

***Cultural Encounters by Means of Artifacts of Faith and Religion:***

***The Tel Aviv Central Bus Station***

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**Abstract**

*In this paper we will discuss the ways artifacts and visual representations of faith and religion reflect and create cross-cultural encounters in Israel. These artifacts and visual representations are found in great quantities among other cheap and popular goods in the central bus-station in Tel-Aviv, located in a large three-storey mall. Since its opening in 1992 the mall has become a popular meeting place for low-income working people and commuters representing diverse cultural groups: Israeli-born Jews and immigrants of various ethnicities; Christians, Muslims, Druze and temporary Asian workers.*

*Our research revealed a multitude of artifacts, images and symbols, including ritual objects, stickers and icons related to different faiths and religions; objects of mysticism and magic, Jewish, Christian, Asian and New-Age visual representations, displayed side-by-side and sometimes together on one stand. They transmit messages of different types: aesthetic, mystic, magical, moral, missionary and national (Jewish/Israeli). They are found throughout the mall and concentrated in various focal points such as synagogues, fortune-tellers' stands, Habad stands (an ultra-orthodox Jewish stream whose members persuade Jewish males who pass by to perform a ritual prayer), in restaurants and in commercial stores and stands where they are displayed for sale and for the sellers' personal use. The cross-cultural encounters in the station-mall created through these representations are complex. They bring together cultural elements from the west (North America and Russia) and the East (the Middle East and Southeast Asia) and also reflect the transformations that these so-called authentic sources have undergone in a global world.*

## Introduction

In this paper we discuss the ways artifacts and visual representations of faith and religion both express and create cross-cultural encounters in Tel-Aviv's Central Bus Station. The central bus station in Tel Aviv is located in a large three-storey mall, which is a dynamic, cross-cultural meeting place. Two main types of encounters take place in the station-mall:

- a. An encounter between entities that represent Israeli institutional culture: The designers, builders and managers of the station *vis-à-vis* the station's users. By and large, they could be classified as belonging to middle-class or low socio-economic groups, and could be regarded as representing Israel's popular culture.
- b. The second encounter is among the users of the bus station, who are a variety of buyers, salespeople and commuters. This encounter is manifested by a multitude of artifacts and religious objects and symbols, both for sale and for the sellers' personal use. Since its opening in 1993, the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station has become a popular meeting place for people of diverse cultural groups, most of whom belong to lower socio-economic classes. They include Jews of diverse ethnic origin, Christians, Muslims, Druze and many labor migrants from Asia.

This article is based on a study of multitude of artifacts, images and symbols, which include ritual objects, stickers and icons associated with different faiths and religions, mysticism and magic. These artifacts are displayed among other cheap and popular goods throughout the bus station-mall.

We attempted to establish the respective semiotic roles of the various artifacts in the context of the social and cultural environment of this station-mall and to examine the ways in which they facilitate cross-cultural encounters. The complexity of these encounters is manifested by what seems to be the influence of New Age culture on traditionally Eastern and Western cultural elements (Ban 2006; Hanegraaff 1998).

### Everyday culture and the material-visual culture

The concept of "culture" is by definition, a complex one. In his article on popular culture, historian Peter Burke (1984) emphasizes that culture is an open system characterized by different kinds and nuances of interactions between groups and individuals. Hence, the dichotomous model of high versus low or popular versus elitist culture does not reflect twentieth century reality. According to Burke, contemporary culture can be said to be a combined popular/elitist culture, consisting of a variety of trends. He further notes that in most cultures, cooperation between popular culture and

institutional culture is achieved by means of *negotiation*.

In the late fifties, Hoggart (1957), Williams (1958) and Thompson (1963) presented a new approach to the study of culture which emphasized research of everyday practices. They suggested a new anthropological definition of the notion of culture as an expression of everyday life. They emphasized the ordinary and the mundane and the way rules and commonly accepted ideas develop in a social context.

As a result, the definition of the notion of *culture* which is either explicitly used or presupposed by current cultural research pertains to everyday values, norms, rules and principles devised by communities. People of the same cultural group can interpret their lives and act in a way that enables them to understand and relate to each other and to their environment. Cultural research should therefore address the following issues:

- The institutions that produce or construct culture
- Movements and groups from which the everyday culture as well as the material-visual culture develop
- The relationship between material objects and their respective cultural manifestos
- The ethnic identities of cultural products and the ways in which they express meaning.
- The way traditions deal with the social order as well as with social changes.

