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## Abstract

This article examines the production of 'high culture' and how it shapes social mobility. I observe how the second generation of immigrants from North Africa have succeeded in rising up the Israeli social hierarchy by appropriating established modes of cultural expression. The founders of the Israel Andalusian Orchestra became aware that the road to full integration was closed to them by the politics of difference, that the way to total segregation from wider Israeli society was closed by economic and ontological dependence on the national state, and the option of multiculturalism condemned them to a permanently marginal status. They realized that they needed a new political approach and that cultural appropriation was the way by which they could reclaim their ethnic identity yet still establish themselves among the élite of Israel.

## Keywords

conspicuous consumption of ethnic identity, cultural appropriation, ethnic identity, ethnicity, immigrant, immigration, Israel, Israeli, culture, high culture, Mizrahi, second generation nation-state

## Introduction: The Israel Andalusian Orchestra

The sociology of culture has offered new ways of thinking about the relationship of culture to social stratification and power (Swidler, 1986). It has opened the door to questions concerning the cultural aspects of social inequality. DiMaggio (1987) argues that examining the production of 'high culture' involves understanding how the 'making of meaning' shapes social institutions. His approach is consistent with the focus on the relationship between social organization and systems of classification, as expressed in Durkheim's classic work. DiMaggio (1991) notes that the distinction between high and popular

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culture in the USA emerged in the period between 1850 and 1900, out of the efforts of urban élites to build organizational forms that isolated high culture and differentiated it from popular culture. Documenting and analysing the discourse and the institutional practices of a classical music orchestra, as I do here, appears to be just another case of the production of high culture, albeit in the case I am going to examine by a particular ethnic minority.

But, in fact, the ethnography of the Israel Andalusian Orchestra that I will lay out in this paper actually involves documenting a particular plan, held by members of the orchestra and those associated with it, for achieving social mobility in Israeli society. Clearly, the second generation of North African Jews in Israel, the ethnic group associated with the orchestra in question, has different characteristics from the 19th-century Boston bourgeoisie described by DiMaggio. Yet there are parallels. The aim of the orchestra's founders in re-labeling the music heard in their parental homes as classic 'high culture' was to gain recognition, financial resources and status in Israeli society. This paper will follow their way from the synagogue to the concert hall, from the Israeli periphery to the urban centres. On their way, they struggled with both the 'Establishment' and their parents, the first generation of migrants.

The Israel Andalusian Orchestra was founded by Dr Yehiel Lasri and Motti Malka in two stages in Ashdod, a pre-planned immigrant city in southern Israel. In 1988, together with Sammi Almagrabi, Eli Ben Hammo and Aryeh Azulai, they established the Center for Sacred Songs and Poetry, which became, and still is today, a training school for singers of sacred songs and musicians who play traditional North African instruments. In 1994 there was an organizational restructuring, and the orchestra was put on a new footing. It was established as a Western-style classical orchestra, with a preponderance of string instruments absent from the original 'traditional' format. There were 45 instrumentalists, consisting of two groups. The first was called, in local parlance, 'the authentic ensemble', and the second was called 'the orchestra'. Most of the 'authentic ensemble' were, and still are today, immigrants from North Africa and Israelis of Mizrahi origin.<sup>1</sup> The First Violin, however, was a Palestinian, an Israeli citizen from Majd el Krum in Western Galilee. Most of 'the orchestra' consists, still to this day, of immigrants from countries of the former Soviet Union or native-born Israelis. While the 'authentic' played by ear, the orchestra played from scores.

By 2006, the orchestra had 4000 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 programmes that were distributed at concerts, the lyrics appear in Arabic, but written in Hebrew letters, since most of the audience cannot read Moroccan Arabic, though perhaps half can speak it.

Motti Malka, the founder and the general manager of the orchestra, told me the story of the evening he decided to establish the orchestra, encapsulating some of the paradoxes this paper documents and analyses:

The story is about Neighbourhood 'A' [in Ashdod]. Rabbi Meir Amar came to me to ask for the use of the community centre for the special morning prayers, the 'Request Songs'. I told him: You've got it. At four o'clock in the morning I woke Lasry up in the pouring rain. By the time we got there we were all wet. We asked ourselves, what idiots, what on earth are we doing here? When we got to the main hall, we were amazed: the room was packed. Someone pushed a prayer book into our hands. What we got was three hours of a spiritual experience. I felt that something was happening here, a community event, a musical and cultural one. They invited us, young academics, to a table and treated us as honoured guests. But people brought their food with them, the amplification was faulty, and they put pictures of holy men up for sale, to cover their costs. We got annoyed – is this way to do culture? Still, we understood that it wasn't their fault – they just didn't have the conventional framework to express themselves. I saw that, and I wasn't there to complain but to create. I put my idea down on paper and sent it to the mayor of Ashdod. No answer. A few months later, I got a call from him: Come at once, I have this idea to found a world centre for sacred songs.

