails set a bad example to our children? Isn’t a groomed hand better than one yellow hued from excessive smoking? Wearing necklaces, like color preferences, is a matter of taste and should bother nobody. The writer announced that she will treat any female member not according to what she wears, but according to her personality, and according to the way she performs her work and duties in the kibbutz.

As to the claim that it is only female members who suffer from the weakness of vanity, what about beards and mustaches? Are they too not a matter of fashion? And what about shirts from nylon and silk, chequered and striped, suits, white sweaters and cardigans, all of which some of our male members wear on Sabbath evenings? Is that not vanity? Perhaps male members are exempt from criticism just because we do not envy them...? We are a free society and pressure should not be used in

private issues. None of us wants the kibbutz to turn into an “army camp” where everyone is dressed exactly the same. Our dress should be comfortable and modest, as befits workers, but its details should not be dictated by the general assembly. Instead of dealing with marginal issues such as dress, we should try to improve internal relations and encourage each member to become more educated and accomplished; then better taste will be expressed in dress as well. The writer concluded with the statement that the kibbutz female members should not be rebuked: they all work hard in a devouring climate and should be congratulated if they manage to beautify and color their grey routine.⁵⁸

Although the first writer claimed that she was not admonishing, her article ties dress conformity to sustained idealism, while connecting “extreme vanity” with wrongful and unworthy ideals. The second female member attempted to refute these implications. Importantly, these two writers did not argue about the kibbutz’s basic beliefs, only the question of the best way to implement them in the sphere of dress. While the first female member viewed clothes as a public issue and called for stronger centralized institutional intervention and enforcement, the second female member insisted that dress is a private issue, not to be infringed upon by the democratic community.⁵⁹ Whereas the second writer claimed that sartorial change is taking place in the kibbutz among men and women alike, the first writer maintained that the “problem” of vanity was manifested especially among female members and girls. This latter opinion was commonly voiced by members of the kibbutzim, both men and women, and echoed the wider prevalent association of women in particular with vanity, clothes, and fashion.

When one of the four kibbutz movement organized a storehouse-keepers’ convention in 1950, most lectures were dedicated to the dress of female members. “A little attention was also paid to the male members, although they don’t tend to worry the ‘experts’ [the storehouse keepers].”⁶⁰ Three years later, a male member who supported the move to a personal clothing allowance wrote that since the arrangements of the early communal clothing institutions,

Individual wishes gradually claim more expression. This tendency is obvious among the female members. They probably find it harder to adjust to the uniformity caused by the present system of distribution. The men don’t re-

ally mind. The women care more. This development may have several reasons. Perhaps it's a matter of aging, or the dwindling of the pioneering tension, and perhaps the increasing standard of living among urban workers has aroused some envy. And maybe it is simply the nature of the female member—her wish to be different, to be decorated.⁶¹

Even in a kibbutz that did not consider the move to a personal clothing allowance, the storehouse keeper nevertheless asked in 1956 to increase the freedom of choice in female members' Sabbath clothes, because female members feel a greater wish to determine their personal Sabbath outfits according to their individual "needs." Without violating kibbutz principles, she argued, various feminine needs could nonetheless be addressed; even within the limited possibilities, each member could practice a certain amount of free choice.⁶² Apart from the storehouse keepers, the members who actively participated in the general assembly debates concerning the clothing distribution were usually men. But a cartoon published in one of the kibbutzim implies that while male members were arguing in the assembly, it were actually the female members who demanded change and were wreaking havoc about dress issues behind the scenes.⁶³

If the annual celebration of Purim provided Israelis with an opportunity to fulfill their dress fantasies, this respite was probably even more meaningful in the kibbutzim, where meticulous dress codes were normally maintained more harshly. After the foundation of the state, Purim became a central holiday in many kibbutzim, usually celebrated as a one-night festival of leisure, pleasure, and fun, an opportunity for amusement and merriment within an otherwise somber routine of hard work.⁶⁴ Costumes played a cardinal role in transforming kibbutz normality into a fantastic dream-world.⁶⁵ Purim costumes provided female kibbutz members with a rare license to prettify themselves without being criticized and censored. The usual communal socialist lifestyle of the kibbutz left little room for coquetry, mystery, and glamor, and it is no wonder that female members, who had to repress such facets all year long, used Purim to present an explicit feminine appeal in costumes such as Parisian cabaret show-women or concubines in an Oriental harem. Any sharp departure from the simple code of dress was regarded in the

kibbutz as “bourgeois vanity,” and even Sabbath clothes were expected to maintain an unadorned nature. Yet the same features that were socially forbidden in daily life—such as the use of makeup and provocative clothes—were welcome on Purim.⁶⁶ As one kibbutz bulletin announced happily, “All our girls have turned beautiful: their lips hot red, their faces powder white, and their dress stimulating.” Men too have changed, “their costumes disclosing exactly which movies have been screened in the kibbutz during the last year.”⁶⁷ Purim played a particularly dramatic role as a social safety valve for kibbutz members, permitting the temporary fulfillment of otherwise contained and subdued fantasies.

Despite some similarities between religious collective communes in the United States and the kibbutzim, the latter were not isolated communities like the former. Kibbutzim took an active part in the Zionist national project, and alongside their distinctive features, they were always open to Israeli society and its effects.⁶⁸ While isolated and strict religious communities could keep themselves removed from fashion and its influence for centuries, distinct groups that did not separate themselves from society at large usually submitted to fashion: their unconventional dress either disappeared or blended to some extent into the general fashion.⁶⁹ Thus, although kibbutz members maintained their unique dress, they were not immune to the effects of fashion. Kibbutz members were living in a voluntary, well-informed, society; through magazines, cinema, and visits to Israeli cities, they were quite aware of changing trends in fashion.

So kibbutz dress was going through some gradual change during the 1950s, but since stylistic alterations were sometimes viewed unfavorably and denounced as a slavish imitation of urban fashion, those kibbutz members who adopted fashionable elements did so only gradually, partly, and selectively. Self-restriction was not merely a way of avoiding social censure; after all, the kibbutz was a voluntary society and its coercive measures were non-violent. Maintaining a distinct kibbutz style also served an external role: in spite of the crisis they were experiencing in the 1950s, the kibbutzim still represented Israel’s hegemonic ideals. While shabbiness was accepted and even encouraged in working clothes within the kibbutz territories, it was supposed to be somewhat checked and moderated when kibbutz members were visiting the city in their Sabbath clothes. Moreover, members who were sent by the kibbutz to work permanently in the city were allocated different and more “representative” clothes and shoes. But even when wearing their best clothes

and being unusually groomed, kibbutz members maintained their unique simple look.⁷⁰ Sabbath clothes, worn by members when traveling outside the kibbutz, still differed in their simplicity and relative stability from typical urban dress and its changing fashions and visibly signaled one's prestigious affiliation with the kibbutz. Kibbutz members regarded their voluntary simple anti-fashion as a sign of their superiority. They treated their simple dress as a mark of meliority, and depicted high fashion's elegance as ridiculous, hollow and useless, contrasted to their own worthy modesty.⁷¹

Indeed, the basic guidelines of kibbutz anti-fashion and its anti-bourgeois tones were maintained to a certain degree even among the highest ranks. Unlike some Israeli delegates, who openly flaunted expensive clothes which they bought when abroad,⁷² kibbutz members who served as Israeli emissaries, parliament members, and cabinet ministers "dressed down" even in formal events. They reluctantly consented to wear black suits and starched white shirts (maintaining the typical colors of kibbutz Sabbath clothes), but flatly refused to wear ties, which they regarded as the ultimate trademark of bourgeois culture. They had to explain to their foreign hosts and guests that this informality was a long-time custom of theirs and in no way a sign of disrespect: even in the opening ceremony of the newly founded Israeli parliament they wore no ties.⁷³



Figure 4.7: Girls from Kibbutz Afikim in the planting ceremony of Tu-Bishevat (New Year of the Trees), 1951.

Photograph from Dan Shalit's private collection.

Those Israelis who wanted to manifest pioneering national ideals, especially members of youth movements, wore apparels that somewhat resembled kibbutz Sabbath clothes,⁷⁴ thus making kibbutz style less exclusive. Yet kibbutz anti-fashion still managed to serve both its external purpose of setting the group apart by a distinctive look, and its internal purposes of accommodating the kibbutz work-orientated lifestyle, expressing and confirming its basic ideals, and maintaining a certain amount of equality and uniformity among its members. Whereas kibbutz members were internally arguing whether change was desirable or not and to what degree, it seems as if non-kibbutz Israelis hoped and expected kibbutz members to retain their unique dressing style. The kibbutz male native was strongly and favorably associated with modest clothes and resistance to pretentious elegance. It was commonly supposed that urban women and workers “needed” more clothes than agricultural laborers and female kibbutz members. Glamorous dress was explicitly and exclusively associated with “the urban girl,” and makeup was regarded “unsuitable” for kibbutz lifestyle. The modesty and simplicity of kibbutz dress was approved of, and supported by, Israeli society at large.⁷⁵

Even the right-wing Revisionists, who objected to the kibbutzim on ideological and political grounds, criticized the moral and material transformation from kibbutz modesty to urban luxury. A story published in their party’s newspaper in 1950 portrays leaving the kibbutz for the city as a betrayal of socialist pompous pretensions, a desertion incarnated in dress: A left-wing urbanite spent five years living in a kibbutz, where she braided her hair and wore “a white shirt and a dark skirt.” Now, living in Tel Aviv, Israel’s urban and fashion center, she wore makeup, curled her hair according to the latest fashion, grew her fingernails and dyed them red, wore diamond rings and bracelets and a long tight dress, “made, no doubt, by the most famous and expensive dressmaker in town.” Her handsome husband, a kibbutz native, had replaced his undone Russian shirt with an adorned suit and a colorful expensive tie. He has smoothed his unruly curls with a generous amount of hair oil and has “become a total urbanite.”⁷⁶ Since simple dress was identified with the kibbutz, a complete change of dress and grooming style, including the adoption of the latest fashion, signified the shedding of the kibbutz past, its ideology and legacy.

Every now and then, suggestions were made regarding the invention

of a kibbutz representative outfit. In the 1950 storehouse keepers' convention, the head speaker called to create "our own agricultural fashion," befitting "our aesthetics," rather than imitating unsuitable urban fashion. In the 1955 convention, dressing style was discussed again and the participants "called on Israeli painters to create some agricultural national style."⁷⁷ But repeated appeals to create a formal kibbutz dress remained an unfulfilled rhetorical wish. The previously mentioned member of Kibbutz Afikim who objected to communal intervention in dress found the idea of molding a kibbutz "folk" style quite ludicrous. She argued that the sarafan and the embroidered shirt were never unique kibbutz dress but an imitation of Russian traditions, and noted that folk dress should emerge gradually and naturally and cannot be imposed artificially. One year later, a male member of the same kibbutz wrote that it was difficult to consolidate a uniform agricultural national folk dress in Israel's dynamic immigrant society, but he hoped that in time "our stability and rootedness would be reflected in our dress." However, since the foundation of the state, "Americanism and snobbery" and contagious evil petit-bourgeois attitudes have spread even into kibbutzim. Therefore, in order to keep the pioneering spirit and the unique kibbutz lifestyle, "our dress should be simple, modest and comfortable (less eager to follow journal-dictated fashion)."⁷⁸

Though not invented as a formal outfit, the kibbutz dress that emerged out of the kibbutzim's material circumstances and their special lifestyle became a kind of visual trademark, reflecting kibbutz ideology. The difference of kibbutz dress from urban attire, explored in Gelbert's "Wine Queen" cartoon, was given an additional international comparative dimension in another cartoon titled "Costumes in the City and the Village." The top panel portrays costumes "among other peoples," where simple-line and somber urban suits are compared with the colorful, ornamented, and fantastic folk-costumes worn by villagers. Contrarily, "in our parts" [Israel] the somber, simple-line clothes belong to the agricultural sector of the kibbutzim, while urbanites are those who don colorful, flashy dress.⁷⁹



Figure 4.8: “Costumes in the city and the Village.”
From Gelbert (1954), 67.

The contrasts created in the cartoon are not historically accurate, because the European urbanites’ dress is somewhat outdated, while the Israeli urbanites are wearing contemporary 1950s fashion; and whereas the European villagers are dressed in festive folk costumes, Kibbutz members are portrayed in their everyday working clothes. Gelbert had a very perceptive eye for fashion and its nuances, so these historical inaccuracies were probably intentional and meant to enforce his message: kibbutz dress (hence its lifestyle) was unique and distinguishable both within the comprehensive Israeli culture and also when compared to other and previous agricultural societies.⁸⁰ Indeed, the sartorial field reflected inner conflicts and debates within the kibbutzim during the first years of statehood, and dress visibly mirrored their dynamic evolution, as these collective communities strove to implement their utopist ideals in the daily life of the present.

