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The *Biramschule* in Context –  
The »German« Influence on Jewish Body Culture  
in Mandate Palestine

When Arthur Biram retired from his position as principal of the Reali School in Haifa in 1948, it was widely assumed that the school could not expect to find »another person of such stature« to replace him.<sup>1</sup> In the years that preceded the foundation of the State of Israel Biram's educational approach had gained a conspicuous influence on the shape of Zionist national education. His contribution to the Israeli nation-building efforts was officially acknowledged a few years later, when he was granted the 1954 Israel Prize for achievements in education. Yet, throughout most of his career Biram was perceived as a peculiar outsider. His views on national education and his reportedly belligerent temper were often attributed to their »foreign« origin, namely, Germany.<sup>2</sup> One of the most controversial aspects of the *Biramschule* (a term used in reference both to the practices in the Reali School and to Biram's pedagogy in general) was its distinctive approach to physical education.<sup>3</sup> The »Prussian« demand for disciplined physical activity as part of the curriculum, alongside the nationalization of leisure time through physical activity in the school, had generated much resentment among Biram's peers.<sup>4</sup> His openly derided perception of physical education, however, was eventually embraced by the Zionist establishment and in fact facilitated his canonization.

- 1 As noted in a 1947 report written by delegates of the Zionist Education Department in Palestine: The Reali School in Haifa: Government Inspectors, on the Basis of Their Visit on February 24-26, 1947, Reali School Archive, Haifa (hereafter RSA), 14 [Hebrew].
- 2 »Foreign« here is in relation to the mostly East European cohort of Zionist teachers. Aharon Yedlin, Introduction, in: The School as an Educational Institution: Symposium in Memory of Dr. A. Biram, Haifa 1973, 1-5, here 1 [Hebrew].
- 3 For instance, Naomi Troka, Words in Memory of Dr. Biram [Hebrew], in: *ibid.*, 6. The author of this short essay in memory of Biram notes that this was a common reference to both the Reali School and Biram's approach among his contemporaries. Many other references to Biram indicate his exceptional perception of physical education (and implementation of it in his school), but use various different terms.
- 4 The Reali School in Haifa: Government Inspectors (fn. 1), 17. The following discussion attributes to Biram a variety of policies and practices initiated in the Reali School. Many of these practices, including the paramilitary training that became part of the school curriculum, were developed and introduced to the students by the school's teachers, such as Emmanuel (Ernst) Simon, Meir Meret, Esther Pomeranz, and Kurt Marx. Biram was nonetheless the person who formulated the objectives of these practices and placed them within a comprehensive view on sport, Zionism and the purpose of national education.

This article discusses the ideological and cultural origins of Biram's approach to physical education within the context of modern German-Jewish experience. I would suggest a twofold argument. First, Biram's views were indeed »German,« but in a different sense than the one attributed to him in the 1930s. Rather than German nationalism, or a »Prussian« attitude, they manifested views and sentiments prevalent among bourgeois Jews in early-twentieth-century Germany: a mixture of the (at times incompatible) ideologies that dominated the educated middle class's imagination in Germany until the mid-1930s; and the encounters of acculturated Jews with German nationalism and militant anti-Semitism. Second, Biram's ability to integrate into and influence mainstream tendencies in the *Yishuv* (the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine) through athletic activity represents a widespread yet understudied phenomenon. During the 1930s and 1940s numerous German-speaking immigrants had endeavored to integrate into the Jewish community in Mandate Palestine as athletes or as experts in athletic activity (such as trainers, physical education teachers and sports journalists). For these late-comers in Palestine, many of them bourgeois urbanites, sports provided an unparalleled opportunity for assimilation, enabling them to be heroic representatives of the nation, as well as to incorporate their pre-emigration experiences and self-perceptions within the Zionist national ideology. Biram was a striking example of this phenomenon rather than an odd exception in the history of the *Yishuv*.

### *Biram as an Acculturated German Zionist*

When Arthur Biram entered Ottoman-ruled Palestine in 1913, physical education was already a symbol for the modern, secular Zionist education. The immigrants who arrived in Palestine during the first *Aliyah* (the wave of Jewish immigration in 1881-1904) sought to develop a new education system that would reflect their values and objectives. Funded by the German-Jewish association Ezra and the French-Jewish Alliance Israélite Universelle, the newly formed education system included »national« content alongside the traditional, religious content. Both Alliance and Ezra perceived education as an effective means for disseminating European culture in the *Yishuv* and endeavored to incorporate Enlightenment-based educational philosophy with an emphasis on broad general education.<sup>5</sup> Physical education was introduced to Jewish students within this new framework of national education. The first institution to include physical education in Jewish Palestine was the Alliance boys' school in Jaffa, in 1893. The teachers of this school (among them

5 Efraim Cohen-Reiss, the principal of the Lemel School in Jerusalem, gives a detailed account of the commitment to the ideals that inspired these early attempts to support the Jewish education system in Palestine. See Efraim Cohen-Reiss, *From the Memoirs of a Jerusalemite*, Jerusalem 1934 [Hebrew].

the prominent German Zionist Heinrich Loewe) apparently had no proper training in physical education.<sup>6</sup> The lack of teachers' training was not the only problem of this early attempt to institute physical education in Jewish schools. While aspiring to endow their children with »general« and »national« education, the students' parents were generally reluctant to embrace the »non-Jewish« practices of physical education.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, following this initial attempt most Jewish schools, both in Jaffa and in the new settlements, refrained from including physical education in their curriculum. Instead, some pioneering sports associations used the schools' athletic equipment and provided young students with extracurricular »national« physical activity.<sup>8</sup>

A different path was taken by the Lemel School in Jerusalem, which in the 1890s – and from 1904 under the auspices of Ezra – sought to incorporate modern German pedagogical ideas.<sup>9</sup> Founded in 1856, this school was the first to employ a trained physical-education teacher, whose methods were copied from the contemporary German education system.<sup>10</sup> In 1905 Ezra initiated its Teachers' Training School (Beit-midrash le-morim) in Jerusalem. Similar to Lemel, this new institution taught physical education in German and according to the »German method«; the equipment was also purchased in Germany.<sup>11</sup> Still, the controversy around the teaching of »non-Jewish«

6 Loewe, one of the founders of the Jewish Student Association in Berlin (which Biram joined later during his student days), visited Palestine in 1896 and again in 1897. The reports that he taught in the school refer, apparently, to this period, in which he also attempted to found a Hebrew-speaking high school in Jaffa. See Ben-Zion Zangan, *From the Mouths of the Founders: A Conversation with Prof. H. Loewe*, in: *Davar*, March 18, 1949 [Hebrew].