The gap between the spiritual experience and the casual behaviour of the audience and producers alike gave rise in Motti Malka's mind to the question: *is this the way to do culture?* From that moment on, the main question that would preoccupy the founders of the Andalusian Orchestra was how they could perform what they heard on that rainy night as legitimate and recognizable 'culture'?

An inquiry into this question provides a good opportunity to reveal the social construction of ethnic culture as 'high culture', under conditions of the cultural oppression of immigrants. The development of the orchestra involved a perception of culture as a strategy for coping with social inferiority, in this case ethnic and class inequality (Gans, 1991). The main analytic challenge this paper grapples with is to identify and analyse the means that turned a socially- and culturally-excluded ethnic group in Israeli society into proponents of so-called 'high culture', associated in all societies with class- and ethnic-based Establishments. The main tool involved here, it turns out, was a form of cultural appropriation.

It will be shown that the founders of the orchestra achieved their aim of improving their social position, and that of people associated with them, by appropriating the 'appropriate culture'. The fact that the second generation of immigrants succeeded in moving itself up the social ladder through cultural appropriation involves the notion of culture as a political mechanism of exclusion. The second generation immigrant experience was in a special situation that enabled it to 'learn culture' in a critical way. My analysis, while focusing on the narrative of the orchestra's founders and audience subscribers, will reveal a process of 'cultural purification', a revolt against the Israeli state's national 'melting pot' policy of the 1950s (Zameret, 2002). In this case the process of purification was at the heart of the crossing-point between folk culture and high culture, where the latter had become a political tool for social exclusion. The second generation immigrant founders of the orchestra became aware that the road to full integration was closed to them by the politics

of difference, that the way to total segregation from wider Israeli society was closed by economic and ontological dependence on the national state, and the option of multi-culturalism condemned them to a permanently marginal status. They realized that they needed a new political approach, and that cultural appropriation was the way by which they could reclaim their ethnic identity, yet establish themselves among the élite.

## Methods

This paper is based on four years of wider ethnographic study in the city of Ashdod. After a year of preliminary exploration (2001), the study concentrated on the Andalusian Orchestra, over a period close to three subscription seasons (2002–5). It involved travelling with the orchestra, recording backstage events and talking to the musicians in their dressing rooms, as well as attending many concerts, sitting side by side with the subscribers. Interviews were also held with prominent figures in the municipality. Four years of ethnography created a rich and varied field diary.

In a first telephone conversation with Motti Malka, the director of the orchestra, I asked his permission to conduct ethnographic research on it. His answer was surprising: 'I've been waiting years for this telephone call', he said. Motti Malka and Yehiel Lasri, the founders of the orchestra, both belong to the second generation of immigrants from Morocco, coming to Israel as toddlers. Both of them are religious, charismatic and able players in the games of politics and power.

It became clear at an early stage of the study that Malka and Lasri explicitly saw the orchestra as a vehicle for social mobility in Israeli society for the ethnic group associated with it. But it also became clear quite quickly that there was no obvious set of tactics known to the protagonists that they thought would achieve this aim. The founders of the orchestra did not say 'This is how we do things'. Rather, they were in an ongoing process of constructing a cultural identity for their ethnic group, tentatively evolving strategies to achieve this end. In one of the conversations, Malka talked about his meeting with Dr Buzaglo, a philosopher and the son of one of the important musicians of North Africa's Jews, Rabbi David Buzaglo. 'You have to help me to create a language', Malka told him. 'I need some more words and arguments, we have to write a new dictionary'. Understanding the way people shape cultural 'recipes' deepens our understanding of how culture works in particular contexts. Not everybody has the ability to shape their own recipes. In the present case, the second generation immigrants held a social position that enabled them to translate between languages, spaces and times, and by doing so to gain a certain amount of recognition from wider society.

