THE MULTI-CULTURAL CHALLENGE IN ISRAEL

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"WE PAY OUR TAXES AND SERVE IN THE ARMY": ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE CHALLENGE OF MULTICULTURALISM

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1. Introduction

In the last decade of the twentieth century, theories developed concerning the flourishing of cultural enterprises, and treating them as demands for the recognition of cultural difference.[1] Multicultural citizenship seemed to be a way to define and understand how people settle their identity, both as citizens and as ethnic subjects, identities that often "run up against one another."[2] Hence, Kymlicka's notion of multicultural citizenship appeared to be a promising tool for analyzing one of the cultural enterprises of the second generation of immigrants to Israel from North Africa — the Israel Andalusian Orchestra.

However, every attempt to fit the field research on which this paper was based into the language of multicultural citizenship raised more questions than answers. It became clear that multiculturalism has to be viewed as a constructed category, rather than a natural phenomenon, raising questions of how people use it, what contribution it makes to different social groups and under what conditions. Thus, a research project that began as an exploration of multicultural citizenship turned into ethnography of the politics of classification.

Early in my research it became clear that "multiculturalism" was not only the language of researchers. The subjects of this research, the founders of the Israel Andalusian Orchestra, were familiar with it and with its implications. The way they interpreted the experience of the first generation of immigrants led them to reject the use of it. They refused to adopt difference, the central component of the multiculturalist way of thinking, demanding instead recognition as an integral part of Israeli society, not merely by right of their ethnic identity. They rejected uniqueness as the basis of their claim, on the grounds that "nowadays everybody is unique," to use the words of one of them. Furthermore, establishing the orchestra

was not an effort to revive a culture, but rather one more case of invasion of tradition.[3] From this perspective, multiculturalism can be explored as one strategy among others that people use to gain recognition. Indeed, as far as these founders were concerned, it is not even a very successful one. They were knowingly constructing a culture by asking themselves how a tradition that their immigrant parents brought with them could be accepted as high culture by mainstream Israeli society.

In the course of establishing the orchestra, a number of methods of presentation were examined. The method which the founders chose, what they called "the right model," was to perform Andalusian music within the outward forms of a western classical orchestra, that is to say in formal suits and bow ties, with a preponderance of string instruments, under a conductor, with a printed program, and with a Friends of the Orchestra association, all of which were absent from the source. They saw this as a new way to make use of their inherited culture to become a modern national enterprise.

It was this understanding that brought the research back to its starting point for review, this time investigating not only citizenship as it was experienced by the second generation of North African Jews, but the theories of multiculturalism as well. A study of the relationship between the state and the Andalusian Orchestra involves a close look at a struggle for classification that identifies the institutions that operate in the field. The question of what multiculturalism is (both as an idea and as a set of institutionalized practices) in the eyes of the second generation of Jewish immigrants from North Africa to Israel, brings multiculturalism into question as an empirical reality that has to be understood in the wider context of economy and politics.

Several steps are required to create new research tools as Vertovec[4] urges us to do in his important introduction to the special issue of Ethnic and Racial Studies.

The first step is to distinguish between the language of the field and the language about the field. In the course of writing field diaries it became clear that multiculturalism is emic, the language of the field. Comaroff and Comaroff (ibid.) suggest that the concept of "polyculturalism" provides a more useful tool for analyzing social variety than the term "multiculturalism". The concept of polyculturalism includes both multiplicity and the politicization of the relations that arise from that multiplicity.

The second step is to analyze a cultural phenomenon at the meeting point of the structures and the agents — that is, between state institutions and its subjects[5]; in this case, not so much the orchestra and the state themselves as the relationship between them. The state is both the source

of funding and the source of social recognition and legitimization[6], and hence it is not a matter of the ethnography of the state or of a particular cultural enterprise, but of the meeting point of the two. It is here that bureaucracy, nationalism, law and liberalism come into the picture, together with social aspirations.

