Israeli football as an arena for post-colonial struggle: The case of Beitar Jerusalem FC

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Abstract

The current study endeavors to place the case of Beitar Jerusalem FC and its fans, as depicted in media, entertainment and public discourse in Israel, within an Orient-Occident theoretical framework. For this purpose the study adopts an acknowledged theoretical framework of the relationship between East and West, which examines the relations between these two political and geographic cultural poles as a power struggle between those who are perceived as the conquerors (colonialists) and the conquered (natives). This theoretical framework, known as 'post-colonial discourse', deals with salient characteristics of power relations in a global society following the colonial period of the major European powers.

Keywords
Beitar Jerusalem, post-colonial struggle, Israel, football

Introduction

In social and political sciences, sport provides a common research arena as it serves as a microcosm of wide complex social processes that transcend the specific field. The case of Beitar Jerusalem, the Israeli football club, provides a fruitful sociological discussion as it is located at a number of central intersections in the socio-political discourse of the post-colonial era.

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In order to understand the linkage between sport and society within the Israeli context, one has to familiarize himself with Beitar Jerusalem football club which was established by one of the main-streams within the Jewish Zionist national movement. As such it found itself, especially during the initial days of the establishments of the Jewish State of Israel, at the center of a number of conflicts between the various streams of the same movement characterized by different attitudes to the term nationalism in the post-colonial era. Secondly, among Beitar Jerusalem fans, especially at that time, there was a relatively high representation of a socio-economic level comprised mainly by second and third generation Jewish immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries (Sephardic Jews, or *Mizrahim*). This echelon was, and still is according to some experts, in a hegemonic struggle against the first and second generation of Jews who immigrated to Israel from Eastern European countries (Ashkenazi Jews).

The current study seeks to place the case of Beitar Jerusalem and its fans, as depicted in media (see for example Galily & Bernstein, 2008; Tamir & Galily, 2010), entertainment and public discourse in Israel, within an Orient-Occident theoretical framework. For this purpose the study adopts an acknowledged theoretical framework of the relationship between East and West, which examines the relations between these two political and geographic cultural poles as a power struggle between those who are perceived as the conquerors (colonialists) and the conquered (natives). This theoretical framework, known as 'post-colonial discourse', deals with salient characteristics of power relations in a global society following the colonial period of the major European powers.

The main idea the current study attempts to formulate is that the process, which the Beitar Jerusalem football club and its fans underwent over the eighty years of its existence, is an inherent functional process of the identity crisis that took place at different stages of social stratification. This process has similar characteristics to the relations between the East and West in the post-colonial era. As such, this study proposes that Israeli society's attitude of superiority towards Beitar Jerusalem fans and similarly the attitude of Beitar Jerusalem fans towards Arab citizens living in Israel, is at its foundation an identity struggle. This struggle is an outcome of the position within the social stratification that enables greater access to material resources offered by society.

To present a relevant theoretical background for this argument, a review of the main approaches to the post-colonial discourse is presented. Importantly, Eduard Said's 'orientalism' argues that attaching a stereotypical inferior image to the East is the West's attempt to compare itself with the East and the Easterner (Said, 1987). Provided is a review of the work proposed by central researchers in the field offering diverse theses regarding power-relations between the conqueror and the conquered in the post-colonial era and thereafter. This discussion is followed by a review of the history of Beitar Jerusalem and its place within the social landscape of Israel.

The methodology applied in the current study is then presented. An analysis was conducted of texts published in the Israeli press over the past 70 years that are relevant to the orientalistic representation of Beitar Jerusalem and its fans. Finally the study examines how the process that Beitar Jerusalem underwent is reproduced by what the

authors call 'the next generation of the labeling process' and is expressed similarly by Beitar fans' attitude towards non-Israeli Arabs.

Post-Colonialism – Central ideas in the discourse

With the disintegration of the control of European super powers' control over historic colonies in Asia and Africa during the middle of the last century, a discussion in the social sciences evolved regarding the new relationship that was formed between the East and West. This discussion was named 'post-colonial discourse' or 'post-colonialism'.

The central basis of post-colonial discourse is that although the military and political colonialism may have ended, colonialism, as a power position or world perception is still alive and kicking. Post-colonial discourse contends that the West has transferred its control by means of tanks and local commissioners, in order to establish its superiority over the East by the more sophisticated means of founding an ethical, cultural and moral dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' (Rimon-Or, 2003).

In 1978, Eduard Said, the American literature researcher of Palestinian origin, first coined the term 'orientalism', which has since served as the basis for discourse in the field. Said proposed that orientalism is a thinking style based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West. According to Said, the 'orient' is an invention of the European, who perceives it as a place of romance, memories, beautiful scenery and mystical experiences. The orientalist, a researcher of the East, is not interested in objective reality as it exists in the East, but rather in making his or hers ideas, findings and reports fit within the orientalist image which he or she wishes to preserve. Said sharply attacks Western culture agents such as Beckford, Byron, Goethe and Hugo for reorganizing the East through their art, by turning its colors, lights and people into the images, representations and motives imposed thereupon.