In his book about everyday practices, Michel de Certeau (1984) investigates what he calls “ways of using.” He comes out against cultural research that marginalizes users and relates to them as being dominated, passive or submissive entities. De Certeau investigated what he called “consumer tactics” and the “victories of the weak over the strong”. That is, he interprets the ways users manipulate the conditions imposed on them by the ruling institutional powers. Users adopt practices through which they reorganize space for themselves. These practices are actions undertaken by the silent majority, which is heterogeneous and is often divided into groups operating in the physical space that institutional systems have provided them with. They redefine and redesign this space.

"Material-visual culture" is a term originally used in archaeological studies. It refers to the remains of buildings and many different kinds of artifacts. These archaeological artifacts reflect everyday life, economic and technological achievements, as well as the beliefs and concepts that characterize the excavated culture. Whereas cultural researchers used to differentiate material culture from intellectual culture, Burke (1984) opposed this differentiation and contended that

culture is a social phenomenon which comprises all aspects of human life. That is, culture includes both intellectual achievements as well as various kinds of artifacts and performances.

Research on material-visual culture is usually based on artifacts from archives or museums. These artifacts are usually displayed as folkloristic items and as objects that are disconnected from the context in which they were used. In our study, we examined the artifacts in their natural context and environment, thus revealing their authentic function.

### **An encounter between the institutional culture and the users' culture**

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two types of cultures have coexisted in the Jewish community in Palestine and in the State of Israel. One type of culture is the heterogeneous popular culture consisting of diverse "ethnic cultures", which the Jewish immigrants brought from their countries of origin. The other culture is an "official popular culture", created by the elite as a unified national culture and suggested as an alternative to the "ethnic culture" (Shavit & Sitton 2004). We believe that yet another type of popular culture arising from everyday encounters and interactions between diverse religious communities within the same space has developed in the Tel-Aviv station-mall.

Tel Aviv's new central bus station opened in 1992, replacing the old bus station that had been in use since 1942. The old, open-air station had become too small and congested. The entrepreneurs and planners of the new station had intended to construct a large, prestigious building based on a Western model. To quote a newspaper interview with the architects: "The new central bus station is built like a city under one roof, an ecological bubble of clean air, with all the possible delights..." The bus station's team of engineering experts, based in New York, copied the American model, enlarged and adapted it to the new bus station and incorporated the optimal solutions" (Dor 1993). The article goes on to state that acoustic walls would be built like "...in noisy metropolitan cities throughout the world, such as in Japan and Canada". Thus, the new bus station was built in accordance with the culture that the establishment wished to impose on the area and its potential users. The aim was to replace the old bus station and the "low" culture associated with it.

Once it opened for business, however, the bus station changed its character and adapted itself to the needs of its users in an ongoing and dynamic process of *negotiation* in the Burkian sense. This is clearly apparent in the stalls set up throughout the bus station and the incursion of merchandise into areas outside the shops. In contrast to the prestigious shops designed by the architects based on a Western model, the stalls and the merchandise they sell have turned the Tel Aviv Central Bus

Station into an oriental bazaar.

Another example of this encounter between the institutional culture and the users' culture is an improvised synagogue named *Keter David* (literally, the crown of King David) arranged in two deserted garment shops in the southern side of the station-mall. The original plan for the station-mall included a Sephardic synagogue which was run by the owners of the station-mall. This synagogue is now locked because the users of the station-mall preferred their own synagogue established by the station-mall's merchants, who had raised money for this purpose.



Fig. 1 - The *Keter David* Synagogue: Entrance

The *Keter David* Synagogue is open most of the day for prayers and religious studies and in some way functions as a community center for all Jews, regardless of their ethnic affiliation. Except for women, for whom no special section has been allocated, the synagogue serves Jews from different religious sects and ethnic groups. It has become a center for prayer and for the study of religious texts, a quiet place for people to rest as well as a distribution point for charity. The synagogue is decorated with pictures of various Hassidic rabbis, such as the Sephardic Rabbi Baba Sali, and the Ashkenazi Lubavitcher Rabbi and Rabbi Nachman of Breslau. In addition, in one corner of the synagogue, there is a table with piles of pamphlets and brochures which present the views of rabbis from a variety of religious factions on different religious and moral issues. On one of the walls,

there is a bulletin board with announcements on the prayer schedule, religious lessons, and telephone numbers for those in need.