NOTES

1. *Zmanim*, August 9, 1954. *Ha'olam hazeh*, August 19, 1954.
2. Gelbert (1954).
3. Gelbert used the actual portrait of the elected Wine Queen of 1954, Ziva Shafir.
4. Helman (1992), 169. On the foundation of the Kibbutzim and their movements see Near (1992b).
5. Near (1992b), 191.
6. Helman (1992), 169–170.
7. Ben-Rafael (1995), 265–275; Near (1995), 243–259; Near (1997), 171–175, 178–191, 198–222; Near (1992b), 120–121, 126–129; Zachor (2007), 110–112; Giladi and Shwartz (2001), 38–41, 58–72; Weitz (2001), 101–102; Katz (1995), 253–280; Halamish (2010), 36; Golan (2010), 59, 62; Drori (2010), 82; Asaf (2010), 184–191; Pauker (2010), 180.
8. Zachor (2007), 108–112, 136; Kochavi-Nehab (2006), 24–25; Drori (2010), 90–91.
9. Helman (2008a). On anti-fashion see Lind and Roach-Higgins (1985), 184, 190–191; Ewen (1990), 55–56 n. 3; Fortunato (2007), 49. On historical examples of revolutionary and conservative anti-fashions see Braudel (1981), 324; Mansel (2005), 51–54, 132–133; Ribeiro (1988); Hunt (1998).
10. Ribeiro (2003), 64; Wilson (2003), 220.
11. Fischer (1995), 56–7, 64; Ingoldsby (2002), 90; Wilson (2003), 208–209.
12. Stern (2004), 45–48; Wilson (2003), 205–206; Bowlt (1985), 203; Gradskova (2007), 142.
13. On Russian and Communist cultural influences in the Kibbutzim and the Israeli Left, see Zachor (2007), 138–148.
14. Raz (1996), 65–87.
15. Raz (1996), 162.
16. Liebermann (1998), 51; Zakim (2006), 54–55.
17. Talmon-Gerber (2006), 404, 406, 408; Ben-Rafael and Weitman (2006), 617–633. Also see Tehar-Lev (1976), 11–12. Cartoon in Gelbert (1954), 9.
18. Photos from 1950–1952—KKA, 10.10, 6.10, 6.14, 7.11, 7.9, 9.15. Photos from the early 1950s—KAA: sheets 1952–7. *Gan Shmuel* bulletin, January 12, 1956, January 18, 1956 – NNL.
19. Photo by Fritz Cohen, 1951 – NPC: D290-091. Cover photo in *Kol yisrael*, July 12, 1951. Photos from 1950, 1952, 1954 – KKA: 10.10, 6.10, 6.14., 7.9, 7.11, 7.16, 9.15, 2.283. Cover photo in *Laisha*, June 5, 1950. Cartoon in *Sde Eliyahu* bulletin, *Kav Nissan Tashtav* (1955) – RKMA. Anniversary illustrations in *Dorot* bulletin, October 1951 – NNL. And compare with Stern (2004), 51–53.
20. Photos from 1952–1956 – KAA: sheets 1952–5, 1951–1957. Photos from 1950–1955—KKA: 2.129, 2.111, 13.32, 2.131, 2.180, 1.181, 13.20, 3.26, 3.28. *Gan Shmuel* bulletin, March 16, 1951 – NNL.
21. *Revivim* bulletin, January 29, 1954, August 6, 1954 – YTA. *Tirat Zvi* bulletin, January 6, 1950, *Sde Eliyahu* bulletin, *Kav-dalet Shvat Tashai* (1951) – RKMA.

- And compare distinctive clothes for work and Sunday among workers in nineteenth-century France, in Communist China, and in Soviet Russia: see Chenut (2005), 224; Chen (2001), 153; Gradszkova (2007), 151–152.
22. Tirat Zvi bulletin, July 15, 1949, Beerot Itzhak bulletin, July 6, 1950, Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, March 5, 1954 – RKMA. Shefayim bulletin, January 29, 1954 – YTA. And see Near (2010), 19.
 23. Dorot bulletin, January 10, 1952 – NNL. Hazorea bulletin, March 20, 1953 – KHA, 163. Cartoons in Gelbert (1954), 30, 57. On the working conditions in this branch see Shefayim bulletin, April 22, 1949, Revivim bulletin, January 29, 1954, August 6, 1954 – YTA. Kiryat Anavim bulletin, January 20, 1955, March 23, 1951 – KKA. Tirat Zvi bulletin, January 11, 1952, January 6, 1950, Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, April 12, 1950, Beerot Itzhak bulletin, March 25, 1955 – RKMA. Gan Shmuel bulletin, April 19, 1953 – NNL. Photo by David Eldan, 1952 – NPC: D352-089.
 24. Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, April 12, 1950 – RKMA. Photo from 1952—KKA, 2.284. Hazorea bulletin, April 1, 1955 – KHA. Gan Shmuel bulletin, December 22, 1952 – NNL. Cartoons in Gelbert (1954), 30, 38, 57. Also see Meimon (1955), 151–155; Fogiel-Bijaoui (2006), 595–615; Ben-Rafael and Weitman (2006), 621; Fogiel-Bijaoui (2010), 150–156; Near (2010), 14.
 25. *Dvar ha-po'et*, April 1951. Gan Shmuel bulletin, December 22, 1952 – NNL. Photo from 1952 – KKA: 2.284. Hazorea bulletin, April 1, 1955 – KHA. Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, April 12, 1950, Beerot Itzhak bulletin, March 25, 1955 – RKMA.
 26. Gan Shmuel bulletin, March 16, 1951 – NNL. Shefayim bulletin, April 22, 1949 – YTA. Kiryat Anavim bulletin, January 20, 1950, October 17, 1952 – KKA. Tirat Zvi bulletin, March 23, 1951, Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, January 11, 1952 – RKMA. Hazorea bulletin, June 21, 1953 – KHA.
 27. Kiryat Anavim bulletin, January 20, 1950, October 17, 1952 – KKA. Gan Shmuel bulletin, December 8, 1950, January 12, 1951 – NNL.
 28. Hazorea bulletin, June 21, 1953 – KHA.
 29. *Dvar hapo'et*, April 1951. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-beit Kislev Tashtav (1955) – RKMA. And see Talmon-Gerber (2006), 407.
 30. The Palmach generation and its unique dress are discussed in the next chapter. And see Sivan (1991).
 31. Tehar-Lev (1979), 45. My literal translation of an originally rhymed poem – A.H.
 32. Fine and Stoecker (1993), 248.
 33. Tirat Zvi bulletin, November 20, 1953 – RKMA. And see Helman (2008c), 15, 27–28, 61–62.
 34. Dorot bulletin, October 11, 1949; Shefayim bulletin, April 22, 1949 – YTA.
 35. Dorot bulletin, July 5, 1951, December 20, 1951, January 10, 1952, Revivim bulletin, August 12, 1951, June 25, 1952 – YTA. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-beit Kislev Tashtav (1955), Yod-zayin Adar Tashtav (1955) – RKMA. Hazorea bulletin, October 9, 1953, September 29, 1956 – KHA.

36. Hazorea bulletin, October 9, 1953, September 29, 1956 – KHA. Shefayim bulletin, July 7, 1950, April 29, 1955; Revivim bulletin, August 6, 1954 – YTA. Beerot Itzhak bulletin, June 12, 1953 – RKMA.
37. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-tet Tevet Tashtav (1955) – RKMA.
38. Revivim bulletin, August 6, 1954– YTA. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-dalet Shvat Tashai (1951), Kav-vav Adar Tashtav (1955), Beerot Itzhak bulletin, November 23, 1949, January 5, 1950, January 26, 1950, July 6, 1950, Tirat Zvi bulletin, January 23, 1954, January 20, 1956, September 5, 1956, Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, March 5, 1954 – RKMA. Kiryat Anavim bulletin, November 11, 1949, December 28, 1951 – KKA. Hazorea bulletin, October 9, 1953 – KHA. Hamadiya bulletin, February 8, 1952, February 7, 1955 – NNL.
39. Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, April 19, 1953, May 8, 1953 – RKMA.
40. Talmon-Gerber (2006), 401–6.
41. Tirat Zvi bulletin, November 20, 1953 – RKMA.
42. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-vav Tevet Tashiad (1954) – RKMA.
43. Dorot bulletin, June 8, 1950. Shefayim bulletin, April 29, 1955. Summary of storehouse keepers' seminar, May 1950 – YTA.
44. Revivim bulletin, August 31, 1951, August 29, 1952 – YTA. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-beit Kislev Tashtav (1955) – RKMA. Gan Shmuel bulletin, January 12, 1951, March 16, 1951, May 4, 1955 – NNL.
45. Alonim bulletin, October 6, 1950 – KAA. Beerot Itzhak bulletin, June 24, 1949 – RKMA.
46. Tirat Zvi bulletin, November 25, 1955; Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, May 8, 1953, Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Kav-vav Tevet Tashiad (1954) – RKMA.
47. *Bamachaneh*, December 7, 1950. Cartoons in Gelbert (1954), 53, 95. Photos from 1950–1954—KKA: 2.41, 2.193, 2.203, 2.168, 2.210, 2.269, 13.71.
48. Kvutzat Yavneh bulletin, January 11, 1952 – RKMA. Gan Shmuel bulletin, January 12, 1956 – NNL.
49. Dorot bulletin, July 5, 1951, Gan Shmuel bulletin, March 16, 1951 – NNL. Tirat Zvi bulletin, January 20, 1956 – RKMA.
50. *Dvar hapo'elet*, July 1952.
51. Tirat Zvi bulletin, September 5, 1956 – RKMA.
52. Compare with Ingoldsby (2002), 94–96.
53. “Taarikhon toldot Afikim”, Part I – KAA. On the decline of collectivism in richer, larger, societies see Triandis (1995), 82.
54. *Haaretz*, December 15, 1950 .
55. *Davar*, January 24, 1951.
56. “Taarikhon toldot Afikim”, Part I – KAA.
57. Afikim bulletin, March 5, 1954 – KAA.
58. Afikim bulletin, March 19, 1954 – KAA.
59. Compare with Ingoldsby (2002), 94.
60. Shefayim bulletin, July 7, 1950 – YTA.
61. Tirat Zvi bulletin, November 20, 1953 – RKMA.
62. Hazorea bulletin, September 29, 1956 – KHA.

63. Hamadiya bulletin, February 8, 1952 – NNL. And compare with women's sartorial demands in Hutterite and Mormon communal societies: Ingoldsby (2002), 89; Fischer (1995), 58-59.
64. *Dvar hapo'et*, March 1951. Alonim bulletin, February 17, 1950, March 3, 1950, March 14, 1954 – KALA. Dorot bulletin, February 6, 1953, September 4, 1954, Gan Shmuel bulletin, March 30, 1951, February 15, 1956 – NNL. Hazorea bulletin, October 1, 1951, November 4, 1955 – KHA. Revivim bulletin, February 13, 1953, March 5, 1954, Shefayim bulletin, March 2, 1951 – YTA. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Tet-vav be-Av Tashai (1950) – RKMA. And compare with Williams (1991).
65. *Dvar hapo'et*, March 1951. Gan Shmuel bulletin, March 30 1951 – NNL. Alonim bulletin, March 18, 1949 – KALA. Revivim bulletin, April 9, 1954 – YTA. Photographs from 1952-1955 – KAA. Cartoon in Gelbert (1954), 100.
66. *Yediot aharonot: 7 yamim*, March 12, 1954. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 1, 1956.
67. Revivim bulletin, March 11, 1955 – YTA.
68. Oved (2010), 368-371.
69. Lind and Roach-Higgins (1985), 88-90. Also see Triandis (1995), 1-3, 52-53. And compare with Matt (2003), 108-11, 144-145, and Stern (2004), 55-56.
70. Dorot bulletin, July 5, 1951, April 9, 1954 – NNL. Hazorea bulletin, September 4, 1953 – KHA. Sde Eliyahu bulletin, Yod-aleph Adar Tashiad (1954) – RKMA. Cartoons in Gelbert (1954), 8, 12, 93. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 8, 1952. Cartoon in *Ashmoret*, October 25, 1951. *Ma'ariv*, July 9, 1954.
71. Revivim bulletin, April 9, 1954 – YTA. Cartoons in Gelbert (1954), 10, 67.
72. Rozin (2002), 101.
73. Bankover (1975), 133. On the over representation of Kibbutz members in Israel's first parliament, see Zachor (1997), 38; Zachor (2010), 386.
74. Almog (1997), 317, 324-328; Raz (1996), 160-161.
75. *Tafrit*, July 1949. *Haisha bamedinah*, September 15, 1950. *Ha'olam hazeh*, May 25, 1955. *Laishah*, January 4, 1950.
76. Herut, December 1, 1950.
77. Shefayim bulletin, July 7, 1950, April 29, 1955 – YTA.
78. Afikim bulletin, March 19, 1954, June 24, 1955 – KAA.
79. Gelbert (1954), 67.
80. Other cartoons by Gelbert convey similar proud yet ironic messages, see Helman (2007b).

