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THE REPRODUCTION OF THE MODEL OF 'THE
ORIENTAL' IN ISRAELI SOCIAL FIELD
The 1950's and the Speedy Immigration

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SUMMARY

The aim of this work is to describe and analyze the ethnic relations in the Israeli society of the 1950's, through the examination of the ways in which the model of 'the Oriental' (Mizrahi) functioned in organizing the Israeli culture in that period, i.e., what was their role and function in the framework of the Israeli dominant repertoire.

The introduction opens with an historical view of 'the Oriental' in the history of modern Jewish identity, and presents theories which analyze the ways this model functioned in shaping modern Jewish identities since the 18th century, when more and more Jewish individuals and groups joined the cultural processes of modernization and westernization.

One of the central models that the western Jews operated in their relations with the 'Oriental' Jews, was the model of *transforming philanthropy*. This model is different in its essence from the model of the traditional Jewish *Zdaka*, by the fact it conditioned the economical or informational assistance, in an identity change on behalf of the philanthropic beneficiary. One of the questions the work examines is if the relationship between the dominant groups of the 50's and the 'Orientals' immigrants, operated in the model of *transforming philanthropy*.

The second theme in which the work focus, concerns the history of the *Zionist* cultural identity, and the ways in which the 'Orientals' were placed within the *unification* process of the Jewish nation, which operated since the emergence of the Zionist repertoire at the end of the 19th century. The *unification* process, which is typical to any national movement, operates in more strict and aggressive manner during the first stages of the founding of the state, since the dominant group is apprehensive of the potential of contesting groups to emerge, or of the spread of models that oppose the repertoire it wishes to regulate.

The third part of the introduction is methodological, and it presents the inter-cultural contact analysis suggested by Elias and Scotson [Elias & Scotson 1965], who described

cultural situations that seem at first glance to be similar to those of the Israeli social field in the 50`s. Elias and Scotson developed a theory which is based on the opposition between the “Established” and the “Outsiders”, which I used in the work to examine the Israeli case.

According to Elias and Scotson the established are building a memory through idealization of their past (in the opposite way to the way they build the outsiders memory), in order to defend their dominant status, and to increase their symbolic capital. In their efforts to differentiate themselves from the outsiders, the established using almost everywhere the same weapons, among them humiliating gossip, stigmatizing beliefs about the whole group modeled on observations of its worst section, degrading code words and, as far as possible, exclusion from all chances for gaining symbolic and material capital.

One of the advantages in the methodology of Elias and Scotson is that it takes into account the reciprocation between the established and the outsiders, and shows that on behalf of the outsiders, which are exposed to stereotyping, there is a “silent agreement” to the distorted and degrading image imposed upon them by the established. This process doesn’t only inhibit the outsiders capacity to retaliate and to assert themselves, but it also begins to influence the “we-image” of the group and eventually to shape their behaviour and affective life. This process emerges among others, from the denial and the repression of the shame and humiliation which are caused by the unequal relations, which are compensated through deep identification with the established which perceived by the outsiders as perfect, as ideal.

The work examines the Aliyot (immigrations) of the 50`s, from three main point of view:

1. Their connection to the history of modern Jewish identity.
2. In the context of the emergence of the Israeli nation state.
3. In comparison to prevailing theories on the relationship between the dominant group and the groups of the others, that desire or are forced to obey its repertoire.

The first chapters examines the factors that operated in the Israeli social field after the Second World War and the Liberation War, and the political, economical, and settlement interests of the dominant groups.

The young state of Israel desired urgently a demographical majority in order to establish its political status, as well as to enforce its sovereignty over the territories it occupied after the Liberation War. When the leadership of the evolving state recognized that after the holocaust the only option to achieve its demographical, political and economical goals, is bringing the Jews from the Arab world to Israel, it opened a speedy and large scaled transfer enterprise of them.

The analysis of the social field showed that the relation of the dominant group towards the `Orientals` was shaped in the frame of four main interests:

1. A creation of demographical majority,
2. Accumulation of votes and political capital,
3. The enforcement of the Israeli sovereignty over the lands evacuated from Arabs,
4. Economical interests.