The above two examples – namely, how users of the station-mall redesigned the commercial area and how they determined the special multi-ethnic character of the synagogue – demonstrate that users can manipulate the conditions initially imposed on them by institutional powers.

### **A Cultural Encounter by Means of Artifacts of Faith and Religion**

The Tel Aviv Central Bus Station contains a large variety of artifacts and ritual objects expressing various images and symbols associated with mysticism, magic and several religions. Specifically, they represent Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Asian and New-Age symbols, ideas and concepts which are displayed either separately or side-by-side in one stand. They convey messages that are aesthetic, mystic, moral, national (that is, either Jewish or Israeli) or missionary. These objects are found throughout the mall and are concentrated in various places such as the *Keter David* synagogue set up by the merchants in the bus station, the two fortunetellers' stands, in restaurants, as well as in stores and stands.

In our study, we examined the artifacts and various visual images by conducting a semiotic analysis based on Barthes' (1957) semiology which he used in order to decipher cultural phenomena.

#### ***The signifiers***

By definition, the system of artifacts and visual images at the station-mall is a two-fold one, since it comprises various objects, some of which also include a variety of visual images. The artifacts and visual images constitute signifiers which can be described as follows:

**a.** There are two different kinds of artifacts that can be said to have a religious function. Some artifacts are mainly intended for ritual and mystical purposes. Examples are, *mezuzahs*, various kinds of talismans, *hamsa* charms against the Evil Eye, waterfalls, cards, stones, crystal balls, candles, skullcaps, holy books and Psalm booklets, books on mysticism – that is, Kabala – and on alternative medicine à la New Age.

Other artifacts are ordinary objects such as posters, stickers and jewelry which also propagate religious beliefs by means of visual images, such as pictures of saints and rabbis or other religious symbols. Some artifacts contain holy texts or use Hebrew letters in a biblical style.

**b.** Another phenomenon witnessed at the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station was that of visual images changing their respective roles depending on the particular context in which they appear. For

example, the image of the Madonna and Child appears on a poster that is sold as a religious object in a shop owned by Christian Filipinos. On the other hand, in a nearby stationery shop owned by Jews, the same image appears on a Mother's Day card also intended for Jewish customers and does not have the religious function it has in a Christian context. Another example is a poster with the image of Rabbi Nachman from Breslau on the wall behind a fortune teller's stall next to her name, even though fortune-telling is rejected by Orthodox Judaism. Although the image of Rabbi Nachman from Breslau is a popular one, it is usually displayed in shops or synagogues that do not contradict the values or beliefs of the Orthodox religious establishment.

c. The same object often contains many different images from various sources. Common examples are *hamsa* charms. The *hamsa* (which has the shape of a hand with five fingers, hence the name *hamsa*, which means 'five' in Arabic) is originally a Muslim symbol of luck used as protection against the Evil Eye. There are *hamsas* with images of angels derived from Christian Renaissance art (such as "The Sistine Madonna" by Raphael), while other *hamsas* contain the image of the *Baba Sali* Rabbi, the Moroccan Jewish leader revered by a large community in Israel (Bilu & Witztum 1993)). The picture of this Sephardic Rabbi looks like that of a Christian saint decorated with roses in baroque/rococo-style. Other *hamsas* contain stones which, in New Age culture, are considered to have magical properties.

d. Another phenomenon is that of invasion as it was, that is, the use of secular images on religious objects and, on the other hand, the appearance of religious images on everyday objects belonging to the secular realm. One example is an ordinary pen which is transformed into a talisman because it has a scroll inside it with a prayer for the road next to a picture of Rabbi *Baba Sali*. A similar type of intermingling is found when religious, and nationalist or militaristic values come into play on skullcaps that are decorated with symbols representing different branches of the Israel Defense Force (IDF). Elsewhere in the station-mall, we found a poster which showed an IDF soldier holding a military cap with a large Yin/Yang symbol inside it.