7 Yosef Yekutieli/David Tidhar (eds.), *Fiftieth-Anniversary Album of Maccabi Jaffa-Tel Aviv*, vol. 1: 1906-1926, Tel Aviv 1957, 24 [Hebrew]. See also Talya Ben Israel, *The Integration of Physical Education in Hebrew Education in Palestine from the End of the Nineteenth Century to the Establishment of Israel*, Ph.D. diss., Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, 2002, 9 [Hebrew].

8 See Yehoshua Hassin's account in Yekutieli/Tidhar (eds.), *Fiftieth-Anniversary Album* (fn. 7), 15-18.

9 Lemel was founded in the mid-1850s and was criticized by many of the local Jews for introducing dangerous »European ideas« to the youth. Until the 1880s, however, the school hardly differed from other small institutions of elementary religious education in Jerusalem. Frankel's 1859 travelogue discloses the anxiety felt by Jerusalemites when encountering the new »European threat: Ludwig A. Frankel, *To Jerusalem*, Vienna 1859, 208-209 [Hebrew; translation of *Nach Jerusalem*, 1857].

10 According to Zvi Nishri, who in 1906 was the first physical education teacher in Gymnasia Herzliya, the physical education teachers of Lemel were trained in Hannover in 1904. Zvi Nishri, *A Short History of Physical Education*, Tel Aviv 1993, 38 [Hebrew]. According to Nishri, similar teacher-training programs were offered also in France, but they were considered inferior to the German ones.

11 The teachers and students of these two schools also founded the Bar Giora club in 1906, which later became Maccabi Jerusalem.

practices accompanied and hampered the integration of physical education into Jewish schools until the early 1910s.<sup>12</sup> This controversy waned in the years that preceded World War I, with the growing influence of the second *Aliyah* (1903-1914) in Palestine. Max Nordau's concept of a »Jewry of Muscles« (*Muskeljudentum*) had now evolved into an inspiring ideal, which envisioned a nation built through hard labor and physical strength.<sup>13</sup> In the early 1910s, when Biram initiated his plans for the Reali School, the previous efforts to incorporate athletic activity into Zionist education had met with new willingness to see the strengthening of the individual's body as part of the national enterprise, which was complemented with further immigration of trained physical education teachers. But while it reflected new trends in Jewish education in Ottoman Palestine, the Reali School's physical education program was unique in its aspirations and goals. Athletic activity in »Biram's school« was an essential component in a philosophy of education that was rooted in the experiences and sensibilities of the Jewish middle class in modern Germany.

Ironically, Arthur Biram's career in pre-1948 Palestine began as a result of an effort to eradicate the German influence on local Hebrew-speaking students. In 1912, the German-Jewish association Ezra sought to establish the Technikom, a school for the technical professions in Haifa. The decision to teach these professions in German – in order to »connect the students with the lively, developing European science«<sup>14</sup> – caused an uproar among the Zionist teachers and students, who decided to detach themselves from Ezra and to establish a new Hebrew-speaking school. Biram, who had recently immigrated from Germany, was appointed as the first principal of this school, which was called the Hebrew Reali School. When he accepted the position at the school, Biram was in his mid-thirties and had already earned two Ph. D. degrees, in the study of Islam and in Classical Studies. He was also certified as a rabbi by the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin (Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums). Biram's employment prior to his emigration – as a librarian of the Berlin Rabbinical school, a rabbi in Potsdam and a high-school teacher – exhibits his broad knowledge and his diverse interests.

Biram's teaching philosophy envisioned the school as an institution combining studies with manual labor and aiming to provide its graduates with both technical knowledge and humanistic values. The students, according to

12 Ben Israel, *The Integration of Physical Education* (fn. 7), 90.

13 Haim Kaufmann, *Der neue Jude und die Körperkultur in Israel*, in: Yotam Hotam/Moshe Zimmermann (eds.), *Zweimal Heimat. Die Jeckes zwischen Mitteleuropa und Nahost*, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, 280-286. For general scholarship on Zionist body culture and its cultural expressions see Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*, Lebanon, NH 2011.

14 Quoted from A. Baruch, *Milestones in the History of the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa* (a lecture to newly hired teachers at the Reali School), August 1980 (no page nos.), RSA [Hebrew].

this vision, would be disciplined, meticulous hard workers, who would function as the vanguard of the national enterprise.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the school took pride in its demanding code of conduct, which was based on »modesty,« »honesty« and »resolute effort« in work (a code that was bourgeois in essence as much as it was Zionist).<sup>16</sup> Principled values and structured classroom practices, however, were necessarily complemented by supervised physical activity. In Biram's educational vision it was »quite obvious that physical education should have the most prominent role.« Physical education was the manner through which the desired Zionist personality would be molded: »we need physically healthy people with strong discipline. Through physical education we also hope to develop a [better] society and public, [to develop] the talent for self-control. Gymnastics, sports and, especially, hikes in nature will bring us closer to our goal.«<sup>17</sup>

While Biram was a pioneer in his systematic formulation of the link between Zionist education and nationally oriented physical activity, his outlook was not unusual in the cultural and intellectual environment in which he shaped his views. Similar ideas were traditionally discussed within the German *Bildungsbürgertum* and likewise inspired many Jews who grew up in this milieu. The integration of physical activity within the educational curriculum (already contemplated in Ancient Greece) had been developed in two different – though not unrelated – paths in modern Germany.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, some early German Enlightenment thinkers enthusiastically argued that physical education could play a decisive role in the formation of the free, rational individual.<sup>19</sup> In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, certain German intellectuals – most notably Johann C. F. GutsMuths – de-

15 Arthur Biram, *The Aim of the Hebrew High School* (no date), RSA [Hebrew].

16 Still in use today, the school's motto, »Walk Humbly« (*Ve-batzna lekhet*) (taken from Micah 6:8), was for Biram a guide to the appropriate (bourgeois) behavior code. Following this code, he noted on several occasions, was the »key to our future in the Land of Israel.«

17 Biram is quoted in Sarah Halperin, *Dr. Biram and the Reali School: New Paths and a Constant Course*, Jerusalem 1970, 90f. [Hebrew].

