Landscape and Ideology: the Emergence of Vernacular Gardening Culture in Pre-state Israel

Tal Alon-Mozes and Shaul Amir

Dr. Tal Alon-Mozes is a landscape architect and teacher on the faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. Dr. Shaul Amir is The Joseph Meyerhoff Professor in Urban and Regional Planning at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. He is a landscape architect and a regional planner.

Abstract: *This article discusses the emergence of Hebrew vernacular gardening culture in the Land of Israel-Eretz Israel since the late nineteenth century up until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. As a vernacular gardening culture, typical of immigrants who made their new home in a new country, this culture is unique as it is a "cultural invention." Its creators are characterized by a lack of gardening heritage. This article, based on the socio-semiotic theory for defining culture, deals with five topics: identification of the roots of the vernacular Hebrew gardening culture of pre-state Israel; the role of the Zionist ideology in its development; the contribution of cultural agents and local establishments in its promotion; and finally the uniqueness of Hebrew vernacular gardening culture. The article examines a variety of sources, such as remnants of gardens, plans, building guidelines, photographs, memoirs, and newspapers, as well as children's and adult literature.*

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

The Vernacular Garden as a Component in the New Hebrew Culture

This paper examines the development of vernacular gardening culture in pre-state Israel as part of the broader phenomenon of building a new Hebrew culture. Vernacular Hebrew gardens appeared in the landscape of Eretz Israel since the late nineteenth century. They were small, modest, and hidden from the documenting eye and public awareness, but they were extremely meaningful both for their creators, and for the local establishment and its cultural agents. They flourished in the new agricultural settlements as well as in the newly built neighborhoods.

While other aspects of Hebrew culture, such as language, literature, and theater, were broadly examined and studied, research on the Hebrew gardens is limited to studies on gardening in the agricultural settlements (kibbutzim) (Enis and Ben Arav 1994; Hargil 1993).

The paper addresses five issues; the first section reviews the roots of the Hebrew vernacular gardening culture. It describes the relationship of traditional Judaism to its immediate physical environment, to the Land of Israel-Eretz Israel, and to the concrete reality of the Land of Israel to where the immigrants arrived. The second section discusses the Zionist ideology and its role in fostering gardening culture. The third section focuses on the contribution of various cultural agents in boosting vernacular gardening culture. The fourth section discusses the contribution of the founders of settlements and towns to gardening activity. The final section analyzes the uniqueness of Hebrew vernacular gardening culture.

The vernacular garden is generally a small garden, planted and cultivated by amateur gardeners who either own or rent plots of land for this purpose. The process of creating and nurturing the vernacular garden is more essential than the final product. The garden is based on local or imported vegetation, on incorporating ideas from do-it-yourself literature, and on the gardener's personal skills and abilities (Hunt and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1993). This paper examines the vernacular garden as reflection of local population identity, especially those of immigrants in their new country. This subject was discussed by various researchers who studied gardens of Afro-American immigrants (Westmacott 1992), Portuguese immigrants (Butler 1987), and Asian immigrants in the United States (Giraud 1990, pp. 166–171). The research field of vernacular gardens and landscapes was influenced mainly by the studies of J. B. Jackson (1970, 1980, 1984), Bernard Rudofski's research on vernacular architecture (1964), and the emerging field of culture studies and especially folk culture. The conferences on vernacular gardens sponsored by the prestigious Dumbarton Oaks Institute in 1990 and 1994, and the subsequent publications (Hunt and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1993) opened up new horizons for vernacular garden researchers. Currently, vernacular garden research develops into a distinct discipline that parallels research on canonic gardens. It examines historical, cultural, anthropological, political, and social aspects of gardens from the past and up until present day, as well as methods of documentation, and their relationship to current practice (Helphand 1995).

This paper perceives the vernacular garden as cultural product and adopts the socio-semiotic concept of culture (Even-Zohar 1980, pp. 165–189; 1996, pp. 373–381; 1979, pp. 287–310). According to this concept, these gardens, similar to other cultural products, contain a repertoire of options, such as differ-

Landscape Journal 21:2–02 ISSN 0277-2426
© 2002 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System

ent vegetation species, built elements, types of spaces, methods of use, and meanings. This repertoire is organized into distinct models, which compete for control and status. Leading individuals and cultural agents have an influence on the acceptance or rejection of the models.

Culture is a mechanism that creates a collective identity for social and national entities. When the Zionist movement was established in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, one of its objectives was to foster the Hebrew cultural system. Zionism wanted to restore the Jewish nation to its land of birth, Eretz Israel, and have the Jewish nation become like other nations with its own territory and culture. Zionism evolved, in part, from a denial of the Diaspora experience. It rejected fundamental elements of culture as it developed in Europe for almost 2000 years, and sought to create a new Hebrew culture that would conform to the new life of the nation. The components of this new culture were debated by the Zionist movement's leaders, in the Zionist congresses since the beginning of the twentieth century.[1] History shows that the process of creating a new Hebrew culture in the Land of Israel involved a struggle among cultural components. These include components related to the traditional Jewish culture, the evolution of modern ideas, the infiltration of local elements, and those originating in neighboring cultures (Shavit 1996, pp. 327–346).

The sources for this research are various texts: old plans and photos, archive documentations, memory books, literary sources, and others. Therefore, the perspective that defines the garden as a text was preferred in order to analyze these sources. Critical reading and interpretation of these texts creates the text of the Hebrew vernacular garden.[2]

Affinity to the Land of Israel

Judaism attitude toward the environment. Judaism had an ambiguous attitude toward nature. Nature as a manifestation of the god's power was glorified, but when the admiration of the trees was identified with idol work, it was rejected. The people who occupied the land of Israel during biblical times belonged to an agricultural community. As farmers, they were very close to their physical surrounding and nature. But when they were expelled from their country, most of them lost affinity to their physical surroundings. In Europe, the Jews lived mostly in small, dense Jewish settlements and towns—"shtetels" and Ghettos. They earned their living from commerce, were forbidden to own land, and were often property-less. Gardening was not part of their cultural heritage. [In 1895 Germany, more than third of the population farmed and only 0.25% of them were Jews (Enis 1998)]. After many years of exile from their ancestral homeland, most Jews still felt as if they were visitors or foreigners in their living places. Few individuals had a different attitude toward their surrounding, The poets Haim Nachman Bialik (1873–1934) and Shaul Tshernichovsky (1875–1943) both lived in villages and their poetry was influenced by their surrounding nature.

The Land of Israel as an abstract idea and a Utopia. The land of Israel was an abstract idea for the Jewish people in the Diaspora. The biblical description of the "land of milk and honey" was a literary description only rarely accompanied by pictorial images. "Hamizrach," a paper or a card hung on the eastern wall of European Jewish houses, depicted the landscape of Israel. Usually the description included a realistic drawing of holy places in Eretz Israel situated in a schematic setting representing the east. Rolling hills, palm trees, cypresses, and olive trees were the main attributes of these landscapes (Baharuzi 1993).