Fig. 2 - A poster of an Israel Defense Forces soldier who has the Yin/Yang symbol inside his hat.

e. In spatial terms, religious artifacts and visual images appear in the spaces of several ethnic communities and their specific shops. Moreover, such artifacts and visual images are available to consumers from different communities who can also buy them in shops selling non-religious articles, such as household utensil shops, gift shops, stationery shops, or bargain stores that sell “Everything for \$2”. This is not the case in ordinary malls, where, for example, a shop specializing in household utensils would not carry such religious artifacts.

For example, Christian labor migrants from the Philippines, who have created an area of their own in the station-mall, sell talismans with Jewish texts, such as the “Prayer for the Road”. Similarly, the same metal wine goblets, produced by a local company, are sold as objects to be used for Jewish rituals at the stall selling Jewish religious artifacts as well as at another stall specializing in objects from the Far East, where they are sold for use in Christian rituals. In the latter stall, these goblets are placed alongside miniature waterfalls, typical of Asian Buddhist cultures, which have also become part of New Age culture. The same waterfalls are shown in a sign advertising another store for Jewish religious artifacts. Similarly, various versions of the *hamsa* charms are used and sold by almost every shop or stall owner in the station-mall. For instance, they are sold at the stalls for Jewish religious artifacts as well as at a gift shop that also sells household utensils. Another

example of this phenomenon is prayer books and Psalm booklets. They are displayed alongside books on Jewish mysticism – called *Kabala* – and alternative medicine from Jewish sources (e.g., Maimonides) and of the New Age type. These articles are displayed for ritual purposes in the synagogue and at the Chabad stall as well as at the fortune tellers' stalls. These books are displayed and sold both at the stall selling Jewish religious artifacts as well as at a café whose owners are Druze – a religious group whose beliefs combine ideas from Islam, Greek philosophy, Gnosticism Christianity, among others, and are kept secret.

### ***The signified***

In order to define the signified of the artifacts and visual images mentioned above, one must take into consideration the ways in which they derive from various historical and iconographic sources which have been revived and have undergone filtering.

For example, symbols such as Yin/Yang and objects like the miniature waterfall stem from Asian religions and have undergone filtering through New Age culture. New Age culture is itself an amalgam of beliefs based on Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. New Age culture is a cultural import from America, and is also part of the youth culture imported directly from Asia by young Israelis returning from trips to India, Thailand or Nepal (Mishori 2000). In the last fifteen years or so, it has become very common for young Israelis to travel to the Far East or South America after their military service.

Ichnographically, the pictures of rabbis mentioned above are derived from European paintings of Christian saints from the Byzantine period, the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Romantic and pre-Raphaelite paintings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The popularization of this tradition and its appropriation by kitsch culture is what forged the connection between the pictures of rabbis and these icons (see Kulka 1988 on definitions of *kitsch* and Bilu & Ben-Ari 1992 for a discussion of pictures of Jewish rabbis as kitsch icons). This kitsch culture is also exemplified by various posters or as visual images which appear on objects, such as puzzles, furniture or jewellery imitating such styles as that of Israeli designer Michal Nagarin, who makes expensive jewelry sold in her chain of shops in Europe and in the United States. (Nagarin, 2006). Another example is the pictures of angels on many *hamsas*. These angels are direct references to Rafael's painting, "Madonna Sistina" from the year 1514. They also appear on many commercial objects and in advertising all over the world. For example, this image is found in the logos of many different companies or puzzles/games (Alljigsawpuzzle 2006).

As noted above, the objects and the visual images on many of the artifacts evoke a large variety of cultural and historical sources from many periods. A similar phenomenon is that of mixing or juxtaposing the holy and the profane as well as images and objects sacred to different religions or cultural groups. Both of these phenomena serve to convey a complex system of meanings which are often ambiguous. In the discussion below, these phenomena will be analyzed in terms of the visual images employed and by referring to the spatial distribution of these objects or images in the station-mall. It is important to note, however, that in many cases, the distinction between these two dimensions is not always so clear since both may be at play.

Regarding the combination or juxtaposition of various visual images, the question that arises is whether this enhances the mystical power or the sacredness of the respective artifacts or whether their religious impact is thus diminished. For example, when Rafael's angels appear on *hamsas* in the context of a stall where Jewish religious artifacts are sold, it is not clear if the combination of Rafael's angels, which belong to Christian iconography, and the *hamsa*, a Jewish artifact, increases the mystical potency of the *hamsa*, or whether the appearance of the religious image of angels on the *hamsa* actually dissociates them from their Christian source and now merely has aesthetic appeal. Another example is that of a *hamsa* with a picture of the Rabbi Baba Sali decorated with Baroque style roses.