18 See, for instance, Robert A. Machikoff/Steven Estes, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education: From Ancient Civilizations to the Modern World*, New York 2002.

19 Hajo Bernett, Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths, in: Horst Ueberhorst (ed.), *Geschichte der Leibesübungen*, Berlin 1989, 197-214; Erich Geldbach, *Die Philanthropen als Wegbereiter moderner Leibeskultur*, in: *ibid.*, 165-196; Christiane Eisenberg, *Die Entdeckung des Sports durch die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: Hans Joachim Teichler (ed.), *Moden und Trends im Sport und in der Sportgeschichtsschreibung. Jahrestagung der dvs-Sektion Sportgeschichte vom 8-10. Juni 2001 in Potsdam, Hamburg 2002*, 31-44.

picted the nurturing of the body through sports as part of the personal cultivation and adherence to universal ideals associated with *Bildung*.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the international conflicts in the early nineteenth century and the rise of the European national movements engendered the increasingly popular tendency to associate body culture with nation building.<sup>21</sup> In the effort to discover the essence shared by all members of their »imagined community,« physical activity became a symbolic act in these movements, through which the qualities of the nation could be exhibited and the »natural« bond that unites the nation could be felt by the collaborating athletes.<sup>22</sup> A particularly strong connection between the national struggle and athletic activity was created in Germany under the charismatic leadership of *Turnvater* Jahn, »the father of gymnastic tournaments,« Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. During the Napoleonic Wars, when fierce battles raged between Prussia and France, Jahn founded gymnastics associations that embodied the rising German »spirit« against the foreign aggressors. By contrast to GutsMuths' emphasis on cultivating the universal element of *Bildung* through sports, Jahn maintained that training the body aimed to improve the nation, rather than the individual, to »heal« it from its ailments.<sup>23</sup>

In the latter half of the nineteenth century Jahn's views had been incorporated into the German education system. Their appeal grew during the years

- 20 GutsMuths was an early and most influential advocate of using sports as part of *Bildung*, i. e., personal enhancement through education and cultural experiences: Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths, *Gymnastik für die Jugend*, vol. 1, Dresden 2003 [1793].
- 21 J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport*, London 2002; Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport*, New York 1979.
- 22 On the formation, variations and evolutions of these sentiments and ideas, see, for instance, Lincoln Allison, *The Politics of Sport*, Manchester 1986, 1-26; Michael Krüger, *Sport, Habitus und Staatsbildung in Deutschland*, in: Annette Treibe et al. (eds.), *Zivilisationstheorie in der Bilanz*, Opladen 2000, 211-242; Douglas A. Kleiber/Carol E. Kirshnit, *Sport Involvement and Identity Formation*, in: Louis Diamant (ed.), *Mind-Body Maturity: Psychological Approaches to Sport, Exercise and Fitness*, New York 1991, 193-199; Adrian Smith/Dilwyn Porter (eds.), *Sport and National Identity in the Post-War World*, New York, 2004; Alan Brainer, *Sport, Nationalism and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives*, Albany, NY 2001, 1-20; Jeffrey Hill, *Cocks, Cats, Caps and Cups: A Semiotic Approach to Sport and National Identity*, in: *Sport in Society* 2/2 (Summer 1999), 1-21; Alan Tomlinson/Christopher Young, *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*, Albany, NY 2006.
- 23 Christiane Eisenberg, *Charismatic Nationalist Leader: Turnvater Jahn*, in: *International Journal of the History of Sport* 13/1 (1996), 14-27; Felix Saure, *Beautiful Bodies, Exercising Warriors and Original Peoples: Sports, Greek Antiquity and National Identity from Winckelmann to »Turnvater Jahn,«* in: *German History* 27/3 (2009), 358-373.

of Bismark's struggle to unite all the »Germans« under the political regime of a German state. Yet, the nationalization of physical education did not lead to an inevitable break with its role in the German humanist tradition. As Georg Kerschensteiner asserted in his influential 1913 essay on the ideal environment for education, the combination of study and physical activity in the school essentially aimed to mold the ideal »accomplished individual« (*vollkommener Mensch*); notably, however, the individual could be »accomplished« only as a person-of-the-nation.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Kerschensteiner conceived sports as an effective means of forming the free individual as a subject of the nation. This approach attracted many young bourgeois Germans of the early twentieth century, who perceived physical education as a bridge between the cultural heritage of Enlightenment's humanism and the constitution of a strong, healthy nation.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, for bourgeois Jews in early-twentieth-century Germany this approach marked a particularly attractive link between nation building and body culture that was not tainted by Father Jahn's chauvinist nationalism and often quoted anti-Semitic statements.<sup>26</sup>

Born in Bischofswerda, Saxony, in 1878, Arthur Biram was a product of the educational philosophy that championed the role of physical education in the formation of a humanist nationalism. His depiction of »the objectives of the [Jewish] high school in the Land of Israel,« in which physical education would play an essential role, followed Kerschensteiner in combining a strong commitment to both universal, humanist ideals, and nation building:

»The European high school originated in the German neo-*Humanismus* [... on the basis of] the ideal of *Bildung*. [...] These were the foundations for the 1812 Prussian Gymnasium, the prototype of European education in the past 150 years. »Education« means that the individual fuses together various cultural influences [...] and forms [his] singular spiritual entity. This perception makes us the heirs of Plato, the successors of German

24 Georg Kerschensteiner, *Begriff der Arbeitsschule*, Leipzig 1913, 11 f.

25 Ronald Naul, *History of Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, in: idem/Ken Hardman (eds.), *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, New York 2002, 15-27.