Zionist propaganda created posters even more unrealistic. The 1929 poster by Ze'ev Raban, urging emigration to Palestine represented the land of Israel as a Japanese landscape decorated by Oriental motifs (Figure 1). Other prevailing images in Zionist propaganda posters depicted Israel as a biblical Arcadian landscape, oriental idyll, modern agricultural landscape, or a deserted land (Arbel 1996). These images paralleled the literary descriptions that appeared in the Zionist Utopia, such as Herzl's *Altneuland* and others (Elboim-Dror 1993).

Similar ambiguous attitude was prevalent also in non-Jewish sources. In the 1580 Buenting Map, Jerusalem was portrayed as a symbol for the entire Eretz Israel. It was described as the center of the world, where Europe, Asia and Africa meet (Figure 2).

In all these representations, the land of Israel was depicted as a utopia which by its definition is both the good place and the no-place (Elboim-Dror 1993). It lacked physical as well as tangible dimensions. Jerusalem, Zion, and the Land of Israel were universal Utopian concepts of yearning for an idealized country, concepts that were not merely restricted to Jews.

Consequently, the roots of vernacular gardening culture were not instilled in the living environment of the Jews in the Diaspora nor in their perception of the Land of Israel as a physical entity. Moreover, their relationship to the Land of Israel as a utopia implied possible directions in shaping the country's landscape.

The landscape of Israel encountered by newcomers. The actual landscape encountered by newcomers was different from their mental perception. Vast areas of the country were a desert. Mark Twain, who visited the Holy Land in 1867, wrote in his book: "'Like unto the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Nothing in the Bible is more beautiful than that, and surely there is no place we have wandered to that is able to give it such touching expression as this blistering, naked, treeless land" (Twain 1869, 1967) (Figure 3).

The local Palestinian "Bustan" garden and the neighboring Christian holy sites and institutions were the exceptions in this landscape of despair. Dispersed throughout the country, these gardens were elaborately described by travelers and pilgrims as oases. Hector Green, who visited the town of Jaffa in 1868,

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

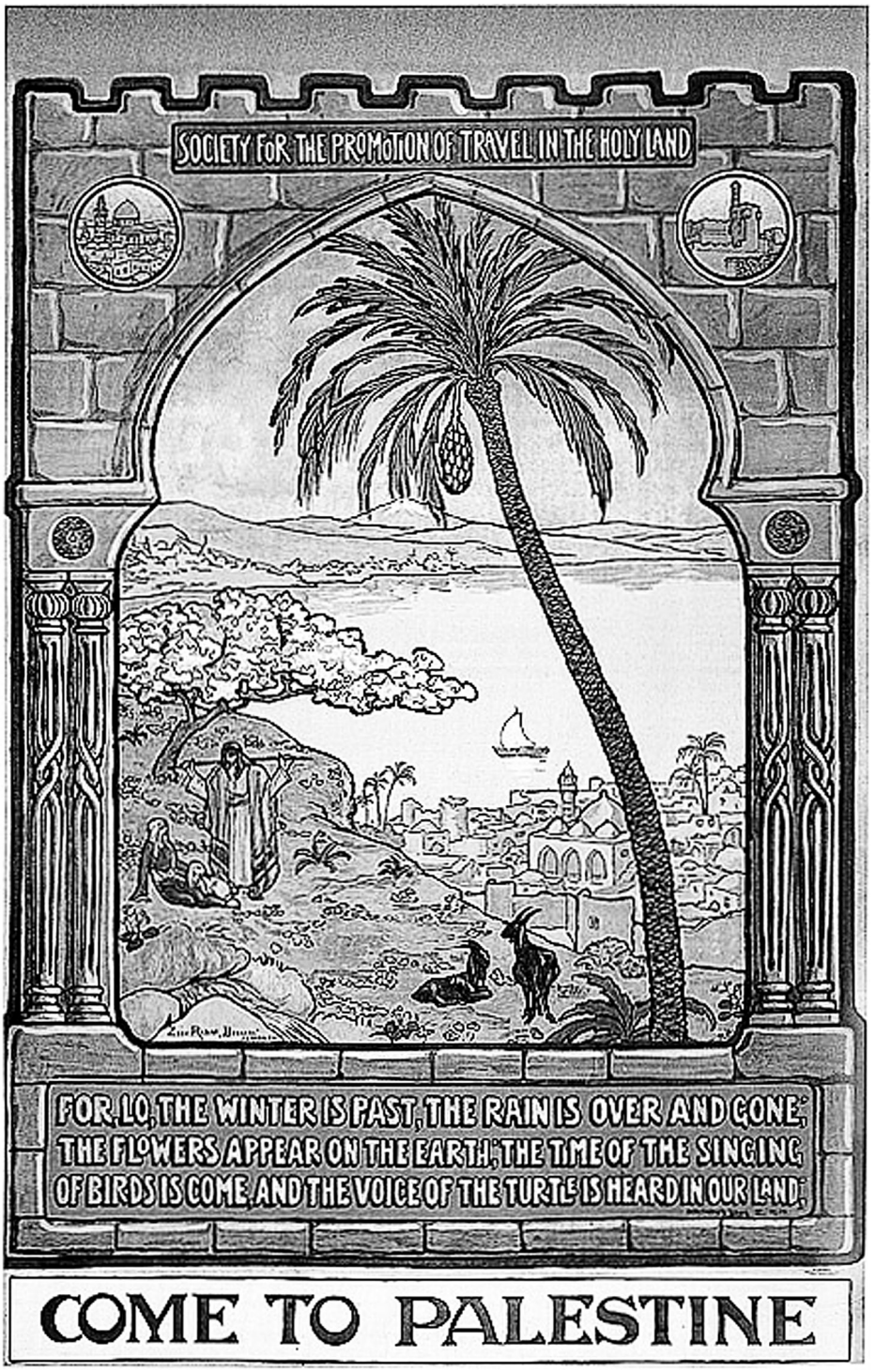

Figure 1. Eretz Israel as a hybridization of Japanese and Oriental images as drawn by the painter Ze'ev Raban for a poster for "the Society for Promotion of Tourism to Eretz Israel," 1929, (Arbel 1996, p. 65).

describes its flowering gardens: "Indeed, who can really stroll through the gardens of Jaffa without immediately feeling the effect of the vegetation with the pleasant odors emanating from every corner of this Promised Land, as it is so described in the Bible. Fragrant lemon, orange and pomegranate trees that blend together their foliage, flowers and fruits in a disorderly manner elicits a magical charm" (Green 1982).

The Bustan garden was a small, walled-in utility garden located adjacent to the house. Within the enclosure, there were orchards of various fruits, vegetables, and herb beds, all for family consumption. The order of these gardens derived from agricultural patterns, but included a great diversity of plants, with only a few of each kind. A water pool and a system of watering ditches irrigated the garden. The garden served as a source of food, and had a social and a recreational role as a place for family and community gatherings (Braudo 1983) (Figure 4). Unlike the Bustan, some of the gardens surrounding Christian monasteries, churches, and even settlements were designed as decorative gardens in the European style adapted to the local Levantine conditions (Figure 5).