The third step, emphasizing analysis within the wider social context, is to ask what multiculturalism means to groups of minorities whose rights are recognized but who experience poverty under a neo-liberal policy.[7] The social climate during the period of this research was formed by years of economic depression and the second *intifada* (Palestinian revolt). The Jewish public discourse in Israel during that time was dominated by nationalism, on the one hand, and neo-liberalism (the ruling policy in the field of economy, under the Minister of Finance, Benjamin Nethanyahu), on the other. The budget for cultural enterprises was cut progressively from $95 million in 2003 to $56.4 million in 2004. In the second year of the research, the players of the orchestra were not paid for seven months. Thus, even ten years after it was founded, the orchestra was still struggling for its existence and for official recognition.

The Subjects: Between the promise of belonging and social marginality

> *"Minority individuals suspended in limbo between the promise of full integration and the fear of continued exclusion"*
>
> Geoff Dench.[8]

The current section discusses a second generation of immigrants into the modern nation state, Israel, whose national and religious identity enables them to take part in state and society, but whose social marginality is nevertheless preserved by strong social forces.

It is impossible to understand the story of the Andalusian Orchestra without taking into account the suppression of local cultures that non-European immigrants brought with them to Israel in the 1950s and early 1960s. To a great extent, the orchestra was a response to this cultural and social fracture, when they were lumped together under the term "Mizrahim" [a term denoting immigrants from Islamic countries].[9] "Country of origin" became a useful category for sociologists in describing the ladder of class in Israel, with European and North America Jews at its head, followed by the Jews from Asia, then Jews from Africa, Palestinian citizens of Israel and, at the bottom, Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[10]

Cultural suppression was made possible by the total dominance that the established forms of culture held over art and culture,[11] including the field of music.[12] The culture of the Mizrahim, insofar as it enjoyed the status of culture at all, was not granted the resources that would enable it to flourish or maintain any quality. From this perspective, culture can be seen as a political mechanism for excluding minority groups. Cultural oppression constructs social marginality and is reinforced by it.

The history of Moroccan Jewish music in Israel typifies the extent of this deliberate cultural destruction and what arose from the dramatic circumstances of this great wave of immigration.[13] This suppression of "alien cultures" led to the near-extinction of the customs of Moroccan Jewry in Israel. Many of the musicians and singers of sacred music became a part of the proletariat of the predominantly secular Zionist revolution, with the result that many of them were forced to abandon their music just to earn a living. In such circumstances there was no chance of forming musical ensembles and playing professionally. In addition to this process, the leaders of the musical scene were split up, in the name of settling peripheral areas of the country, putting the older generation of musicians into an impossible situation. Dr Eilam-Amzalig, musicologist and first conductor of the orchestra, stated:

> The human element of Andalusian music was very low, both culturally and musically. This is easy to show: they were limited to playing at parties and celebrations. They were capable of banging on an oudh or a violin, but the musical continuity, the musical knowledge and culture were lost to them. Look at the players who are used to playing loudly: the nobility of the instruments has got lost over the years of playing at Bar Mitzvahs, weddings and parties. What you have to do there is to play over everything else, over the eating and the noise of the crowd.

Nonetheless, there were still some among them who were recognized over the years as special phenomena, due to their expertise in classical Arabic and Hebrew and the esoterics of music. However, any chance of bringing up a second generation without a conservatory, without music groups for young people and without documented music was doomed to failure. Even the few who continued with this musical activity treated their work as if they belonged to a closed guild and took on no pupils.

The Israel Andalusian Orchestra was founded by Dr Yehiel Lasri and Motti Malka in two stages in Ashdod, a pre-planned immigrant city. In 1988, together with Sammi Almagrabi, Eli Ben Hammo and Aryeh Azulai, they established the Center for Sacred Songs and Poetry, which became, and remains to this day, a training school for singers of sacred songs

and musicians who play the traditional instruments. In 1994, there was a division, and the orchestra was put on a new footing. It was established as a classical orchestra, with a preponderance of string instruments absent from the original format. There were forty-five instrumentalists, consisting of two groups. The first was called, in local usage, 'the authentics', and all the rest "the orchestra." Most of the "authentic ensemble" were, and still are, immigrants from North Africa and Israelis of Mizrahi origin. The First Violin, however, was a Palestinian, an Israeli citizen from Majd el Krum in Western Galilee, and most of the "orchestra" consists, to this day, of immigrants from countries of the former Soviet Union or native-born Israelis.