Chapter Five: Representing the State, Molding the Nation

Folk Dress and Representative Attire

Israel's national airline El-Al was founded in 1949. Six years later, an "Air Queen" international competition was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, to elect the most professional and pleasant air hostess. The El-Al hostess who represented Israel in the contest won the second place. Like national beauty queens who represented the state in international beauty competitions, so did flight attendants embody the young state both internally and externally. They too were physically attractive women.¹



Figure 5.1: Ground hostesses from the government tourist department at the Israeli National Airport in 1952.

Government Press Office, NPC, D391-079. Photo by Teddy Brauner.

The airport—the first Israeli site to be viewed by tourists—was regarded as the state’s “display window,” and therefore its workers were to make a good impression and look “representative.”² In spite of their formal appearance, including a masculine tie, the hostesses’ uniforms looked smart and fashionable, and complimented the female body with their fitted skirts, narrow waists, and feminine shoes. In Israel, a young state extremely sensitive about its image and reputation, El-Al uniforms were created by Lola Ber and other leading fashion designers.³ These uniforms were expected and intended to play a formal national role.⁴

Ideas of molding a Zionist national dress first emerged during the Yishuv era. In 1923, for instance, a reader’s letter published in a socialist women’s magazine suggested that local artists create a national dress to be shared by all classes. Rather than imitating Western dress blindly, those who settle in the East should fit their dress to the country’s climate and “spirit.” In 1939 a reader wrote to another magazine about the national importance of dress, calling on the Zionist institutions to set a committee to determine a unified style of dress. Three years earlier, in the Levant Fair held in Tel Aviv, a contest was announced for designing an original Hebrew dress, “combining Eastern and Western cultures, symbolizing the revival of the Hebrew heritage in the Land of Israel.” The two winning dresses were both creations of a leading local designer, Pnina Riva: a casual dress in the shape of a Ukrainian sarafan, titled “Daughter of my people,” and an evening gown in the shape of an Arab abaya, titled “Daughter of Zion.” These winning dresses were not adopted by the women of the Yishuv as their daily or ceremonial dresses. Yet Raz mentions that after the foundation of the state, Riva’s 1936 winning evening gown was worn by the first Israeli beauty queen when she represented the state in the international beauty contest.⁵

Indeed, the issue of a national dress was raised again after the state was founded. In May 1955 a group of painters, directors, actors, and other professionals was gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the issue of styling a national folk dress. Some of the participants proposed imitating the colorful Arab embroidery, others suggested adopting the Yemenite tunic, others still advocated drawing inspiration from Israeli landscape and from Jewish historical sources or using the experience already gathered by local scenery painters, directors of public ceremonies, and dance companies. One participant proposed gathering women’s dresses from all Jewish Diasporas, exhibiting them to the public,

and holding a referendum among Israelis and Jews abroad in order to elect the favorite dress as the national folk attire. Two artists propounded announcing a public bid for the design of a national dress, and two directors suggested conducting an ethnic fashion show as a basis for a future ethnographic museum. One participant claimed that ethnic Jewish dress should be gathered before it disappears, although this, she added, cannot solve the problem since “a sartorial style cannot be created artificially” but rather evolves gradually from a place’s climate and its peoples’ lives. The meeting, which focused on women’s dress in particular and did not mention men’s wear at all, ended without reaching any practical decision.⁶ The speakers did not distinguish between folk and national dress, and it seems that the target of the consultation was never clearly delineated: was it about ethnographic research of traditional Jewish dress, the creation of a representative outfit for dance and theater performances, or the design of an obligatory national outfit for ceremonial use?

Other discussions of the topic reveal similar ambiguity and no clear distinctions between folk dress, national dress, and fashion. Thus a 1952 letter published in *Dvar hapo’elet* claimed that Israel still lacks a national dress because

Folk style does not emerge according to a set plan, [but rather] is the result of mass effort. An original national dress is a collective creation of tens of thousands of women, mothers and girls, accumulating the tendencies, the experiences and the tastes of generations.

Such an effort does not exist in Israel, the writer lamented, where instead of nurturing a unique national style, women keep imitating foreign tastes and patterns.⁷

For the sake of analytical clarity, let us distinguish between folk and national dress. The former develops within local communities over ages, and is part of their rooted customs and values. Folk dress is supervised by the community; it separates it from other communities and internally classifies and grades its members. National dress, on the other hand, is associated with residency or citizenship in a state, and as such might envelope a population of various ethnic groups and communities, each having a different folk dress. Whereas folk dress is molded

gradually on the grassroots level, national dress is defined and nurtured by state authorities and agencies. National dress can either utilize elements from existing folk traditions or intentionally replace the local folk dress. Sometimes newly invented national dress is promoted as having ancient folk roots. Both folk dress and national dress are non-fashion forms of clothing: whereas fashion is cosmopolitan and ever-changing, folk and national dress are local and tend toward stability.⁸

Although not all national dress is necessarily based on folk dress, many modern national movements search for the people's historical roots, and therefore designers of national dress might choose a certain traditional dress, announce that it epitomizes the "spirit" of the people, adopt it, and combine its features into the new national dress.⁹ Thus Riva's choice of the Ukrainian sarafan and the Arab abaya for her 1936 national designs were echoed after the foundation of the state: the sarafan, as well as the embroidered Russian rubashka, were worn within the austere style of dress, particularly in the kibbutzim and by members of youth movements, and Israeli fashion designers sometimes used the abaya shape for their models.¹⁰ As we saw, during the 1950s the sartorial traditions of new immigrants from Muslim countries, the Yemenites in particular, became the main source of inspiration for designers who tried to infuse a "local" character into their creation.

A unique Israeli costume was gradually consolidated in the field of "folk dancing." Since the Yishuv era, local dances—to be practiced by the wide population and not necessarily by trained or professional dancers—were being invented by several choreographers. Danced to Hebrew songs and combining steps from different Jewish Diasporas as well as local Arab dances, these new "folk dances" were regarded as an authentic national creation, expressing Zionist and pioneering ideals and depicting national notions about the land. Beginning in 1944, national dance conventions were held in one of the kibbutzim, and since 1953 dancing parades were performed during some of the national holidays. Israeli folk dances are an example of a modern invented tradition, initially begun by groups of settlers but from the 1940s run and distributed by national institutions, which trained dance teachers and tried to spread new folk dances among the population. In addition to their internal role of acculturating Israelis into "worthy" national ideals, Israeli folk dances quickly became an attraction for tourists and a representative Israeli performance abroad.¹¹

While ballroom dances were identified with foreign influences and indeed conducted in fashionable Western evening wear, Israeli folk dances, associated with national authenticity, required a unique costume. Some dances were performed in costumes according to their ethnic, geographic, or thematic inspirations (for instance Hassidic, Yemenite, or pseudo-Biblical costumes), but a specific costume was molded for the majority of the dances, whose themes were Zionist or pastoral. Before the third folk-dancing convention in 1951, the organizing committee published a competitive bid and the winning costume was worn, in six color variations, by all performers. The costume included pants and a short tunic for the men, a skirt and a blouse for the women, and kerchiefs tied around the waist or the shoulders. The color combinations were bright (for instance black and white, blue and orange) and decorated with embroidered stripes.¹²



Figure 5.2: “The fishermen dance” in a dancing parade performed during Independence Day celebrations in Haifa, 1956.

Government Press Office, NPC, D726-095. Photo by Fritz Cohen.

This outfit became the paradigm for Israeli folk-dancing costumes, and was seen in different variations in dance performances in kibbutzim and other settlements. Dresses with wide skirts for women, short loose tunics above long pants for men, decorations of embroidered stripes, bare feet and uncovered heads—this dance costume was eventually regarded as the quintessential Israeli “folk dress.”¹³

Apart from a few brief exceptions, the folk costume was used solely for dance performances, but then again, this was the usual fate of folk dress in the modern era. Whether created gradually, along centuries, within traditional communities, or invented during a short while by designers, as in the Israeli case, in modern industrial societies folk dress is allocated to the limited sphere of performance and tourism.¹⁴ Yet sociologist Dina Roginsky shows how Israeli folk dances contain primary elements of folklore alongside elements of government patronage and commercialization.¹⁵ The institutionalization and commercialization of folk dancing and costumes does not necessarily testify to, or entail, decreased authenticity or reduced power as a national symbol. Local costumes can maintain and enhance the community’s internal values even when they are performed in “exotic” versions for tourists.¹⁶

Israel had no set, formal and required national dress.¹⁷ Yet the leaders of the young state were very sensitive about its international reputation and about the impression it made on outsiders. Surrounded as it was by hostile Arab states and suffering from a sensitive international status, diplomacy and diplomats held an important place in Israel’s first years of existence. The state sent ambassadors and consuls, delegates and envoys, military attachés and commercial advisors, according to its relationships with various states. Every foreign embassy or consulate that was opened in Israel was celebrated as a crucial occasion, and every diplomatic event was covered by the local media. Within the poor and informal Israeli society, foreign diplomats were regarded as the height of grandeur and formality, and the annual diplomats’ ball was considered the most fashionable local event.¹⁸



Figure 5.3: First Israeli president, Chaim Weizmann (left), receiving members of the diplomatic corps, 1950.

Government Press Office, NPC, D725-094. Photo by Hans Pinn.

But when it came to Israeli envoys abroad, the attitude to grand dress was more ambivalent. On the one hand, if Israel was to become a state like any other state, its envoys were supposed to dress according to diplomatic protocol and conventions. On the other hand, these norms contradicted the post-war poverty of the young state. According to hegemonic ideology, the country's leaders—members of parliament, cabinet ministers, high military officers, and their spouses and families—were supposed and expected to live and dress as befits the austere “spirit of the land.” During the rationing regime, state representatives who bought extravagant clothes when they were abroad and then “flaunted” them in Israel, were publicly criticized.¹⁹

Then again, it was conceived as a national interest, rather than a private one, to dress Israelis who represented the state overseas in a suitable manner. Even during the height of the recession, members of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra were dressed as properly as possible during their international tours.²⁰ Sport delegations too were regarded as envoys of the state. In the popular imagination, a national team can take on the guise of the nation itself, symbolizing unity and strength. Nations are enshrined in sports via flags, anthems, and the national colors of a team's uniform.²¹ Thus, although sport wasn't exactly Is-

rael's strongest field, international sporting events were deemed symbolically important even if they were professionally and aesthetically disappointing.²²

Following the poor performance of the Israeli team at the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion established a special committee to investigate the delegation's conduct. Finding no proof of misconduct, the committee nevertheless found some faults with the project's organization.²³ It is interesting to note that one of the issues investigated by the committee was the delegation's representative outfit. One of the witnesses testified that all the members of the delegation, sportsmen as well as trainers and escorts, constantly wore the formal dress with the newly designed emblem of the state—a blue shield with the seven-branched menorah surrounded by two olive branches.²⁴ Another witness, however, provided contrasting evidence and claimed that the outfit was not worn by all members on all formal occasions. He also argued that the Israeli sport outfit did not look imposing, certainly when compared with those of some of the other delegations, and that it made a poor impression on foreign participants and spectators.²⁵ Clearly some importance was attributed to sartorial representation in Israel's first participation as a sovereign state on the Olympic stage.

The centralist state was involved in all aspects of formal national representation, and its institutions participated in molding and promoting formal culture, including folk dancing. But when it came to *fashion* the state did not interfere directly. It was mainly the local press and fashion journalists who encouraged designers to create a distinctive Israeli style by inserting unique elements into fashion. Local fashion designers were required not only to adjust international fashion to the local climate and the limiting economic conditions, but also to infuse into their models some "national character." In 1950 the fashion reporter of a feminist magazine suggested that rather than sending envoys to Paris, Israeli designers should create a style as appealing as Parisian style:

Instead of imitating everything imported, even the most grotesque models, wouldn't it be better to use a bit of imagination and good will and create a local fashion that beautifies everyone, fit even for the most snobbish women, those who believe that a dress from Paris could cover ugliness and lack of taste?

She claimed that with the proper promotion, Israeli fashion could be exported to all the countries that share Israel's hot climate and ended with an overstated vision that "soon enough fashion from Tel Aviv will be in demand as much as fashion from Paris."²⁶ The writer praised American fashion, which managed to break free from the dictates of Paris and assert its own character, but did not provide any concrete aesthetic suggestions of how to implement a similar break in the Israeli case.²⁷

Reports on local fashion shows occasionally included some disappointed comments when the shows presented no recognizable "Israeli style," nothing "originally Israeli" alongside cosmopolitan trends. Fashion reporters lamented the fact that local fashion had not developed its unique look. The press and other factors expected a uniquely Israeli fashion to be created intentionally, perhaps with the help of a national committee or a national mind trust.²⁸

Lola Ber, however, did not share this vision of a unique Israeli style. When asked "Do we have an original fashion of our own in Israel?" she replied unapologetically in the negative: only Paris creates an original fashion. Fashion, she claimed, requires a special atmosphere and a certain tradition, and therefore Paris' strong status in fashion will abide forever. Israel, said Ber, is a small country with limited possibilities in the field of fashion, but Israeli women can adopt and adjust Parisian fashion quickly and with much aptitude.²⁹ Ber viewed fashion as an international phenomenon, based on one fashion center only, and her ambitious goal was to achieve aesthetic excellence locally by imitating the Parisian example successfully.