To prove his claim, Said borrows the 'ruling discourse' paradigm first presented by Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault, 1961). In this seminal work, Foucault deconstructs psychiatric discourse and the label imposed on the mentally ill by the diverging system of images, assumptions and prejudgments. According to Foucault these are intended to ensure political power in the hands of psychiatrists over a growing population of the 'ill'. Similarly, Said demonstrated that by cutting into the West's canonical writings with a surgeon's knife, Western literature overflows with images that depict Easterners as 'sensual', 'physical', 'dirty', 'lazy', 'emotional', 'traditional', and 'corrupt'. They 'admire power', ' grovel before power', and have 'inferior political, artistic, and spiritual culture'. This is in contrast to the rational Westerners who are allegedly doing Easterners a favor by providing them with Western manners, medicine and education as well as cultural, artistic and literary values.

According to Said, intellects, academicians and a long line of 'imperialist administrators' have accepted this basic distinction between East and West as a foundation for basic scientific theories which formulate their political policies. Said sees orientalism as a Western style for governing the East, to reorganize it and establish its authority over it. According to him, it is a systematic development by which European

culture has succeeded in managing and even creating an East in scientific, ideological, military, sociological, political, and even imaginary terms in the period following the Enlightenment.

In addition, influenced by psychoanalytic discourse, Said argues that the East is one of Europe's deepest images of the 'other' which helped define the continent, and later the entire West as its complete contrast in image, idea, personality and experience. Thus, to date the outcome of geographic, cultural and historic entities defined as 'orient' as opposed to 'occident' materialize as the two entities support and reflect one another. Thus, by contrasting itself against the orient and using it as a type of substitute for the self, even as a type of underground self - European culture has accumulated power and identity. 'Europe' has turned into a collective term which transcends its geographic meaning and is identified with culture and an identity superior to all non-European peoples and cultures.

Power relations and labeling processes in Jewish society

In post-colonial discourse, the claim that the Zionist-Jewish national movement drew its economic, social and cultural inspiration from Western culture has been established (Galily, 2003; Harif and Galily, 2003; Mizrahi *et al.*, 2008; Kaufman and Galily, 2009; Tamir and Galily, 2010). According to Kazum (1999), the roots of this position are planted in an era when Jews lived as distinct communities fighting for their political rights in Eastern Europe. Kazum proposes the view of Jewish history as a series of orientalization processes – periods during which one group serves as an East/West dichotomy in order to present another group as appearing inferior.

According to Kazum, three characteristics of Jewish reactions in Europe indicate that Jews internalized a labeled identity. First, Jews accepted the notion that something within them was faulty. Second, they believed that similarity to Christians meant progress. Third, they believed that Eastern European Christians were the appropriate authority to judge the extent of their progress. Consequently, Kazum argues, all of the following phenomena - development of ethnic inequality between Jews from Arab countries and those from European countries in Israel, the relations between Arabs and Jews, the chasm between Orthodox and secular Jews, and even the image of the feminist movement in Israel – when examined together as a whole can be translated into the extension of the same historic pattern of Orientalization and Westernization.

The first buds of labeling processes in Jewish society in Europe were discovered with the awakening of the Enlightenment in Western Europe at the end of the 18th century, when French and German Christians granted Jews full economic and social inclusion. In return Jews were required to prove that they were worthy of equal rights by dispensing with their 'backward' tradition, dismantling their isolated community network, and altering their approach towards modernity. Jews accepted this pact and initiated transformation projects designed to make Jewish life fit into the Christian ideal. By adopting the Christian's negative image of Jewish communities, voices among these

communities began to be heard calling to put an end to isolationism and community activity and favor the destruction of Jewish particularism and independence.

In the next stage, German Jewish intellectuals and those who adopted the German Enlightenment project asked to differentiate themselves from Eastern European Jews (especially from Russia and Poland) or the *Ostjuden*. They began writing a series of novels in Yiddish with the aim of presenting them to Eastern European Jews as the 'atrophied and retarded' nature of their culture. Jews and non-Jews, anti-Semites and philo-Semites, all agreed about the faults that characterized the *Ostjuden*, and gave exaggerated descriptions of the contaminated, chaotic and culture-less ghetto, with its winding order-less streets.