How could the second generation found an orchestra under conditions of cultural oppression? How could they dream about a classical orchestra, with its preponderance of string instruments, when very few of their people knew how to play the violin? During the early nineties, there was a huge wave of immigration to Israel from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Among them were many musicians who, under the state policy of dispersing the population, were settled in Ashdod. These new immigrants provided the founders of the orchestra with cheap, professional western musicians. The second generation of immigrants from North Africa were able to empower their 'burden' and present it as 'culture', in order to gain social status, only thanks to these immigrants from the CIS.

By 2006, the orchestra had 4,000 subscribers. Most of these were first or second generation Moroccan Jews. Most of the musicians played from notes, on classical instruments, such as the violin, viola, cello and double bass, but next to these was an ensemble of traditional Andalusian musicians who played the oudh, mandolin, guitar, camandja, darbuka and tahr drums. Integral to Andalusian music is the accompanying vocal. For hundreds of years, both Muslims and Jews wrote lyrics to the music, in Arabic and Hebrew, and over the years these lyrics became the main part of a tradition of worship among Moroccan Jewry. Texts in Moroccan Arabic were interwoven into the Hebrew, so that the content would be understandable. This genre was known as "*al-matroz*" (the weave). In the program that were distributed at concerts, the words appear in Arabic, but written in Hebrew letters, since most of the audience can not read Moroccan Arabic — though perhaps half can speak it.

Even ten years after the orchestra was established, its founders were busy morning to night in defining their vision and their form. The raison d'être of the orchestra was an ongoing process of constructing a cultural identity. It became apparent early on that there was no common knowledge

available: there was no common understanding of 'This is how we usually do things'. In one conversation Malka spoke about his meeting with Dr. Buzaglo, a philosopher and the son of one of the important musicians of North African Jewry, Rabbi David Buzaglo. "You have to help me to create a language," Malka told him, "I need more words and arguments, we have to write a new dictionary." This developmental flux facilitated our investigation into the politics of classification.

2. Methodology

The present paper is based on four years of ethnographic study in the city of Ashdod, Israel.[14] After a year of preliminary exploration, the study concentrated on the Andalusian Orchestra, over a period close to three subscription seasons (2002–5). This involved attendance at many concerts, sitting side by side with the subscribers, recording backstage events, talking to the musicians in their dressing rooms and traveling with them. Interviews were held with dominant figures in the municipality. The research even involved attendance at synagogues at four o'clock of a winter's morning. It also involved inquiries concerning the history and music of North African Jewry.

In a first telephone conversation with Malka, the managing director of the orchestra, I asked his permission to visit the orchestra. His answer was surprising: "I've been waiting years for this telephone call." It was an answer that opened the door to a deep and frank dialogue. Malka and Lasri, the founders of the orchestra, came to Israel from Morocco as toddlers. Both of them are religious, charismatic and able in the fields of politics and power. They were very welcoming, viewing the fact that a researcher saw fit to devote the topic of a doctorate to the orchestra provided them with authoritative proof of its importance. As a result, the research on the orchestra itself became an important part of their quest for recognition. For example, when Malka was told that the work had been presented at the AAA conference in Washington D.C, he requested the Abstract in order to put it on the Orchestra's web site, "You see," he smiled, "It's not every day that people talk about the orchestra in Washington."

In the majority of ethnographic studies there is a distance between the researcher and the reality under study, but in this case the distance was minimal. The discourse concerning multiculturalism represents a meeting of an enlightened subject and political academia. Major Israeli academics have been requested by state authorities to write papers on the topic of policy

regarding culture; others led the establishment of social organizations that became dominant in the demand for multiculturalism. Malka, Dr. Lasri, Dr. Avi Ilam Amzalig (first conductor) and Asher Canfo (chairman of the orchestra) took part in the intellectual discourse concerning multiculturalism. They attended discussions and conferences, and published essays and papers in a variety of publications. Thus, my position as the one who wrote about them became yet another voice in a field in which the writers and the subjects of research constantly changed places.