Ber said that it would take at least five hundred years to develop a unique Israeli fashion, but others wished to hurry the process. The easiest and most superficial way of "nationalizing" fashion was simply by giving models a local title. Thus names such as "Negev colored suit" or "Eilat beach" were bestowed on specific fashion models. The settlement of the Negev, the thinly populated desert in the south of Israel, was one of the young state's major projects, eagerly promoted by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion. Built at the south end of the Negev on the shore of the red sea, the young city of Eilat symbolized the new pioneering settlement. Therefore, naming fashion items after the Negev and Eilat were clear patriotic gestures. In 1955 an elegant fur hat was named by its local designer after the national airline "El-Al," and a top hair stylist from Tel

Aviv named two of her ladies' haircuts after the Negev and another region in Israel, the Sharon. A more material way of nationalizing fashion was by using locally produced fabrics in the manufacture of high fashion. This was made possible when the quality of local textiles improved beginning in 1954.³⁰

Yet such technical forms of nationalizing fashion did not necessarily entail any *stylistic* innovation or singularity. This, as we recall, was usually provided by the integration of Eastern elements, but apart from Maskit's exceptional success, most Israeli designers found it difficult to furnish their models with an Israeli "national character." Other historical cases and precedents confirm that nationalizing fashion is no easy task and usually doomed to failure, because it involves separation and permanence that counter fashion's internationalism and its ceaseless motion. Whereas national dress is aimed at, and dictated by, political factors, fashion is an aesthetic mechanism; most of its changes are internal, autonomous, and led by *arbiter elegantiae*, whose prestige hardly depends on political issues.³¹

When Pnina Riva's latest designs were presented successfully in the United States in 1950, a local reporter wondered "and why shouldn't Tel Aviv too hold a central place in the production of luxurious evening-dresses in world markets?"³² Dress was supposed to contribute to the formation of the new Israeli national identity, but fashion was also inadvertently enhancing the centrality of Tel Aviv compared with Jerusalem's marginality. Historians have discussed the political risks and implications of defying the UN resolutions and announcing west Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 1949,³³ but transferring the government ministries from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem also involved some internal mundane dilemmas. Its symbolic significance for Zionism notwithstanding, war-devastated Jerusalem was a poorer, colder, less developed and less lively city than its coastal rival. It is no wonder that some government officials and clerks, as well as their wives, were reluctant about "leaving swanky Tel Aviv and settling in gloomy, dull, historical Jerusalem."³⁴

Government workers who moved from the warm coastal plain to the colder mountain region had to be supplied with warmer winter apparel.³⁵ But the regional differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem were not merely climatic: the former was associated with high fashion and the latest cosmopolitan trends, whereas the latter was considered traditional, conservative, and provincial. Tel Aviv had become the country's

fashion center during the Yishuv era, and it maintained its position as the hub of fashion design, industry, and commerce after the foundation of the state.³⁶ The identification of Tel Aviv with fashion was taken for granted, so much so that a reporter describing a fashion show in 1949 Tel Aviv wrote of the local urban audience as “the women of the capital.”³⁷ Referring to Tel Aviv, rather than to Jerusalem, as “the capital” was a significant slip of the pen: while formal national interest was set on turning Jerusalem into Israel’s capital, in the flow of daily life, including the sphere of dress, Tel Aviv was often perceived as the country’s actual cultural center.³⁸

Even though Israeli fashion—like most other fashions—was rarely infused with a distinct “national” character, it is noteworthy that during the first years of statehood it was demanded that fashion designers express some national identity in their designs. The dress of envoys of all sorts was supposed to represent the sovereign state, and the costume of folk dancers was believed to embody the spirit of the ingathered nation in its old-new homeland. But there was one specific category of dress that symbolized poignantly both the new sovereignty of the Israeli state and the national revival of its people: the military uniform.

“A People in Uniform”

Israel was founded during a total war, and when the war ended, the cease-fire agreements did not bring about peace. Sociologists Horowitz and Lissak write that since its earliest days as an independent state, Israel had to prepare itself conceptually as well as strategically to withstand a continuous violent conflict. They define the Israeli experience as a “Nation in Arms” (or in the Hebrew version: “A People in Uniform”), because there are many meeting points between the civilian and the military, on both the private and the public levels. A recent study argues that Israel’s security network stems from the particular power structure established by the founding fathers of the state, who sought to use the IDF to promote the processes of state formation and social integration. Thus the boundaries between the state’s security and civilian spheres were deliberately kept porous.³⁹ The War of Independence placed security and the army at Israel’s political and social center. Army service during the war was a basic element in the educational myth toward national identity and unity. The IDF, its commanders, and its soldiers were placed

at the focus of the national centralist idealism, over and above ideological, political, and partisan disagreements.⁴⁰

The IDF was established in 1948, and during the war 100,000 soldiers were eventually mobilized. When the war ended, it was clear that Israel could not maintain such a large army, and a reserve system was designed, combining the regular army, the reserve army, and a smaller framework of professional soldiers.⁴¹ Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion regarded the IDF as a central unifying force in the young state. He viewed the IDF role as extending military matters, and as a non-political “people’s army” it was given leading missions of settlement and education. The IDF was involved in founding, populating, and defending new frontier settlements, and in helping to absorb the new immigrants in transit camps. These wider national missions enhanced the IDF status within Israeli society. At the same time, within the IDF, military service became a main tool for achieving the melting-pot goal as it forged “New Israelis” according to the centralist ideal. Different segments of Israeli society met during their army service. The IDF was a cardinal means of acculturating young new immigrants, teaching them Hebrew, and making many of them feel integrated into Israeli society.⁴²

Military historian Mordechai Bar-On describes a comprehensive public support of the army in 1950s Israel, when military efficiency was regarded as a paramount interest of the state. Israel was put under siege by all its surrounding neighbors and attacked by infiltrators on a regular basis. Most Israelis conceived this situation as justifying the use of force and acknowledged the crucial importance of a strong army. Attempts were made to maintain the army’s unity and prestige, to consolidate the soldiers’ identification with the army’s goals, and to nurture the civilians’ fondness of the army.⁴³

Involved in many non-military missions throughout the country, army soldiers were not a rare sight, restricted to army camps and training grounds, but rather a frequent recognizable feature in Israeli towns, kibbutzim, and transit camps. Many soldiers wore their service uniforms on leave as well as on duty. Their well-loved image constantly appeared on posters, illustrations, and even in commercial ads.⁴⁴ A military pamphlet reminded IDF soldiers that outside the camp they are seen by citizens as the representatives of the army; in order to maintain and enhance the public respect and fondness of the army, soldiers were therefore instructed to keep a neat appearance, in addition to behaving

politely.⁴⁵ In late 1949 a journalist described some army vehicles, loaded with IDF soldiers, driving through a town:

What power lies in the faces of these young men, with their unruly forelocks! What graceful flexibility in their exposed and firm limbs! What confidence shines in their laughing eyes!

The writer then hears some old men talking about the soldiers, and saying that they differ from soldiers elsewhere in the world: most soldiers have a touch of evil, say these old men, whereas “our soldiers have a touch of Jewish sanctity.”⁴⁶ It is noteworthy and indicative of its special structure and status that the IDF was not just respected and admired among the Israeli public, but also liked. It inspired fondness, even love, rather than a distant awe. The army also presented itself to civilians in many public ceremonies, most famously in its annual military parade on Independence Day.⁴⁷



Figure 5.4: New military uniforms, 1956.
Government Press Office, NPC, D369-018.

Many studies on the IDF and on Israel's military history have been published, but to date no research has focused on uniforms. The Hebrew word for "uniforms" is often used to designate military service in general, and the Hebrew expression "A People in Uniform" is frequently employed as a metaphor for the entire Israeli society, where the civilian and the military tend to overlap and merge.⁴⁸ Let us therefore literalize the metaphor, and examine Israeli military uniforms in light of this dress' cardinal features: denoting legitimate use of power, symbolizing state authority, molding discipline, and representing manliness.

Unlike most kinds of modern dress, which are influenced by informal codes and social conventions, uniforms are a formal dress, dictated explicitly by institutions such as the army or the police force. The communicative power of military uniforms is much more precise than the limited, vague, and ambiguous codes of other kinds of clothes. Uniforms become direct denotative signs, socially familiar and well-known, and therefore their "reading" does not depend on personal interpretation. Uniforms enhance the political goal of the modern army by symbolizing the legitimate use of force, and are therefore meant to be recognized and categorized at first sight.⁴⁹

The IDF started issuing uniforms for its soldiers in late May 1948. About two-thirds of the uniforms were purchased and ordered in Israel. Ata, the large textile manufacturer, was one of its main suppliers. About one-third of the IDF uniforms were ordered from abroad, in particular from the United States. Many of the purchased items were second-hand. An alternative source was gifts and donations, most of them sent by American Jews. During the war supply was often detained and slow, but first to receive any available uniforms were soldiers serving in the front lines. An acute shortage in army shoes was later solved by import from Australia. When the battles were over, more attention could be paid to the uniform, but the IDF Quartermaster's department met with numerous material and technical problems. In late 1949 a special military committee, peopled by representatives from all the main corps, was founded in order to deal with all matters of uniforms and insignia.⁵⁰

Until early 1950 uniforms were not purchased according to any set plan, but rather at different available opportunities and from all over the world. Now, when the war was over, it was decided to set a plan and

to use the full capacity of local manufacturers for the army's needs.⁵¹ The implementation of the plan, however, was restricted by the economic crisis of the time and affected by shortage of raw materials, lack of foreign currency for importing materials and items from abroad, and the deteriorating quality of local textile products. During 1950 the IDF tried to finalize the shape of both battle dress and service uniforms for its different forces and units, but the rationing of clothes and shoes, introduced that same summer, piled new difficulties on the realization of these plans.⁵²

Sometimes different practical considerations—comfort, health, and cost—clashed and contradicted each other. In early 1950, for instance, the IDF debated the issue of short pants, a popular Israeli item of clothing that was often worn by soldiers during the war. Some factors in the supply flank claimed that shorts should not be used any longer in the army, because they were wasteful: they could only be worn in daytime and for order drills, but not for training or during nighttime. The commanders of the forces and the Chief of Staff disagreed, claiming that soldiers should be allowed to wear shorts in Israel's steaming hot summertime. The military medical officer supported the latter and wrote that shorts are used by all armies in tropical and sub-tropical climates; they allow the soldiers freer movement and reduce their amount of sweating; they are cheaper than longer pants and are less prone to be damaged by washing.⁵³ A few years later the IDF stopped issuing short pants as part of its uniforms, but during the first years of the state this item was so central and ingrained in the existent Israeli sartorial culture that it seemed inconceivable to do without it in the army.

Alongside practical considerations, such as cost, climate, and health, historical documents reveal that military factors were also concerned with aesthetic considerations. Since 1949 the army had dealt with different types of uniforms: battle dress uniforms for actual combat and training, service uniforms for military ceremonies and for non-combat activities, and formal uniforms, issued only for soldiers and officers who represented the army overseas. The difference between battle dress and service uniforms can be clearly seen in the case of the navy: work on board was performed with dark khaki tattered uniforms (some soldiers worked with no shirts on), whereas in formal ceremonies the soldiers wore their gleaming white uniforms.⁵⁴

IDF summer uniforms were made of bright khaki cotton while win-

ter uniforms were cut in the British battle-dress shape and made of dark khaki wool. When the Quartermaster's department announced that it could not provide belts for all the units, and therefore suggested discarding this item from the uniforms altogether, a question arose whether the belt was an integral part of a military uniform, and whether a soldier could look neat enough without it. Eventually the uniform committee decided to do without belts in the winter uniforms, but to issue a thin belt with a brass buckle, "of the type used by the American army," for the summer uniforms.⁵⁵

The design of the IDF uniforms combined foreign influences and attempts to give uniforms a unique Israeli character.⁵⁶ Adopted foreign items did not necessarily fit local conditions. The Medical Department opposed the Australian hat because it was heavy, and because it had to be tied under the chin, causing skin eczema. It also disqualified the stiff English cap as unsuitable for the local climate and dismissed the brimless soft cap, which eventually became the IDF general head-cover, claiming that it did not provide ample protection from the sun. In addition to modifying foreign items in order to adjust them to Israeli climatic conditions, the IDF wanted to distinguish its uniforms aesthetically. Thus, although the formal uniforms—issued only for soldiers and officers who represented the army abroad—were designed "after the American model," the Chief of Staff insisted that the shape of their caps should differ from American or British caps.⁵⁷ Whereas modern battle dress uniforms put increasing store on practicality, price, and comfort, service and formal uniforms maintain the main lines of traditional uniforms.⁵⁸ At the same time, uniforms should also distinguish different national armies. This dual purpose—of designing a "classic" uniform while also infusing it with unique national features—was clearly evident in the IDF during its first years of existence.