My ethnography took place during the years of economic depression and reaction to the second Palestinian *intifada* (revolt). This marked the end of the discourse about a 'New Middle East' that had held up until that point (Peres and Naor, 1993). The Jewish public discourse in Israel became ever more dominated by isolationist nationalism, on the one hand, and neo-conservative economic policy, under the Minister of Finance, Benjamin Netanyahu, on the other (Ram, 2008: esp. chs 1–3). The condition of war and terror attacks in the urban centres created a severe economic depression. One of the results was that the budget for cultural enterprises doled out by the Israeli state was cut progressively, from \$95 million in 2003 to \$56.4 million in 2004 (Israeli Parliament

Research Centre, 2003). In 2004, for example, the players of the Andalusian Orchestra were not paid for seven months. So, even after ten years of existence, the orchestra was still fighting for its life and for recognition. Its leaders kept the players informed of their struggle with the 'Establishment' (in their language), especially the Ministry of culture and the local municipality, which led to a sense of solidarity among the players, and helped to still criticism of the leadership. In this situation, the players did not demand a rise in pay, and continued to perform on very low wages. Thus, paradoxically, the very struggle for existence enabled the orchestra to survive over a long period.

## **A 'Classic Mizrahi Orchestra': Ethnicity, Class and Inequality**

To a great extent, the orchestra was the response of immigrants from Morocco to the forms of cultural and social fracture that took place when all immigrants to Israel from Islamic countries were lumped together under the term 'Mizrahim' (Shohat, 1998). 'Country of origin' became a useful category for sociologists in describing the ladder of class in Israel, with European and North American Jews at the top of the ladder, followed by Jews from Asia, then Jews from Africa, Palestinian citizens of Israel and, at the end of the list, Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Semyonov and Epstein, 1987).

Cultural suppression was made possible by the strong hegemony of European Jews that held sway over the fields of Israeli art and culture (Shenhav and Yonah, 2005), including the field of music (Sa'ada-Ophir, 2001; Regev, 2000; Pearlson, 2006). 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 particular level of performative quality. It was largely excluded from the radio and television, and given neither moral nor financial backing for public practice, nor any share of subsidies allocated by the Ministry of Culture (Shohat, 1988). Culture certainly operated in this regard as a political mechanism that excluded ethnic minority groups. Cultural oppression helped construct a social marginality and was in turn reinforced by it.

As its name implies, Andalusian music has its origins in the Muslim Caliphate in southern Spain in the Middle Ages. This body of music comprised 24 'modules' that, according to mystical instructions, linked their performance to various times of day, seasons of the year and certain moods (Sarussi and Carasanti, 1991: 116). Although musicians and poets continued to perform after the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain, both the knowledge and the repertoire gradually became reduced to 11 entire modules. It is these that form the basis of all contemporary Moroccan-Andalusian music. Research has revealed that Jews played a prominent part in the cultural life of Muslim Spain, including in musical terms (Sarussi and Carasanti, 1991). This dominance continued in Morocco and other North African countries to which the non-Christian population was expelled from Spain in 1492. One of the modules that found communal expression in the synagogue was that of 'Request Songs'. These were sung in synagogues *a capello*, integrating the Andalusian Allah and Hebrew hymns, over 20 Sabbaths in the winter, at about four o'clock in the morning. This custom was established under the influence of

groups of scholars of the Kabbalah in Tsfat, who saw special value in prayer and night vigils, and the custom spread to the wider Jewish-North African world.

Instead of adopting the musical modes of Arabs from the East, the Jews of northern Morocco chose to prefer a combination of their own canon and local Andalusian music. Collections of manuscripts were published during the 19th century and up to 1930 by a wide number of musicologists and singers in Morocco (Sarussi and Carasanti, 1991). The tradition was maintained, though at a low level, throughout the process of the community's emigration to Israel in the late 1950s. It enjoyed something of a renaissance in the 1960s when the famous cantor Rabbi David Buzaglo came to the country, at a time when ethnic awareness and cultural self-expression was growing among minority groups in Israel (Sarussi and Carasanti, 1991).

The suppression of Mizrahi culture by the ruling elite led to the near-extinction of the customs of Moroccan Jewry in Israel. During the 1950s and the early 1960s many of the musicians and singers of sacred music were forced to abandon their music just to earn a living. In such circumstances there was no chance of forming musical ensembles and playing in a traditional way. In addition, 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-Amzalg, musicologist and first conductor of the orchestra, refers to the experience of the first generation of players that were immigrants from North Africa to Morocco in the late 1950s and early 1960s:

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 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 Mitzvot, 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 those among the musicians who were recognized over the years as 'special', due to their expertise in classical Arabic and Hebrew, and the esoteric knowledge of the music (Sarussi, 1984). However, any chance of bringing up a second generation of musicians without a conservatory, without music groups for young people, and without documented scores, was likely 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.