26 Michael Berkowitz describes the attempt of Berlin's Zionists to form a »gymnast's symbiosis of *Deutschtum*, *Judentum* and liberalism« through both a selective use of Jahn's writing and identification with Heine's criticism of Jahn's chauvinist nationalism. Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War*, Chapel Hill, NC 1996, 108. For a discussion of Jahn's widely known anti-Semitic remarks, see Guntram Schultheiß, *Arbeit am Volkstum*, in: *Die Gesellschaft. Münchener Halbmonatsschrift für Kunst und Kultur* 1-2 (1896), 587-600, here 591; Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation*, Cambridge 2006, 96.

*Idealismus*. [...] And yet, we must recognize that this objective is also essentially Jewish [...].<sup>27</sup>

Jewish national education therefore manifested both national particularism and the (universally oriented) tradition of *Humanismus*. The challenge of national education lay in the practical means it developed to bridge the gaps between the individual, the nation and the »European« or universal principles. According to Biram, physical education should be institutionalized because of its role in connecting individual experiences with the »shared values« that constitute the nation: physical education forms »individuals of spiritual essence« (or »singular spiritual entities«), who would be able »to fulfill their duty to [their] nation.« In other words, physical education does not deviate from the »harmonious training of all human faculties« – the fundamental ideal of humanist education – since the individuals it seeks to shape are always conscious of being part of the nation.<sup>28</sup> In Biram's view, physical education in the school was supposed to link the Reali School with the heritage of German education, which underscored the school's role in combining the universal and the particular to form the national.

In 1938, the now experienced principal of the Reali School approached the Zionist Education Department in Palestine with a proposal to introduce systematic paramilitary training in Zionist high schools, in order to »create reserve forces for the defense [of the *Yishuv*] which would include all the [Jewish] youth.«<sup>29</sup> Notably, when the proposal was adopted by the Zionist leadership, its acceptance was formulated as approval for Biram's pedagogical approach in general: the goal of such training in Zionist schools, it declared in accordance with Biram (and, apparently, with Kerchensteiner), was »to educate responsible, disciplined individuals, [...] boys and girls should realize that they are training in order to serve the nation and [to promise] its liberation«; incorporating this training into the school's regular timetable would enhance the students' »sense of national unity.«<sup>30</sup>

While Biram placed himself and his pedagogical approach within the German tradition of nation building through *Bildung* – in itself a »Jewish« understanding of German identity<sup>31</sup> – his perception of national education was

27 Biram, *The Aim of the Hebrew High School* (fn. 15), 4. Biram demonstrates familiarity and agreement with Kerschensteiner's views (especially the aspiration to form an »accomplished individual« as a subject of an »ideal state«). Nevertheless, Biram did not accept one of the German pedagogue's key principles, namely, the necessary submission of the individual (the student) to the »fundamental ideals of the state.«

28 *Ibid.*

29 Arthur Biram to the Department of Education, November 1938, Archive of the Israel Defense Forces, Kiryat Ono (hereafter IDFA), 23/61.

30 Ha-Va'ad ha-Le'umi (National Council) protocols, 1939 (no precise date), IDFA, 23/61.

31 George Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism*, Bloomington, IN 1985.



heavily influenced by the experience of middle-class Jews in post-emancipation Germany. As part of the dual effort to acculturate within the local bourgeoisie and to maintain a distinct self-awareness as a bourgeois Jew, physical strength facilitated the Jewish ability to be »the other within.«<sup>32</sup> According to Biram, years before Max Nordau called for the resurrection of the militant Jew he had already learnt that physical strength would secure a Jewish presence in the German public sphere. »If my father would hear someone harassing a Jew he would engage in a fight,« Biram recalled of his early childhood, »the goyim [gentiles] respected him [the father] for it. My brother acted the same way. I remember a time when we were strolling down the street and a passerby shouted ›Juden!‹ at us. In an instant my brother attacked the man and beat him to the ground [...].«<sup>33</sup> Naturally, in tandem with Biram's Zionist conviction, this anecdote of integration through the muscles reinstates the self-deluding aspect of Jewish acculturation. It also demonstrates, however, the significance of nurturing body culture within the context of German-Jewish assimilation. From the (arguably, illusionary) point of view of an acculturated Jew, the right to be »a man in the street«<sup>34</sup> was won in a fistfight on the streets, or – more significantly – in the willingness to engage in such a fight.

This early recognition of the importance of »muscles« for middle-class Jewry had become part of a practical approach to physical education during Biram's days as a university student. In the early twentieth century the nationalist student associations in Germany had become an influential arena of illiberal socialization and a greenhouse for chauvinist sentiments.<sup>35</sup> These popular associations, which nurtured anti-Semitic passion alongside social conservatism and nationalist myths, occasionally harassed Jewish students (the stereotypically weak, effeminate Jewish body was a common trope

32 The nuanced discussion of the acculturated bourgeois Jew as the »other within« has been developed and contested in numerous studies such as Steven E. Aschheim, *German History and German Jewry: Boundaries, Junctions and Interdependence*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 43 (1998), 315–323; Samuel Moyn, *German Jewry and the Question of Identity*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 41 (1996), 292–308; Till van Rahden, *Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860–1925*, Madison, WI 2007; Marion A. Kaplan, *As Germans and as Jews in Imperial Germany*, in: idem (ed.), *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945*, New York and Oxford 2005, 173–269.

33 Quoted in Halperin, Dr. Biram (fn. 17), 59.

34 The principle of assimilation as famously defined by J. L. Gordon: »Be a man in the street and a Jew at home [...].« Judah Leib Gordon, *Awake My People* [1863], in: *Collected Works of Judah Leib Gordon: Poetry*, Tel Aviv 1959, 17 [Hebrew].