The condition of second-generation immigrants at the time provided a unique methodological moment which gave observers, including social scientists, a standpoint from which to analyze culture both within and beyond the borders of culture, thereby helping them to explore the construction of major social categories such as ethnicity and citizenship.

Theory: Between "ideals," "empirical reality," and "concepts"

It was Walter Benjamin who proposed the use of the meeting point between the "ideals," "empirical reality" and "concepts' as a research tool:[15]

State and statements (ideals)

[Citizenship]

People and concepts Empirical reality

This triangular model will be followed to analyze the citizenship undertaken by this second generation of immigrants who were looking for both social recognition and making a living. At the point of the triangle is the utopian ideal of modern nationalism, which promises a national culture that embraces everyone. On one side of the base is the empirical reality, which is how the ideal actually works out on the ground (where it will be shown how state actions often contradicted formal state pronouncements), and at the third point we find the people themselves, that second generation whose very existence embodies multiple identities. It is in the space between these points that different categories of citizenship are negotiated and can be classified.

Hence, the model can help us to explore the experience of citizenship in a new light. It turns attention from constituent elements as entities in themselves to the relationship between them, reminding us that social categories, promises and power struggles play out at their meeting point.

The triangle reflects tension between its point and its base, between the "'big time,"[16] the national time of promises, declarations and ceremonies and the "small time" of the daily round.

> The state and society meet at the point where citizenship is found, that is to say at the point where rights, duties and institutions overlap … citizenship is located at the medial point between state and society, exercising the normative control of the relations between the state and the individuals that constitute society [17]

3. Findings

Part 1: Statements and state: enlightened nationalism and the politic of exclusion.

Culture, like every social phenomenon, is always stratified. Just as no social movement has succeeded in deleting social stratification, so too no social-cultural movement has succeeded in deleting cultural stratification. Hence, the principal of equality of value may be a heartfelt catchword, but it is never brought to reality in any cultural system.[18]

In more recent years, the official pronouncements of the state, which also form a part of the public discourse, aim to present enlightened nationalism by shuttling between the demand for homogeneity and tolerance toward groups of minorities. In this case, multiculturalism came to be a discourse of mere politically correctness. State officials adopted multiculturalism under an interpretation that preserved the core (Western) culture, while yet making some room for other cultures. At the same time, the state practiced a bureaucracy of exclusion by adopting so-called objective criteria, based on official reports and carried into practice by budgetary policy. The orchestra, as a result of its refusal to accept the label "ethnic," became a serious problem, because it blurred the establishment strategy to budget the orchestra, not under the category of "classical orchestra" but as a "special-native-case."

Two reports on culture were written at the beginning of the present century by major academics in Israel, at the request of the government, called the Bracha Report[19] and "Vision for 2000."[20] Another document was the budgetary policy, which became known as 'the criteria'. It is in those parts of the documents, in the small print which the reader tends to pass over, that the fate of whole groups was decided. Why did the government ask for reports on culture? Firstly, to neutralize the power of politicians to interfere with the budget for cultural matters, secondly it was a result of examining

the tension between preserving the old institutions and encouraging new enterprises, and thirdly out of a desire to strengthen the connection between the national budget and national objectives, especially social unity.

By presenting a policy of enlightened nationalism, the reports try to tread a path between the desire to preserve the ethos of one national culture by protecting the budget for so-called "national institutions" (i.e., the national theater, Habima, and the national orchestra, the Philharmonic) while at the same time showing "tolerance" by promoting what were seen as "other" cultures. They rejected the main and basic demand of the Andalusian Orchestra to be considered as a classical orchestra, as we can see in the following quotation:

> In 1998, some 40% of the Jewish population attended the cinema, a museum, a popular music show or an evening of light entertainment at least once. Twenty-five percent went to a concert of classical music, 13% to a dance performance, 5% to the opera and 5% to a concert of the Israel Andalusian Orchestra.[21]

The Andalusian Orchestra is in a separate category that the report refuses to consider as classical music. In rejecting this demand, its writers repeated their position that the orchestra belongs in the "ethnic" category. At the same time, the orchestra went through a process of delegitimization, under the label "ethnic symbolism," which placed the Mizrahi identity into the category of an invented one, and its leaders into representatives without a public. "The claim of Mizrahis who demand equality is more statistical (50% of the population) and sociological (identity) than substantial" (ibid.). In "Vision for 2000", too, Mizrahi identity is negated as an artificial construct. The writers of the report continue to look for a mono-ethnic national identity.[22] The orchestra was stigmatized as threatening to split Israeli society.