Traces of this search for specific characteristics within a worldwide military style were later apparent in the military salute as well. In early 1956 the IDF introduced a new military salute: the quickest and most direct raising of the right arm to the right side of the brow, with the tips of the finger touching the brow, the forearm faced diagonally downward, and the upper arm held straight and paralleling the front of the body. The IDF explained that this new salute replaced the previous one, which followed the American salute, in which the upper arm is held 45 degrees in front of the body. Some of the soldiers could not maintain

their upright posture when saluting in the American way, and the new salute also solved the problem of the partial restriction of view on the right. The new salute did not include the long arc swinging of the arm that characterized the British salute, “and was found unsuitable for the Israeli style.”⁵⁹ By clarifying how it differed from foreign salutes, the IDF defined its new salute as particularly “Israeli.”

Among its major roles, uniforms are meant to tell soldiers apart from civilians. But after the War of Independence, Israeli soldiers and civilians often wore very similar dress. In the summer of 1949, the IDF’s bulletin *Bamachaneh* described a strange phenomenon to be noticed on the streets of Israeli towns: “Many of the people passing by are dressed in half-uniforms, [military] caps with no insignia, military shirts. On the other hand, it’s hard to find two soldiers dressed in the very same uniform.” The writer explained that “today’s citizens are yesterday’s soldiers,” who had received khaki clothes when discharged from their army service; and besides “Khaki clothes have always been the national dress of Israelis”—evoking memories of the pre-state era, suiting the local climate, and fitting the conditions of the rationing regime. The IDF, continued the writer, cannot afford to order all its uniforms at once. Relying on chance bargains and gifts means that army uniforms remain at this stage diversified and non-uniform.⁶⁰

Indeed, we recall that khaki had been a favorite color in the male version of the austere model of dress since the 1940s. Soldiers in the settlement units (“Nachal”) spent some of their service in kibbutzim, and it was often hard to tell them apart from members of these kibbutzim in their working clothes. Ata was also a main manufacturer of the IDF uniforms, and, as noted before, its products for civilians shared a straight, military, cut. Military influence was also apparent in the popularity of the military-style short jacket (locally called “battledress”) worn by many civilians, both men and women, in the 1950s.⁶¹

It is no wonder, therefore, that in late 1949 the uniform committee required that military uniforms be made “with a special khaki fabric, which will be strictly forbidden for civilians.” It insisted on a special uniform shape, “because most civilians in our country tend to wear khaki during the larger part of the year, and it is often hard to differentiate a soldier from a civilian.” There was also a need to distinguish the army from the police force, whose uniforms were blue, and the Air Force commander asked to make sure that the force’s blue uniforms

differ in shade from police uniforms.⁶²

Uniforms unite all soldiers, but are also supposed to visually categorize soldiers according to their different forces, units, and ranks. The IDF ground forces wore khaki, while the Air Force's winter and service uniforms were dark blue, and the Navy's service uniforms were white. Another distinction was made by the military caps. Whereas all working hats were khaki, the service uniform caps differed in colors and shapes: white sailor caps for the Navy, blue caps for the Air Force, a stiff peaked cap for the Military Police, a black cap for the engineering and armored corps, red caps for the paratroops, and dark khaki caps for all the other ground corps. Some demands and requests regarding uniforms and insignia reveal a competition over prestige among different forces in the IDF, mainly between the Air Force and the parachute units. In addition, and despite the melting-pot effect of the military service, some visual differences abided. Thus one could tell a religious Yemenite soldier by his beard and long side-locks, whereas the master sergeant could usually be recognized by his huge moustache. There also remained clear differences between the regular army and the shabbier and less unified uniforms worn by soldiers in the reserves.⁶³

Historically, uniforms helped to shape the bodies and the minds of soldiers and train them for battle: keeping one's uniforms clean and tidy demanded meticulous daily attention and care, and thus uniforms became a means of disciplining the individual soldier.⁶⁴ Yet in the case of the IDF, the whole disciplining mission constantly met with a powerful contradiction: a local tradition of military informality. Casualness was deeply engrained in the Sabra sub-culture and was present within the Israeli military establishment through the heritage of the Palmach.

The Palmach (acronym for "plugot machatz," Hebrew for "strike platoons") was founded in 1941 as the elite fighting unit of the Haganah ("Defense"), the Yishuv's main and largest secret military organization. Its recruits—both men and women—went through extensive military training. Since it was an underground force and had to hide its training and activities from the British authorities, Palmach units were spread in kibbutzim, where its young recruits divided their time between farming and military activity. Its secrecy and lack of resources also affected the Palmach's military style. The motto "every squad commander is a general" reflected the initiative and resourcefulness expected of all soldiers, the close and informal relationship between commanders and

their men, and the absence of formal ranks. The “Palmachniks” relied on mobility, flexible maneuvering, nocturnal guerilla tactics, and their intimate direct knowledge of the country’s landscape. During the Palmach’s years of existence and training as separate groups within the kibbutzim, Palmach men and women nurtured a strong camaraderie and created their own unique sub-culture, with extensive lore and a special sense of humor. Despite being a military organization, Palmachniks shunned formality and discipline, held neither ranks nor insignia, and practiced no military salutes or ceremonies.⁶⁵

Palmach units bore the main share of fighting during the Arab-Jewish strife that began in late 1947, and later played a major role in the War of Independence. When the IDF was established in June 1948, the Palmach, like all other pre-state military organizations, was dismantled. Ben-Gurion insisted on the unity and the non-political character of the national Israeli army, but his decision regarding the dispersal of the Palmach was met with resentment and public debates. The IDF was to be a populist “army of the people,” but the security needs of Israel during its first years, with constant Arab infiltrations through the volatile borders, required elite infantry units. And thus, only a few years after its dispersal, Palmach notions and style once again dominated the IDF.⁶⁶

Yet even before the IDF adopted a formal policy of nurturing elite units, in which all soldiers were encouraged to show initiative and commanders and men held informal relationships, the spirit of the Palmach was never quite absent. Since its foundation, the Palmach was surrounded by a heroic aura and symbolized youth, pioneering, and committed love of the land. During the 1940s the Palmach became the body most associated with the Sabras and with the local “New Jew.” During and after the war the Palmach was immortalized and celebrated in songs, drawings, and anecdotes. It was surrounded by nostalgic admiration and became an influential local myth.⁶⁷ Among other things, the Palmach impact on Israeli culture and the IDF can be detected in the sphere of dress.

As a secret military organization, Palmach members naturally wore no uniforms. They “blended” into their kibbutzim’s surroundings, wearing kibbutz working clothes and tembel hats of the kind described in the previous chapter.⁶⁸ Palmachniks, both men and women, sometimes wore the Arab kafiya either as a head-cover or as a scarf, but by the

outbreak of the war in 1948, the most typical hat covering the heads of many Palmachniks was a certain type of sock cap (beanie) with a large turn-up. Many Palmachniks wore their shirts deeply unbuttoned, uncovering a large part of their chest. Both male and female Palmachniks wore very short pants and leggings.⁶⁹ Palmachniks took great pride in their informal and unkempt dress, which demonstrated their meaningful combat service in the front lines. During the war they scorned the grand, decorated, and meticulous uniforms worn by non-combat soldiers who served as clerks on the home-front. They could even distinguish members of the Haganah, fighters who did not belong to Palmach units: though the former also dressed in simple clothes, they were still tidier than the Palmachniks.⁷⁰



Figure 5.5: Figures of Palmach male and female soldiers in a chocolate ad: “Good chocolate for them—Give them the very best.”

Beterem, January 1949.

Although the Palmach was dismantled and uniforms and insignia were gradually introduced in the IDF alongside formal ranks, clearer command hierarchy, and military salutes, the Palmach spirit still lingered on in the IDF, especially in elite combat units. Many visual documents reveal an admiration of Palmach dress and disclose attempts to imitate it among IDF soldiers.⁷¹

Military pomp was therefore checked and minimized. The IDF viewed itself as an army devoid of redundant military ceremony. Many officers neither kept their uniforms tidy nor wore their rank's insignia. Soldiers in elite units were allowed, in practice, to disregard formal uniform codes, and their disheveled dress visibly manifested their higher military (and therefore social) status. Their informality reflected toughness, manliness, and no fear of physical discomfort.⁷² And vice versa: meticulous formal uniforms became a clear indication that the wearer was *not* a combat soldier, therefore placed in a lower military (and therefore social) status. In contrast to other armies, where higher status is reflected in a more spectacular uniform, in Israeli culture soldiers won more prestige if their uniforms were simpler, informal, and scruffy.

Formal attempts to discipline the appearance of Israeli soldiers were thus countered by the informal local military dress culture, which was intentionally and manifestly un-disciplined. Correspondence from the IDF archive and publications in the IDF bulletin *Bamachaneh* disclose how the army's discipline branch and its military police tried to put army soldiers, and especially disheveled officers, into sartorial order. "A neat appearance does not make an officer," reads a caption in *Bamachaneh*, "but officers are obliged to keep a neat appearance."⁷³ The discipline branch fretted that the unkempt appearance of soldiers and officers, especially when they ventured out of the enclosed military camps and were seen in public, would disgrace the IDF among Israelis and, even more importantly, among foreign tourists and visitors.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, alongside calls and slogans to keep up discipline and an orderly military appearance, *Bamachaneh* itself indirectly supported the disheveled dress of IDF soldiers, especially former-Palmachniks, and ridiculed attempts to discipline them. Many cartoons published in this army bulletin made fun of the master sergeant and the military policemen, presenting their antagonist, the undisciplined scruffy soldier, in an endearing light. Rather than presenting discipline as an integral

and important part of the military regime, even *Bamachaneh* subverted its own formal slogans by depicting discipline as a distraction, which tampers with the real business of combat.⁷⁵

One example among many is a cartoon by Fridl, a prominent female cartoonist. Published in *Bamachaneh* in September 1949, it shows a military policeman ordering a seated soldier “Pull down the sleeves!,” and the latter replies, “Did you say anything, mate?” The cartoon required neither title nor further explanation, because its viewers, soon after the end of the war, could read and understand its meaning perfectly. The seated figure was a Palmachnik, a sturdy man who did the real fighting during the war and contributed to the victory. The wicked military officer, on the other hand, has nothing better to do than bother worthy soldiers about dress codes and discipline. The butt of the joke is the Palmachnik’s total indifference to military discipline, as evident in his unkempt clothes, unruly hair, and leisured posture. Moreover, he feels neither respect nor fear toward the military policeman, and his familiar reply, added to his annoyed expression, indicates that he has no intention whatsoever of obeying the ludicrous order. The cartoon, published in the IDF bulletin, fully supports the Palmachnik, and portrays the military policeman (and by extension, military discipline in general) as a joke.⁷⁶

Belonging to an “army of the people,” IDF uniforms echoed the general Israeli culture, where simple and austere dress expressed the hegemonic national values. “In regular armies uniforms are so opulent, that they can be worn in the most snobbish evening balls,” wrote a *Bamachaneh* reporter in 1949. “In our country, however, the soldier is camouflaged not only in the battle field, but also on the city’s streets.” The Israeli soldier, he wrote, must win respect and gratitude from the general public without wearing lavish uniforms, brilliant colors, and shining brass buttons. Even in drilling exercises and military parades he wears practical, simple uniforms: “This is the splendor and the pride of the Israeli soldier.”⁷⁷ From the outset, the IDF designed unostentatious uniforms, and due to the Palmach heritage and other local informal tendencies, these simple uniforms were worn without much ceremony or obedience.



Figure 5.6: IDF soldiers after winning a Northern post from Syrian troops in May 1951. The combat soldiers are notably undisciplined in their dress, wearing a mish-mash of clothes, including one Palmach sock cap (beanie) on the right. Government Press Office, NPC, D383-123.

IDF uniforms maintained an aesthetic simplicity at home, but army officials who were visiting other countries for training or other formal purposes were supplied with special and more refined uniforms. Army commanders and military envoys claimed that having to appear in public without wearing “suitable” uniforms in countries such as the United States, Britain, and France, was embarrassing.⁷⁸ Most insistent were military attachés, whose representative outfits included both military uniforms and full evening dress, and whose increasing demands often covered their assistants and wives in addition to themselves.⁷⁹ Whereas the simplicity of IDF military uniforms was a source of local pride, Israelis away from home did not always maintain their modesty but rather tried to imitate their hosts’ standards.