At the same time that labeling processes in Jewish society in Europe were taking place, a similar process of identity construction and distinction between Jews of North Africa and Islamist countries was taking place. Descriptions that educated Jews from Western Europe used to designate the inferiority of North African Jews were almost identical to those used to describe the *Ostjuden*. "There is a need to fight against the bad habits characterizing more or less the majority of the Eastern population: selfishness, pride, large ego, lack of original thinking, blind respect to wealth and power, violent and indistinctive emotions".[4]

Jews from Arab countries listened and internalized the message until eventually many of them learned to see themselves through the eyes of those who 'Easternized' them. They themselves began to treat Arab children negatively in order to feel confident of the change they underwent. "The thinking of the Arab is slow-witted; his religion and tradition turn him into a creature of habits and ideas hardly capable of change. The Jew, in contrast, who has just disengaged from the chains which made him exiled for generations, has suddenly soared and today he is a free man capable of keeping up with European rhythm in his dress, customs, and development of thought."[5]

The Zionist Movement's identity construction of Israeli society

In many ways Zionism was a closer step towards Europe, a kind of last call asking for inclusion within the arms of the European people. When Theodor Herzl, father of the Zionist movement, declared that a Jewish state would be part of Europe's blockade battery against Asia, a military base for civilization, he tried to place the Jews in the European axis of the fence, on the Western side of the East/West dichotomy. Similarly, David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of the State of Israel, declared war on Levantism and was worried that the "Israelis would become Arabs." Abba Eban, a prominent Zionist activist who following the establishment of the Jewish state, became its first U.N. ambassador, claimed "The aim should be to revive Western spirit among the Sephardic Jews, instead of allowing them to drag us into unnatural orientalization".[6]

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[4] General regulations given to Alliance school teachers in Africa. From the 'Alliance' Archives, cited by Rodrigue (1993)
[5] From the 'Alliance' Archives, cited by Rodrigue (1993)
[6] See for example Shohat (1988)

The Zionist-Jewish national movement in fact struggled with a basic tension: It returned the Jews of the East in order to westernize them. It supported Jewish life and celebrated its uniqueness, yet, as a worldview; it continued to regard tradition as the opposite of modernity. Shohat (1988, 2001) claims that according to the Israeli elite's dominating discourse, European Zionism liberated immigrants from Middle Eastern countries where they lived in primitive conditions of poverty and superstition, and led them to a modern Western society characterized by tolerance, democracy and humanistic values. Immigrants to Israel from the Arab and Muslim East allegedly recognized these values only 'vaguely', due to the 'Levantine environment' they came from.

Jewish immigrants who came to Israel from Europe used the East/West dichotomy to produce images of Jews from Eastern countries as 'inhabitants of a strange and archaic world' and as 'incapable of managing in a modern industrialized society or contribute to its design and growth.' These are in contrast with the self-images of Jews of European origin: Western, modern, educated, intellectual, Zionists with the correct knowledge necessary for managing the new state. They emphasized the culture gaps between them and the immigrants from Eastern countries, while at the same time included them as part of the new society being constructed in Israel. According to this double standard, Jews who arrived from Arab and Muslim countries were not 'Western' enough, but their brothers who arrived from Europe would 'teach' them how to become as such.

The aim of immigrants from Eastern Europe was to secure for themselves advantageous opportunities in this developing society. The identity construction of immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries as primitive and uneducated was evidently related to the concept that they needed 'less' – less income, fewer benefits, and less attention to their living conditions. Compared to their friends from Eastern Europe, Jews who arrived from Arab countries were an outsider group arousing caution. They were dark-skinned, continued to cling to their traditions, and their languages were characterized by guttural sounds which Yiddish and Anglo-Saxon speakers had difficulty pronouncing.

The Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries came as refugees - their possessions and properties taken from them, in a state of confusion, and incredible disappointment. Those educated among them invested great efforts to westernize them in an attempt to emphasize the social gap between them and the Arabs amongst whom they had lived before their immigration to Israel. This led to a state in which these immigrants leaders not only believed their construction as 'oriental' Jews, hence also accepting the belief that orientalism was a legitimate reason for their inferior social status.

Still, it was not only the Jews who came from Arab countries who were exposed to labeling processes and identity construction of inferiority by the ruling elite in the country. With the political and economic establishment of the young state and the military annexation of territories conquered during the Liberation War and the Six Day Way, an additional labeling process began – that of the Arab-Israelis and/or Palestinians.

Social scientists, journalists and the wide public often regard the undemocratic political structure, lagging economy, traditional society, and treatment of women and government mechanisms as ineffective in Arab society within the framework placing Israel as the most Western society in the region.

Here again, history repeats itself: Jews of both European and Eastern, origins, constructed the identity of Jews from Arab countries as only temporarily Eastern, and as Western in comparison to Arabs. As in the case of European Jews' orientalizing Arab Jews, orientalizing the Arabs was also aimed at reaching political and material gains, in this case, in the international relations arena. Thus, for example, Israel depicts international support as a clearly Western interest since Israel, at least until current democratization processes mature in the Arab world, is the only stable democracy in the region.