One of the orchestra's subscribers, a local councillor in his 50s, told me, in the first of many conversations:

First of all, we won legitimacy. It was the Likud government, in the late [19]70s, that gave us legitimacy. There was a programme of religious songs on Saturday night, two weeks of the Ashkenazi version and a week of the Mizrahi version [i.e. European vs. North African customs and traditions]. When the Likud came to power, they made it a week of this and a week of that. Success was always identified with Western culture, but Japan brought that theory down: number one in the technological world, without changing its culture the least bit. The moment they gave our culture legitimacy, everything opened up. Have you ever heard the word jubilation? We used to do it with a silencer, now there's a word for it – jubilation. [He pulled



out a chain with a Hamsa – a good luck charm]. See this Hamsa? Once they called it superstition, now they call it mysticism. It comes in a cardboard or plastic or glass box, you name it. When my parents ate parsley or mint, they called them primitives; today they call it culinary herbs. When our parents wore a *jalabiya*, what did they say about them? Primitives. When Dan Ben Amotz [a well-known satirist] wore a *jalabiya*, he was a Bohemian and fun-lover ... Nothing has changed, except one thing, that they recognized the fact that we have a culture. That's why this orchestra is everyone's anchor. Let them recognize that we have a culture – from that point on everything will be OK.

The accepted models of legitimate culture are always specific, carried by and identified with a single social group, but they are presented as universal, and their main strength arises from this. The outstanding example in the musical field in the Israeli context is the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, a cultural enterprise of particularly high standing, which succeeded in stamping itself as the legitimate 'national' orchestra, and thus as a representative of socially legitimate culture (Birnboim-Carmeli, 1993). What I want to focus on is the process whereby the second generation of Mizrahi immigrants appropriated this cultural model for their own purposes.

Ruling regimes shape geopolitics, policy, economics and culture, as expressed in language, beliefs and desires. Culture is highly important in the integration of immigrants into the modern national state. Almost every dimension in people's lives is reshaped and redefined, such as typical modes of city life, education, religion and family practices (Comaroff, 1998; Mitchell, 1998; Scott, 1998). Accepted models of what culture is and should be become the main source of political and moral legitimacy used by elites to control 'others'. The concept of *cultural appropriation* is offered here because it emphasizes the power of the accepted models of culture and behaviour to shape and design worldviews, especially those of immigrants. At the same time, however, processes of cultural appropriation can confer power on those subjects who appropriate accepted models in order to gain both cultural capital and material resources for themselves.

The term 'classical music' is a stamp of social and cultural acceptability, existing at the pinnacle of the social order, which Israeli society has presented as a respectable cultural mode for those groups 'accepted' in that society. The case of the Israel Andalusian Orchestra shows that the adoption of accepted cultural models by an immigrant group was crucial for the purposes of achieving broader social acceptance. The leaders of the orchestra emptied the accepted model of its specific content (in this case, the European classical music tradition) and replaced that content with a new one – the sacred music of their fathers. The result was the apparent paradox of an 'oriental classic orchestra'. In this way, the struggle for recognition and material and symbolic support within and by Israeli society did not lead the orchestra's leaders to create an alternative to the hegemonic culture, but to appropriate it, subtly changing its meaning as they did so.

This process took place in three stages. 1) The heads of the orchestra and the subscribers identified and adopted the 'appropriate model' (the Western classical orchestra form). Then 2) the founders of the orchestra distinguished between form and content. They adopted the form (namely, the Western criteria for the classical orchestra), but gave it a new content, namely oriental religious music and prayers. The players started to wear suits and bow ties – key referents of the standard Western classical orchestra format – but played the traditional sacred music of their fathers. By adopting the form of accepted

culture they appropriated it. Then 3) this cultural appropriation constructed a base for social and cultural legitimization, new demands and a new narrative.

In one of our first conversations, Malka told me: 'They [the elite group] say to themselves: We have culture; the simple people, the natives, have folklore'. This was the way he interpreted the value of culture, as experienced through the eyes of those who 'have it', in this case European Jews who are Israeli society's dominant social group. Coming from this assumption, he and the other founders of the orchestra dealt with what was for them the crucial question – how to present the things they held important (music, instruments, knowledge) as parts of a socially acceptable culture? How could they raise themselves through music to become part of the elite and not a marginal minority?

## Finding and Defining the Appropriate Model

The story of the orchestra shows its founders Lasri and Malka acting rather like anthropologists, looking into their past where they discovered a new world of spiritual and impressive music. Malka and Lasri identified the potential of the music of their parents as a potential source of power, something that could be presented as a culture that was simultaneously 'authentic' and 'classical'. They recognized its potential to be a vehicle that could take them across the boundary between social marginality and the elite.