War is a male pursuit, and as George Mosse argues, it can be viewed as “an invitation to manliness.”⁸⁰ Military service encourages physical power and bravery, and legitimizes the use of violence—spheres that are traditionally attributed to men and to male culture. Uniforms too were molded from the outset to accentuate manliness. Wide shoulders (in relation to the hips) are considered a male characteristic, and most military uniforms visibly broaden the shoulders.⁸¹ There is ample evi-

dence that military uniforms can arouse sexual interest, if not sexual attraction, although studies differ in their explanations of this phenomenon. Some attribute the erotic appeal of the uniform to its explicit visual manliness, while others connect it to its association with power and violence, with ideas of discipline and hierarchy that evoke fantasies of domination and submission.⁸²

When women started serving in modern armies in the mid-twentieth century, they joined a masculine organization, where dress was intended to enhance notions associated with masculinity—physical strength, bravery, and the legitimate use of violence. The shape of the military uniform, designed to enhance the masculine form, inevitably disfigures or hides feminine contours. Similarly, the values represented by the uniform contradict prevailing ideals of femininity as soft, gentle, and homey. Women's uniforms were designed as a modified variation of men's uniforms, so they retained their basic masculine shape despite some "softening" changes. The aim was usually to give women's uniforms some hint of womanhood, but at the same time to conceal any explicit female sexuality. Military uniforms visually celebrate masculinity, but hush and restrain femininity. Since women are associated with fashion, women's service uniforms are modified more often according to changes in fashion, but whereas civilians enjoy the freedom of choice within fashion, women soldiers are extremely limited in their choice.⁸³ Jennifer Craik mentions an inherent paradox in women's military uniforms: uniforms are meant to limit and discipline one's body and behavior, but since they are historically and strongly linked with masculinity, whenever a woman is seen in military uniform, it might evoke contrary associations of crossing borders and breaking boundaries.⁸⁴

Women participated in the Yishuv's defense organizations since the beginning of the twentieth century. Thousands of women were active members in the Haganah, for instance, but their integration involved a constant struggle to reach positions of authority and attain new roles. Women's desire to play an active role in the defense of the community appears to have stemmed from patriotism rather than from feminist ideals. Rosenberg-Friedman writes that the myth of equality between the sexes in the Yishuv drew greatly upon the presence of women in the defense forces, especially women fighters in the War of Independence; but she notes that in fact women were mostly assigned to traditional roles, in the military as well as in society at large.⁸⁵ A similar picture is

drawn by Sasson-Levy, who writes that women's service was based on two models: the British army, where women served in non-combat jobs, thus freeing men for fighting; and the Haganah and Palmach, where women were integrated into all roles and units. Yet even the latter decided as early as 1941 to allocate special roles for women, and although they were trained as fighters and took active part in defending settlements, most of them served as medics and in communications. When the IDF was established in 1948 it opted for the British army model, and a separate women's corps was established.⁸⁶

Like other modern armies, in the IDF women's uniforms were designed as a female variation of men's uniforms. In 1950, for example, men's uniforms included a hat, a combat coat, a shirt, a sleeveless pull-over, combat pants, khaki leggings, a khaki tie (optional), and brown or black shoes. Women's uniforms included identical hats, shirts, pullovers, and ties, and differed only in their skirts, socks, and brown shoes. Most women soldiers had to wear service uniforms, and received a tailored coat and a wool skirt. Only those who served in specific locations and as drivers were allowed to wear battle dress uniforms that were identical to the men's. Curiously, photos reveal that although the loose working clothes hid the feminine figure, while service uniforms included a skirt and emphasized the waist with a belt, the latter did *not* create a more feminine look. The service uniforms, with their straight rigid lines, enhanced the shoulders but distorted the shape of feminine breasts and hips.⁸⁷

Still, the acronym for "Women's Corps" in Hebrew is "chen," a word that also means grace and charm; and indeed women soldiers were expected to beautify the army.⁸⁸ The IDF wanted to give women's uniforms "a nice look" and so the uniforms committee wrote in late 1949 to the fashion institute in Jerusalem, requesting designs for suitable women's uniforms: "The problem is to find uniforms that would be comfortable but also aesthetic and fit for the common figure among our girls in the ages of 18 to 20."⁸⁹ The following year the Head of the Women's Corps protested when it was decided, without consulting her, to stop supplying women soldiers with nylon stockings. In summer they can wear short socks, she claimed, but in winter stockings are a necessity for the nice appearance of the soldier, "who is also a woman." She claimed that dress discipline should not be imposed on women soldiers as harshly as on men soldiers. Her successor, the new Head of the Women's Corps,

asked in late 1951 that the women officers' service uniforms should be made to their personal size, because

The uniforms are the dress worn by the officer most of the time (which is not an easy thing for a woman). And according to public opinion officers representing "the fair sex" should look nice.

A couple of years later she demanded that women soldiers be issued a different, feminine, and more fashionable hat, rather than dressing them in the same caps worn by men soldiers.⁹⁰

The sphere of clothing thus supports the notion according to which a separate women's corps institutionalizes a more gendered army. Moreover, cultivating women soldiers' looks stood in reverse relations to their actual and practical military contribution. Hence in late 1955, when the IDF designed and supplied new uniforms, men's uniforms were determined by comfort and practicality, whereas women's uniforms "don't have to suit combat conditions," as most of them served as secretaries and other such roles. They could therefore wear in future dark khaki uniforms, a skirt, and "a jacket with a nice cut."⁹¹



Figure 5.7: Inspection of women soldiers in an instructors' course, 1956. Government Press Office, NPC, D379-052.

The woman soldier was sometimes depicted as a potential maid, whose true role was to iron the soldier's uniform or to sew his buttons for him.⁹² Historian Daniel Roche describes how the uniform, although the ultimate male dress, actually forced and taught soldiers to perform tasks that were traditionally associated with women, such as washing and darning.⁹³ But then again, no women served in the French army in the eighteenth century, whereas women did serve in the IDF and could perform sartorial tasks for men.

In 1950 *Bamachaneh* published another cartoon by Fridl, in which a high ranking officer addresses his secretary: "And now, Ruchama, a private question that I have wanted to ask you for a long while ..." Ruchama, a conspicuously well-groomed soldier of a low rank, is looking at her commander expectantly. She is hoping for a romantic proposal, but the officer is holding his old socks behind his back, and is in fact about to ask Ruchama to darn them for him. Although Fridl drew the officer as a dubious "catch," a man with an unattractive figure and a simpleton's expression, the ultimate joke is at Ruchama's expense. She represents a type of woman soldier who serves in the army only in order to catch a husband, the higher his rank the better, but fails to realize her true goal in spite of her makeup and hairdo. Indirectly, and perhaps unintentionally, the cartoon also exposes the difficulties met by women IDF soldiers, who had to deal with boring and unappreciated jobs, lower ranks, dependence on male commanders, and confusing messages about their appearance and sexuality.⁹⁴

As we observed in previous chapters, Israeli women were often required to avoid excessive vanity, which was regarded as contradicting important national priorities, but at the same time they were expected to boost national morale by nurturing the aesthetic fields and by pleasing the eye.⁹⁵ During military service, these contradictory messages were particularly acute. On the one hand, women soldiers were rebuked for being too preoccupied with their looks; on the other hand, they were supposed to "decorate" the army and to provide a pretty sight for both soldiers and civilians. They were expected to maintain a feminine charm, but without looking overtly attractive or behaving flirtatiously.⁹⁶

Maintaining a feminine look within the limitations of the military uniform was no easy task. Contemporaries noted that women basic trainees, once they were made to take off their civilian clothes and replace them with uniforms, went through a disappointing aesthetic

transformation. This visual process of turning “from women to soldiers” was depicted in photographs and cartoons. Cartoons also pictured how women soldiers, who sometimes gained weight during their service, missed their former figures as well as their feminine, complimentary, civilian clothes. Although men soldiers too were sometimes illustrated in cartoons as longing for civilian clothing items, no cartoon ridiculed basic trainees transforming “from men to soldiers” by replacing civilian clothes with uniforms; on the contrary, military service, including military uniforms, only forged or enhanced men’s masculinity.⁹⁷ The War of Independence and the foundation of the IDF had turned the combat soldier, especially the paratrooper and the pilot, into a unifying national hero of mythic dimensions. The red cap of the paratrooper and his parachuting insignia became a well known status symbol in Israeli society.⁹⁸

Military service, especially in combat units, was automatically connected to notions of heroism and manliness, and therefore the uniform became a “legitimate” field of male vanity, a sphere where grooming would not endanger one’s sexual identity and tough image.⁹⁹ Thus, alongside the heritage of intentional neglect, we can find some hints of men soldiers heeding their uniforms’ looks, not just their efficiency and comfort. This tendency was particularly visible in the Air Force. Soldiers and officers in the Air Force voiced their opinions about their uniforms and insignia, complained about some of the designs allocated for the corps, and often added seams to the uniforms that they received from the quartermaster, “to make them look nicer.” It is possible that the Air Force’s insistence on a different and more elegant uniform was part of its competition with the paratroopers, who were celebrated for their Palmach-style shabbiness. Hence, when new summer uniforms were issued in 1956, the Air Force Commander complained that he was not consulted, and that the new uniforms would contribute nothing to the morale of his force. “The average soldier in the Air Force,” he added indignantly, “does not aspire to imitate the paratroopers in his dress.”¹⁰⁰

Although uniforms are based on distinction—between the military and the civilian, between different units and ranks, between male and female soldiers—they also unify all soldiers under one national banner.¹⁰¹ The IDF was a main tool in the melting-pot project, and the image of the uniformed soldier became a cherished embodiment of the ideal New Israeli.¹⁰²



Figure 5.8: *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 20, 1950.

In 1950, the “Shemen” oil company published its greetings on Israel’s second Independence Day. The inscribed quotation is from the Book of Nehemiah, chapter four, and reads,

They all built the wall and those who bore burdens load-
ed themselves; everyone with one of his hands worked
in the work, and with the other held his weapon.

The building of the sovereign Israeli state is thus compared to the reconstruction of Jerusalem’s walls in the days of the prophet Nehemiah, as both projects demand a combination of labor and defense. The young state and its main national tasks are incarnated in three masculine figures: alongside the farmer and the manual worker clutching their work tools, the image of the combat soldier is not holding an actual or symbolic weapon, as described in the Biblical text; instead he is waving the national flag of Israel.

NOTES

1. *Zmanim*, May 9, 1955. Also see *Dvar hashavu'a*, November 23, 1950, January 4, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA, VT GE 06.
2. *Yom yom*, April 25, 1949.
3. I would like to thank Ayala Raz for this information.
4. On uniforms of civilian pilots and air hostesses see Craik (2005), 110–113.
5. *Haisha*, 3, 1923. *Hahed*, 14/4-5, 1939. Raz (1996), 88–89, 162.
6. *Davar*, May 31, 1955. Compare with Finnane (2008), 207.
7. *Dvar hapo'elet*, May 1952.
8. Tarrant (1994), 52, 54; Mansel (2005), 37, 51–54, 114–115; Calefato (2004), 16; Eicher and Sumberg (1995), 300–301, 303. See also Trevor-Roper (2006), 20–25, 30–36; Finnane (2008), 212; Wilson (2003), 9; Stitzel (2005), 53.
9. For instance Sekatcheva (2004), 89, 91; Mansel (2005), 116–117; Assmann (2008), 360–361, 371; Allman (2004), 5.
10. Raz (1996), 88–89, 156–157. Photo from *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 25, 1951. 1950s WIZO blouses and shirts – SCA. And compare with Konenko (2007), 66; Guenther (2005), 109–118; Hason (1997), 19.
11. Ronen (1999); Roginsky (2007a), 47–52; Roginsky (2007b), 223–225, 232, 236; Roginsky (2009), 104–105. Letters from 1950 – ISA, 47/c-223/37.
12. *Dvar hashavu'a*, June 15, 1950. Photos from *Kol yisrael*, December 21, 1950; *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 30, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1951 – SA, VT GE 02.
13. Harrold (1986), 205; Roginsky (2007b), 239–244. Poster from 1953 – HMA: 21/2471-73808. *Davar*, September 16, 1955.
14. 1950s Hakuli Ltd. Israel metal plates – from the author's private collection. And compare with Kononenko (2007), 67, and Walton (2005), 7.
15. Roginsky (2007a), 42–44.
16. Cohen (2004), 110–113.
17. Compare with Tarlo (1996), 62, 319–323; Finnane (2008), 15, 17, 202–211, 220–225, 230, 249–254; Chen (2001).
18. Israeli Government, 1951, 83–90. Letters from 1949 and 1950 – ISA: 47/c-223/43. *Yediot aharonot*, December 9, 1949. *Ma'ariv*, April 21, 1950. *Dvar hapo'elet*, May 1952. *Omer*, April 10, 1953. *Davar*, April 28, 1955, May 31, 1955. *Geva* newsreels, 1952, 1954, 1955 – SA: VT GE 01, VT GE 05, VT GE 06, VT GE 07. Also see Dowty (2001), 37.
19. *Dvar hashavu'a*, May 19, 1949. *Herut*, April 26, 1951. Rozin (2005), 186–188; Rozin (2002), 110. Compare with Finnane (2008), 209.
20. Letters from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-223/37. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA: VT GE 07.
21. Polley (1998), 35. On the Soviet Union's case see Gradskova (2007), 120–123.
22. Helman (2008b), 108–113.
23. Helman (2008b), 109.
24. On the Israeli emblem see Mishori (2003), 138–164.
25. Meetings protocols, 1952 – ISA: C-4/5548. Photo from *Sport la'am*, August 3,