Identity struggles in Israeli football

The sports movement 'Beitar' arose from the management struggle between the revisionist stream and the dominant socialist stream that established the Zionist-Jewish national movement. Mapai, the labor movement which represented the same stream, won the elections for the Zionist Congress that took place in 1935. In reaction, the revisionist movement led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky decided to secede from the general Zionist movement and to establish a 'New Zionist Association'. As a result of this act, the process of founding separate revisionist movement institutions accelerated in a number of areas of life: the labor association, health maintenance organization and work departments. In addition, an independent military organization (Etzel) was established, as well as a separate sports union within the framework of the revisionist youth movement, Beitar.

Beitar Jerusalem's football club was established in 1936. The Beitar Jerusalem branch was a small branch and its football team did not reach any major achievements on the football field during the British Mandate prior to the establishment of the State of Israel.

The first significant competition in which the Beitar Jerusalem football team participated took place at the 'Jerusalem Cup' games I 1944. Beitar noted its first major achievement when it won against a team of British soldiers, 'Al-Almain', with a score of 3:0. During the first years following the establishment of the State of Israel, the team played in the second league and was not a candidate for the first league. Significant games at those times were conducted against its municipal rival, Hapo'el Jerusalem, which represented the socialist stream and the general labor union, 'The Histadrut'. Naturally, the main interest was derived not from sportive competition, but rather from political class struggles between the representatives of the rival camps (Ben-Porat, 2001).

The first municipal derby took place on November 15, 1947. Three thousand fans attended the game on Hapo'el's field in Jerusalem and witnessed Beitar defeat Hapo'el with a score of 3:1. The significance of the victory for Beitar fans transcended sports limits and the chants 'mourning in the Histadrut' echoed throughout the city at the end

of that night, emphasizing the fact that victory on the football field symbolized a much broader victory, both politically and socially.

These chants in effect gave expression to the Beitar fans' frustration about the alienating attitude the movement's teams received from the sports institution for their political identification with the revisionist movement – "Hapo'el" institutions banned Beitar as far back as the British Mandate, a ban that lasted even after the establishment of the state and included a sweeping prohibition of conducting sportive encounters with teams from the Beitar center. This ban outraged Beitar's leaders who called for state intervention with an 'absurd ban against the civil constitution, especially in light of the fact that Hapo'el teams, while banning Jewish teams, play against teams of Arab and British murderers."[7]

Despite long-lasting protests, this biased attitude towards teams and players belonging to the Beitar movement persisted. For example, in 1956, in preparation for the national football team's journey to a series of games in the United States and the Soviet Union, the English trainer Jack Gibbons, did not choose any Beitar players, due to what was suspected as orders from above. In response, the Liberty movement, a political party which represented the revisionist stream, demanded the separation of the position of the coach from the position of putting together the national team. It thereby proposed assigning an officer with the rank of a colonel as responsible for assembling the team. The proposal suited the perception that representation of a team on the sports field was practically an act of war in the name of the nation, and thus "Beitar players are fighters who will protect in splendor the honor of our state."

The hostile attitude towards Beitar by representatives of the political parties in the various sport associations can also be understood in light of the Herut (Liberty) party's internal politics. This party represented the revisionist stream in the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, in the early 1950s. The party was active as a liberal government party in accordance with accepted democratic rules until 1952, when it turned to an anti-establishment pattern of activity which better suited its oppositionist past and self-image. This choice of strategy turned Herut into a party that centralized the sense of discrimination and bitterness towards the establishment, and identified with the socialist stream. "Our role is one – to put down the pipes through which the people's rage will pass".[8] In order to recruit immigrants, Herut turned to activity in developments and neighbourhoods by means of sports in general, and football in particular. The Beitar center became vigorously active in founding tens of new teams across Israel, with an emphasis on the quantity of participants rather than quality of the athletic activity.

Towards the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s the revisionist movement gradually began to come out of its forced isolation. The process was much accelerated after Levi Eshkol became prime minister in 1963 and Herut became a legitimate movement, even in the eyes of the socialist parties. The legitimacy process

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[7] From an editorial published in those days in the "Sports Newspaper of the National Movement", the sports journal of the revisionist movement
[8] Reznik (2002)

was completed, in fact, when Herut, headed by Menachem Begin, joined the first national unity government on the eve of the Six Day War. This process had considerable influence on Beitar's fate, since now the sports association was identified with a legitimate political party. At the same time, at the end of the war, Beitar returned to the first league for the second time in its history.

