

BETWEEN TRADITION AND FASHION

*Garments of Belgrade Jews on photographs,
end of XIX and first half of XX century*

Traditional and Fashion Clothes

The phenomenon of costume is in connection with entire socio-cultural system and the research of the way of dressing is significant since all factors existing in that system influence its creation. As an index of social relations and circumstances, stratification and identity, the costume contains many meanings and could be viewed as a non-verbal system of communications, relevant for understanding of social processes. Being as old as mankind, and even though it arose from the need for protection and warmth, the clothing actually shows the identity of a people, tells us about its religion, interests, feeling for aesthetics and the social status of a person wearing it. Since the way of dressing, in addition to climate, is determined also by the environment with its accepted current style, Jews have nourished a particularity in many spheres of their common lives in Serbian and Oriental environment, but they also received influences from the majority of population. Because of the jobs they engaged in, especially prior to being granted civil rights, they partly resorted to social mimicry, in order not to differ in costume from indigenous population.

The research of Jewish customs, music, costume,

language, mutual relationships and life in general is interesting because of peculiarities which set Jews apart in Serbian environment since despite geographical dispersion, Jews remained faithful to certain aspects of their original cultures based on which they were considered a separate cultural entity. Having in mind that in literature there are no works dedicated to clothing of Jews in Serbia or Belgrade, the aim of this work is to make a reconstruction of traditional and fashion costume. On one hand, fashion maintains a continual process of standardization and introduces innovations in general use, whereas on the other hand, it cyclically returns to old forms in search of stability in traditional shapes.

Sephardic and Ashkenazic

Term Sephardic (Hebrew: Sfarad=Spain) is used to denote Jews who, forced by the Inquisition to leave Spain and Portugal, spread and settled in many Mediterranean and European countries. The Castilian language they used was transformed into Ladino. Despite their strong tradition, Sephardic communities with their characteristics and peculiarities succumbed to natural process of assimilation influenced by the environment sur-

rounding them and also by their internal changes in the scope of historical development. The Jewish costume was influenced by population in whose environment they lived but certain traditional elements and motives were kept.

Ashkenazi Jews (Ashkenaz = Noe's grandchild), who according to antiquity of settlement come before Sephardic ethnical branch (XII century), moved to the Balkans from central European countries, seeking shelter from religious and later anti-Semitic persecution to which they were exposed. They spoke Yiddish, a mixture of German, Hebrew and Slavic words. They wore European civil clothes that unlike the Sephardic costume did not bear any peculiarities. Differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in mentality and languages they used were more prominent than differences in religious regulations, having in mind that Ashkenazi and Sephardic children were taught religion by the same Rabbi. There were differences between Ashkenazis and Sephards in pronunciation of prayers and regarding their way of life, differences were mostly in food. According to the testimony of the interrogated, up until the WW1 there was a barrier to marriages between spouses belonging to different religions, which applied to marriages between Sephards and Ashkenazis also. According to the data from literature, Jewish settlement in Serbia, especially in Belgrade, dates from X century¹⁾ but numerous archaeological artifacts from first centuries A.D. testify of the presence of Oriental Jewish Romaniot. Between

XII and XV centuries, Belgrade was after Thessaloniki, one of the most important spiritual and economic centers of Balkan Jews, with organized religious community and strong connections with commercial centers. Jews settled in the vicinity of Danube, on the lower side of the fortress, on the fringe of Belgrade settlement. That was the location of Jewish settlement-Jalija, where Jews remained for the next three centuries, spreading gradually towards the city, to the vicinity of their shops. By its mentality, language, customs, costume and food Jewish community differed from the rest of citizens.

Legal status of Jews in Kingdom of Serbia, which was part of the Ottoman Empire changed during that long period but as Jews were invited by the Sultan himself, their settlement in the beginning was secure and they were guaranteed personal security as well as security of their property. Turks respected diligence of Jewish merchants and craftsmen, counting on their loyalty which was a lot more reliable than that of their Christian subjects. Jews were able to travel and trade freely and many even rose to positions of counselors in Sultan's administration. Being granted certain civil-legal freedoms, Jews established their community, synagogue, school and developed their cultural activity. They built their identity based on the mixture of certain rules by which they confirmed themselves as a separate community. Identified by faith, respect of religious rules, moral codes, history and laws, they presented a separate entity in Serbian environment. Diligent,

skilful, productive, flexible and on a higher civilization level than indigenous population, they engaged in trade, banking and crafts. The most important political event for Jews was the Berlin Congress in June 1878, when the discussion on recognition of the independence of Serbia was held under the condition that Serbia put into effect principles of religious freedom and guaranteed equality of civil and political rights for all its citizens. After that Congress, the number of Jews grows with every census and community considerably develops. According to the census in 1874, there were 1.754 Jews in Belgrade whereas in 1931 there were 7.906.⁹⁾ As time passed, prejudices against Jews disappeared and cordial relations between them and Serbs were more frequently mentioned in literature, as well as was the Jewish integrity in social, cultural and even political life of Serbia.