35 See, for instance, Konrad Jarausch, *Liberal Education as Illiberal Socialization: The Case of Students in Imperial Germany*, in: *Journal of Modern History* 50/4 (1978), 609–630; idem, *Sex and Politics in Imperial Germany*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 17/2 (1982), 285–303.

among anti-Semites).<sup>36</sup> Many students who advocated Jewish nationalism sought to conceive an »appropriate« Jewish response to anti-Jewish activism.<sup>37</sup> Biram's solution was once again based on the dual principle of acculturation *and* dissimilation:<sup>38</sup> Jewish adoption of the ideals and behavioral codes of the German nationalists in order to »make the arrogant goy respect« the Jew.<sup>39</sup> Following Biram's lead (according to his account), the Jewish Student Association (Vereinigung jüdischer Studenten) in Berlin embraced the accepted principle of the German Student Association,« namely, »unconditional satisfaction«: every person of the association who was insulted or otherwise offended would invite his opponent to a duel in which he would re-establish his honor. Naturally, this principle dictated the need to improve the physical strength of the Jewish students. It also created a link between the necessity to develop physical strength – and to learn effective methods for nurturing such strength – and an awareness of Jewish national identity. This defiant engagement with the chauvinist, often violent aspect of German nationalism was for Biram a practical lesson in *Turnvater* Jahn's teaching, which emphasized the intimate connection between gymnastics (disciplined training), self-defense and national self-determination.<sup>40</sup>

The conviction that physical activity of the youth should be channeled to »Jewish national self-defense« became a fundamental principle in the curriculum of the Reali School after the violent Arab riots of 1929 (after 1938 this program informed the paramilitary training in the Zionist education system as a whole). However, the adoption of »unconditional satisfaction« by the German Jewish Student Association influenced Biram's vision for physical education in the Reali School in other ways as well. Biram's colleagues in

36 Norbert Kampe, *Jews and Antisemites at Universities in Imperial Germany (I): Jewish Students: Social History and Social Conflict*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 30 (1985), 357-394. While anti-Semitism was common in these associations, some student organizations did advocate more liberal approaches. See Jaraus, *Liberal Education as Illiberal Socialization* (fn. 35), 621 f. The image of the Jew as unfit for physical endeavor was reiterated in anti-Semitic propaganda before and after 1933. See, for instance, *Juden und Leibesübungen*, in: *Der Dietwart*, December 8, 1938; George Eisen, *Jewish History and Ideology in Modern Sport: Approaches and Interpretations*, in: *Journal of Sport History* 25/3 (1998), 482-531, here 487.

37 For the wider context of the Jewish quest for an appropriate response, see Lisa F. Zwicker, *Dueling Students: Conflict, Masculinity, and Politics in German Universities, 1890-1914*, Ann Arbor, MI 2011, 103-117.

38 For the tensions, and oftentimes compatibility, of assimilation and dissimilation among the Jewish bourgeoisie, see Shulamit Volkov, *The Dynamics of Dissimilation: Ostjuden and German Jews*, in: Jehuda Reinharz/Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, Hanover, NH 1985, 195-211.

39 Halperin, *Dr. Biram* (fn. 17), 59-60.

40 Biram recounts that the Jewish self-defense association in Berlin was intended not merely to protect specific Jewish students but rather to »nurture the spirit and the capacity for Jewish national self-defense« in general. *Ibid.*

Berlin interpreted this principle in a broad manner, declaring that since the anti-Semitic insult was directed at Jews in general, it was the Jewish association's responsibility to fight for the Jews' honor as a group. Physical confrontation was consequently transferred from the individual to the group (as a representative of the nation); in addition, »national honor« was now dependent on the physical strength of all members of the group, who were committed to risking their lives (or risking an honorable injury) if any member of the group was offended.

The Reali School students under Biram's leadership were encouraged to embrace a similar approach. The sense of belonging to a group whose members were intimately connected – and where an attack on one was considered an insult to all – was cultivated by Biram and the teachers of the school mainly during lengthy hikes, an essential part of the school curriculum. Hikes on the Carmel hills were often an opportunity to come into contact with the Arab youth of the region, encounters that enabled Biram to instill in his students the same sentiments (and, arguably, similar anxieties) he had experienced as a Zionist student in Germany. Fights with local Arabs and – more important – the sense of constant danger of being attacked by »hostile Arabs« during the hike were part of the school folklore. The hike was therefore an opportunity to demonstrate Jewish strength and bravery in a hostile environment and, in cases of actual confrontation with local Arabs, it provided an opportunity to exhibit the mutual responsibility of the group members.<sup>41</sup>

Having grown up and been educated in the German youth culture of the early twentieth century, Biram was well acquainted with the potential role of the hike in the constitution of national identities.<sup>42</sup> The rediscovery of the fatherland, achieved through physical effort and detached from the »formal« educational frameworks, was celebrated in the pre-1914 German youth movements such as the Wandervogel (or the Jewish »Blau-Weiß«), in which exploring the *Heimat* was also an act of separation from parents and the creation of an alternative, national community.<sup>43</sup> Biram sought to maintain the appeal of such activity but to contain it within the institutionalized sys-

41 Thus, for instance, Yaakov Dori – later the IDF Chief of Staff – boastfully carried a scar from a wound sustained during a conflict between Reali School students and local Arabs. *Ibid.*, 84.

42 Biram was not the first to include hikes in the Jewish school curriculum in Palestine. Efraim Cohen-Reiss, who was trained as a teacher in Germany, had already introduced hikes in his Lemel School in 1887. Ben Israel, *The Integration of Physical Education* (fn. 7), 53.

43 John A. Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism and Conservation, 1900-1940*, Stanford, CT 2007; Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape, Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945*, Cambridge, MA 2004; Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, Cambridge, MA 1979, 42-84; Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement*, New Brunswick, NJ 1984 [1962], 41-86; Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, New Haven, CT 1996, 46 f.

tem of national education. Within this context, including the hike in the school curriculum was crucial for Biram especially since it maintained the school's role as the main framework for the nationalization of the individual. The school was thus presented as the only genuinely »national« framework, as opposed to the competing »politicized« frameworks – the ideological youth movements of the time – which used similar methods in their educational programs.<sup>44</sup>

Hikes were therefore a crucial experience of national fraternity monitored by the school's teachers, who could also seek to ensure that students understood this activity in the »right« way. Yet, as some teachers noted, the school's impact on the level of physical exertion during the hikes and on the students' interpretation of their experience was considerably limited. By contrast to the loosely regulated hikes, Biram and his teachers – most notably the German-Jewish doctor Ernst Emmanuel Simon – invested considerable time and effort in developing a meticulous physical education curriculum for the school.<sup>45</sup> Since the development of physical strength through standardized exercises aimed to form the person-of-the-nation – rather than to train professional athletes – athletic performance manifested the (symbolic and actual) capabilities of the nation. Carefully planned physical education lessons did not merely emphasize discipline and improved performance but also, and primarily, displayed the visible (corporal) expressions of discipline, coordination and shared goals (as was underscored, for instance, during the mandatory morning exercise in the school).