An attempt to understand the overall picture arising from the many details reveals a bureaucracy of exclusion. The policy known as "the criteria" involves supposedly objective support by the state of its national culture. The main parameters for awarding budgets are (a) assessment of quality, which the Cultural Administration mostly divides into "pass; or fail;" (b) seniority, on the basis that the old should not have to give way to the new. For example, a cultural enterprise can gain the support of the state only after showing two years of activity. The latter criterion of course closes the door to groups who need support from their outset.

The research revealed a formal machinery of ranking that lets the Authority maintain and protect what it calls national projects. This system

gives the Philharmonic Orchestra the advantage of being "national," while the official policy of multiculturalism provides a lower ranking factor, called "special," that enables the Authority to give relatively tiny grants to groups on the fringes of the hegemonic society.

Part II: people and concept

Next, we come to the subjects, the people concerned, who play a major role in defining the situation. The director of the orchestra, Malka, was busy from morning to evening with questions of self-definition and strategic location; not as a therapeutic exercise, but to win recognition and financial support. For example, when asked whether he considered their music as "world music," he answered:

> As far as I am concerned, our music is world music, in the sense that all the music in the world comes into that category. If mine is world music and his is classical music, then mine is not world music at all. And if his is Western classical music, then mine is Mizrahi classical music. When I define my music, I don't use the notion of world music.

In other words, ethnic identity has nothing to do with the culture of a particular group, nor indeed with the country of origin of that group. The need to maneuver in a wide range of discourses involved the heads of the orchestra and its players — Moroccans and Russians alike — in questions of ethnic identity, specifically as it concerns movement from the margins toward the center of society.

This is a different definition of ethnic identity: the attempt to "get in," to be "correct," to win a budget, to gain recognition. Such an identity — in this case, Mizrahi identity — does not arise from the question of origin, but from the desire to move from the social periphery to the central, established positions.

The "Vision for 2000" Report brings into discussion the need to preserve the national core culture. Groups that do not belong to Western culture were promised funds in return for their recognition of the centrality of Western culture.

This was Malka's reply:

> Someone wanted western, Ashkenazi [i.e., European] culture to be THE Israeli culture. In my opinion, they failed. The facts speak for themselves. There is a struggle going on, both concealed and open, about what Israeli culture is to be. My contribution is to say: let every

> cultural sector come out in all its glory, in full force, in its fullest expression, with its strength and its people, and from the junction of them all we will get one good central power. In one of my articles, I asked, what is culture for your understanding? Mozart? Rachel the Poetess? What about David Avidan and Hanoch Levin? [This refers to three Israeli writers who could be considered to typify the established culture.] That's the heart of the matter!
>
> Tell me—don't hold back. I say that the core will come from both this one and that one. David Avidan—I've nothing against him, but his poetry does nothing for me. The poetry of Rabbi David Buzaglo is what does it for me—it's canonical. They say that the core is Ashkenazi stroke western culture, and on the fringes let the Beduin, the Druze, the Maimuna [a Mizrahi festival] come out with their mats and dances and we'll take a look and say Oi, oi, oi, natives [Malka used the English word] and so on. Oi, oi, oi, I'm not having that!

Malka went on more quietly:

> The problem is one of resources. If all that culture were carried on with private money, if they were to bring a hundred million dollars, they could do what they like. But the moment that it's a question of public money of all the shareholders, both mine and theirs, in my opinion it should be divided out in a way that all the shareholders can enjoy the dividends. That's not what happens.