Sources of Research

According to the objectivity level, sources are divided into primary and secondary whereas according to types into: material, written, narrative and artistic. For the sake of an accurate information on cultural unity, mutual check up and amendment, it was necessary to use all available sources. In relation to the costume of Belgrade Jews, sources consist of rare written parts of studies whose primary subject is not costume research, photographs taken from family albums, tombstones with medallions as well as newspaper advertisements posted by Jewish merchants from

which we can learn of economic situation, find indication of innovations, people's needs, kinds of services and goods that were available together with witty advertising slogans and illustrations. The photography, as an expressive and representative artistic means, communicates with the audience by universal, comprehensive language and testifies about material culture. Numerous photographers' studios dealing with portrait photography produced images of people and description of costume. In addition to professional photography, exhibited are also amateur works with large number of photographs from every-day life, illustrating atmosphere, customs... Half of some 600 collected photographs were chosen to be presented according to documentary value as well as artistic level. Photographs are chronologically divided into women's, men's and children's wear, and according to thematic unity into every-day and festive. Based on the mentioned distinction, a written questionnaire was made which served as a base for positions and value estimates of the questioned on given topic. Photography, as an essential source of research for a period until the 20's of XX century, does not illustrate everyday life but rather presents an ideal image and clothes, since photographs were taken in circumstances which individuals or society considered as representing them in best light. A more complete picture and testimony about the past starting from the 20's of XX century was provided by the questioned individuals, Jews from Belgrade and Israel. According to their memory, through formal conversation,

helped by clearly sketched questions about structure, material, color and functions of garments and based on photographs which have stimulating effect on memory, they created the picture of spiritual and material culture. The collected material was used for the first time for the purpose of analysis of costume of Belgrade Jews at the end of XIX and in the second half of XX centuries.

For the sake of comparison, the material from the territory of the then Austro-Hungarian Empire (Zemun, Senta, Bečkerek or Petrograd), where Ashkenazi Jews lived, as well as the material from Šabac and more important Kragujevac, former capital of Serbia, represents a separate unity. Time research reaches into past as deep as it is possible to follow available sources for research - which coincides with the period when Jews gained civil equality, until the WW 2, i.e. it finishes with the beginning of persecution that tore off from history a part of one people's existence.

Summary

Available artistic sources and testimony of questioned individuals, point to the fact that in Belgrade at the end of XIX and first half of XX century, in accordance to the variety of environment they lived in, Jews wore Jewish - traditional, ceremonial and ritual clothes, Turkish-Oriental costume, Serbian folk costume and at the same time European clothes influenced by fashions of Vienna, Budapest, Paris and London.

Jewish women's traditional clothes consisted of a long velvet dress, with round neck and long, straight sleeves, richly decorated with golden and silver braids, embroidery, sterling silver and sometimes pearls. Shoes worn with this dress were of the matching-color velvet, decorated with embroidery. At the same time, Serbian civil costume of Oriental type was worn. Broad, long upper garment of a bell-like cut, *anterija*, was open down the whole length, with semicircular décolletage and long, on the inner side slightly opened sleeves. It was made from brocade or velvet with combination of embroidery and bands woven in with metal thread. Anterijas were worn only on festive occasions and mothers donated them to their daughters for dowry. Frequently *anterija* was worn with belt that had decorative silver buttons. Upper winter garment consisted of a fur coat that was opened down the whole length, with long sleeves considerably let out in lower part. Around neck and on frontal edges, fur was sewed on. In period of transition to European clothes, long satin dresses were worn with *libade* or *jelek* (a type of sleeveless embroidered jacket) over it. *Libade* is a short, open upper velvet garment, with long sleeves let out in lower part. Unlike in married women's clothes, color and embroidery were stressed in clothes worn by young women. Colors differed depending on material so that heavier materials like taffeta, velvet or wool were of bright colors, whereas materials like silk or gauze were of gentle coloring. Festive costume was also Serbian folk costume,

which Jews accepted almost equally with their own costume and evidence of which are photographs of Jewesses standing one next to the other in traditional, ceremonial, Jewish and Serbian folk costume.

Jewesses brought from Spain *tukadu* (Ladino term) or *tokado* (Castilian term) hat. Of conical or cylindrical shape, usually made of silk, velvet or brocade, it was attached to head. It represented national characteristic which elderly Jewesses continued to wear even when fashion costume completely replaced the traditional one.