These factors created in the Israeli social field a *speed dimension* which must be taken into account in any analysis of the cultural identities in the Israeli social field, and in particular in that of the 50`s. the significant impact of the *speed dimension* led me to name the immigrations of the 50`s “the speedy immigration”, a title which expresses not only the fact that this immigration was the most swift one in modern times, but also that the haste served the dominant group in enforcing its repertoire over the immigrants, and on the Israeli cultural space as a whole.

Though the political and economical interests of the dominant groups, were a crucial factor in the differentiation of the `Orientals`, we cannot grasp the meaning of this process without considering the impact of the speedy `Orientals` immigration, on the cultural identity of the society shaped before their arrival.

The examination of the common perceptions and attitudes towards the 'Orientals' among the leaders of the dominant groups, shows that in most cases they were perceived as possessing a low culture, which is not appropriate whatsoever to the ideal form of life according to the repertoire. Big doubts have been cast upon their mutability, and their ability to be soldiers and productive citizens, and a deep disappointment expressed concerning their level of education and hygiene. For many prominent social agents, the 'Orientals' seems dangerous also for political reasons, and many expressed the fear that the 'Orientals' might collaborate with the Arabs in times of war, or might generate an internal revolution that will put an end the entire Zionist enterprise.

As I described above, according to the theory of Elias and Scotson, the established are using many weapons to differentiate the outsiders, and one of the most effective ones, which was used by all dominant groups, was the stereotyping of 'the oriental'. The function and impact of the stereotyping processes in the Israeli social field is one of the main themes of the work.

As already described in many studies and testimonies, the stereotyping of the cultural system in the 50's presented the 'Orientals' as physically and mentally degenerate, as carriers of genetic and infectious diseases, as suffering from chronic poverty and dirtiness, as possessing excessive and uncontrollable sexual desires, as immoral, spiritually impotent, and as practicing primitive religion. From the 16 articles of the journalist Gelblum in the daily newspaper Haaretz, through Mosinson's stage hits, to Eisenstat sociological canonical researches, the 'Orientals' were represented, analyzed and researched, as being a part of a dark and pervert world. Their arrival perceived as the reason for the wave of crimes in the state, to its moral deterioration, and in short to almost every negative cultural phenomena.

It is important to note, that although most of the stereotypes projected on the 'Orientals' (especially in the first part of the 50's) were negative, the symbolic border between the dominant groups and its 'oriental' outsiders was established also by positive stereotypes. Since the line of differentiation is fantastic in its core, it is flexible and dynamic, and it

enables the dominant group to tackle the intrusion of the others into its symbolic space by sustaining the illusion of an absolute difference between them and the others.

The differentiation of the 'Orientals' by the dominant group was therefore double faced, as reflected by the positive and negative systems of stereotypes. On the one hand, the dominant group aspired to integrate 'the oriental' (and by that to reduce its anxiety from him) and on the other, it rejected him when he attempted to share its symbolic and material capital. This relationship generated a model of "positive" or "good oriental", i.e. an 'oriental' who obeys the dominant repertoire, and it was laid in opposition to the model of the "negative" or "bad oriental", who refuses to accept his position in the symbolic hierarchy and consequently to adapt what the dominant repertoire destined for him (e.g., "to be satisfied with less" and "productive").

In the analysis of the stereotyping process, I used Sander Gilman's theory, which describes two stages of stereotyping. The first stage, can be called *necessary stereotyping*, since it results from the fact that the system of stereotypes enables us to organize in an immediate and initial way, our usual unstable perception process, and in this context the stereotypes are *necessary* to the socio-semiotic cohesiveness of the self and the culture, especially when this cohesiveness is threatened.

In the second stage, the stereotyping can develop in two directions. In the first way, the inability to repress the stereotypical memory, excludes any possibility to recognize a discrepancy between the stereotypes and reality, in a way Gilman calls "pathological stereotyping". The second way, which is titled in the work as *reflective* or *dialogical* stereotyping, tries to dismantle the stereotypes or at least restructure them, in relation to their correspondence with reality. In other words, the *differential* or *pathological* stereotyping interaction, does not enable repression of the stereotypes and certainly not reevaluation of them, i.e., reflection on the correspondence between the stereotypes and the particular actions of the given individual or group of people.

