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Arab Soccer in a Jewish State: The Integrative Enclave. By Tamir Sorek.
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Early in Tamir Sorek's *Arab Soccer in a Jewish State*, the reader is informed that "soccer is much more than another 'interesting angle' for the investigation of Arab-Jewish relationships" (p. 5). That Sorek seeks to justify his subject matter in this way is arguably emblematic of the fact that for increasing numbers of scholars from outside the subdiscipline of sport sociology—many of whom traditionally eschewed sport as a prism through which to understand social phenomena—soccer has become a novel way of gaining fresh insights into established areas of study. Yet, in this instance, the author's claim is verified as he provides a powerful exposition of the relationship between soccer and the state in Israel. Contrary to the putative academic triviality of sport, as espoused by many social commentators, the reader is left in little doubt as to the importance of soccer in understanding and analyzing identity in this part of the world.

The main strengths of Sorek's work lie in his ability to delineate the importance of soccer in the identity politics of young Arab men—drawing on a combination of psychological and sociological approaches—and to expose the role of the game in maintaining Jewish-Israeli hegemony. Sorek's central thesis is that Israeli soccer has been constructed and represented in the hegemonic imagination as an "integrative enclave" (p. 2),

in that the game both contributes to the suspension of Palestinian identities and facilitates displays of civic partnership between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority.

Throughout the course of the book, the author demonstrates the problematic nature of this dominant discourse and provides a cogent debunking of it. Sorek adopts a critical perspective and centralizes notions of power, repudiating the popular perception that the numerical presence of a certain minority in a particular social or occupational sphere necessarily equates with inclusion and empowerment. Building on the well-trodden Gramscian path in neo-Marxist approaches to sport sociology, Sorek identifies soccer as a contested terrain and a site of ideological struggle. He demonstrates soccer's appropriation and use by different agencies and the game's dialectic position as a source of integration into Jewish-Israeli society and as a vehicle for nationalist pride and protest.

Most crucially, however, Sorek shows that, overall, soccer serves to reinforce Jewish-Israeli hegemony. While he acknowledges that soccer does possess a degree of integrative potential—for example, it enables forms of cultural integration unavailable in many other areas, and the Israeli national team promotes a genuine opportunity for the sharing of national symbols—he demonstrates that, in reality, the dominant discourse of integration is merely a veneer on the surface of a divided and unequal society. Soccer's potential and perceived role in subverting the institutional discrimination of the state and providing social mobility for the Arab population is minimal. In Gramscian fashion Sorek skillfully demonstrates how this process is underpinned by the fact that “the potential to present sports as an apolitical sphere actually can assist the rulers in using it as a political tool” (p. 34). Accordingly, Sorek identifies what he calls a “ninety-first minute effect” (p. 79) that soccer creates in that it helps to preserve the legitimacy of the state among the Arab-Palestinian community. Indeed, the sociopolitical implications of soccer are shown to go beyond the game itself as it actually legitimizes the marginalization and subordinate position of Arabs in Israeli society by obfuscating discrimination and deprivation in other spheres.

Sorek's style and construction of arguments are engaging and accessible, and the book provides an excellent introduction into soccer in Israel. The first half of the book provides both the social context and the theoretical framework, while the latter half offers a series of interesting case studies (many of which demonstrate attempts to subvert the dominant social order), such as Arab supporters of Jewish teams, the Islamic Soccer League, and a case study of the town of Sakhnin. Key issues in soccer are always placed in their appropriate social context, linking them to the shifting and contested geopolitics of Israel and to the situational ambiguity of Arabs both locally and in the Palestinian diaspora and their continuing social, political, and economic marginalization.

In terms of methodology, the arguments are underpinned by a substantial body of empirical data, generated through interviews, observa-

tion, surveys, and content analysis, and employing both micro and macro perspectives. Nevertheless, the author's claim that ethnographic fieldwork in Palestinian towns constituted a major component of the fieldwork is not reflected in the text, providing little evidence that this aspect of the research was especially *ethnographic* rather than purely qualitative social science. This is not helped either by the fact that the author's observations are not discussed until the final chapter (on the town of Sakhnin) or by the fact that there is hardly any information on what the ethnography involved. Considering Sorek's claims that it was the "most challenging and the most problematic" aspect of the research (p. 11) and his mention of the "complexity and sensitivity of the ethnographic work" (p. 12), one would expect much more portraiture. Furthermore, his statement that, as a young Israeli-Jewish man, his presence was "far from being natural and unthreatening" (p. 12) arguably requires a greater degree of discussion on issues of access and reflection on the politics and power relations embedded in this research project.

Sorek's meticulous approach and wide-ranging focus leave little uncovered. Those wishing to read about prejudice and discrimination in the everyday cultures and structures of professional soccer or the position of female players and spectators will find little here, but this is primarily a book about soccer and the state, and it has certainly cultivated the ground for further study. In summary, this volume represents an excellent contribution to the literature on soccer and social identity. It will become recommended reading to students and scholars interested both in the specific topic of Israel and the broader relationship between soccer and society.