This journey into the realm of their childhoods involved discovery – 'We were amazed, we have a wonderful culture', said Malka – a discovery that stood in contradiction to their experience as the second generation of Moroccan Jews in Israel, a group otherwise suffering from the effects of social marginality. The fact that they engaged with the culture of their parents and were surprised by their findings tells us something about the experience of second generation immigrant groups. As Dr Lasri said, the revitalized experience of cultural traditions 'frees many people ... from feelings of inferiority. We, too, have classical music that can be heard in concert halls'. Those members of immigrant groups who believe that they possess an 'appropriate' culture, which is at least as legitimate as that possessed by more dominant social groups, are freed from some of the effects of cultural stigma.

However, returning to the musical experiences of childhood brought with it elements that were identified by the orchestra's founders as signs of cultural inferiority and humiliation. One of the most problematic features of traditional musical performance as far as they were concerned was the sale of pictures of holy men during performances, and also what they perceived to be the screeching amplification of the music. 'We got annoyed with these features', said Malka. The incongruous juxtaposition of musical uplift side by side with these unwholesome features, as they saw it, was what motivated them to act to transform the nature of performance. Both Lasri and Malka accepted the standard definitions of what high culture is. In Bourdieu's (2005) terms, they agreed to the rules of the established field, hoping to gain some of its rewards. When they listened to traditional performance, something that could be presented as high culture was revealed to them. This they felt was their entry ticket into the field of high culture. The music could be presented as 'classical' as well as 'authentic' – produced by something new, a 'classical' but still 'Eastern' orchestra.

This poses the question: how could the founders dream about a classical orchestra, with its preponderance of string instruments, when very few of their players knew how to play the violin? The answer has to do with developments in migration to Israel. During the early 1990s, large numbers of people emigrated from the countries of the former Soviet Union to Israel, among them many musicians whom, under the state policy of population dispersal, were settled in Ashdod (Aharon-Gutman, 2009). These new immigrants provided the founders of the orchestra with cheap professional 'Western'-style musicians. Thanks to these immigrants, the second generation of immigrants from North Africa were able to, as it were, empower their cultural 'burden' and present it as legitimate 'culture'. The creation of a cultural enterprise associated with one ethnic group became possible only thanks to the crucial participation of another.

The Israel Andalusian Orchestra was founded by Lasri and Malka in two stages. In 1988, together with Sami Almagrabi, Eli ben Hammo and Aryeh Azulai, they established the Centre for Sacred Songs and Poetry in Ashdod, which became a training school for singers of sacred songs and musicians who play traditional instruments. In 1994, there was a division of the group, and the orchestra was put on a new footing. The act of institutionalization created a base upon which the music could be presented as perceived high culture.

Most of the orchestra's activities revolved round the question: what is the right way to 'do' culture? That is, how could 'traditional' and 'authentic' musical culture be performed as high culture? The ways in which the orchestra dealt with these questions reveal certain facets of the wider political economy of culture in Israel. Dr Lasri put the issues like this:

What is the 'correct' model [for performance]? Professional, bigger, a formula that takes into account not only the Andalusian side, but the Israeli side as well. It was difficult for Israeli society to digest something like sacred songs and poetry. The Andalusian part is easy to stomach, a combination of the authentic with the Western. The notes had to be written down as a score – which had not been done in Israel before – [then also] the framework of a conductor, a Western-style stage: the content is Andalusian, the framework Western. Keeping the authenticity all the time ...

We understood that anything that was not presented in classical form would not be accepted as culture. We wanted to insert cultural elements into Mizrahi music. Popular Mizrahi music has its place and has won legitimacy in Israel, but they [the non-classical, 'popular' Mizrahi musicians] don't give it that added value, the value of the classical, and without that you don't penetrate the heart and canon of Israeli culture. It's important to us to get into Israeli society, to be a part of Israeli culture.

Thus the Andalusian Orchestra was formulated by its founders as an exercise in the translation of an 'other' culture into high culture. 'Otherness' is reconstructed as an entrance ticket into the socially accepted, mainstream culture.

The road that the founders took leads us to a reconsideration of the term multiculturalism. The people under discussion did not carry on the culture of the country of their origin as a route to a community in which the individual can enjoy 'cultural freedom'

(Kymlica, 1995). They chose an element of their parents' traditions and gave it a form that gained significance and won them recognition within the 'absorbing' culture. To a great extent, it can be said that the cultural resurrection of Andalusian music would not have taken place if the founders of the orchestra had not thought that it would gain them resources of status and money within the absorbing society. This shows that – in this case – culture is not a permanent load that is carried on people's backs but a continually changing entity, and that it is a matter of constant negotiations that involve complex engagements with issues of power and social and material survival.

In the story of the orchestra's foundation, the accepted 'Western' model was not the only one available. During the events that led up to the foundation, two versions of how the music could be performed were offered to the public. One was the format of the musical ensemble sitting on mats, dressed in traditional clothes and playing traditional instruments. The other – the winning one, as it turned out – was the format of performance by a large orchestra with *both* traditional and classical instruments, an orchestra which transmitted westernized arrangements of the music.