If the emphasis on disciplined exercise in school contributed to Biram's reputation as a »Prussian« educator, this impression was substantially intensified when he introduced paramilitary training into the school's curriculum after the summer of 1929.<sup>46</sup> His enthusiasm for paramilitary training in the school (or EPE, Extended Physical Education) would seem to epitomize Biram's militant Zionist convictions. His long-lasting contribution to the development of EPE underscored the relations between his Zionism and the belligerent aspects of *Turnvater* Jahn's doctrine (in 1952, five years after he retired from his position as principal of the Reali School, Biram took this aspect of his approach even further when he initiated the incorporation of a

44 Biram's vision for the school included the ability to »satisfy all the [students'] necessities, so they would not need to join youth movements unrelated to the school.« Baruch, Milestones (fn. 14), 6. Despite the school's efforts, students apparently continued to be associated with other youth movements and such membership was eventually officially prohibited by school regulations.

45 Reali School teacher Emmanuel Simon also published numerous instruction booklets on physical education such as: *Be Strong and of Good Courage! Exercise for Men*, Jerusalem 1939 [Hebrew]. Some of these booklets were translated into German and English.

46 Biram asserted after the riots that the Jewish community suffered from a lack of »appropriate preparation« for the violent clashes. David Dayan, *Yes, We are Youth: History of the Gadna*, Tel Aviv 1977, 31 [Hebrew].

pre-military boarding school into the Reali School, with the intention of »combining general education with military needs«).<sup>47</sup> As noted above, however, Biram's experiences and upbringing as an acculturated Jew within the German *Bildungsbürgertum* were no less crucial to his pedagogical approach than his commitment to Zionism.<sup>48</sup> Jahn's influence notwithstanding, Biram's interpretation of EPE was also based on the views of German humanist intellectuals, such as Kerchensteiner and GutsMuths, who sought to utilize physical education in order to form the »spiritual unity« of the individual. In Biram's vision, EPE was not intended to replace physical education but merely to »extend« it – not in order to form a militaristic society, yearning for and prompting armed conflicts, but rather to mold an »accomplished individual« who is ready to serve the community that grants his or her freedom and, ultimately, identity.<sup>49</sup>

### *Biram as a German-Jewish Immigrant*

Oscillating between the cultivation of the individual and the nation-building effort, and trying to reconcile the two, Biram's perception of body culture reflected some predominant traits of the German middle class. To a large extent, the physical education program he initiated in the Reali School negotiated German bourgeois ideology from the perspective of an acculturated Zionist. In adopting this perspective Biram was hardly unusual among German-speaking immigrants in Mandate Palestine. He was an exceptionally well-known case of the (generally overlooked) widespread endeavor of Central European Jews to successfully integrate into the local Jewish community – and to gain influence within this community – through expertise in sports and body culture.

Naturally, for certain individuals such expertise had some direct, practical advantages. In some cases, athletic achievements, a background in physical education or in sports journalism, or even an administrative connection to

47 The pre-military boarding school sought to provide excellent high-school education together with the experiences and knowledge that would prepare students for, and enable their successful integration in, the military. It was located in Biram House on Mount Carmel, which Biram originally assigned to be a physical education center for Reali School students (from 1949 it hosted the school's 10th to 12th grade classes). The boarding school was named after Biram's son, who died in 1951 during his reserve duty.

48 Ironically, while he is known for his harsh criticism of Jewish assimilation in Germany, Biram's familiarity with military training came from his service to the German nation during World War I (already in Palestine when the war broke out, Biram left his position as principal of the Reali School and enlisted to the German army).

49 This understanding of EPE is summarized in Biram's statement on the matter: Arthur Biram, *Extending Further Physical Education* (1943), IDFA, 23/61 [Hebrew].

sports associations before emigration, were valuable for finding work opportunities in the new homeland.<sup>50</sup> Some clubs, such as Maccabi Haifa, enlisted numerous German-speaking immigrants and subsequently provided a supportive environment for the newcomers.<sup>51</sup> The first two international Maccabiah Games in the early 1930s facilitated the immigration of German athletes to Palestine and provided them with the opportunity to integrate into the *Yishuv* as athletes (and as administrators in the field of sport).<sup>52</sup> As in the Reali School, some German-speaking teachers of physical education were able to find positions in various schools in the *Yishuv*.

Beyond their significance for the livelihood of individual immigrants, however, sports and body culture played a significant role in the interpretations and expressions of Zionist identity among German Jews, both before and after immigration. Like Biram, many German-speaking immigrants regarded physical activity as a key component in the experience of Zionism before emigration and the context in which Zionism gained its meaning. By the late nineteenth century, when Arthur Biram was advocating Jewish nationalism as a student in Berlin, the symbolic and practical importance of physical activity had become increasingly recognized among Central European Zionists.<sup>53</sup> Kindled by Max Nordau's renowned call for a Jewry of Muscles at the second Zionist Congress in August 1898, this recognition led to the emergence of Jewish sports associations in Wilhelmine Germany and

50 The Maccabi Archive at Kfar Maccabiah, Ramat Gan (hereafter KMA) contains numerous such »reference letters« that German Jewish athletes produced upon arrival in Palestine. The letters commonly included a detailed description of the immigrant's devotion to the Maccabi association and to Zionism. KMA, Maccabi Königsberg, 125/4-142.

51 The dominant swimming and water polo team of Maccabi Haifa is a striking example of such an environment in the 1930s: In 1932-1933 several athletes of Hakoah Vienna, led by the trainer Ernst Weigler and the swimmer Georg Pelsch, joined the club, followed by Shlomo Hirschberg (Tinshemet) and Yehudith Deutsch. The club was founded in the early 1910s by German-speaking immigrants in the city.