In connection to the stereotyping process in the Israeli 50`s social field, the work presents a series of researches made in the late 50`s and early 60`s, which examined the stereotyping in the education, medical and sport fields. These researches show that the differentiation principle of the dominant repertoire, which I described above in the context of the political and administrative leadership, operated in a similar model in the inter-personal social interactions, and especially in the education system. These researches corroborates the argument that the stereotyping in the Israeli social field of the 50`s was in most cases *differentiating* and *pathological*, and did not occur in the way I defined as *reflective* or *dialogic* stereotyping.

Another important point which is stressed in the study of the stereotyping in the 50`s, is that the Jews from the Arab lands and other `Orientals`, behaved in the same way of Elias and Scotson`s outsiders, and internalized the differentiating stereotypes projected upon them, in processes referred as *auto-stereotyping* and *self-differentiation*. This process stress the part of the outsiders, i.e., the `Orientals` themselves, in the fast reproduction of the model of `the oriental` in the Israeli social field.

The character of the stereotyping processes in the 50`s, asserts that the differentiating and pathological stereotyping of `the oriental`, were central models of perception and action in the Israeli culture, i.e., a necessary and integral part of its repertoire and the various options of identity it includes.

This proposition stressed that the differentiating stereotyping of `the oriental` didn`t emerge in the social field of the 50`s, rather merely operated there in a more intense manner, which resulted from the extreme conditions of the field. In other words, the model of `the oriental` was not *produced* in the social field of the 50`s, but only *reproduced* on large scale, within the speed dimension frame, and as a result of the intense anxiety the mass appearance of the `Orientals` stirred in the dominant group.

Indeed, the anxiety of the dominant group from a mass immigration of the `Orientals` existed already in the first stages of the Zionist colony in Palestine. Dr. Arthur Ruppin,

known in Zionist historiography as “the father of Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael”, wrote in 1911, that a mass (“en masse”) immigration of the “Oriental Jews” might endanger the Jewish Yishuv spiritually and intellectually, and will have a negative impact on its future.

The short review of Ruppin’s ethno-Darwinist theory concerning the Orientals, related also to one of the questions presented at the beginning of the work, concerning the function of the model ‘oriental’ in the modern Jewish repertoire. Ruppin’s theory and practice, which had a *direct* influence on the political leadership of the 50’s, demonstrated the way that the modernization and westernization of the *ostjuden* (the European oriental) in Palestine-Eretz-Yesrael, included since its formation a cultural process which “orientalize” the ‘oriental’, and differentiate him in the bureaucratic field.

The anxiety from the mass immigration of the ‘oriental’ Jews emanated from their perception as a threat to the regeneration process of the Jewish nation. In other words, the mass immigration of the ‘Orientals’ marked a “regression in the regeneration”, and an imminent threat to regress the dominant group into what it perceived as the ‘oriental’ primitive conditions, which this group aspired to escape from since it emerged in Europe.

The excessive preoccupation in the poverty, ignorance, low morals, laziness etc., i.e., in defining the low culture of the ‘Orientals’, enabled the dominant group to forget the memory of the poverty, shame and powerlessness, they experienced at the turn of the century pale of settlement. The escape from their own orientalizations in Europe was convoluted with the orientalizations of the Jews from the Arab lands.

Nevertheless, although the work considering the psychological dimension of these “projective identification” cultural relations, the point it stresses, is that the past “wipe up” of the dominant group memory, was a central part in the activity that gave them their symbolic capital. Indeed, this “wipe up” was a result of *building* a new past, and in this part of the work, I describe the model in which the dominant group has built its new past. This description is quite similar to what Elias and Scotson tells us about the established

tendency to idealize their past and to mold it according to the model of “minority of the best”.

Although the work concentrates mainly in the analyses of the symbolic capital field, it stresses that the differentiation of ‘the oriental’ is connected in an insuperable way, to the economical interests of the dominant group, and to the process of converting the symbolic capital into material capital. This conversion was possible mainly through *objectification* and *scientification* of the bias and stereotypes of the dominant group, and in creating a differentiating bureaucratic system that was legitimate through the conception of “objective discrimination” (kipuach obyektivni), a term coined by one of the sociologists at the time.