The Palestinian Bustan garden and European gardens were part of the gardening repertoire available to Jewish immigrants in the nineteenth century. Other models were brought from Europe: gardens of gentile residents in cities and agricultural settlements, or models that Jews, who had studied gardening and agronomy in Europe, had become acquainted with.[3] An additional source of inspiration were gardens of the Middle East, such as those in Lebanon and Syria that were visited by the country's residents.

The roots of Hebrew gardening lie in many sources. Parts of the available repertoire were adopted; others were partially incorporated or rejected. The outcome is the result of intellectual discourse that included Zionist ideology and the extent of conformity of the models dictated by this ideology. The influence of the Zionist ideology on the creation of a

Hebrew vernacular gardening culture will be discussed in the next section.

Zionist Ideology and the Role of Gardening in Nurturing Landscape Affinity to the Land of Israel

The creation of a bond between the immigrants to Eretz Israel and the land as a physical entity was a main objective of the Zionist movement. Various means nurtured this affinity: rural lifestyle, long journeys to remote areas of the country, periodic agricultural work for youngsters, and development of a new literary style that aimed to rebuild the bond between the biblical landscape and the contemporary one. Gardening was one of these means (Almog 1997).

Zionist ideology found an ideal in farming and physical work. Significant efforts were invested in its realization, through investments of resources, in education, and in the dissemination of verbal and written information to the public. Soon after the first waves of immigrants settled, it became clear that farming would not provide a sufficient source of employment for the country's growing Jewish population. This resulted in redirecting most of the new immigrants to urban settlements. The new reality required alternative means for bonding urban man and the land. Gardening became a substitute for agriculture. Various writers such as the editor of the youth magazine "Hasadeh La-Noar" (*The Field for Youth*), first published in 1943, emphasized this claim:

> "This natural feeling of affinity to the land and everything within it, as expressed in the great love for Mother Earth, is rooted in the hearts of the youth of nations who were not disconnected from their land of origin . . . . We were forcefully alienated from the land and the mutual relationship between us ceased. We mainly need to educate our sons to think 'nature,' to instill in them once again the emotional countenance, the delight of the whisper of the tree, the rustle of the grain. A young boy and girl in the city will find great pleasure in planting a garden near their house, nurturing a flower and

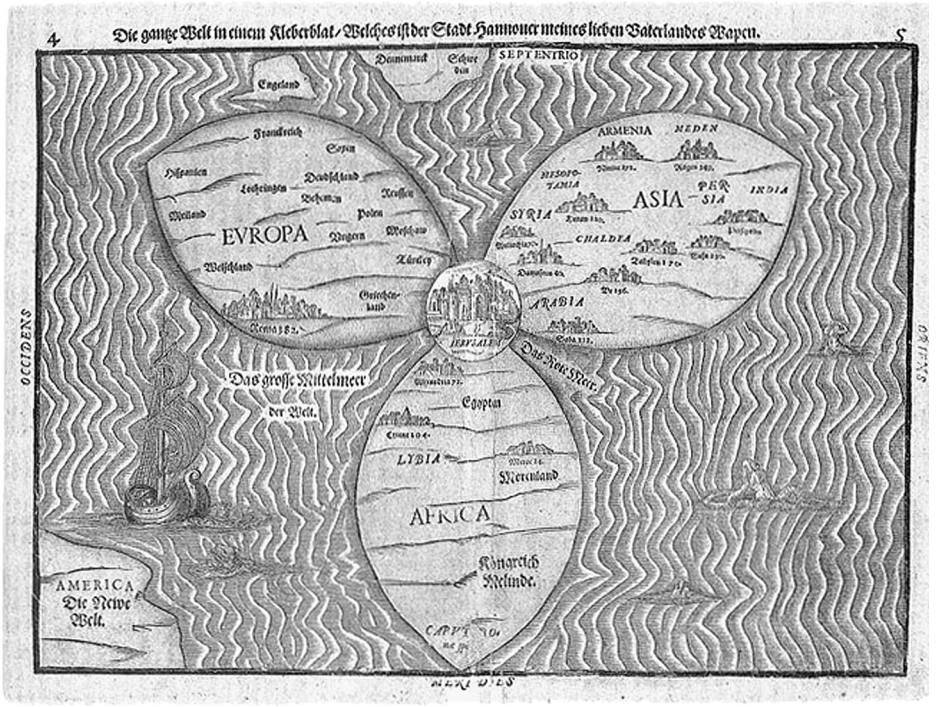

Figure 2. The 1580 Beunting Map. Jerusalem is drawn as the center of the world, where Asia, Europe and Africa meet (Elboim-Dror 1993, p. 146).

Figure 3. Jaffa, looking north. Drawn by the Victorian painter David Roberts on his visit to Eretz Israel during 1839 (Roberts 1839, p.141).

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

green planting. They will experience the delight and serenity of 'sitting under one's vine and fig tree,' the emotional extension in agricultural life, which, out of love for the land, is doubly significant in deepening their roots in the earth and inspiring the nation and the homeland" (Hasadeh La-Noar 1943).

The garden has become a tool in the hands of the Zionist ideologist for realizing its objectives. The fact that different people found different meanings in gardening helped popularize it among many.

Gardening as an expression of affinity to the biblical country. For the Zionist movement, gardening was intended to change the existing landscape and remodel it according to the biblical vision as the "land of milk and honey." During the long years of exile in the Diaspora, this was the image of Eretz Israel that the Jews held. The biblical Land of Israel was a fertile, agricultural land covered with fields of wheat and terraced vineyards. As described by Kohelet, the biblical king of Jerusalem: "I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree. I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees" (Ecclesiastes, 2:5–6).

In recreating these landscapes, newcomers asked to renew the bonds with their ancestral land. Furthermore, the image of the biblical land was one way to materialize the utopian vision. It was a recreation of Eden or Arcadia on Earth. A concrete example of such a utopian garden appears in *Altneuland* (Old New Land 1902), by Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl (1860–1904), the visionary of the Jewish State. The garden of the painter Isaacs, one of the book's heroes, combined Muslim and European gardens with Roman motifs. Built as an inner courtyard, a living room without a roof, it included palms, delicate marble statues, and a broad-based water fountain whose waters whispered sounds of passion (Herzl 1902).

Gardening as an expression of progress and Western superiority. While the roots of these motivations stemmed from the nation's past, gardening was facing its future and realizing the vision of the Zionist fathers to create a modern European state in the Levant. Ebenezer Howard's garden city idea found its way to the old towns of Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa. New settlers who visited World Exhibitions in Europe, or who were aware of new planning concepts as expressed in professional literature at the time, adopted these new ideas in their homes (Weiss 1947). They chose to build their new neighborhoods outside the city walls, and off the dense, dirty streets of their old towns. One of the founders of Tel Aviv writes: "The built area would be just a quarter of the lot area, which must be not less than 1,000 square cubit. All the rest would be planted by decorative trees, seeded by vegetables and every house would be surrounded by green" (Schori 1989). Another settler compared the planned garden suburb to Paris and Vienna.