One example through which we can learn about the work of the orchestra's founders as a series of exercises in cultural translation concerns the discussions that went on regarding the orchestra's name. Again, Dr Lasri phrased the issue succinctly:

There was also an argument about the name of the orchestra. [Calling it] the 'Israel Andalusian Orchestra' would make it a part of what is happening here [in Israel], not what happens in Morocco. Other suggestions were 'The Andalusian Orchestra' [and] 'Moroccan Jewry'. We went for the name that expresses our world view – a link between Andalusia and Israel. Like the Israel Philharmonic. It's not a surrender [as dropping reference to 'Morocco' might imply suppressing their origins] ... because, after all, we came here to build a state.

The name, the Israel Andalusian Orchestra, to a great extent itself sums up the findings of my research: it voices the coupling of Andalusia (the source that legitimized the music as authentic and classical) with Israel, the modern and the national – with its budget to support culture and its forms of cultural and social recognition. Dropping the word 'Morocco' was part of the act of cleansing the music and the players of all the elements of the stereotype of Moroccan Jews, considered as 'low' or inferior in wider Israeli society. The success of the chosen name was due to the willingness to adopt an existing model, the most successful model of all – the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

## Playing Between Form and Content

Having described the initial means by which the 'appropriate' cultural model for the orchestra was adopted, we now turn to the second stage of the process – that is, bringing the new content (Moroccan music) into the established ('orchestral') form.

According to Malka, the founder and general manager of the orchestra:

After we went through the Via Dolorosa of steering committees and requests for financial support and paperwork for three years, they [the Israeli state's cultural administration] said to us: 'O.K., that's all well and good, but we can't allocate money for something that doesn't exist. First show us a concert'. With thirty thousand dollars, we did 'fake' events. We took traditional

players that we knew and gave them a call-up, and they agreed to come without even knowing if they'd be paid and how much. We hired all the instrumentalists from the Israel Chamber Orchestra in Tel Aviv as a package deal, and held just three rehearsals of the repertoire.

In the same vein, Dr. Lasri noted:

At the first rehearsals in Tel Aviv ... they [the Israel Chamber Orchestra players] thought the material was very funny. They laughed, but I grew very excited. I said to myself: that's it exactly – a song we heard in our childhood, they used to sing it as a childhood song to children in their cradles. To hear it all blown up like that – I said to Motti: 'We did it! That's the way to go!'.<sup>1</sup>

Fundamental to the steps that the founders took was the separation of musical content and form. As Simmel (1978) implies, this can be done even from a marginal position in the society if you have sufficient economic capital. The founders had little or no knowledge, established structures or any kind of platform to establish an orchestra – but they had collected some money, which then enabled them to play. They hired the Israel Chamber Orchestra for several days, and asked it to play the lullabies of their childhood, written down in Western notation – itself an act of cultural translation.

The beginning of the act of translation was to separate form from content. The technically-driven decision of hiring the Chamber Orchestra led to a new construction: the instruments were Western ones, and the means were Western notation, but the content was the 'original it', the Andalusian Allah. As Dr. Lasri put it:

During the process of foundation, Professor Sheetret<sup>2</sup> thought that the Andalusian [players] should only play on authentic instruments, and sit on mats on the ground. I thought that would make us look like folklorists. We'd be invited to the Maimuna [a Mizrahi festival] but we'd never get into Israeli society. Motti and I wanted suits and bow-ties – that was the only way to preserve our culture. We knew the way the wind blows in the corridors of power – we would never get a subsidy. Besides, a lot of Mizrahis here in Israeli society see themselves as Western, so to connect them up to their music, their home, again, they would need a link to their Westernness.

The symbolism of suits and bow-ties was the only way to carry out 'our' culture as high culture – the perceived source of power. Moreover, the orchestra adopting the rules of the field of high culture was an effective strategy in the fight for the symbolic recognition of the liturgical music of their fathers. The bow-ties were a highly significant enabler, allowing them to play 'their own music'. They had no intention of denying the status of high culture in Israel, only of gaining recognition ('getting into Israeli society') and sharing the material rewards, namely a subsidy from the state cultural administration.

Founding the orchestra was a two-part action, according to Dr. Lasri and confirmed by all the supporters that I spoke to. The first part involved the activities of the immigrants and their children vis-à-vis the Israeli cultural Establishment, to gain a subsidy from the State and to be seen as a legitimate part of Israeli culture, and the second was aimed at the second generation of immigrants 'who see themselves as Western'. As Dr. Lasri said, they needed a connection to their 'Westernness' before they could connect up with their

homeland and the lullabies of their childhood. In other words, the sacred music had to be embodied into the rules of the field of high culture, because the term 'Mizrahi' could not provide a symbolic home for the second generation of immigrants, since it was a stained and burnt-out stereotype.