The perceptions of the repertoire gave the dominant group the legitimacy to mould the ‘Orientals’ in accordance to their fantasies, and in this context, the work describes the ways in which the ‘oriental’ identity was shaped through initiation processes of *productivization* and *militarisation*.

The perception and action models of *productivization* appeared already with the emergence of the Jewish modern identity, but the Zionist repertoire gave them a central function in its attempt to produce a “new Jew” which is bound to his ancestral land of Eretz Yisrael. The Zionist repertoire asserted that the Jews are suffering from a defective contact with soil and nature, and that they must cultivate themselves by a specifically Zionist form of *Bildung*, in order to become a “healthy” and “normal” people.

One of the main conditions for mending these defects was the *volunteering spirit* of the Jewish pioneer, and the physical and mental restoration programs offered by the Zionist institutions, which were operated usually without compulsion, and accompanied in most cases with a sense of cooperation and equality. The pioneer perceived as one who takes on himself the full responsibility for his destiny, recognizing the dangers and difficulties of settling in a hostile environment and in grueling agricultural work.

Nevertheless, in the 50's, as part of the camouflage and denial processes of the economical, demographical, psychological and martial interests, the cultural and bureaucratic systems used a rhetoric which was very similar to that of the pioneer ethos, but in practice they lacked the most important element of “volunteering” or free choice.

The analysis of the productivization process of the `Orientals` shows that it was inseparable from the economical interests of the dominant group, or in other words, from transforming and utilizing the `Orientals` as cheap labor.

The second process of initiation that the work examine is the militarization of the `Orientals`, a process which cannot be separable from the overall militaristic policy of Ben Gurion and other political and military leaders, which created a social field that mixed citizen values with military ones, and which blurred the border between the sphere of the army and the civil one. Nevertheless, the militarization of the `oriental` did not result only from reasons of security, but as in the case of the productivization, it served as a practice for transforming the `oriental` body and mentality.

The second part of the work examines the differentiation processes of the `Orientals` in different fields (sociology, educational, the IDF, etc.), and finds that the differentiating principle of the repertoire, operated in a similar way in all fields of Israeli culture in the 50's, both in terms of perception and action.

In the field of population distribution, the work shows how the differentiation of the `Orientals` operated in various models of postponement (the immigrants camps and the Ma`abara), and by geographic marginalizing (the Development Towns, special neighborhoods in the cities). The function of the `Orientals` in the cultural planning and population distribution, was actually to create a fast *Jewish* (i.e. non hostile) alternative for the Arab inhabitants that escaped or transferred, as well as an available, cheap and loyal labor force, for the settlements or the factories of the dominant group (most of the factories directors in the “development towns” didn't live in them).

The last field in which the differentiation of the `oriental` is examined is the field of the theater, which its study constitutes a central part of the work, since it is a fertile site for the extrication of representation and differentiation models of `the oriental`. The analysis of this field includes the bureaucratic system of the theater as well as the aesthetic models of the plays and performances in which the `Orientals` were represented.

The analysis of the bureaucratic field concentrates in the emergence of a new theatrical institution in the 50`s: TELEM (theater for the Ma`abrot), which changed, its name at the end of the Ma`abrot period into “Art for the People” (Amanut LaA`am). In the symbolic space of the Israeli theater the appearance of TELEM sharpened the opposition between “center” and “periphery”, between “cultural” and “popular”, between the “mob” and the possessors of “good taste”, and between “Kultura” and “Chaltura”. This opposition reflected until our day in the logo of “Art for the People”: a flying black cylinder over a background of a desert. The cylinder represents “high culture” and Europeanism, arriving as mental well spring to the desert, which symbolizes the cultural desolation of the `oriental` “desert generation” (this title designated the immutable mature `Orientals`).

TELEM was actually an active and efficient agent of the political establishment indoctrination, and its theater productions represented the agenda of the government in a most loyal way, expressed in on of the replicas uttered by the “good oriental” (Morei Levi, the Yemanite):

I wish that all the Jews in the state will care about the government more than of themselves!