Gardening as an expression of symbolic land ownership. Gardening was a softened version of the demand for blood, sweat, and tears as prerequisites for land ownership. The growing bourgeois communities of Tel Aviv and other urbanized centers expressed land ownership through gardening. The town architect of Tel Aviv, as did other individuals, posed for a photograph wearing a white shirt, holding a hoe, and putting

Figure 4. A well in a garden (Bustan) in Haifa (Braudo 1983, p. 139).

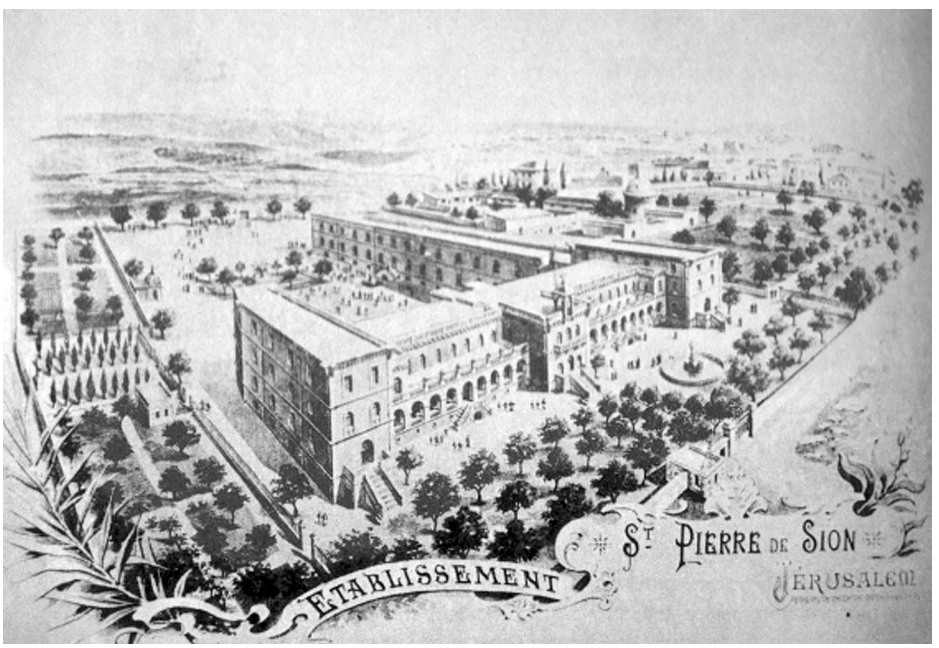

Figure 5. " Etablissement St. Pierre de Sion" in Jerusalem. The drawing exemplifies the style of gardening in Christian institutions in Eretz Israel during the nineteenth century (Ben Arie 1979, p. 389).

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

forth the motions of working in his garden (Figure 6). This symbolic gesture was analogous to that of the Jewish farmer who was portrayed in official Zionist posters typical of the period (Figure 7).

Zionist ideology did not directly express opinions regarding the vernacular Hebrew garden, but the Zionist vision of the garden was expressed in more than one way. The garden represented a modest contribution by urban settlers in conquering the land, and in encouraging Jewish labor and productivity that characterized the pioneering farmers. In the garden, the aspiration for a "native affinity" between the settlers and the land itself was encouraged, mainly by materialization of the utopian biblical vision. On the other hand, gardening contributed to the modern vision of progress and development. It is therefore no wonder that the idea to create a private gardening culture was very popular among settlement founders and cultural agents whose objective was to formulate and disseminate the messages of the new culture.

Cultural Agents Promoting Gardening

Cultural activity among youth and children. The creation of a private Hebrew gardening culture was a process that was initiated and planned by various institutions dealing with building a new Hebrew culture in the country. Initially, the process targeted the young. Toddlers were nurtured by songs and stories about gardening and taking care of gardens. Elementary school pupils, who attended agriculture classes, nurtured the school's gardens within the school's periphery and helped in establishing gardens next to their parents' houses. Youth were engaged in actual agricultural work during summer vacations and were supposed to join one of the agricultural settlements after graduating school.

Stories, songs, fables and tales about gardening adapted for toddlers and elementary school pupils served to convey educational messages regarding nurturing vegetation and gardens as symbols bringing redemption closer.

Figure 6. J. Megidovitch, the town architect of Tel Aviv, posing in his garden with his family (Duvshani 1993, p.23).

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

Figure 7. A drawing of a Jewish farmer on a certificate that certifies a two-trees donation for the planting of Herzl Forest. Berlin 1900 (Arbel 1996, p. 87). Copyright by the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

Tu B'Shevat Song of Peace
On the fifteenth day of Shevat
When spring fills the air
The angel descends, with notebook in hand,
Recording every blossom, every tree, every fabric
And everything planted in our garden.
And when the notebook will be full,
With tree, blossom and bush
When the desert will turn into a field
And our whole country will be a saturated garden—
The Messiah will appear.
(Ha-Sadeh La-Gan Ve-la-Nof 1947)

An identical message is told in a Jerusalem tale about the primrose, which grew in the gardens of Jerusalem. With the upcoming exile, the primrose was uprooted and moved to the hills, and its flowers bent over. Recently, Jerusalem children started to bring back primroses into their gardens "and the flowers wink with pleasure at the children when asked: Has the redemption really come to the Israeli nation and to the primrose?" (Solomon 1934).

Gardening as a rewarding work that bears with it benefits and satisfaction is another message conveyed in children's books. Lazy Anan confessed to his diligent brother Hanan, who brought him to work: "I did not know, my brother, how sweet was the work and how doubly sweet to eat the fruits of one's labor" (Fishkin 1936).

The story of Tamar and the Savion flowers, by Ze'ev (1939) is the most complete and the richest among these sources. It is a wonderful example of creating affinity between a small immigrant child and the land through gardening. Tamar, the story's heroine, came with her parents to live in the "big outdoor" as the writer calls it. Her parents' first step in that great emptiness was to build a hut and then a fence around it. Every morning, Tamar's father went off to sow a field and her mother went to hoe a garden. The essential process of creating a place in the world out of a space is beautifully presented to young children. Heidegger's concept of dwelling (Heidegger 1971, pp. 145–161) becomes a vivid vision for toddlers.

Figure 8. Tamar watering the Savion flower in her garden (Ze'ev 1939).

Figure 9. Bialik's house and garden in an official postcard from the mid-1930s.

Tamar was left at home alone, with no one to play with. Her salvation was a small flower she found near the fence, which became her friend. Every morning, she went to water it and to take care of it (Figure 8). The core of the story is the three-way connection among Tamar, the flower, and the landscape that became familiar. Plant selection in this story is not accidental. The Sancio (Savion) is one of the most common flowers in the country; almost every child recognizes it, and it is easy for a child to put himself or herself in Tamar's place. Moreover, the name of the story's heroine, Tamar (palm tree in Hebrew), is also the name of a very common tree in the local landscape; it is often mentioned in the Bible and symbolizes continuity and firmly established roots.