Oriental environment and European influences took part in forming the look of men's clothes, same as women's. Every day garment of Oriental type consisted of fez, short coat, belt and trousers. Over this garment - a long open coat (*cloak, dolman*) with broad sleeves, in winter lined with fur, was worn on occasion of celebrations or visits to synagogue. Short coat made of waterproof cloth (*koporan, libade*) with broad, long sleeves was buttoned up on chest with many buttons lined one under the other, which reached to waist. A long, broad belt wrapped around waist several times supported trousers made of silk, wool or linen. It was used also for keeping money, tobacco, pencils and similar. Trousers were part of garment made of black wool or linen, with not completely long trouser legs. They were cut from parts like pants with broader belt, at two points cut for pulling the belt through, for pleating. Flat shoes or slippers were made of soft leather sticking to leg like a sock and were sometimes fastened to trousers.

Broader shoes, open in the back, with sharpened front were worn over slippers. Shoes were of darker color. Terms used for certain garments point to the Oriental influence in clothing and way of living that corresponded to social circumstances of XIX century Serbia. The most important of all men's garments was hat which indicated religious, ethnical and class affiliation, gave information on social status, profession and as such, presented a symbol of distinction and expressed wish for separation and self-determination. In addition to everyday fashion clothes, men wore a *fez* on their heads. It was made of waterproof cloth, more or less deep and insignificantly narrowed towards upper flat part. Some fezzes had a silk tassel coming out of the center and falling to the side.

Last two decades in research differ in description from the previous period because survey data from questionnaire with detailed questions on style and way of dressing of women and men born between 1906 and 1930 was used. Questionnaire comprises 8 segments. In addition to general data and questions about women's, men's and children's wear, as well as characteristics connected with every-day, festive or holiday and ritual clothes, the conversation itself led to Jewish customs and way of life. Therefore, that part of material and spiritual culture was also recorded in questionnaire.

The greatest Jewish holiday, Shabbat, celebrated by Jewish families on Friday night was "connected with creation of the world, is considered to be

a symbol of eternal agreement between God and Jewish people on necessity to work and obligation to rest, since both work and rest are equally important for people's welfare."³⁾ On Shabbat, people were obliged to wear special, festive clothes that could not be worn every day and which at the same time were clothes that were worn when going to service in synagogue. While reading the prayer, housewife covered her head with lace kerchief. It was a custom for married Jewesses to cover their heads, i.e. hair, all the time. Gradually, that custom remained only for the occasion of holidays, like Shabbat and during reading of prayers in synagogue. Special holiday in Jewish calendar was Purim or Esther's Holiday, which was a symbol of Jewish struggle for survival and was celebrated in gay atmosphere with people dressed up in various costumes: Gypsy clothes, costumes of pirates, princesses, Harlequins, Serbian costume. Ritual clothes were more festive than those worn every day and completely new. On weddings, white wedding gown with long veil was worn. In case an older person was getting married, festive dress could be worn as a wedding garment. In times of mourning, black clothes were worn especially. Jewish widows wore black clothes for shorter period of time than Serbian women. More observant Jews, both Ashkenazis and Sephards, wore ritual clothes every day. On Friday night wearing of *talit* (Ladino) or *tales* (Yiddish), a rectangular white silk, woolen or linen prayer shawl, worn by men of legal age, was obligatory. Prayer shawl was decorated down the edges by brocade,

golden and silver embroidery or blue thread. In part that was put next to neck, a band woven of golden or silver threads was sewed on, at ends it had black or blue transversal stripes, and on each edge it had four tassels - *tzitzit*. The shawl could be woolen or silk, after Shaatnes Law in Fifth Book of Moses, Deutonom-Devarim (XXII:II): "Thou shall not wear dresses woven from wool and linen", which placed a ban on mixing wool and linen. Since this ban did not relate to high priest and their belt worn around the small back or to decorative braids, this rule was not based on a moral principle but on an early example of Law on Luxury.

Shawl and prayer book were kept in a special blue silk bag - *kužeta*, which was closed with one button and sometimes covered with painting. Square, rectangular, linen vest, *tzitzit katan* or *talit katan* (Hebrew: small talit) which was like a kerchief cut out in rectangular shape in center, had tassels on ends and was worn under the shirt. End tassels were always held in hand during prayer reading. Holding tassels has its foundation in the Bible. There are two parts in the Old Testament, which is by the way the oldest source of research, that address wearing of decorative braids and the more specific one comes from the Fourth Book of Moses, Numers-Bemidbar (XV:38). "Speak to sons of Israel and tell them to make tassels on skirts of their dresses, from generation to generation and to put blue braids on tassels:, so as to by watching them be reminded to perform God's orders"; and from the Fifth Book of Moses,