The synchronization between Beitar's achievements on the field and Herut's accomplishments in the political arena have continued in the upcoming decades. In May 1976 Beitar noted its first real achievement in the national arena when it won the national cup for the first time. In these finals, which took place in the Ramat-Gan national stadium, Beitar defeated Maccabi Tel-Aviv with a score of 2:1. A year later Herut, headed by Menachem Begin, won the general elections for prime minster for the first time. For the next 30 years, Beitar on the football field and the Likud party (the political force that inherited Herut) in the political field became dominant factors in Israeli reality. During those years Beitar won six championships and seven national cups, and established its status as one of the most important teams in Israeli football. Beitar's fans today are dispersed throughout the country. A survey conducted by the Israeli Football Association towards the end of the last decade found that Beitar Jerusalem had the largest number of fans in the country. Today Beitar fans include all social strata - developments, kibbutzim and even Druze and Arab villages.

Reznik (2002) raises the question of how it is possible that a team identified politically with the 'separatists', whose fans initially had local and neighborhood characteristics in Jerusalem, became the most popular team in the country. This is despite the fact that in contrast to such teams as the Maccabi Tel-Aviv basketball team, which has won the Europe Cup a number of times and was considered a source of national pride, Beitar has been unable to reach any achievements that would bring honor to the nation in the international arena.

According to Reznik (2002), the key to understanding this phenomenon lies in the Israeli socio-political arena and the achievements that were made during those years. Likud's victory in the 1977 elections became a turning point for Beitar Jerusalem and its fans. The separatists became those who 'separate' and who positioned themselves as the new establishment. The Likud became an object of identification not only for former Herut members or revisionist movement alumni, but also for many second-generation immigrants who came to Israel in the 1950s from Arab and Muslim countries. In general, anyone who felt that their parents or themselves were deprived or discriminated against by the establishment in those days joined the Likud party. The same coalition that led the Likud to win the 1977 elections was a central component among new Beitar fans. The equation that was advertised during the 1996 election campaign, "Binyamin Netanyahu[9] for Prime minister - Beitar the Champion," expressed this well and emphasized the identity between the Likud and Beitar even more. Being a Beitar fan was the way to express, on a daily basis, identification with Likud's principles and abhorrence towards

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[9] Head of the Likud party and the party's candidate for Prime-Minister in the 1996 general elections.

the old establishment, which according to them was responsible for discriminatory policies.

Images of Beitar Jerusalem and its fans

In order to examine how the special ties between Beitar Jerusalem and the peripheral groups influenced Israeli society on constructing the identity of Beitar, it is only appropriate to begin with an examination of a sketch performed by the most famous comedy group in Israel, HaGashash HaChiver, during the 1970s, called 'Offside Story'[10]. Although it is a satire, the sketch's position within the cultural cannon of Israeli humor, especially due to the fact that the most dominant cultural agents in the country's history performed it, is an indication of its significance.

The sketch presents a courthouse scene where a Beitar Jerusalem fan is standing trial for attacking a football referee during a team game. While the accused is presented with the stereotypical background of a 'Levantine hoodlum', it is the image of the court judge which is especially curious. The development of the sketch reflects the development of the 'new *Mizrahi'*, the one who successfully completed the Westernization process ("I know what one asks and what one answers, that's why I studied for 10 years at the televised university"). However, despite the fact that he has allegedly crossed the class Rubicon, it is still insinuated that several *Mizrahi* remnants have survived, by example, the over significance he awards to the issue of 'respect' – the judge turns to the accused no less than five times with the demand, "you will give me the respect I deserve!"

A twist in the plot occurs at the end of the sketch when the judge decides to acquit the Beitar fan. The judge explains to the stunned football referee, who arbitrated the game and was allegedly attacked by the accused, that his acquittal is justified in light of the fact that "Charnocha" was not offside."[11] The sketch comes to an end when to his disbelief, the referee Mr. Penaltywitz, recognizes the court judge as one of the figures sitting in the Beitar bleachers. The sketch thus ends with a picture of the two fans, the judge and the accused, singing together the well-known Beitar Jerusalem chant.

This final scene demonstrates the great fear of Mr. Penaltywitz – the name testifies to his European descent – and his friends of European descent that those of Eastern descent will take over key positions in the country and its management according to a logic that is strange and foreign to them. Homi K. Bhabha (1994) coined this a 'mimicry process' whereby the oppressed mimic the oppressor for the purpose of strengthening control over the hegemonic mechanism, while at the same time threatening it: from the moment the conquered adopts behavior patterns of the conqueror, they may be used as pawns in the hands of the conquered to undermine the conqueror.