The youth magazine "Hasadeh La-Noar" tried to internalize these messages by publishing intelligent scientific articles, reviews about ancient agriculture work practiced in the land of Israel, articles on world agriculture, and literature on agriculture and nature (Hasadeh La-Noar 1943).

Literature on private gardens and gardening was used as a popular tool for the dissemination of the idea. In parallel, various cultural agents used personal examples to convey these ideas. The garden of the renowned national poet, Haim Nachman Bialik, which was planted in the mid-1920s, is an example for such an approach.

Bialik's garden as a promotion for the garden idea. The beautiful garden surrounding the bourgeois house of the poet Bialik in the middle of Tel Aviv manifested the new affinity to the Land of Israel (Figure 9). Plant selection, by Bialik himself, emphasized the indigenous, biblical species over imported common plants recommended by the landscape architect that designed the garden (Y. Segal, original plan 1924, Bialik house archive). The location of the garden on the most prestigious street of town and the publicity it received, turned the place into a "model garden" documented on postcards sent abroad. Bialik's writings on gardens and the literary work of his circle of friends emphasized the importance of the garden and helped to disseminate gardening ideas among the general public (Gliksberg 1945).

Bialik's garden also exposed contradictions that characterized the emerging gardening culture of prestate Israel. For the poet, the garden and gardening provided a venue for self-expression. Bialik treated his plants as if they were the offspring he never had. He closely followed the growth of each of his trees, developing a strong affinity to each of them (Fichman 1936). Bialik's longing for the European landscape was manifested in some of the trees that the poet nurtured and in his attempt at creating a cool, shaded European atmosphere. He yearned for the European cherry tree, the lilac, and conifers. Therefore, one can see the garden as an expression of the struggle between the old and the new homes. It was both a garden of retreat and a place of defiance. It served as a pause in the struggle to cast roots into the country's soil and to bear the heavy burden of ideology at all times.

Like Bialik, the amateur gardener Zorfati faced similar dilemmas as described in the book written by his daughter (Zorfati 1982). He also grew a cherry tree in his garden despite the mockery of his neighbors, and succeeded in his efforts. The cherry tree bore fruit for the entire neighborhood, and the blue pool in the middle of the garden represented the fulfillment of his childhood dreams (Figure 10). Bialik was not as successful as Zorfati. He had to comfort himself with the Chile Pine (*Araucaria araucaria*) as a fading echo of the European cedars and firs, and the small pool near the garden fence served as an echo of his childhood

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

Figure 10. Mr. Zorfati working his garden as portrayed in a book by his daughter (Zorfati 1982, p. 79).

dream of a water pool in the middle of the forest.

Bialik's garden represents the style of the mid-1920s gardens of Tel Aviv, planned by landscape architects and diligent homeowners. These gardens, which served as models for other gardens, contributed to the expansion of a gardening repertoire of plant species brought from Europe and from nurseries all over the world.[4] In addition, they introduced new gardening elements such as water pools and pergolas to the existing landscape. These "model gardens" contributed to the enrichment of the existing "Zionist" garden repertoire. They conveyed more personal taste and gained public legitimacy for diversion from the canonic stream of gardening design common to the period.

Tu B'Shevat holiday (Arbor Day). Another contribution to the creation of a gardening culture in the country was the renewal of the ancient custom of the Tu B'Shevat holiday on the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat. The reinstitution of the holiday, which had been forgotten for the duration of exile in the Diaspora, was originally intended for the colonial settlers of the first wave of immigration at the end of the nineteenth century, and later for the entire Jewish community. Historian, writer, and educator Ze'ev Yavitz headed the initiative, perceiving the spring holiday to be similar to First of May celebrations in Europe. In the small settlements, the day became a national holiday in which settlers exchanged gifts of garden vegetables. In 1888, Yavitz proposed to the Baron Edmund de Rothschild (1845–1934) that trees be planted during the holiday. Two years later, he implemented this idea in the settlement of Zichron Yaacov. Tree planting became a central part of the holiday starting from 1907, when the Federation of Hebrew Teachers adopted the custom (Berlovitz 1989, pp. 3–5).

Tu B'Shevat festivities contributed in broadening gardening culture in Israel in several ways. In practice, it led to the development of an extensive educational system around the holiday, which emphasized the value of tree planting. The subject was discussed in schools, children's newspapers, and the general press. On Tu B'Shevat, the Tel Avivian pupils returned home from school with a small plant they were suppose to plant and to grow in their home gardens. A 1934 report by Tel Aviv Municipality states that 10,000 plants were distributed to pupils on the occasion of Tu B'Shevat [TAM - Tel Aviv Municipality archive (4) 2657] (Figure 11).

Today, Tu B'Shevat is primarily associated with tree planting activity, initiated, among others, by The Forestry Department of the Jewish National Fund. The day is perceived as a cultural creation analogous with the private gardening culture, whereby the motivations, the mechanisms, and the acting forces were partially identical.

The next part of this article discusses the practical aspects that helped disseminate gardening ideas. It describes the contribution of the founders of Zionist settlements and

of urban institutions in developing the vernacular garden idea.

Contribution of Institutional Agents to the Gardening Culture

The role of Jewish philanthropists as builders of settlements and gardens. By the end of the nineteenth century, public institutions and individuals incorporated the new urban and rural gardens into the country's built landscape. Lord Moshe Montifiore (1784–1885) and the Baron Edmund de Rothschild supported the idea of gardening in the settlements they established. In the "Mishkenot Sha'ananim" estate, the new neighborhood outside the city walls of old Jerusalem that was built in 1860 by Montifiore, housing units included a small plot of land for planting. To help maintain these private gardens, Montifiore provided the settlers with seedlings and fertilizers each year (Greivsky 1939). The promotion of gardening in new suburban neighborhoods was not unusual. Gardens were popular and their provision was implemented through written building guidelines and neighborhood ordinances.

The creation of new gardens was not restricted to urban areas. They were also part of Baron de Rothschild's new agricultural settlements, "moshavot," established in the late nineteenth century. A typical layout of the street in these settlements included a five-meter setback between the house and the sidewalk (Ben Arzi 1988). This area was turned into a flowering garden by the French-educated gardeners and bureaucrats who managed the moshavot. Many of these gardeners were graduates of the Versailles' School of Gardening. Some of them had previous professional experience from work in Egypt, Algeria, Kashmir, and other Asian and African colonies, where they became experts in plant introductions (Aahronson 1990). At first, the officials' own private ornamental gardens were most exceptional in the moshavot landscape. The settlers, busy earning their living, preferred geese yards to flowerbeds. Competition between the invading geese and the flowerbeds became a source of tension, among others, between the poor settlers and the French bureaucracy (Yavitz 1992, p. 133). Soon after the settlers improved their standard of living, they adopted the frontal garden as an expression of French culture and status symbols. " It is hard to believe that these flowerbeds in front of almost every house, and these shaded boulevards of mulberry trees along the streets, all grew in less than eight years" (Hissin 1982, p. 136).