Fig.3 - The stall selling Jewish religious artifacts: a *hamsa* with a picture of the Rabbi Baba *Sali* decorated with Baroque style roses.

A similar question also applies to the opposite case, when an everyday object devoid of any religious or ritual significance, such as a pen, is employed as a talisman because it contains a picture of the Rabbi Baba Sali and the “Prayer for the Road”. That is, does this combination turn the pen into something sacred or does it diminish the Rabbi Baba Sali’s holiness?

Another function of the combination or juxtaposition of various visual images is to assert one’s ethnic and religious identity. One such example is found in a music shop owned by Ethiopian Jews. The owners have put up a picture depicting the Abu Hatzera rabbinical dynasty from North Africa next to an Ethiopian banknote, and a *hamsa* containing a blessing for the owner’s business that is set in stones with magical powers. The picture of holy rabbis functions both as a magical spell for the shop’s success, as well as a sign of the owner’s religious identity as a Jew. According to the owner of the shop, the religious leaders of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel (called *Kesim*) forbid displaying pictures of *Kesim* as religious icons, which is why he chose to display a picture of rabbis usually associated with Moroccan-Israeli Jews instead. This shows how Ethiopian Jews attempt to integrate into the complex social and religious mosaic in Israel. Similarly, skullcaps

decorated with symbols of the IDF's various branches are commercial goods sold at the stall for Jewish religious artifacts. At the same time, in addition to their ritual function, these skullcaps are signs of the wearer's national, social and religious identity.



Fig.4 - Music shop owned by Ethiopian Jews: a picture depicting the Abu *Hatzera* rabbinical dynasty from North Africa next to an Ethiopian banknote.

The second dimension which must be discussed is the spatial distribution of artifacts or images in the station-mall. The various objects and visual images acquire different meanings and functions depending on the physical context or place where they appear. For example, the Jewish holy books have different meanings and functions in the synagogue as opposed to the fortune teller's stall. In the latter context, the holy books have three different functions. They serve a) as a blessing for the fortune teller's business; b) as tools for communicating with higher powers; c) as an expression of her personal religious identity as a Jewish fortuneteller.

Another example is the pictures of Christian saints or Jewish rabbis. In some places they function mainly as commercial goods, while in other places they act as magical objects designed to protect

the business and its owner. They also allow the owner to express his or her social and religious identity. Similarly, in the stationary and gift shop owned by Jews, posters of the Madonna and Child sold together with Jewish artifacts are merely commercial goods. In contrast, in a jewelry and gift shop owned by Christians from the Philippines, posters with Christian images are both sold and displayed in the shop window to indicate the owners' social and religious identity.



Fig. 5 - Stationary and gift shop owned by Jews: posters of the Madonna and Child sold as Mother's day greeting card.

### *The signs*

The above analysis of signifiers and signified reveals several **signs** that characterize the popular culture which has evolved organically in the setting of Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station.

The main **sign** associated with this popular culture appears to be a complex web of multicultural images related to faith and religion. Within this multicultural web, we detected several salient cross-cultural connections. These connections reflect the dynamic, tolerant human encounter that takes place in the commercial area of this particular station-mall.

The second **sign** is that there seems to be a sharpening of religious identities in conjunction with the intercultural encounter that occurs at the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station. Evidence for this sharpening of religious identities is the existence of focal points belonging to different communities. However, through the intercultural encounter at the station-mall, people also assimilate identity symbols belonging to other groups. This provides them with a broader range of means to express their own identity.

The third **sign** is that the popular culture of the kind that is evolving at the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station is an example of the popular version of the New Age spirit. The main characteristic of the New Age spirit is its capacity to accept and combine philosophies and elements from various cultures. New Age culture, in itself a Western phenomenon, adopts practices deriving from Eastern philosophies and mysticism, as well as from monotheist religions and European pagan traditions. Examples of manifestations of the New Age Spirit at the station-mall are the *Keter David* synagogue. As noted earlier, it is open to people from both Sephardic and Ashkenazi traditions (that is, Eastern and Western traditions, respectively) and exhibits visual images from both traditions. Other examples of the New Age spirit are stalls for magic, astrology and other fortune tellers using cards and coffee which coexist with institutionalized religion.