1952. *Geva* newsreels, 1953, 1955 – SA: VT GE 04, VT GE 07.
26. *Haisha bamedinah*, February 1950. Also see *Dvar hapo'elet*, June 1949. *Ha'olam hazeh*, February 23, 1956.
27. *Haisha bamedinah*, October 1950.
28. *Yediot aharonot: koteret*, March 16, 1951. *Ha'olam hazeh*, March 11, 1954. *Zmanim*, June 10, 1955. Photos from 1956 by Fritz Cohen – NPC: D435-037, D541-079, D541-080.
29. *Hayei sha'ah*, November 26, 1953. *Zmanim*, June 26, 1955.
30. *Zmanim*, June 24, 1955. *Haisha bamedinah*, October 1950, August 1951. *Hazofeh*, December 24, 1954. Yossfer (1955). *Davar*, May 31, 1955.
31. Hentschell (2004), 50, 57; Gordenker (2001), 29; Stannek (2003), 339; Bowlt (1985), 203, 206, 209, 213, 217; Gradszkova (2007), 118, 140; Finnane (2008), 209–210; Guenther (2005), 99–103, 200–201, 275–276; Paulicelli (2004), 142–143; Gori (2004), 169–175; Stitzel (2005), 54, 58, 63–65, 68; Stitzel (2008), 274.
32. *Al hamishmar*, August 24, 1950. Also see *Dvar hashavu'a*, December 14, 1950.
33. For instance see Shalom (1993); Katz and Paz (2004).
34. *Haaretz*, December 20, 1949.
35. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-222/31. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-223/38.
36. Raz (1996), 67–76, 125–163.
37. *Ma'ariv*, November 21, 1949.
38. *Ma'ariv*, March 31, 1949. *Yediot aharonot*, December 5, 1949. *Haboker*, July 6, 1952. Letter and protocol from 1956 – JCA: 2030/91/29, 1751/16.
39. Horowitz and Lissak (1990), 241, 250, 252, 256; Barak and Sheffer (2010), 33–34.
40. Drori (2000), 31–32; Levy et al. (2010), 147.
41. Helman (1999), 195–196.
42. Drori (1995), 609–610; Drori (2000), 32, 100–176.
43. Bar-On (1999), 65, 71, 83–84, 89–91.
44. Drori (2000), 100–123; Raz (1996), 159. Cover photo in *Kol yisrael*, December 14, 1950. Photo from 1949: NPC: D208-010. Illustrations in *Ma'ariv*, September 30, 1949; *Bamachaneh la'oleh*, January 10, 1950. Ads in *Beterem*, January 1949; *Ma'ariv*, December 3, 1950; *Jerusalem Post*, July 24, 1952. Independence Day greeting, *Dvar hashavu'a*, April 10, 1950.
45. IDF (1956), 18.
46. *Dorot*, October 20, 1949.
47. *Geva* newsreels, 1951, 1953, 1954 – SA: VT GE 02, VT GE 05, VT GE 06, VT GE 07. Photos in *Bamachaneh*, May 10, 1951, April 16, 1953, December 23, 1954, April 18, 1956; *Ha'olam hazeh*, May 13, 1954; *Dvar hashavu'a*, October 12, 1950. Radai (1956), 158–161. Letter from 1953 – IDFA: 641. On the Independence Day parade see Azaryahu (1998), 69–92. Also see Brownfield-Stein (2010), 311.
48. For example Kimmerling (1993); Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari (1999); Drori (1995); Sasson-Levy (2006); Cohen (2010), 243.
49. Roche (1994); Holman (1980), 9; McVeigh (2000), 39; Hunt (1996), 109. Also

- see Martin (2004), 228; Craik (2005), 119-120; Fussell (2002), 186; Wilson (2003), 35; Johnson and Lennon (1999), 7 n. 9.
50. Protocols and letters from 1948, 1949, 1950 – IDFA: 12, 7, 528, 529. Letter from 1950 – ISA: 47/c-15/224. *Ma'ariv*, May 18, 1949. And compare with the delayed production of Red Army uniforms in the Soviet Union – Bowlt (1985), 208.
 51. Letters from 1950 – IDFA, 263.
 52. Letters from 1950, 1951 – IDFA: 7, 263, 630, 635, 637.
 53. Letters from 1950 – IDFA: 7, 263, 629.
 54. Protocols from 1949 – IDFA: 529. *Bamachaneh*, September 27, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1951 – SA: VT GE 03.
 55. Correspondence from 1950 – IDFA: 629, 630. On the history of khaki see Newark et al. (1996), 10–14; Alber (1999), 125–129; Craik (2005), 37–38.
 56. Photo from 1953 – NPC: D374-070. *Geva* newsreels – SA: VT GE 02, VT GE 03, VT GE 05, VI GE 06. *Bamachaneh*, March 23, 1950, June 1, 1950, December 21, 1950, May 6, 1954, December 16, 1954. Photos from *Dvar hashavu'a*, June 29, 1950, July 20, 1950; *Ashmoret*, May 10, 1951. Protocol and letters from 1949 and 1950 – IDFA: 528, 429.
 57. Letters from 1949, 1950, 1951 – IDFA: 12, 526, 528, 632, 635, 641.
 58. Craik (2003), 142; Craik (2005), 49; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 122; Hill (2004), 72.
 59. *Bamachaneh*, January 18, 1956.
 60. *Bamachaneh*, September 15, 1949.
 61. Drori (2000), 65–99. *Ma'ariv*, August 10, 1949. Ad in *Al hamishmar*, January 14, 1949. Military uniforms are associated with heroism, and therefore civilian fashion seasonally adopts military elements, in particular during military conflicts, see Craik (2005), 48-49; National Maritime Museum (2007); Mansel (2005), 77–129; Moser (1998), 210; Mendes and de la Haye (1999), 122; Hill (2004), 72; Craik (2003), 142.
 62. Protocol, letters, and military regulations from 1949, 1950 – IDFA: 7, 528, 630.
 63. Letters and correspondence from 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1956 – IDFA: 130, 424, 526, 529, 637, 640. *Geva* newsreels, 1952, 1954 – SA: VT GE 01, VT GE 06. Illustration in Schor (1956), 233. *Dvar hashavu'a*, July 15, 1949. Photos and illustrations, *Bamachaneh*, July 19, 1951, September 23, 1954, March 6, 1956.
 64. Roche (1994), 228–229, 238–239; Wilson (2003), 35.
 65. Gilad and Megged (1957). Also see Bar-Or (2010).
 66. Horowitz (1993), 48–49.
 67. Gelber (1996), 459; Almog (1997), 176–186; Keren (2004), 11–12, 22.
 68. On the Palmach and the Kibbutzim see Spiegel (2010), 76-77.
 69. Cover photos in *Dvar hashavu'a*, July 26, 1951, August 9, 1951. Ben-Amotz and Hefer (1956); Hefer (1956).
 70. Bar-On (2006), 477, 482–483, 485, 488.
 71. Cartoons in *Bamachaneh*, September 8, 1949, November 11, 1949. *Geva* newsreels, 1954 – SA: VT GE 05. *Ashmoret*, July 20, 1950. *Bamachaneh*, September

14, 1955.

72. Almog (1997), 338–339.
73. *Bamachaneh*, April 4, 1950.
74. Letters from 1951, 1952, 1953 – IDFA: 635, 637, 639.
75. Cartoons in *Bamachaneh*, June 16, 1949, September 22, 1949, November 16, 1950, January 1, 1952, July 6, 1955, *Dvar hashavu'a*, February 24, 1949. *Bamachaneh*, March 10, 1955.
76. Cartoon in *Bamachaneh*, September 22, 1949.
77. *Bamachaneh*, September 15, 1949. Also see *Dvar hashavu'a*, December 7, 1950. *Ashmoret*, May 24, 1951.
78. Letters from 1949, 1950, and 1951 – IDFA: 300, 364, 632, 633, 635, 636. *Geva* newsreels, 1952 – SA: VT GE 01. Cover photo of *Bamachaneh*, June 1, 1955.
79. Letters from 1952 and 1953 – IDFA: 101, 640, 641. Photos from *Dvar hashavu'a*, August 9, 1951, August 16, 1951.
80. Mosse (1985), 114–115. On the difference between men and women as a combination of nature and socialization see Bradley (2007), 17, 21, 24; Lips (2008), 83–85; Pinker (2004), 423–429; Gribbin and Gribbin (2000), 290–291, 308–314; Workman and Reader (2004), 92–94.
81. Hillman (1999), 66–67; Fussell (2002), 11, 14; Craik (2005), 12.
82. Craik (2003), 139; Steele (1996), 180.
83. Eicher and Roach-Higgins (1993), 21; Young (1993), 267, 269, 273; Hillman (1999), 69–76, 78–79; Craik (2005), 12–13, 50, 80, 88, 90, 92–93.
84. Craik (2003), 142. Also see Johnson and Lennon (1999), 5.
85. Rosenberg-Friedman (2003), 122–123.
86. Sasson-Levy (2006), 41. And compare with Evans Clements (1985), 220, 227.
87. Letters from 1949 and 1950 – IDFA: 528, 632. Photos in *Bamachaneh*, June 22, 1950, April 8, 1954, April 18, 1956; *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 8, 1951. *Geva* newsreels, 1956 – SA: VT GE 08.
88. For instance, *Dvar hashavu'a*, February 17, 1949, April 12, 1949. And see Brownfield-Stein (2010).
89. Letter from 1949 – IDFA: 529.
90. Letters from 1950, 1951, 1953 – IDFA: 630, 633, 637, 641.
91. *Bamachaneh*, October 19, 1955. On the struggle for allowing women soldiers to wear pants, see letters from 1951 and 1952 – IDFA: 638, 639.
92. Cartoon and cover photo in *Bamachaneh*, May 8, 1952, June 9, 1952.
93. Roche (1994), 233.
94. Cartoon in *Bamachaneh*, July 22, 1950.
95. For example *Jerusalem Post*, December 4, 1953. *Yediot aharonot*, July 6, 1956. *Dagesh*, July 1953. *Herut*, October 14, 1955.
96. *Bamachaneh*, June 22, 1950, September 28, 1955, April 4, 1956. Cartoons in *Bamachaneh*, July 17, 1949, November 3, 1949, May 4, 1950, December 7, 1950, July 24, 1954; *Ashmoret*, January 26, 1950. Ad in *Jerusalem Post*, July 24, 1952. Photo from 1955 – NPC: D369-055.
97. *Dvar hashavu'a*, March 23, 1950. Cartoons in *Bamachaneh*, February 9, 1950,

- December 7, 1950; *Ashmoret*, March 6, 1952. *Yediot aharonot*, March 18, 1949. *Bamachaneh*, April 3, 1952. And see Brownfield-Stein (2010), 315-316.
98. Sasson-Levy 2006, 13–14, 35; Almog (1997), 209–210; Raz (1996), 159. Photo from 1950 – NPC: D384-023. *Ma'ariv*, July 16, 1954. Cover photo in *Bamachaneh*, April 11, 1956.
99. See Bell (1976), 148; Black (2004), 36–37. On a similar “tolerance” of male vanity in the sphere of sports see Shannon (2006), 186–187.
100. Letters and correspondence from 1949, 1950, 1952, 1956 – IDFA: 7, 130, 424, 632, 639.
101. Roche (1994), 228–229, 238–239; Wilson (2003), 35.
102. Compare with Gradsikova (2007), 119; Finnane (2008), 230–244; Paulicelli (2004), 76–77.