52 Yosef Yekutieli, *What Is the Maccabiah?*, in: Haim Wein (ed.), *Book of the Maccabiah*, Tel Aviv 1980, 15 f. [Hebrew]; see also Anat Helman, *Young Tel Aviv: A Tale of Two Cities*, Lebanon, NH 2012, 56 f.

53 Max Nordau's famous manifesto already acknowledged the psychological impacts of the emergence of the New Jew as well as the practical aspects of self-defense (his model for the New Jew was to a certain extent the ancient Jewish warrior Bar-Kochba). See Max Nordau, *Muskeljudentum*, reprinted in his *Zionistische Schriften*, Leipzig 1909 [1903], 379 ff. See also Michael Brenner/Gideon Reuveni (eds.), *Emancipation through the Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe*, Munich 2006; Todd S. Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*, New York 2007; David Biale, *Zionism as an Erotic Revolution*, in: Howard Eilberg-Schwarz (ed.), *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, Albany, NY 1992, 283-308.

the Habsburg Empire.<sup>54</sup> The foundation of the pioneering Bar Kochba club in Berlin in 1898 marked the beginning of a period in which Germany was a center of influence on Jewish sports, enhancing their association with the regeneration of Jewish nationalism. Inspired by the German model (in particular, by Jahn's approach to gymnastics), the 1903 Jewish Gymnastic Movement sought to intensify Jewish national sentiments among young middle-class Jews.<sup>55</sup> As sport became increasingly important in the urban leisure culture of Central Europe, the appeal of Jewish sports associations – Zionist and non-Zionist alike – also grew.<sup>56</sup> Like Biram's emulation of non-Jewish students' practices in his student association, the Jewish sports club enabled athletes and fans to express their particularism as Jews and simultaneously exhibit their bourgeois acculturation.<sup>57</sup>

Zionist leaders were well aware of the suggestive power of athletic activity, in particular among the acculturated middle-class German Jews.<sup>58</sup> The German-Jewish press regularly addressed the role of sports – and of athletes – in the national »renaissance.«<sup>59</sup> Monitored physical activity was claimed to link the younger generation with the »legacy of Herzl and Weizmann.«<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, Jewish participation in professional and non-professional sports in pre-Nazi Germany was neither exclusively Zionist nor even national in

54 Manfred Lämmer (ed.), *Die jüdische Turn- und Sportbewegung in Deutschland 1898-1938*, Sankt Augustin [Germany] 1989; Paul Yogi Mayer, *Equality – Egality: Jews and Sport in Germany*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 25 (1980), 221-241; Moshe Zimmermann, *Muscles Jew vs. Nervous Jew*, in: Brenner/Reuveni (eds.), *Emancipation through the Muscles* (fn. 53), 13-26.

55 George Eisen, *Zionism, Nationalism and the Emergence of the Jüdische Turnerschaft*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 28 (1983), 247-262.

56 Erik N. Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity*, New York and Oxford 2010.

57 Jacob Borut, *Jews in German Sports during the Weimar Republic*, in: Brenner/Reuveni (eds.), *Emancipation through the Muscles* (fn. 53), 77-92. In March 1933, the Bulletin of Bar Kochba-Hakoah of Berlin still reminded its readers that even in times of segregation and hatred sport highlighted the similarities that transcended national differences and conflicts. Das Präsidium des deutschen Makkabikreis, *An die deutschen Makkabi-Vereine*, in: *Bar Kochba – Hakoah, Berlin (Mitteilungen)*, March 26, 1933.

58 An assertion by a prominent Maccabi activist in 1940 is typical: »sport is the only method that brings Zionism to assimilated [Jews...], especially in Germany.« Dr. Lifshitz, chair of Maccabi World Union, 1940, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter CZA), S71/1824.

59 Von der Makkabi-Reise Lord Melchetts, in: *Bar Kochba – Hakoah, Berlin (Mitteilungen)*, February, 1933.

60 Dr. Zirker, *Nach vierzig Jahren*, in: *Der Makkabi*, October 22, 1938. Similar assertions abound during the 1930s, for instance, T. Levy, *Juden im Sport*, in: *Ha-Gibor ha-Makkabi* 8 (1933), 17ff. See also: J. Elberfeld, *Körperliche Entartung der Juden. Die Debatten über Degeneration in der jüdischen Turnzeitung 1900-1914*, in: *Transversal* 1 (2007), 23-48; Carsten Teichert, *Chasak! Zionismus im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland 1933-1938*, Cologne 2000.

essence.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, by the 1920s many German Jewish athletes did not practice sport *as Jews*.<sup>62</sup> Participation in sports was considered both an efficient path toward Jewish assimilation and a vivid manifestation of one's success in adapting to the contemporary hegemonic values and cultural practices.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, for young men and women of early-twentieth-century Germany, and in particular during the post-World War I era, sports clubs and youth movements provided a most popular framework for displaying and defining various ideological identities in addition to (only rarely in contrast to) identification with the nation.<sup>64</sup> Despite the widespread desire to see sport as a realm that displayed Jewish national identity beyond ideological differences, Jewish clubs frequently reflected the general norm of political commitment to various causes other than (or in addition to) nation building.<sup>65</sup> With the growing popularity of Jewish sports clubs – especially after World War I and