In the examination of the aesthetical aspects of the theater, the work concentrates especially in the analysis of the plays and performances of the theater of the 50`s, and shows the ways the differentiation principle expressed itself in the `Orientals` models of representation. Although I have checked more than 10 plays, the description revolves around three plays which were very successful in the 50`s, in particular with the play

Kaza-Kazablan, which its Moroccan hero became after a short time an Israeli icon, and as described in the work, as a *repertoire* in Israeli culture.

The analysis of the play, the performance, the way it was perceived by the actors, critics, press and audiences, reveals the function of the model of 'the oriental' through the repertoire of the "Kazablantz'ik". The significance and appeal of this character was that it integrated for the first time on the Israeli stage and social space, between the negative and positive stereotypes of the 'oriental'. The reception analysis of the character Kazablan, shows how the pressing conditions of the field generated in the Israeli culture the call for a new representation of 'the oriental', a representation that will make him familiar and even likable, but mainly will give him a path to become *mutable* through recognition of his place in the symbolic hierarchy, and by accepting the function he must fulfill according to the repertoire.

The differentiation of the 'oriental' in the field of theater corresponded to the differentiating principle of the dominant repertoire, and became one of the means for the reproduction and distribution of the model of 'the oriental'. The bureaucratic and artistic activities of this field, demonstrate how important was the role of the literary agents, in the camouflage and promotion of the dominant group interests. As the work describes concerning the educators, sociologists intellectuals and artists, the case of the Israeli 50's presents a distinct example of the way in which science and art serves the dominant group, and instead of supplying it with reflective or critical perspectives, fixed its anxieties and ignorance, and legitimated its excluding activities.

The last part of the work, describes and analyzes some aspects of the 'oriental' cultural identity in Israel, and its connection to the history of the Jews from the Arab world, in particular in relation to their cultural contact with modernization and the west.

The historical and sociological research of the last decade shows that the modern cultural identity of most of the Jews in the Arab lands, evolved parallel to their adoption of the modern and western repertoire, a process that included a differentiating from the Arab

culture, which perceived in many ways as the opposite of this modern repertoire. Though this differentiating was not clear or accepted, and many of the Jews in the Arab lands operated at the beginning of the twentieth century in pre-modern frames, the research asserts that their general direction of their cultural identity fashioning – urbanization, modernization, education, secularization, studies of foreign languages – was convoluted in their differentiation from the Arab culture. As a matter of fact, most of the Jews from the Arab lands that had the opportunity to gain western education, even brief and partial, immigrated to one of the western states, usually to their colonial mother lands, the Iraqis to England, the Moroccans to France and Canada and the Libyans to Italy.

Following the rise of Arab nationalism, the weakening of the foreign powers, and the tension created between the Zionists and the Arab emerging national states, the Jews in the Arab world were thrown into a situation which opposed the general direction of their cultural identity development. Their economic conditions and personal security began to be unstable, and their limited immigration options (which were determined to a large extent by the agreements and understandings between the Zionists the Arab states and the western powers), made for their majority, the state of Israel as the only option for immigration.

Although the immigration options of the Jews from the Arab lands and other ‘Orientals’ were limited, and although their affinity towards Zionism and the affinity of Zionism towards them were very limited prior to the holocaust, many of them perceived the immigration option to Israel as a chance for fulfilling their cultural aspirations, whether in the frame of religion and nationalism, or in the ambition to integrate into the western secular-culture.

It is important to note, that the positive images which were expressed in the definition of the immigrant as “ole” (descending or upgrading, both in the religious, national, class and economic senses), didn’t emerge just from the wishful thinking of the Jews from the Arab world, or from the tough conditions they were situated in, but also from the way Israel and the Zionist culture presented itself to them.

In the level of declaration, the Israeli society allegedly invited the `Orientals` to join the nation through the national-religious ideology of “Mizug Galuyot” (the gathering of the diasporas), but also gave them the impression that they are operating in the model of *transforming philanthropy*, which as stressed above, promised to the beneficiary of the philanthropy a compensation for the pain which the transformation requires, by uplifting him into an economic and symbolic status, which is higher than the one he had prior to his cultural transformation.