The New Age spirit also seems to be responsible for the way nationalism is combined with religious images (e.g., skullcaps decorated with symbols of the Israel Defense Forces and the IDF soldier who has the Yin/Yang symbol inside his hat). As noted earlier, the simultaneous sharpening and blurring of identities reflects the development of a unique popular culture in the local conditions of this station-mall. The need to strengthen cultural identities can be understood as a phenomenon of by-passing or even rejecting some aspects of the official “institutionalized culture” imposed from above by the country’s social elite. Whereas the blurring of identities seems to be a direct outcome of the interactions among the station-mall’s diverse communities of users, it may also reflect the avoidance of traditional officially imposed ethno-folkloric popular culture, creating instead a new popular culture in the spirit of the New Age.



Fig. 6 - The stall selling Jewish religious artifacts: skullcaps decorated with symbols of the Israel Defense Forces.

### Summary

In this paper, we have analyzed interactions among users of the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station by examining material and visual culture, which expresses various aspects of religion and faith. We suggest that the interactions among users at the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station have resulted in a multicultural environment. This environment reflects the development of a new popular culture in this particular place, which differs from the official “institutionalized popular culture” (as manifested in the original plan for the station-mall) and is not guided by national ideology. Nor is it imposed from above by the country’s social elite. In addition, this new popular culture differs from the ethnic cultures originally brought to Israel by various immigrant groups.

What characterizes this new popular culture that has developed at the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station is that it is common to various groups of Israelis: Jews from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, Muslims, Christians, Druze, Buddhists as well as believers in Hinduism. Nevertheless, these groups each continue to adhere to their original religion.

Another characteristic of this new popular culture is the blurring of the traditional cultural distinction between “East” and “West.” Daily life in the bus station shows how these terms can no longer be used to generalize about such vastly different cultures and religions. In the case of the station-mall described in this paper, the concept “East” seems to apply to Asian, or what is usually labeled as the “Far East,” the “Near East”, some groups from the former Soviet Union as well as Ethiopia. Likewise, the term “West” seems to include such diverse components as secular Russian culture, the East European culture of Hassidic Jews, and the New Age culture emanating from the United States.

A question for future research that is raised by this study is whether this new popular culture is unique to the specific setting of Tel Aviv’s Central Bus Station or reflects cultural changes in Israeli society as a whole.

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## **Biographical Statements**

*Dr. Malka Ben-Peshat* is a senior lecturer in the Design Arts Department Teachers College of Technology in Tel-Aviv. She has a background in Byzantine art and architecture and was a Fulbright Scholar at the UCLA art and design department. In 1994 she was the initiator and a founding member of the Middle East Design Forum for dialogue and cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian architects and designers. In 1996 she was the founding chair of the Design Arts Department and led the building of its B.Ed. curriculum. At present she is the head of a M.Ed. program on "Visual Literacy in Education".

She currently teaches in the areas of history and theory of Design, on design and cultural identity, exchanges between design, art and architecture. She has written a text book for high school students and many curricula for high school level in the history of design, art and architecture. She has written articles on design as material culture, sustainable design, and design education in Israel.

*Dr. Shoshana Sitton* is a senior lecturer at the Levinsky College of Education and at Tel-Aviv University at the School of Cultural Studies. Dr. Shoshana Sitton is one of Israel's foremost authorities on the History of Jewish Education. After receiving her degrees in General and Jewish History at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Dr. Sitton received her M.A. at Tel Aviv University in Educational History and Philosophy. She then went on to write her thesis on "Education in the Spirit of the Homeland"(1995). She is author of *Education in the Spirit of the Homeland: The Curriculum of the Teachers Council for the Keren Kayemet (JNF)*. (Tel Aviv University, 1998 [in Hebrew]). She is also the co-author of *Staging and Stagers in Modern Jewish Palestine: The Creation of Festive Lore in a New Culture, 1882-1948* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2004). She has written numerous articles on Jewish Education and on the invention of festivals and ceremonies in the history of Hebrew culture. At the present she is leading a research project into the History of the

Jewish kindergarten.

At present, Dr. Malka Ben-Peshat and Dr. Shoshana Sitton are conducting a research project into the Popular Culture in Israel as represented in the Central Bus Station in Tel-Aviv.