Figure 11. The first Tu B'Shevat festivity in Ahuzat Bait—Tel Aviv's first neighborhood. Photographed by Soskin, an early photographer of Tel Aviv (Droyanov 1936, p.124).

The development of moshavot gardens was an important contribution to the introduction of the gardening culture of pre-state Israel in two ways. First, these gardens, which were highly documented in the local press, added to the nurtured landscape image of the settlements and became models for new settlements all over the country. Second, French gardeners introduced and acclimatized new varieties, which became an important part of the vegetal repertoire of the period.

Tel Aviv and Geddes plan. In 1909 Tel Aviv was founded as the first Hebrew town along the Mediterranean coast next to Jaffa. Its landscape demonstrates another Zionist institutional project of creating a gardening culture. Named after Herzl's utopian book, *Altneuland,* the plan of Tel Aviv meant to represent Ebenezer Howard's vision of a garden city in the Levant. The first neighborhood's ordinances were aimed at creating a well-dispersed suburban community whose houses were each located in the middle of a 500-square-meter lot. The houses had a three-meter-wide front garden and a vegetable garden in the back (Weiss 1947) (Figure 12).

The rapid growth of the town, especially after World War I, changed its suburban landscape. Massive construction activity and land speculation brought the municipality to invite Scottish urban planner Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) to prepare a master plan for Tel Aviv (1925). He envisioned the town as an orchard. His plan included recommendations ranging from building codes to park locations and school curricula.

Private gardens were the heart of Geddes' town block. The placement of houses in the middle of their lots enabled the development of a

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

fruit tree garden in the front and a vegetable garden in the back. Planted, shaded lanes connected the gardens. Geddes, emphasizing the economic value of these gardens, recommended allocating allotments on fertile land near the town for developing the silk industry. He envisioned the establishment of a horticultural society that would take an active part in promoting these ideas through its youth and senior citizens clubs, and through its gardening exhibitions and competitions. School gardens would be used to educate the community. Geddes' vision for Tel Aviv was a combination of economic efficiency and ethical idealism based on the Old Testament's Judaism. Tel Aviv, concludes Geddes, "assuredly may be, so surely must be, a living and a contemporary evidence of this harmony of thought and action" (Geddes plan 1925).

Dissemination of the gardening idea in Tel Aviv. The first years of Tel Aviv were characterized by a few green areas and plantings, in contrast to the vision of Geddes and the town founders. The town municipality, established in 1921, was responsible for the change. In adopting Geddes' vision, it sought ways to transfer the responsibility for enhancing the city's appearance to individuals and residential groups. The first plantings along the boulevards (Rothschild Boulevard, 1910) and in the public gardens (Grosenberg Garden, 1920) were carried out by the municipality. During this period, town officials also obliged and encouraged house owners to plant gardens, as well as trees along the town's streets. Private gardening was encouraged by legislation, by hidden and overt promotion, by provision of assistance, and by the development of school gardens and demonstration yards for amateur gardeners.

Starting from the mid-1920s, the municipality enacted a bylaw obliging house owners to plant trees in front of their houses and on one third of their available plots [TAM archive (2) 3–99]. By the end of the 1930s, the municipality established the "Tel Aviv Association of Trees and Plants Growers." The role of this association was to help residents to implement the guidelines by organizing and funding the planting.

In addition to the legislative effort, a public campaign encouraged school pupils and residents to take the initiative, as stated in the following 1929 proclamation: "Winter is upon us and the planting season is approaching. Not one house owner should be absent during the plantings. Come, one and all, to help our balding city and cover its nakedness" (TAM Public notice 23/1/29).

As part of this campaign, the municipality, the Hebrew Gardening Society, and other local organizations sponsored competitions among garden owners. Sponsorship by public figures afforded an air of prestige to the promotion of gardening activity. In 1940, Shaul Tshernichovsky, the prominent poet, consented to award first prize in a garden competition held in his name (TAM Archive 4–2645)

By the late 1920s, the establishment recognized the value of recruiting the younger generation, and developed the school gardens project. It involved most municipal educational institutions, mainly the participation of elementary school pupils. Gardening was carried out by the pupils under the supervision of teachers. In addition to these school gardens, a central exhibition garden was established in the heart of town. It provided the opportunity for an additional 1,000 children to participate in gardening (Tel Aviv News 1938/9).

The municipality was also involved in the design of some private gardens, such as the garden of Mr. Ushiskin, a foremost Zionist leader (TAM Archive 2–11). Starting from the mid-1920s, various proposals suggested turning the process into a permanent municipal procedure for the entire population [TAM Archive (2) 3–992]. In practice, the involvement of the municipality was limited to the distribution of tree plants and vegetable seeds (during World War II) to private garden owners [TAM Archive (2) 3–99].

Various voluntary organizations and associations assisted the munici-

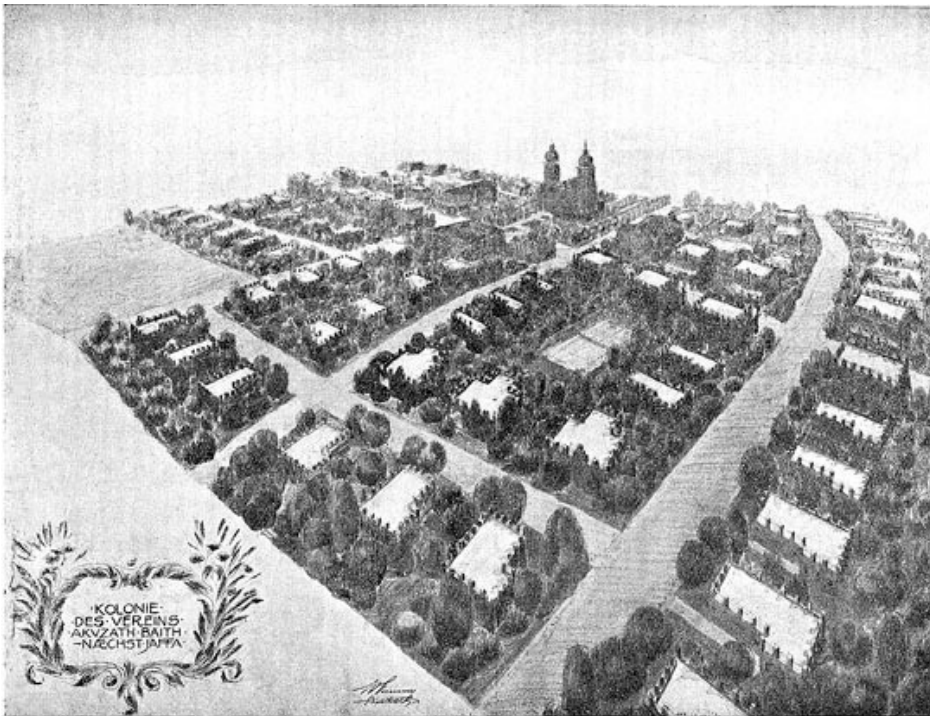

Figure 12. One of the first plans for Ahuzat Bait, as drawn by Stiasni in April 1909. The plan, which was later rejected, demonstrates the vision of the gardens in the new town (Droyanov 1936, p. 104).