Conclusion

When the cartoonist Fridl went to study for a while in Paris, she sent back a cartoon portraying the difference between the dress styles in Israel and Paris: on the top a single “Parisian in Israel” stands out among the stout and simply clad Israelis; on the bottom a single “Israeli in Paris” stands out among the slim, elegant, and fashionable Parisians.¹

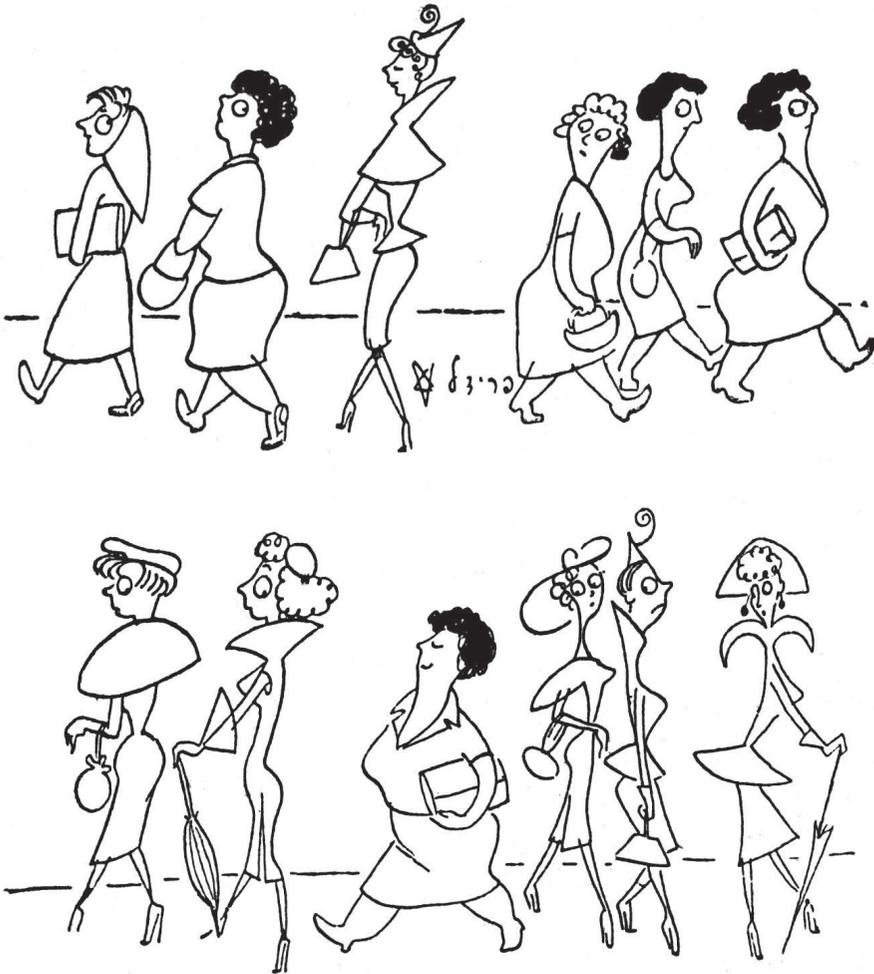


Figure 6.1: Cartoon by Fridl in *Tafrit*, December 1950.

The Israeli women are depicted as aesthetically inferior when compared to their stylish Parisian sisters, but a closer look reveals that the Israeli woman in Paris is smiling contentedly. She, like the cartoonist who drew her, seems proud in her Israeli simplicity and informality rather than humbled or frustrated by the presence of fancy and more elegant foreign alternatives.

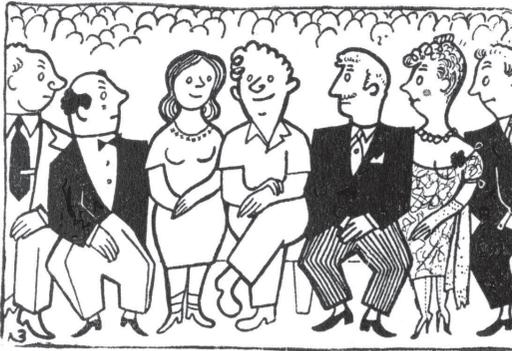
Indeed, in 1950s Israel, the austere model of dress became identified as the typical and representative Israeli national dress, particularly for men but also, to some degree, for women. This specific style, associated with the Sabras and their native culture, was widely though informally recognized as reflecting Israeli authenticity and quintessence.² The male journalist, who wondered in 1954 whether there exists a men's fashion in Israel, ended his article with a strong support of the austere model of dress:

Of course the Israeli style of dress will be created by the country's conditions and by the sons of the country—the Sabras. Only that part of Jewish Diaspora literature that is regarded as interesting and important by the sons of the country would eventually be included in the term “Hebrew literature”; similarly, after one generation, only that style of dress, which the sons of the country regard as beautiful and comfortable, would abide.³

Although his article outlined the actual heterogeneity of men's dress in Israel, the journalist ultimately resorted to the familiar melting-pot ideal: Israeli diversity is but a temporary stage, and the end result was a unified national culture, expressed in a unified style of dress. The writer expressed the prevailing Israeli notion of the time, according to which the Sabras were the “real” Israelis and therefore they should determine the face of the revived nation, including its dress.

The growing dominance of the austere model of dress during the 1950s is also portrayed in a cartoon by Dan Gelbert, titled “A Concert in the City.” The first upper panel shows a concert in 1935—the Yishuv era—and the second panel shows a concert in present-day 1953 Israel. The audience is composed of the very same people, albeit eighteen years older. In both panels the central couple draws general attention due to their distinct, contrasting clothes. In 1935 the audience attends

the concert wearing urban, elegant, modern evening dress. But the central figures are pioneers, probably members of a kibbutz, and even when visiting the city and attending a concert, they maintain their simple attires and hairstyles. Eighteen years later the Israelis have changed their dress, and now they all wear simple clothes, not unlike those worn by the pioneers in 1935. However, the former pioneers have in the meantime left their agricultural settlement. Their extravagant clothes and groomed hairstyles indicate that they now have a lavish lifestyle, probably overseas. Once again they visit a concert in the city, but whereas in 1935 they stood out in their simplicity, in 1953 they stand out with their luxurious formality, among the simply clad Israelis.⁴



... 1935



... 1953

Figure 6.2: “A Concert in the City.”
From Gelbert (1954), 10.

Other historical sources confirm the sartorial change that is implied in the cartoon: the simple and informal dress, associated during the pre-state era particularly with the pioneers, had become much more common and general in Israeli society, even among urbanites, and even at “dressy” occasions such as concerts.⁵ Whereas a distinct national fashion was only apparent in “Maskit,” and the emerging “folk costume” was restricted to dance performances, the austere model of dress had become an actual visual symbol of Israeli-ness.

The austere model of dress—echoing the heritage of the pioneers and evoking nostalgia for the pre-state era—presented Israeli identity as the local elite aspired it to be. It was suited to the Eastern climate without being Oriental; it was modern, practical, devoid of luxury, and signaled ideological commitment to national priorities. Alternative styles were regarded as either primitive or foreign and decadent, and therefore they were not perceived as “authentically” Israeli and did not endanger the supreme status of the austere model. Only in later decades, when Israeli society was going through further noticeable changes, did alternative modes of dress compete with, and later overcome and replace, the austere model. Israeli informality was maintained, but it was now embodied in different, non-austere and less nationally-unique, styles of dress, such as the “hippy” or sportive alternatives.⁶

However, we should keep in mind that even at its peak, the austere model of dress never existed as the sole model of dress in Israel. Israeli sartorial culture enveloped several different ideals of beauty, contained a range of various styles, and the following of cosmopolitan fashion was never entirely absent, economic and climatic constraints notwithstanding. Even in its earliest and most centralist days Israeli society—as reflected in its dress culture—was far from uniform.

1950s Israel is commonly described in absolute and definite terms—centralist, isolated, military, and grey. By focusing on dress as part of material culture and as a daily practice, this research depicts a more heterogeneous, complex, messy, and colorful historical reality:⁷ the centralist ethos, though hegemonic, was not unchallenged; the impact of the rationing regime varied in different segments; the melting pot policy was only partly successful; informal cultural trends persisted even in institutions such as the army; and the emerging national Israeli identity was far from insular. From its inception, Zionism aspired to combine modern European ideals of citizenship and universalism with the

unique Jewish tradition.⁸ Similarly, in the field of clothes we can trace a continuous tension between attempts to blend into cosmopolitan trends on the one hand and to maintain, or to create anew, a national singularity on the other.

During the “Girl of the Year” contest, held in Paris and sponsored by *Elle* magazine in 1956, one of the events was attended by Prince Rainier III of Monaco and his newly wedded wife, movie star Grace Kelly. As part of the ceremony, Princess Grace was presented with a jewelry box containing tiny dolls meant to represent the countries of the contestants, and Israel was embodied by “a doll of a pioneer dressed in shorts.”⁹ Ofira Erez, a pretty woman, represented the young state of Israel in this fashionable, glamorous, international event, but significantly a doll in the shape of a simply dressed man of labor was chosen to emblemize the Israeli nation.

Nationalism, argues Anthony Smith, is not just a political ideology, but also a public culture. National identity operates both on an individual level, where it can exist alongside other collective identities, and on a collective level, where communities can share persistent cultural elements, embodied in memories, values, symbols, myths, traditions, rituals, food, dress, etc.¹⁰ Historian Hedva Ben-Israel notes that in daily life we rarely encounter the abstract idea of nationalism, though we often meet its multiple mundane expressions. Nationalism is not based solely on its rhetorical manifestations, but also on more banal demonstrations that shape one’s lifestyle.¹¹ Dress is an everyday routine performed by all citizens, and therefore a fruitful prism from which to view national culture. As this book reveals, clothes certainly played a part in the Israeli project of nation building on the explicit, formal level, as well as the implicit, informal level. Both these planes, in addition to some correspondences and conflicts between them, composed the emerging Israeli culture.¹²

NOTES

1. *Tafrit*, December 1950.
2. Compare with a similar development in the case of the Australian frontier dress: Maynard (1994), 180.
3. *Lagever*, January 24, 1954.
4. Gelbert (1954), 10.
5. *Dvar hashavu'a*, September 22, 1950. *Yediot aharonot*, December 16, 1949. *Haaretz*, July 24, 1953. *Ma'ariv*, November 1, 1954. *Herut*, January 6, 1956.
6. For examples see Raz (1996), 171-192, 220-239, 261-263.
7. On such contradictions within modernity see Landy and Saler (2009), 3-7.
8. Ben-Israel (2004), 101; Don-Yehiya (1995), 176, 180. Also see Biale (2002), xxi.
9. *Ha'olam hazeh*, May 17, 1956. Also see Gundle (2008), 217-218, 222-224.
10. Smith (2001), 18-20, 33-34.
11. Ben-Israel (2004), 3, 7, 25, 118, 168, 398.
12. On the various levels that mold national identity see Wilk (2002), 69-70.

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	Axelrod Newsreel Collection
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
HMA	Haifa Municipal Archive
IDFA	IDF Archive
ISA	Israeli State Archives
	Jabotinsky Archive
JCA	Jerusalem City Archive
KAA	Kibbutz Afikim Archive
KALA	Kibbutz Alonim Archive
KHA	Kibbutz Hazorea Archive
KKAA	Kibbutz Kiryat Anavim Archive
KKL-JNF	Jewish National Fund's Photo Archive
NNL	National Library
NPC	National Photo Collection
PC	Poster Collection, Manuscript Department at the National Library
RKMA	Religious Kibbutz Movement Archive
SA	Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archives
SCA	Shenkar College Archive, the Rose Collection of Clothes and Textiles
TAA	Tel-Aviv–Jaffa Municipal Historical Archive
YTA	Yad Tabenkin Archive

Newspapers and Journals

- Al hamishmar*
Alonekh
Ashmoret
Baderekh
Bamachaneh
Bamachaneh la'oleh
Beterem
Dagesh
Davar
Dorot
Dvar hapo'elet
Dvar hashavu'a
Epoca
Frontpage
Gazit
Haaretz
Haboker
Hador
Hadshot sport
Hahed
Haisha
Haisha bamedinah
Hamaor: biton neshei agudat yisrael
Hamodi'a
Ha'olam hazeh
Hasport haleumi
Hava laisha velaofnah
Hayei sha'ah
Hazofeh
Hedei hanegev
Herut
Hu vehi
Jerusalem Post
Kolno'a
Kol yisrael
Lagever
Laisha
Ma'ariv
Matzpen
- Min ha'ir el hakfar*
Omer
Palestine Post
Rimon
Sheluchot yotzei teiman
Smol - Shavu'a Tov
Sport la'am
Sport yisrael
Tafrit
Tevel
Yalkut lessivim vetekhnologyah shel tekstil
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Yediot aharonot: koteret
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In recent decades, a group of second-generation religious Zionist West Bank settlers have turned away from the collectivist political messianic ideology of the first generation of settlers and have begun to explore poetry as a mode of individual self-expression. Based on interviews of eight key figures in this new trend and an analysis of their poetry, *Beyond Political Messianism: The Poetry of Second-Generation Religious Zionist Settlers* tells the story of how they revolutionized the religious Zionist settler culture by moving poetry into the mainstream of that culture and how they introduced into the world of secular Israeli literature images and language drawn from their lives as religiously observant Jews. Among the themes central to these poets' concerns are: the formation of a religious identity based on faith and ritual observance, the relationship of the contemporary Jew to the Bible and to traditional Jewish texts, appropriate ways to write about erotic experiences, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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