Not only in satire, but in the public media and discourse in Israel, as well the narrative of the Beitar Jerusalem fan is usually depicted as right wing, traditional-

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[10] Hagashash Hachiver, 'Offside Story', written by Efraim Kishon and directed by Yossi Banai, 1974

[11] Shimon Charnocha was one of the most famous of Beitar's players during the 1960s and 1970s

religious, uneducated and unprofessional. When a journalist or TV writer asks to "examine the atmosphere among Beitar fans" on the eve of an important game, he goes to the food market and not, for example, to the coffee shops in the modern areas of recreation in the city.

As far back as the early 1950s Beitar fans were presented in orientalist colors. Thus, for example, a journalist from Tel-Aviv describes the 'experience' he underwent the first time he came to a Beitar Jerusalem game: "A few Beitar fans were sitting next to me. I looked at them and couldn't believe what I saw – how they were dressed!"[12]

In June, 1974 Beitar Jerusalem played in the half-finals of the national cup against a home team in the Petach-Tikva municipal stadium. After a 1:1 tie at the end of 90 minutes, the game went into overtime with the team from Petach-Tikva at an advantage, but the game was never concluded. A few minutes before the end of the overtime, Beitar fans burst into the field and began a free-for-all before the incredulous and helpless eyes of the guards trained to maintain order in the stadium.

The events were described the following day in the main sports paper of those days, *Sports News*, thus: "acts of hooliganism and violence at the most shameful and despicable level; Levantine football is the inheritance of backward nations and frameworks which we abhor and some of which are found in our very region and neighborhoods; now we can no longer say that this is the case, because it has happened here and we don't consider ourselves like them."[13] In another article from the same edition, Beitar fans are described as a "group of cannibals who purged their blood-thirsty urges."[14]

The game in Petach-Tikva was a seminal event in shaping the image of Beitar fans. The image formed of the team's fans that afternoon would continue to follow them for many years. Thus, for example, on the week that Beitar first won the championship of the 1986/7 season, the editorial of the daily *Maariv Sport*, titled "Championship in Bad Taste" published the following: "memories I've tried to discard with the years, watering pipes as bludgeoning clubs, burned nets, threats against players and coaches, all local products by people known as Beitar Jerusalem fans; for years I've carried the trauma of hundreds of Beitar fans chasing Petach-Tikva fans with hateful eyes; a few years later, barbarity is celebrated in the Bloomfield Stadium, a mob lit the field and goal nets on fire – a real pogrom."[15] This illustrates that its achievements on the sports field had not changed the infamous image of the team and its fans: "There's no need to envy a team with such fans, because when the machine stops working and victories are not won in succession, part of this group is capable of losing its head."[16]

On the eve of the 1997/8 final games, Beitar Jerusalem reached the top of the league chart - at a one-point lead over the team in second place- its mythological rival Hapo'el Tel-Aviv. The game board determined that on that Saturday, Beitar Jerusalem

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[12] Published in the magazine, Sport for the People, February 1954.

[13] Yizhar Brener, Sports News, June 9, 1974

[14] Abraham Finkelstein, Sports News, June 9, 1974

[15] Avi Betelheim, Maariv Sport, April, 24, 1987

[16] Avi Betelheim, Ibid

would play a visitor's game against Hapo'el Beit Shean, while Hapo'el Tel-Aviv would host Hapo'el Petach-Tikva in a home game. Those fateful final minutes of the game against Hapo'el Beit-Shean were expected to create pandemonium that would transcend far beyond the sports field.

Beitar, which received a surprising tie goal towards the end of the game, attacked the Beit Shean goal with the aim of promising a victory in the final minutes. The Beit Shean team, which was informed that due to the results of their other games their place in the top league for another season was ensured, seemingly to stop making an effort on the field in the final minutes of the game. Thus, in the 90th minute, Beitar made the victory goal which granted it the championship title for that season! For Hapo'el fans this meant a conspiracy by Jerusalemites and the peripheral city municipality, whose aim was to prevent Hapo'el from winning the championship and to grant it to Beitar on the background of a 'fateful partnership' between the two camps.

Member of Parliament Yossi Sarid, of the leftist party Meretz, in a special emergency discussion conducted in the Parliament's Sports Committee that week, was quick to determine that "the game had no sportive value and a decisive game for the championship should be conducted between Beitar and Hapo'el so that we know that the championship was not won on accounts that are not of interest."[17] A colleague in his party, Dedi Zucker, claimed that "Beit Shean sold their souls", and an Arab Member of Parliament, Talab El-Sana, determined that "Beitar is a team belonging to the government of Israel[18] and that it was in the national interest that Beitar win the championship."