In saying this, Malka expressed the central standpoint of the orchestra, that it is central to Israeli society and the Israeli culture. They did not seek to select or point to differences, and thereby adopt the category of ethnicity. In their understanding, the dangers of the ethnic label lay behind all talk of differences. Hence, the orchestra refused both the bait and the stigma of "difference." Malka saw clearly that every controversy on the topic of culture came down to a controversy on resources. The experience of the previous generation taught him that any expression of willingness to accept the ethnic label would forever leave them on the periphery of society.

As a case study, let me go into details concerning a meeting between the heads of the orchestra and the Culture Administration. This meeting took place in the summer of 2003, and encapsulates the politics of classification. The context of the meeting explores a new facet of analysis: the summer of 2003 was the summer of the second *intifada* (Palestinian revolt), a time of terror, fighting and deep economic recession. It was at a time when the orchestra had not been able to pay the wages of its musicians for seven months. Malka opened the meeting by saying:

> It was important to us, as heads of the orchestra, not to come to the meeting as members of a needy minority. What we wanted was to be a proper part of Israeli society. After all, we pay our taxes, we do our army service.

In other words, their request for a budget was not based on difference, but on their desire for legitimacy and equal partnership. As they saw it, emphasizing the difference might bring advantages in the short term, but it would harm them in the long term.

> Where multiculturalism is concerned, it's a matter of the "special" factor. We objected to that. We don't want to be labeled as natives, with an agreement for the 6% allocated to special cases, which ended up at 4%. That was supposed to be divided up between all non-Western classical orchestras, and in the end, they added baroque groups and groups that play period instruments as well. It's nothing but fraud.
>
> From a legal point of view, the special factor simply doesn't work. Besides, I don't want to be treated like one of the natives. How much are you giving to multiculturalism?

Dr. Lasri added:

> It bothers you that we compare the Andalusian Orchestra with the Philharmonic.

The head of the Cultural Administration answered: "The nation isn't divided into Andalusian and Philharmonic. We've only just paid for an east-west concert. There is only one national orchestra, and that's that. Don't try to compete with it."

An argument about the status of the Philharmonic as the national orchestra developed. "Where is that written?" asked Malka. "I'll take it on myself to clarify that point. It has to be documented somewhere," answered the vice-chair. She was forgetting that the unwritten agreements are the strongest ones.

Malka asked her to say in her own voice that the orchestra is Mizrahi Classical Orchestra. She refused. "You don't understand what classical means," she answered, and Malka responded: "Classical means anything that is excellent, in the sense of that particular taste. Those mistaken assumptions are embedded into the Establishment, and there's no way that it won't influence your decisions if you won't define us as classical."

That made her angry. She banged on the table: "It's ethnic. It belongs to a particular group. It's just fashionable at the moment."

Malka got angry too and banged on the table. "That's just labeling. It's not labeling on one condition, though: if I'm ethnic, then Beethoven is ethnic too."

This made everyone laugh in amazement.

The meeting was closed on the understanding that the head of the council, who had been trying to calm the sides down throughout the meeting, would examine the possibility of adding to the budget under the heading of "needy cultural institutions."

What comes out of this discussion is that, contrary to formal pronouncements by the state on "culture for all," the moment that some cultural enterprise tries to get support in the name of national unity, the state protects the hegemonic groups, and affixes the label "ethnic" on to even the second generation of immigrants, and then grants them their lesser budgets accordingly. Malka's question, "How much are you giving to multiculturalism?" puts the actual use of the term into a ridiculous light. Contrary to multicultural expectations, Malka refused to talk in terms of different cultures. He was perfectly well aware that if he accepted that term, he would be put right back into the ethnic niche, a "native," as he put it.

Why did the officials repeatedly demand that the heads of the orchestra define their music as ethnic or east-west music? According to Regev,[23] this classification is a continuation of the "melting pot" ideology: "Its creators serve the national idea and in fact make a form of music that is subordinated to the concept of building an Israeli identity." This contention gains reinforcement when comparison between the Philharmonic and the Andalusian Orchestras is treated as the ultimate threat. The officials of the Authority demanded again and again that the orchestra should not compare itself to the Philharmonic, that the latter was something special, and when they were pressed made it clear that they considered this to be a basic understanding that required no documentation. Shenhav and Yonah[24] explain this phenomenon: The dominant culture in Israel was envisaged and engineered from the beginning as an ethno-national Zionist one, and not as a people's culture. The established élite and the state institutions conferred on its creators such kite-marks as "national poet," "national theater," "national museum," "national library" or "national literature."