This is why playing the game according to the rules of high culture did not alienate the public of subscribers. On the contrary: performing the music under the terms of Western high culture gave the subscribers a sense of pride and belonging to Israeli society without involving a relinquishing of their personal identity. The overwhelming majority of these subscribers were 'Mizrahi' and belonged to the 'traditional' stream of Judaism (as distinct from the ultra-orthodox stream). Many belonged to a group, either from a particular synagogue or from their place of work – and targeting such locales was the main thrust of the orchestra's marketing strategy. Other subscribers came as married couples. The audience dressed up for the occasion, in the manner of a standard high cultural audience, yet supported the entire performance by rhythmic hand-clapping and calls of encouragement, actions not at all associated with such an audience but with the audience of 'traditional' music.

### **'Our War with Our Audience'**

The new cultural formation that was the orchestra, and the particular form of cultural appropriation it involved, raised a number of questions: Where to play? What should the players wear? How should the subscribers dress? Should the audience be allowed to sing? Every detail became crucial to holding onto the new position that the orchestra was trying to achieve. The ensuing next stage, involving new narratives, new practices and new rhetoric, then took shape. Complex negotiations and struggles began around the limits and limitations of this new cultural form. In Malka's words: 'This is our war, not with the establishment but with our audience'.

In her research on the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Birnboim-Carmeli (1993) asks: 'How is high culture created?' She describes the cultural practices that made the Israel Philharmonic the symbol of broader high cultural enterprises:

Commonly, the members of the audience, meaning the ideal types of subscriber to the concert series of the Philharmonic, reach the entrance to the auditorium at an easy pace, arm-in-arm with their partner, and with a facial expression that is somewhere between modest seriousness and a broad smile.

She goes on to describe the way they are dressed (formally, with furs, pearls and jewellery). The code of behaviour is that of 'restrained pleasure', the tone of voice is low, and the response to the musical work presented is modest and disciplined.

This is how Birnboim-Carmeli (1993) shows how the 'canonic profile of the concert' is created, presented and performed, and this even in the field of classical music, the status of which as legitimated high culture is already seemingly unquestionable. The heads of the Andalusian Orchestra were well aware of these issues. They were very concerned with developing supervisory practices for the 'culturalization' of their subscribing public and the older performers, those among their parents' generation. They called these supervisory activities 'our war with our audience'. Such an expression reveals the

unspoken agreements between the subscribers and the heads of the orchestra that were revealed throughout my observational work. It was acceptable for audience members to sing in Moroccan in central concert halls, but not to hold a feast. The audience could sing, but it was preferable not to ululate. A suit and tie were defined as appropriate dress. The public had to come on time, and should not talk into their cell-phones during the performance.

The heads of the orchestra made a point of saying, again and again, that the Mizrahi audience was a 'ruined one', because of the way they consumed culture in the Israeli socio-cultural periphery. In that periphery, no formal cultural institutions existed, but from time to time there would be ostentatious and eclectic shows in the city square, with the best singers, and free of charge. From the point of view of the heads of the orchestra, just as the players were 'ruined' at weddings, so too were the public 'ruined', both by being used to everything being free, and by enjoying what the heads thought of as low quality performances. A civilizing mission was needed to support the appropriate cultural model being pursued. The transition from 'town square culture' to the cultured concert auditorium demanded many changes in audience behaviour – coming on time, switching off cell-phones, and so on. All these were minor practices, but each one of them was seen as necessary to the very existence of the orchestra. As Malka indicated:

I want to take the easiness from classical music. I was at a performance yesterday, a conductor and six musicians. Everyone was clapping in time; everything was slow, they took 12 minutes to change the stage. Very nice. It's reasonable. Our audience has a different tempo, you see. That's part of our war with our audience. Apart from that, I had to educate them from zero how to behave in concerts – to come on time, to switch off their mobiles, not to chatter, not to move around in the middle of a piece – you name it!

These words show that when I spoke to Malka, the war was not yet over – neither the war against the audience, nor the war against the cultural Establishment. The aim of the war, from the setting up of the orchestra to achieving an enterprise that produced high culture, demanded of the audience that its members pay 'proper attention' to the performance, thus ridding both the audience, the music and the orchestra of any 'low cultural' taint.