Politicians and the media tried to cast the blame on Beitar fans arguing that the terror they placed on Beit-Shean players caused them to deliberately lose the game. "Every time Beitar is about to lose, its fans threaten to burn the stadium," stated Haim Ramon, a member of the Labor party in that same discussion. "They warned me all week not to go to the game, they'll beat you up or maybe even kill you,"[19] added a reporter in a special editorial of the daily, *Yedioth Aharonoth.* However, the police commander, who was the chief commander in the field during that game, determined that "at no stage were the Hapo'el Beit Shean players in danger."[20]

In general, research data published over the years have not been able to support claims of violent tendencies or ignorance among Beitar Jerusalem fans. In a rigorous study conducted by Menachem et al. (1980) for the Wingate National Sport Institute in the early 1980s, it was found that "behavior problems among fans are divided almost equally among the different sports centers according to their relative number of teams in the leagues."

At the beginning of the third millennium, labeling processes of Beitar fans have been adjusted to the new reality in the social discourse. This adjustment has been

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[17] The quotations from the Parliament Sports Committee are cited as published in the Yedioth Aharonoth sports supplement, May 5, 1998

[18] In those days, the right-wing Likud party was in power, headed by Binyamin Netanyahu

[19] Aviad Fuhorils, Yedioth Aharonoth, May 2, 1998.

[20] Published in the Yedioth Aharonoth sports supplement, May 5, 1998

dictated by concepts of political correctness. Now that it is no longer acceptable to use terms such as 'primitive', 'herd' and 'tribal' in association with the *Mizrahi*, labeling efforts have been redirected at constructing Beitar fans' identity as 'racist': "Sometimes there's the impression that calls 'death to the Arabs' disquiet the Israeli public much more than the actual death caused to Arabs by Israelis inside and outside of Israel." The image of the *Mizrahi* as a racist makes it possible to maintain Western superiority in the East/West dichotomy by presenting the West as more moral, humane and liberal in comparison to the 'racist' *Mizrahi*. The automatic identification of Beitar fans with the political right has only facilitated the process, and Beitar fans themselves cooperate with it by making nationalist and racial slurs towards Arab players and banning Arab players from joining their team.

Orientalization of Arab teams in the Israeli League

In the last decade, we are witness to how Beitar Jerusalem fans who have experienced, as has been shown thus far in this discussion, an ongoing labeling process on ethnic and class grounds, are now managing a similar labeling process towards fans of teams representing settlements in the Arab sector. Memmi (1957) calls this process the 'tyrant pyramid', whereby anyone who suffers social oppression by someone with greater power will always find a third more inferior entity to lean upon and thus become a tyrant in turn.

Relations between Beitar Jerusalem and its fans and teams from the Arab sector have an intense politically charged background, as Beitar is politically identified with the Likud movement and the right wing in Israel (Ben Porat, 2008). Arab players who arrive to play in Jerusalem have often been received with hostility and political national slurs, such as 'death to the Arabs', 'this is the state of the Jews' and 'I swear there won't be any Arabs here'. However, in recent years a fascinating process has taken place where such slurs as 'death to the Arabs' have been replaced by slurs such as 'Fatima, clean here too' and 'Ahmad bring me hummus, French fries, and salad'. That is, Beitar fans, now second and third generation Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, no longer regard Arabs as a threat on a national level, but as a social-economic threat. The gradual but continuous entry of Arabs within the core of Israeli society puts *Mizrahim* in Israel to the test, as they are quick to position themselves as 'enlightened' and 'Western' in comparison to the 'backward natives'.

Self-deception. How Beitar fans have internalized and have come to accept their label

Rimon-Or (2003) claims that power relations are not necessarily colonialist relations. Ashkenazi Jews, for example, lived in ghettos and under harsh, inferior conditions, but colonial relationships did not develop between them and the Europeans. Such relations begin when people of the minority adopt the ruling culture's values, and thus they learn to see themselves as inferior and faulty in comparison to the dominant culture they admire and aspire to simulate.

Fanon describes a similar process (1952); here he spoke about the hope and the envy that caused for blacks to want to be like whites. According to Fanon, the black's self-divide is expressed by his tireless efforts to acquire the white's language and behavior, which he craves out of the desire for equality with the conqueror. This inferiority complex leads him to try and 'whiten' himself, an attempt which leads to the ambivalent identity crisis of the conquered, derived first and foremost from self-denial of the original culture. Similarly, Bhabha (1994) emphasized the 'hybrid' ambivalent aspect, which is formed by the colonial encounter: admiration and self-deprecation felt by natives for the Westerner, and their attempts to adopt the white's codes of behavior. In other words, as far as Bhabha is concerned, Easterners play a significant role in their identity label because by their attempts to imitate Westerners they adopt their hegemonic status and perpetuate their inferiority.

In the post-colonial discourse in Israel as well, a salient voice exists accusing the *Mizrahim* of internalizing the labeling processes they have undergone. Researchers such as Ben Dror Yemini regard the *Mizrahim* as no less guilty than the Ashkenazi in this process, since by their feelings of inferiority they have internalized the social order dictated by the Ashkenazi rather than presenting a successful alternative. Yemini calls it 'the *Mizrahi*'s self-deception' because the *Mizrahim*, instead of discussing among themselves what he calls '*Mizrahi* backwardness', prefer blaming all possible injustices on the Ashkenazi.