However, in view of the policy of criteria, a whitewash of the cultural and social priorities was revealed, in that the committee was forced to invent a special status for the Philharmonic Orchestra in order to preserve the level of its budget. The chairperson of the criteria committee declared to the people of the Andalusian Orchestra, "We made our judgment without any preconceived ideas, don't be suspicious." Lasri and Malka tried to tear

off the disguise of objectivity, asking "Who are the judges? Who are these people who sit on the committee?" and the chairperson turned the whole question on its head by declaring, "It's you, by claiming to represent women, Mizrahis, Arabs to the committee, who have introduced a subjective and alien element into the system." For a moment, the heads of the orchestra were tempted to make their demands on the grounds of being a "special case," but Malka recognized that this strategy would be a failure, because "everyone's special now." He went back to the main track, declaring that they were the equals of the big orchestras and should receive their budget accordingly.

Part III: empirical reality

It is not enough to record and analyze "front of the stage" interactions: they are only one side of the picture, and not the most important one. Behind the scene, in the places that concrete decisions are taken, another kind of policy is shaped. There are key people in the bureaucracy whose position enables them to deal with the reality of a polycultural society. They are not people who are out to change the world, but aim to keep things quiet by means of mechanisms that bypass bureaucracy and by using personal connections.

When a number of key persons work that way over a period of time, a new Establishment statement is created, one that often flies in the face of the formal pronouncements, but never publicly opposes them. The case of the criteria committee shows how opening side-doors to granting a budget gave birth to major social categories, which in turn gave rise to shadow policies that encouraged the politics of identities and, at the same time, to formal pronouncements on the importance of "social glue." For instance, if you came from the CIS and wanted to set up an Israeli theater, you could get a budget from the Ministry of Absorption, as a Russian. A Druze who wanted to set up an Israeli dance group, had to declare himself a member of a minority, and get his budget from the Council for Minority Culture.

In other words, these key people did not announce a new agenda. They adopted the existing one, and were able to recite the chain of events that brought it into being. However, they were aware of exceptions, inherent mishaps that, according to them, were neither deliberate nor the result of error. In point of fact, by their long drawn-out handling of such exceptions, they created a new agenda for the bodies dealing with recognition and connections, where cases fell into bureaucratic and organizational gaps. This activity gave rise to a new reality, as the reports on culture themselves reveal.

For example, according to Katz and Sela,[25] in order to obtain financial support from the Ministry of Culture, it was necessary to prove continuous existence for at least two years — and even that was conditional on the Ministry receiving a higher budget, since it would not be at the expense of any existing body. In that case, how is it possible to become a supported body? How is it possible to "get in" in the first place? How can one support oneself for those two years? One answer given by the report (ibid., p. 48) is that one can first obtain a modicum of support as a special project, and become a regular, fully supported institution at the end of the period. Another solution is to gain support under a different fiscal heading, for instance as a religious body, or as an organization of new immigrants (as the Gesher Theater did), and thereby gain support from another government ministry. In other words, to become a candidate for support, the body or institution concerned is forced to go through the very politics of identities that it opposes.

Hence, the identity of cultural enterprises in Israel has been defined by slipping them through the cracks in the bureaucratic obstacles, cracks that enabled new immigrants from the CIS to obtain support for the Gesher Theater, or a grant being given to a sale of Judaica, justified by calling it artwork. When the Culture Administration rejected a request for support of "neighborhood art," new resources were found to set up councils for neighborhood culture. The result has been that bureaucrats have created routes that bypass the criteria — by right of the politics of difference — and have thereby won peace and quiet.

As a result, the first request of the orchestra to be treated as an equal among orchestras failed, on the grounds that, according to those who made the decisions, it did not meet the criterion of quality. The Ministry would only grant it the status and budget of an "ethnic project."