However, as I mentioned above, the dominant group was not able to operate in accordance with its declared ideology, due to the compressing conditions – economical, political and cultural – in which it was situated. The tension and the actual gap, between the ideology of integration and the differentiating bureaucracy, was one of the main factors in the self-fashioning processes of the `oriental` cultural identity.

On the one side, e.g., the `Orientals` were blamed in their disinterest in education, and on the other, the state did not provide them the minimal educational instruments. As the work describes in length, during the 50`s there were ten of thousands of children and youth (more than 40%) that even if they wish to study did not have any opportunity to do so. In the same way, the `Orientals` were blamed for their laziness, although in practice, the state could not provide them work, and certainly not with a suitable salary.

As opposed to its declaration, the Israeli society did not enable the `Orientals` to maintain its old traditions, and on the other hand blocked their opportunity to join the modernization and westernization of the dominant groups. In other words, the dominant group orientalized the `Orientals`, and postponed their development by transforming them into permanent outsiders, in a way that enabled the dominant group to gain symbolic and material capital and to establish itself as modern and western.

Although the differentiation of `the oriental` was structured in the dominant repertoire, and although the bureaucratic field treated them in a symbolic and physical violence,

there is an important factor, which must take into account in understanding the particular *outsiderness* of the Israeli `oriental`.

The theory of Elias and Scotson concerning the inclination of the outsiders to internalize the stereotypes projected upon them, may explain the cultural and political behavior of the `Orientals` in the first years of their arrival, but it is not give an adequate explanation for their behavior after the initial cultural shock, and since the end of the 50`s (especially after the Vadi Salib riot), when the `Orientals` became equal in number, and began to recognize that they are discriminated against systematically.

Even the two main riots of the `Orientals` - Vadi Salib in 1959 and those of the Black Panthers movement in 1970 – didn't convey a significant challenge to the dominant Zionist repertoire, and didn't link in a meaningful way, between the `Orientals` chronic poverty and the economic prevailing system, or between their differentiation to that of the Arabs. In simple words, they aspired for a bigger piece of the “cake”, but did not develop a critical approach concerning its backing procedures. Their politics were based eventually on the politics of *acceptance*, and not on critical or ideological ideas.

As long as the `Orientals` accepted the Zionist repertoire, and aspired to join the dominant group, their cultural identity bifurcated, since the repertoire they adopted differentiated them. Their adoption of the dominant repertoire led them to adopt as well the dominant group denial of the structured differentiating principle in the repertoire and by that, assisted the dominant group to intensify the differentiation. In order to become legitimate the `Orientals` had to wipe out the “orientalism” that the repertoire attached to them, but since this character is fantastic, it will stay always undeletable.

One of the main factors in the self formation of the `oriental` was his acceptance and participation in the differentiation of the Arab, a factor that was crucial to the success of his own modeling and differentiation. The split in the `oriental` cultural identity, which is typical to the behavior of outsiders in general, must be understood in the particular cultural context of the Jews from the Arab world as described above, and especially in

relation to the fact that their differentiating process from the Arab repertoire, began already during the 19th century, i.e., before they had any significant contact with the Zionist movement.

Like most of the Jews in the modern period, the Jews from the Arab lands aspire to join the west and to the prospecting modernization process, and in this aspiration – which is similar to the aspiration of most modern Jews – lays the source for the immanent split in their cultural identity.

The differentiation of the `oriental` then, does not stem from the accepted dichotomy between `Ashkenazim` and `Mizrahim` (Orientals`), i.e., from the proposition that there are two more or less homogeneous groups which differ from one another, and which have a cultural struggle in the model of `west` vs. `east`, but from the *existence of a repertoire that both groups accept*, i.e., the dominant Zionist repertoire, which one of the models that constitute it, and that appeared since its emergence in Europe, is the differentiating of the `oriental`.

It is reasonable to suggest, that as long as this repertoire will operate in the same way it operated until now, the differentiation process of `the oriental` in the Israeli cultural space will continue.