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

pality of Tel Aviv in its intensive activities. WIZO—Women's International Zionist Organization—one of the prominent organizations, was responsible for instruction in schools. Organizations such as the "Tel Aviv Association of Trees and Plants Growers," the "Hebrew Gardening Society," "Professional Gardening Organization," the "Institute for the Study of the Nature of the Land of Israel in the Hebrew University," and the "Agricultural Experimental Station" initiated diverse activities. These included the establishment of garden exhibition plots, professional gardening instruction, distribution of seedlings and fertilizers, exhibitions, and competitions among amateur gardeners.

In conclusion, one can evaluate that gardening was a foreign idea for the first settlers of the town of Tel Aviv and required an intensive promotion by the municipality in order to materialize. A photograph of the city, taken in the mid-1920s shows the visual transformation of the city's landscape and the success of the project (Figure 13).

Discussion

The Hebrew vernacular garden that developed in Eretz Israel prior to the establishment of the State of Israel is an example of a vernacular garden created by immigrants in their new land. The uniqueness of the Hebrew vernacular garden lies in the absence of a gardening heritage, a heritage related to the environment and ownership of the land by the Jewish immigrants. This gap was filled by Zionist ideology, which appropriated design and meaning to the Hebrew vernacular garden and even provided concrete models for the creation of this garden.

The roots of the Hebrew garden lie in literary images, spoken traditions and utopian perceptions: Most European Jews lacked practical gardening heritage. The roots of the Hebrew garden were instilled in the spoken and written traditions associated with the distant past (the biblical Eretz Israel) and with the utopian essence, lacking any physical expression. Thus, the vernacular Hebrew garden differed from gardens created by other immigrant groups, which preserved practical knowledge and traditions acquired through experience.

Vernacular gardening culture was one of the means to the creation of a new culture and a new nation. The creation of a vernacular gardening culture in Eretz Israel was part of the creation of a culture covering diverse walks of life, such as language, literature, clothing, food, etc. It involved acceptance and rejection of traditions that prevailed among the people who occupied the Land of Israel, such as the Palestinian and the European residents of the country.

Zionist ideology had a significant influence on the development of the Hebrew vernacular gardening culture. As in other expressions of life and culture in the Land of Israel, Zionist ideology set the rules for creating the gardening culture, at all levels, from the selection of vegetation to the creation of the physical setting of the garden and its meanings. The clear preference for local vegetation stemmed from ideological motives, which affiliated the vegetation of the biblical Land of Israel with the vegetation of the developing country. The urge to nurture the landscape and convert it into a green landscape also stemmed from ideological motives. It was both a quest for restoring the fertile biblical, utopian landscapes, and an expression of progress and modernism. Zionist ideology asked for an active participation in building and nurturing the land; gardening became a legitimate expression of this claim for the urban bourgeoisie, who did not work in agriculture or in other employment that required physical labor.

As the Zionist revolution matured by the middle of the twentieth century, ideological and professional changes brought about a change in the character of private gardening in the country. The Bustan, the local Palestinian garden, lost its dominance. Increased tension between Jews and Arabs resulted in dissociation between the groups and in rejection of the Palestinian repertoire by the new Hebrew culture. Landscape architects who were educated in Europe proposed an alternative repertoire, and European models drawn from literature became more prevalent. The use of imported species from Europe and America was preferred over the local ones. In addition to the ideological shift, changes were due to technological developments, improvements in international contacts, and the new role played by the emerging professional community.

Figure 13. Tel Aviv by the mid-1920s, covered by trees and gardens (Naor 1984, p.77).

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

The vernacular Hebrew gardening culture reflects the struggle between canonic and marginal models. The changes that took place in private gardening culture from the mid-1920s on can be explained as a struggle between two models: those supported by the canonic ideology, and a marginal model developed by amateur gardeners. The first conveyed the result of institutional involvement. The latter expressed people's personal values and attitudes. These individualistic gardens, which occasionally contradicted and defied convention, were termed "defiant gardens" by Helphand (1997). The lilac and cherry tree, the secluded pool and the fountain, for which Bialik and Zorfati yearned, expressed the personal aspect of private, individualistic, gardening culture. It related the individual gardens with a country of refuge—a place to which one could disappear from the importunity of the controlling ideology, a place where an individual could express himself or herself on a personal level. In this garden, doubt could be cast on the success of the great Zionist project, and one could yearn for the landscapes and the scents of distant Europe.

The case of gardening culture in Tel Aviv demonstrates the transformation of the Hebrew culture of prestate Israel and the role of its institution in promoting the idea. Tel Aviv's green spaces of the late 1930s hint at the emergence of the new culture. Comparing the outdoor spaces of the old towns of Jaffa, Jerusalem, and others with the spaces of Tel Aviv reveals the seeds of the new culture. Gardening did not mature as much as other fields of the new Hebrew culture, such as literature, poetry, theater, etc. The lure of a garden, and for physical labor in it, was in the air. Children as well as adults pronounced this claim in various ways. But the vision was very fragile. Economic hardship, shortage of lands, and the lack of gardening tradition prevented the full maturation of gardening culture. The need for a significant investment by the municipality in the private gardening project was an indication of its fragility. On the other hand, professional community evolved, professional magazines appeared, new gardens were created, and new species were acclimatized by new nurseries. Hebrew names and gardening terms were coined to define the evolving new culture. The seeds of the new gardening culture were sown.

Acknowledgment

We wish to acknowledge the financial support provided for the research of this paper by the Vice President Research Funds, Technion-Israeli Institute for Technology, Haifa.

Notes

1. The question of culture was discussed during the fifth Zionist Congress held in Basel, and was also a subject for many discussions and articles by Jewish authors, controversialists and artists. The two main approaches are represented in the works of Martin Buber and Ahad Ha'am, and by the poet Tshernichovsky, the painter Lilian, and others. The first called for a creation of a Hebrew culture based on Jewish tradition, while the others called for a culture emphasizing the contrast between the past and the present (A. Mishori 1986). A third approach attributed the creation of a general culture in the Hebrew language to be a model for the new culture in the Land of Israel (Shavit 1996, pp.327–346).
2. This paper defines the Hebrew vernacular garden as a text. This perspective is mainly based on current approaches to landscape interpretation by cultural geographers and landscape architects (Spirn 1998; Potteiger and Purinton1998; Daniels and Cosgrove 1993; Duncan 1990). The text of the Hebrew vernacular garden is the outcome of a critical reading of various texts. Some of these are closely related to the research topic, including: garden photos, plans, sketches, planting lists, building guides, and various garden descriptions in diaries, memoirs, and other literary sources. Other sources create the contextual field, which includes gardening heritage, landscape perception, landscape art and literature ideology, technology, and local conditions. Integration of these various texts, interpretation of their contents, and their rhetoric create the Hebrew vernacular garden text.
3. The first landscape architects who worked in the Land of Israel during the 1920s studied in Western Europe, mainly in Germany (Berlin, Dresden, and Ahlem near Hanover) In Ahlem, a Jewish horticultural school was founded in 1893 and through 1932 more than 400 students completed schooling there. Thirty-six of them immigrated to Israel and were involved in agriculture and gardening work (Enis 1998, p. 311).
4. Imported vegetation from different countries such as Florida, Australia, Sicily, etc. and its acclimatization are documented in Tel Aviv Municipality archives (TAM archive, 4–2645). The subject was also discussed in professional journals such as Hasadeh La-No'ar, and Hasadeh La-Gan Ve LaNof.