4. Conclusions

> *"Ethnic minorities are first and foremost the product of enclosure from outside, and only secondly, if at all, the outcome of self-enclosure."*[26]

This research began as an Israeli case of multicultural citizenship and ended up as ethnography of the politics of classification. It explored the experience of citizenship as a struggle for existence and recognition, where the process of classifications became the turning point to win legitimacy

and budget. The founders of the Andalusian Orchestra rejected the option of winning their claim as "natives." By rejecting this, they rejected any claim on behalf of difference, a category that, in their understanding would preserve their social marginality. Consequently, multicultural citizenship failed to define citizenship as it is experienced by second generation North Africa Jews in Israel.

Multiculturalism should have come under the academic microscope as an empirical reality, as one of many strategies that people use to present and advance their case. Instead, it became a theory, a tool for analyzing social reality in polycultural societies. Under the influence and authority of American academic discourse, this way of thinking became widespread in Israel too.

The following questions arise on public and academic floors: "Does multiculturalism threaten the very existence of the modern nation state?" and "Is multiculturalism the last chance of the state to deal with its internal variety in a moral way?" Questions like these are essential to committed academic discourse, that is, any scholarship that accepts the responsibility of being involved in society. The point is, though, that such questions do not contribute to research on the expanded variety of cultures in a society.

In our analysis of the policy of funding the arts in Israel, it is argued that by its public statements the state present enlightened nationalism, and yet at the same time the state practiced a bureaucracy of exclusion by adopting "objective criteria" for funding. The refusal of the heads of the orchestra to accept the label "ethnic" and their demand for equal treatment were seen as a threat to the status quo.

The narrative and actions of the orchestra make it clear that its leaders were full partners to the definition of the situation. Contrary to what intuition might suggest, they did not make their demands on the basis of the right to be different, or for their uniqueness, but fought for the right to be recognized as equals in Israeli culture. But the whole point is to be recognized as equal as who you are — Arab, Moroccan, Jew, or whatever. The sole contribution of the Culture Administration to multiculturalism was its proposal to grant the orchestra a budget as a special case. The orchestra recognized this as a trap that condemned it to the periphery, where it would have to share limited finances with dozens of other special cases. In rejecting the proposal, the heads of the orchestra rejected the concept of multiculturalism, which they saw as just one of the strategies of the hegemony to advance its own interests. It is worth noting that this standpoint in no way involves any rejection of the concepts of nation and state, in a country

where nationalism has always been a major factor. Indeed, its spokesmen stressed its fulfillment of the duties to the state: "We pay our taxes and serve in the army," he said. They based their claims on excellence, but also on representing half of the Jewish population, a proposition that negated any assertion that the Mizrahi identity is "special." Their standpoint was that they were therefore entitled to centrality in society.

The concept of multiculturalism blossomed among radical intellectuals because it provided them with a new language for talking about democratic utopia and moral society, but it ignores the ideological power of these concepts and the fact that it is useless when it comes to explaining the activities of groups which reject talk about the right to difference, and want to play on center stage. Theoreticians of multiculturalism would no doubt claim that this was the policy of the liberal state, preserving the distinction between the center and the periphery, between the hegemonic culture and sub-cultures, whereas the heads of the orchestra treated multiculturalism as polycentric, as if aiming to multiply centers.

The motivation and driving force of the orchestra are expressions of human, political and cultural hunger for recognition and reward. In fact, it was not the aim of the heads of the orchestra to create a multi-centered society, or to redefine the relationship between the center and the periphery. The explosive nature of the dialogue between them and officials of the state was the outcome of the tension between a sense of being under threat and losing power, on the part of the agencies of the nation state, and the experience of its subjects that the nation state is a powerful and relevant player. Although transnational links were established by the orchestra with Jewish communities in Canada and Europe, these did not present any real alternative to links with the state

The dynamics behind the scenes presented above document and analyze how the shadow policy, created through complex organizational and personal processes, feeds the politics of identities, even while public declarations oppose such a thing. The result is that the imaginary community — and it makes no difference whether it retreated in the face of globalization, as Appadurai[27] says, or changed its appearance while hanging on to its power — paves the way to an imaginary community of differences.

Notes

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