

ISRAEL

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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Summaries

Nir Kedar

New Perspectives on the Establishment of the Israeli Legal System

This article argues that from the first day of independence, Israel's legal system was autonomous and the state authorities acted according to positive written laws that were formulated in a universal language and implemented in a general manner. Despite the state of war, the demographic revolution and the deep economic crisis, legal and social stability were safeguarded in the new State of Israel. The existence of formal law and an effective legal system contributed, of course, to the creation of a law-abiding society and to the inculcation of a legalistic culture and consciousness. But the very fact that the basic requirements of the rule of law were honored by the legal authorities and the elite also demonstrates that a rather developed legal culture already existed in Israeli society prior to the foundation of the state. Without such a culture it is doubtful whether democracy and the rule of law could have matured and been sustained in the harsh circumstances within which Israel was established.

Eyal Katvan and Nadav Davidovitch

Health, Politics and Professionalism: Medical Examination of
Jewish Immigrants to Palestine, 1925-1928

The article focuses on two instances when physicians were dismissed from their position as medical examiners in the Warsaw Eretz Israel office in 1925–28. These two related episodes serve as a case study for placing the medical examination of Jewish immigrants to Palestine by the Zionist movement in a broader social, political and professional context. Apart from their important public health function, Zionist physicians and administrators viewed the medical examination as an important vehicle for acquiring political and professional authority, which created constant tensions among political, ideological and medical considerations. An analysis of the various interests involved can help to understand the interaction between Zionism and public health during a decisive period when the basis for the medical selection of immigrants by the Zionist movement was being laid.

Anat Helman and Yael Reshef

“The Voice of the First Hebrew City to Its Residents”:
Municipal Posters in Mandate Era Tel Aviv

This interdisciplinary study combines textual-linguistic and contextual-historical readings of municipal posters from 1920s and 1930s Tel Aviv. It covers a wide range of urban topics and municipal activities—bread prices, market stalls, public gardening,

beach clothing, public events and the use of Hebrew. Faced with the unprecedented task of running an autonomous town in Hebrew, Tel Aviv municipality made flexible and effective use of the revived language in communicating bye-laws, orders, announcements and requests. By closely analyzing a few examples, the study demonstrates a strong correlation between the posters' topics and goals and their various styles.

Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern

Mothers on the Front Line: The Struggle for "National Consumerism" and the Conflict Between Gender and Nationalism

In Mandate Palestine, as elsewhere, consumption was linked to labor relations and productivity, and was perceived by the Zionist leadership as a weapon to be used on the "front line," i.e., the Hebrew economy. By politicizing goods and products, the Zionist establishment aimed to reinforce national unity and class solidarity among members of the Yishuv. This article analyzes the consumption campaign it waged in the mid-1930s, its mode of operation, and the role women played in it, both as consumers and activists. As consumers, women were viewed in two inherently contradictory ways: as vital allies in the national endeavor, and as potential rivals. Women who chose to buy imported goods sabotaged the Zionist efforts and as such deserved to be sanctioned, but if they chose wisely and with national awareness, women consumers could promote the Zionist enterprise. Women activists, in their efforts to influence consumption habits, did not hesitate to use extreme measures against those who violated the dictates of national consumption. However, the campaign to purchase Hebrew goods highlighted the gap between the women's elite and the rank and file, the wives of the less affluent workers. The article considers, among others, what motivated the women activists to oppose the basic needs of their less fortunate comrades; what mechanisms they employed; and to what extent the consumption campaign benefited women in particular and Zionist society in general.

Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman

Identities in Conflict: The Case of *Shlihot* (Female Emissaries) to Europe after the Holocaust

This article presents the story of the *shlihot* (female emissaries) who were sent to the displaced persons camps in Europe after the Holocaust to perform both Zionist and humanitarian tasks. The *shlihot* were of various ages, and included both single and married women, even some mothers. They came from both kibbutzim and towns; some were religious, others secular. What they all shared was a desire to contribute to the national enterprise and their willingness to pay the heavy price of being cut off from Palestine and their families and to undergo difficult physical and emotional experiences. They also had to deal with the conflict between various female identities. On the one

hand, the very fact that women served as emissaries challenged the traditional female role; but on the other hand they were assigned to perform traditionally female humanitarian tasks. The case of the *shlihot* sheds new light on the processes that shaped the image of the “New Hebrew Woman” in Mandate Palestine.

Zohar Segev

Does Money Talk? The Struggle over the Control of Zionist Funds in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s

In the 1920s and 1930s, American Zionists had reduced their political involvement in the World Zionist Organization. Toward the end of the 1930s, however, they began to seek to change their standing in the WZO, as demonstrated, in particular, by their demand for control over Zionist funds in America and by the attempt to set up independent financial institutions. A test case for this struggle for budgetary independence from the Zionist Executive was the attempt to set up the American Zionist Bank as part of American Zionists’ repeated efforts to use their economic power to influence the structure of the World Zionism Organization and developments in Palestine.