Towards the end of the 1990s, voices began to be heard from the Beitar bleachers for Moshe Dadash, the mythological chairman of the club, to give up his seat to a businessman who could 'upgrade' Beitar economically and enable it to compete successfully against other senior teams in Israeli football (such as Maccabi Haifa and Maccabi Tel-Aviv), which were at the time owned by private businessmen. The first attempt was the sale of the team during the 1999/2000 season to the businessman Kobi Ben-Gur, who operated television broadcasts by satellite. However, Ben-Gur owned the club only for a short period of time, which ended on a bitter note when he wanted to replace Eli Ohana, beloved by the fans and one of the most famous former players of the club, as the coach of the team.

At the end of that season, Ben-Gur sold his share of the club to a Haifa businessman, Gad Ze'evi. Ze'evi, while having no background in football, tried to turn Beitar into a shiny international label and to this end of purpose, brought the best football players to Jerusalem and offered them contracts with unprecedented amounts of money. Ze'evi's term with the club also ended prematurely; after one season a request was filed in his name to the Jerusalem county court to dismantle the holding company that possessed management rights of the club. His sudden resignation left the club hanging in the air, and only thanks to a group of Israeli-American businessmen, headed by Meir Levy and Meir Fenigel, was the club saved and succeeded, barely, to survive in the senior league of that season.

Beitar fans continued to wish for the resale of the club, and the Russian Jewish businessman, Arkadi Gaydamak, purchased the club and the club's management rights from the American group in October, 2005. Beitar fans accepted him with enthusiasm. As

far back as his initial days in the club, Gaydamak's management lacked any business or professional logic. At first he fired, again, the coach, Eli Ohana. This time, the step was met with much more forgiveness on the part of the fans who saw this as a necessary step for turning the team into one with an improved local and European reputation. Next, he brought the club a line of well-known coaches. He repeatedly replaced the management team, and at the end of the process he depleted any factors related to the 'old' Beitar. Beitar fans accepted all these steps, and Gaydamak became a much-admired figure among them. For them, getting rid of the team's old symbols was a necessary step, and symbolized the transition from provincial management, symbolized by Moshe Dadash's 'napkin' contracts[21], to a period of 'calculated' business management that would lead Beitar to new heights.

Professionally, Beitar did achieve much-expected success when it won two successive championships in the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 seasons. However, there was an atmosphere of complete chaos surrounding the team as a result of the new owner's capricious behavior. In addition, the fans' identification with the team diminished, as it was turned into the haven of players from rival teams who wanted to upgrade their conditions. Nevertheless, no bitterness was sensed among Beitar fans regarding Gaydamak's management and the club's loss of identity. Beitar fans, who in the past were fanatic about their singularity and deference from other team, especially those from Tel-Aviv, sympathetically accepted all the steps erasing their identity by the new owner. For the fans, Gaydamak's financial abilities could predict all. Thus, he in fact abandoned the ideology that guided them all those years; as its last remnant was opposition to signing on an Arab player to the team and their loaded relations with teams from the Arab sector.

Final words

This process points to the fact that Beitar fans internalized their inferiority. Moshe Dadash's days as head of the club still carry bad memories, and the 'napkin' myth arouses unpleasant memories among the fans. However, a thorough examination of the facts show that there was no difference between the team's position in the two periods: with Dadash the team won championships and failed in European competitions; the same goes for Gaydamak. Nevertheless, Beitar fans have in fact internalized the orientalist label that presented Dadash as 'primitive' and from the 'neighborhood', and thus admitted that their tradition at its roots is no longer relevant. Moreover, it failed the test of results and realized that the only way to the club's professional success is loss of identity and adoption of Western methods based on cold business sense. According to them, Western capitalist business management, with a marketing orientation directed at Europe, is preferable to the local traditional management of Moshe Dadash.

At the end of the day, the question that remains is whether the claims of discrimination against the East are nothing more than a cry meant to say 'we want to be

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[21] Moshe Dadash, the chair of Beitar Jerusalem in the 1990s said that at one time he signed a player with a contract that he jotted down on a coffee-shop napkin.

like you.' If this is the case, it can be assumed that Western culture will continue to dominate in the future, while the Eastern one will continue to be perpetuated, with its passive conduct and its inferior status, while placing the blame on the West. This is what the Australian culture critic Robert Hughes calls 'the culture of complaint'[22] claiming, with certain justice, that it will not decrease the gaps, but rather perpetuate them.

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[22] Cited in Taub (1997)

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