References

Aahronson, R. 1990. *Baron Rothschild and the Colonies—the Beginnings of Jewish Colonization in Eretz Israel.* Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi.

Almog, O. 1997. *The Sabra - A Profile.* Tel Aviv: Am Oved.

Arbel, R. 1996. *Blue White in Colors, Visual Images of Zionism 1897–1947.* Israel: Am Oved.

Baharuzi, N. 1993. *Jerusalem Spirit and Matter.* Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum.

Ben Arzi, Y. 1988. *The Hebrew Colony in the Landscape of the Land of Israel 1882–1914.* Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi.

Berlovitz, Y. 1989. "New holidays." *Yesterdays* 8(3): 3–5.

Braudo, A. 1983. *The Bustan, a Garden of the Past in Today's Landscapes.* Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for a degree of Master of Landscape Architecture. Eugene: University of Oregon.

Butler, F. 1987. "Mappus Mundi: The Portuguese immigrant garden in California." *Places* 4 (3):33–43

Daniels, S., and D. Cosgrove.1993. "Spectacle and Text: Landscape Metaphors in Cultural Geography." In *Place/ Culture/ Representation* Duncan, J. and Ley, D. (ed.). London: Routledge.

Droyanov, A. 1936. *Tel Aviv Book.* Tel Aviv: Committee of Tel Aviv Book Press.

Duncan, J. S. 1990. *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duvshani, G. 1993. *J Megidovitch-Architect.* Israel: Ministry of Defense.

Ecclesiastes, 2:5–6

Elboim-Dror, R. 1993. *Yesterday's Tomorrow:* Vol. A and B. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi.

Enis, R. 1998. "The Impact of the 'Israelitische Gartenbauschule Ahlem' On Landscape Architecture in Israel." *Die Gartenkunst* 10(2): 311–330.

Enis, R., and Ben-Arav, J. 1994. *Sixty years of Kibbutz, Gardens and Landscape.* Israel: Ministry of Defense.

Even-Zohar, I. 1980. "The Formation of Hebrew Local Culture in Palestine 1882–1948." *Cathedra* 16: 165–189.

_____.1996. "The making of culture repertoire and the role of transfer." *Target* 9(2): 373–81.

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002

_____.1979. "Polysystem theory (revised, first version)." *Poetics Today* 1–2:287–310.
Fichman, Y. 1936. "In Bialik's Garden." *Davar Leyeladim* 2(14): 2–4.
Fishkin, A. 1936. "Anan and Hanan." *Davar Liyeladim* 2(13):10–12.
Geddes, P. 1925. *Town Planning Report, Jaffa and Tel-Aviv.*
Giraud, D. 1990. "Shared Backyard Gardening." In *The Meaning of Gardens* M. Francis and R. Hester, (eds.). Cambridge: MIT Press.
Gliksberg, H. 1945. *Bialik, Day by Day.* Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad.
Green, H. 1982. *Description of the Land of Israel and Judah according to the 1868 edition,* (translated by H. Amram), Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi.
Greivsky, P. Z. 1939. *Settlement Beyond the Walls of the Old City.* Jerusalem: Solomon Press.
Hargil, G. 1993. *A Historical Analysis of the Landscape of the Kibbutz Garden,* Haifa: Technion.
Hasadeh La-Noar. 1943.
Hasadeh La-Gan Ve-La-Nof. 1934, 1947.
Heidegger, M. 1971. "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." *Poetry, Language, Thought,* (translated by A. Hofstadter). U.S: Harper and Row.
Helphand, K. 1995. *Vernacular gardens,* presented at Dumbarton Oaks.
_____.1997. "Defiant gardens." *Journal of Garden History* 17(2):101–121.
Herzl, T. 1902. "Altneuland," in R. Elboim-Dror (ed.), 1993. *Yesterday's Tomorrow, Vol. B: A Selection from Zionist Utopias.* Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi.
Hissin, H. 1982. *Journey in the Promised Land.* Tel Aviv: Rozenberg School for the Study of Judaism.
Hunt, J. D. and Wolschke-Bulmahn, Joachim. (eds.) 1993. *The Vernacular Garden, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, XIV.* Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
Jackson, J. B. 1970. *Landscapes: Selected writings of J. B. Jackson,* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
_____.1980. *The necessity for ruins and other topics.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
_____.1984. *Discovering the vernacular landscape.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
Mishori, A. 1986. "Rebirth of Hebrew arts: Ideology, Utopian and Searches." In Graetz N. (ed.) *Observation Point, Culture and Society in the Land of Israel.* Tel Aviv: Open University.
Naor, M. 1984. *The beginning of Tel Aviv 1909–1934.* Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi.
Potteiger, M. and Purinton, J. 1998. *Landscape Narrative.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Roberts, D. 1839, 1979. *The Holy Land.* Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House.
Rudofsky, B. 1964. *Architecture without Architects.* London: Academy Editions.
Schori, A. 1989. *The formation of Tel Aviv, the Birth of the First Hebrew City and Its Growth Between the Years 1909–1923.* Master's thesis. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University.
Shavit Y. 1996. "The lacking and verbal cultural layer: Between 'formal folk culture' and 'informal folk culture' in the national Hebrew culture in the Land of Israel." In. B. Z. Keidar (ed.), *Folk Culture.* Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for the Study of the History of Israel.
Solomon, A. 1934. *Wildflowers and Ploughed Fields,* Israel: Rudin Press.
Spirn, A. 1998. *The Language of Landscape.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
Twain, M. 1869, 1967. *The Innocents Abroad.* New York: Airmont Books.
Weiss, Y. 1947. *The Beginning of Tel Aviv.* Tel Aviv: Ayanot.
Westmacott, R. 1992. *African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
Yavitz, Z. 1992. "Wandering through the Land." In R. Zeevy (ed.), *Wandering in the Land.* Israel: Ministry of Defense.
Ze'ev, 1939. *Tamar and the Savion.* Tel Aviv: Am Oved Press.
Zorfati, R. 1982. *A Chapter in the Life of my Father—The Garden.* Givataim: Masada Press.
Tel Aviv Municipality Archive (TAM). Files: (4)2657, (4)2645, (2)3–99, (2)3–992, 2–11,
Tel Aviv News 38–39, Public notice 23/1/29.

Downloaded from by guest on December 10, 2023. Copyright 2002