Deutoronom-Devarim (XXII:12): "Thou shall make tassels on four ends of the dress you are wearing". In temple at times of great holidays like Yom Kippur "the holiest Jewish day spent in synagogue in fast and prayer"⁴ or Rosh Hashanah "Jewish New Year when feeling of deep concern and moral responsibility that life imposes on every individual is expressed"⁵, the most observant wore cloak, white colored mantle which was closed by buckles. In synagogue it was obligatory to wear circular or semi-deep hat *kepele* (Ashkenazi name) or *kippa* (Sephardic name), which was put on top of the head. Kippa, talit and prayer book were bought through Jewish community that supplied them or in textile shops owned by Jews: Konfino, Arueti, etc. Rabbi wore gown, cloak or miter and hat and prayer shawl, which did not differ from those worn today. For the day of atonement - Yom Kippur, Rabbi wore cloak, *kitel* and a white hat that symbolizes forgiveness. Kitel was worn under clothes during weddings also. At times of mourning, dark clothes were worn or clothes adorned with black band. *Keria* custom (Hebrew: *likroa*=to tear) dating from very old times, meant cutting in of clothes at home by Rabbi or by host, and was a way of expressing grief. The observant were buried together with their kippa and talit. Men wore costume for Purim. A black silk kippa was worn when going to synagogue, at times of funeral and by the more observant Jews even at home. Boys received their ritual clothes, talit, prayer book and bag for keeping them, from parents or closer relatives on the

occasion of their Bar-Mitzva, at the age of 13 when according to religious rules they came of age. They received kippa earlier, having in mind that children wore it in school, during classes of religious instruction, as well as *tzitzit katan*, during initiations. Children dressed up in costumes for Purim.

The characteristic of traditional costume is that it changed slower than the modern one and also that this change was gradual, so that throughout a long period we come upon parts of modern and traditional costume worn together, Serbian civil - libade with party dress, or Jewish tokado hat with European costume. Practical, usable function of tokado hat, which speaks effectively of the representative of the community, could be followed in continuity from the arrival of Sephards to the Balkans, until the first half of XX century. Traditional costume displays great differences in relation to regional diffusion, whereas, contrary to the traditional costume, the modern one is the same in all regional parts exposed to the same cultural influence. Costume of Sephards and Ashkenazis differed to that extent since Ashkenazis brought with themselves elements of European civilization Sephards, like Serbs, were under long-term influence of Oriental civilization. Ashkenazi Jewesses dressed more in accordance to current European fashion which more conservative Sephardic Jewesses were slower to adopt. The function of Jewish ceremonial clothes was to emphasize identity, while Serbian costume on the other hand pointed to acceptance of culture in

Between tradition and fashion

whose environment Jews lived. Having in mind that they were not included in business and economy life, through fashion clothes women showed financial status of their parents or husbands. Age and marital status could be determined according to the use of certain colors and also adoption of foreign influences could be noticed. Younger women wore brighter colored clothes whereas older women wore more conservative, darker colored garments. Ritual function of clothes could be recognized in white color, generally worn by young women, while widows dressed in black. Men wore ritual clothes every day: square rectangular vest talit katan, kippa hat that showed religious and ethnic affiliation and as such was a symbol of distinction, and on Friday night - talit prayer shawl.

Throughout the researched period, changes in European costume cut were in relation to its breadth and length, which varied from narrow and extremely long, to broad and shorter. In addition to cut, changes were visible in relation to colors, from bright, Orient-influenced to pastel. As a source of research, advertisements from the National Library Fund for period between 1885 and 1918 were used. Advertisements provided information on 50 different manufacturing and linen-dealer shops, tailor's and milliner's shops, factories and factory warehouses, whose owners were Jewish. Based on the advertisements we may conclude that the adoption of European fashion had as an effect the rise and development of new crafts, as well as fashion trade in Belgrade that

throughout the whole period offered various assortments of articles.

Саша ПИСИЧЕВИ ШТОФОВА
ПИСИЧЕВИ
НОВИТЕТИ

Помоћна мануфактурна и Влатнарска радња
Браће Х. Табаја код Круме
Кнез Михајлова ул. бр. 31.

Највећа трговина и осталом грађанству.
Приспео има је највиши и највећи избор разноврсне
робе из врхунских фабрика и продајско са 28 од сто
јефтиније од претходне цене.

Штофа бело, црно, црно, и у боји за женске хаљине
и костиме.

Свиле за женске хаљине, блузе, украсе и борне.
Атлаза у боји и црног са бунде, либадета и јоргане.
Штицен, штофа, чипака, ајасца, сашених тавлатле
и лавелје.

Сав аутер за женске хаљине. Тафетина фулардина
и крозе.

ВЕЛИКИ ИЗБОР:
Платна (шифопа), сва комаде од: дик. 16, 17, 18, 20,
иа иа иа иа.

Платна за јорганске и душевне чаршаве најбоље
качества.

Парчица за душевне и розетке, највиших боја.
Поркена белог и у боји највиших куст. ра.
Руквица кожни и свилени, дугачки и кратки.

Велики избор децкијих хаљинаца.
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и фулова.

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Браћа Х. Табаја