We learn from the reports of Birnboim-Carmeli (1993) that the approach to the Israel Philharmonic by its subscriber public could be effectively characterized by the expression offered us by Veblen (1953) as conspicuous consumption. But this expression certainly does not describe the subscriber public of the Andalusian Orchestra, in the accepted sense of Veblen's notion. Rather, it was apparent that the performances of the orchestra as putative high culture events both involved and created a conspicuous consumption of *ethnic* identity. Many people subscribed to and came to its concerts as an act of defiance, grounded in the difficult experiences of Moroccan Jewish immigrants to Israel. This defiance arose from the fact that the orchestra provided a response to a perceived stigma – a word that was heard over and over again in conversations with subscribers.

There was a marked sense of pride with regard to various elements that made up the performance evenings. I heard one man in the audience say to his wife: 'Did you know that the conductor [Shmuel Elbaz] is one of ours, and got an MA in Amsterdam?' At one concert, when Dr Eilam-Amzaleg came in, one of the women in the audience said: 'Here comes our hero!' People repeatedly said to me things like this: 'We have a culture: what

words, what subjects! Songs about love, about morality, about life!’ According to what the subscribers told me, going to the concerts was a cleansing experience, like a rite of purification from contamination, from a stigma that stuck to them, to their detriment.

However, it should not be assumed that ‘our war with our audience’ was a harmonious process. In fact, it received a great deal of criticism, as one of the important singers who worked with the orchestra related:

The fact is that Malka and Lasri went completely crazy at first. Everything had to be just so and there had to be bow-ties, like at a concert, and no this, no that and no the other. You might say that it was my bad luck that at first they put me in such a tight framework, because they said, here we are, we’re like Ashkenazim. They wanted to please the Ashkenazim. If the conductor of the Philharmonic comes out 20 times, with us he comes out 21 times. But soon enough they saw that this is artificial. They began to be original: it’s all right to clap hands, and you can crack a joke in the middle. Be yourself – they’ll like you.

## Conclusion

The main theme of this paper was an analysis of the ways by which particular cultural entrepreneurs tried to make a particular music ‘appropriate’ - and by extension elevating the status of the ethnic group associated with it - by refashioning it to meet the criteria of ‘high culture’. I see the contribution of the paper to the sociology of culture as having three aspects. The first dimension concerns how a second generation of Moroccan immigrants related to the Israeli State, a context in which their nationality and religion enabled them formally to participate in society, but in which strong social and cultural forces preserved their social marginality. Culture in this case was initially a mechanism of exclusion for this minority group, despite the fact that the State had given them the promise of belonging to wider Israeli society.

The second dimension concerns methodology. It is my view that ethnographic study of the second generation of immigrants helped to explore the making and remaking of culture ‘from within’. My research involved not ethnography of the orchestra but rather ethnography of the founders’ plan to create social mobility. The group in question tried to present their music as high culture in order to gain more status for themselves and what they believed to be ‘their culture’.

The third dimension concerns the analysis of cultural boundaries. I observed how the second generation of immigrants succeeded in rising up the Israeli social and cultural hierarchy by appropriating established modes of cultural expression. In 2006 the Israel Andalusian Orchestra won the Israel Prize. This is the most prestigious national prize for a cultural enterprise, one that is presented on Israel’s Independence Day, and which is aired on the public TV channel in a ceremonial broadcast. Hence what this paper presents is the notion of cultural appropriation as an effective means to contain both the acceptable models of (high) culture and the (immigrant) subject’s action of appropriation. This cultural appropriation itself became a new accepted cultural model, leading to a social re-construction of high culture. A new approach to, and a new narrative and economy of, culture were thereby created.

Cultural appropriation of the kind described here is a political form that theories of integration, segregation and multiculturalism have failed fully to engage with.



Consideration of this kind of cultural appropriation offers the possibility of shedding new light on relations between ethnicity and 'culture'. The subscribers to the orchestra were found to be engaged in the 'conspicuous consumption of ethnic identity'. A subscription to a Mizrahi classical orchestra became a source of power instead of a millstone around the neck, a jewel for self-adornment instead of a stigma, a home instead of a prison. Analysis of the reconfigured ethnic Mizrahi identity that accompanied the Andalusian Orchestra demonstrates that such an identity was forged in a paradoxical manner – for the orchestra's valuable contribution to its subscribers lay in the fact that it accepted the orthodox assumptions of Western high culture, the very culture they were otherwise excluded from.

## Notes

1. 'Mizrahi Jews' is an Israeli category referring to Jews who have emigrated to Israel from North Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Most of them suffer from cultural and economic discrimination in Israel.
2. Shimon Shetreet is a former Israeli politician who held several ministerial portfolios between 1992 and 1996.

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