- 61 The various published attempts to acknowledge the »best« Jewish athletes, sometimes made by enthusiast Zionists, revealed the embarrassingly large number of non-Zionist Jews, who often proudly represented other states. See, for instance, correspondence between Felix Pinczower and Hakoah Vienna, November 20, 1935, KMA, Maccabi Germany, Bar Kochba, Hakoah, 128/4-14-39. For various lists of this kind, see: Robert Atlasz, Unsere Liste, in: *Der jüdische Sport*, no date, KMA, Maccabi Germany, 125/4-14-1; Anon., Die Juden: ein großes Sportsvolk, KMA, Maccabi Germany, 126/4-14-20; Anon., Das jüdische Sportbuch, in: Museum of German Speaking Jewry Archive, Tefen Industrial Area, Israel (hereafter GSJ), G.F. 0046/2.
- 62 The tennis champion Daniel Prenn, a Russian-born Jew who represented Germany in various international competitions, is a case in point. See J. Deiss, Der Emigrant, in: Ulrich Kaiser (ed.), *Tennis in Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis 2002*, Berlin 2002, 146 ff.
- 63 Lorenz Peiffer, Sport im Nationalsozialismus. Zum aktuellen Stand des Sporthistorischen Forschung, Göttingen 2004, 18; Paul Y. Mayer, Deutsche Juden und Sport, in: Irene Diekmann/Joachim H. Teichler (eds.), *Körper, Kultur und Ideologie. Sport und Zeitgeist im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Mainz 1997, 119-146.
- 64 Erich Geldbach, Die Philanthropen als Wegbereiter moderner Leibeskultur, in: Horst Ueberhorst (ed.), *Geschichte der Leibesübungen*, vol. 3/1, Berlin 1982, 165-196; Frank Becker, Amerikanismus in Weimar. Sportsymbole und politische Kultur 1918-1933, Wiesbaden 1993; Robert Wohl, The Generation of 1914, Boston 1979, 42-84; Robert F. Wheeler, Organized Sport and Organized Labour: The Workers' Sports Movement, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 13/2 (1978), 191-210, here 197f.; David A. Steinberg, The Workers' Sport Internationals 1920-28, in: *ibid.*, 233-251.
- 65 The aforementioned desire is demonstrated, for instance, in: *Der jüdische Sport* (Jüdisches Familienblatt). Die neue Beilage des *Israelitischen Familienblattes*, in: *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, October 4, 1933. For the role of sports in exhibiting various perceptions of Jewish identity and various factions of Jewish politics, see Nathan Marcus, Zionist Football and Jewish Identity in Weimar Germany, in: *Judaica* 61 (2005), 147-166; Elke Stiller, Jüdische Sportvereine und ihre Beziehungen zu der deutschen und internationalen Arbeiter Sportbewegung, in: *Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte des Sports* 13 (1997), 28-37; Werner Strentny, Jüdische Sportvereine: Makkabi und Sportbund Schild, 1933 bis 1938, in: Lorenz Peiffer/Dietrich Schulze-



the Balfour Declaration – more attention was drawn to the different ideologies represented by the various associations.<sup>66</sup> The rivalry between clubs that represented different perceptions of Jewish identity, which at times resulted in fierce confrontations, did not wane even after the Nazi seizure of power.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, the evident ability of sports clubs to interpret, express and propagate self-perceptions through participation in physical activity (both as athletes and as fans) had taught German Zionists two main lessons. First, that the social and institutional framework in which physical activity takes place is more important than the mere encouragement of body culture as such.<sup>68</sup> Athletic associations affiliated with Zionism dedicated much effort to inculcating the meaning of physical activity within their framework. The young athletes were often reminded that the ultimate goal was not professional achievements – »setting [personal] records« – but rather to enhance the vitality and strength of the nation's »body.«<sup>69</sup> Journals of the Zionist sports clubs in Germany likewise repeatedly informed their readers that their athletic performance should be perceived merely as a means to promote the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine.<sup>70</sup> Athletic associations' bulletins incessantly encouraged young members to visit Palestine as representatives

Marmeling (eds.), *Hakenkreuz und rundes Leder. Fußball im Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2008, 474-488.

66 Daniel Wildman, *Der veränderbare Körper. Jüdische Turner, Männlichkeit und das Wiedergewinnen von Geschichte in Deutschland um 1900*, Tübingen 2009, 173-221; Haim Kaufmann, *Jewish Sports in the Diaspora, Yishuv, and Israel: Between Nationalism and Politics*, in: *Israel Studies* 10/2 (2005), 147-167, esp. 149-152.

67 Reports on aggressive rivalry between Jewish clubs of different political agendas are not exceptional prior to 1935. See, for instance, *Ein neuer Schritt zum jüdischen Sportfrieden*, in: *Der jüdische Sport*, August 1933, KMA, Maccabi Germany 126/4-14-20; *Makkabi oder RjF?*, in: *Jüdische Rundschau*, May 12, 1935. Private letters of club members also express deep animosity: Gerhard Cohen to Oskar Kurz, August 11, 1935, GSJ, G.F. 0046/1. See also Marcus, *Zionist Football*; Stiller, *Jüdische Sportvereine*; Strentny, *Jüdische Sportvereine* (all fn. 65). The joint council of Maccabi and RjF (Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten) – Reichsausschuß jüdischer Sportverbände – was founded on July 26, 1936, and considerably lessened the tensions. KMA, Maccabi Germany, Bar Kochba, Hakoah, 128/4-14-39.

68 This was already noted by Max Nordau, who specifically called for the formation of Jewish athletic associations. Kurt Lewin's memoir of his days as a young Jewish athlete in Germany also reflects this recognition: Kurt Lewin, *Schicksale jüdischer Sportler* (memoir, no date), KMA, Maccabi Germany 126/4-14-20.

69 A statement in the program of the 1914 Bar Kochba sports event in Berlin is typical. See *Jüdischer Turntag in Berlin*, May 1914, CZA, A142/51. When addressing the differences between Zionist sports and national sports in Nazi Germany, *Yishuv* newspapers emphasized the distinction between the »record-chasing« Nazi athletes and the unprofessional, »authentic« body culture practiced by the Zionist sports clubs in Palestine. What Is Happening Abroad: Germany, in: *Ha'aretz*, July 8, 1936 [Hebrew].

70 Georg Goetz, *Die Arbeit geht weiter*, in: *Der Makkabi*, March 1933; Alfred Klee, *Zionisten über den Makkabi*, in: *Der Makkabi*, February 1934, CZA, A142/51.

of their club.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, sports clubs were also the framework where Jewish youth was introduced to the Hebrew culture of the *Yishuv* and taught the significance of the latest events in Palestine.<sup>72</sup>

The second lesson was that the general banner of »Zionist« club provided an effective context for ideological education well beyond the aspiration to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. While athletic activity was formally formulated to prepare young Jews for emigration, the bourgeois Zionist sports clubs – such as Maccabi or Hakoah – also introduced a plethora of »related« progressive middle-class ideals assembled under vague slogans such as »social justice, free labor, and humanity.«<sup>73</sup> The differences between bourgeois and socialist Zionist sports clubs were habitually underscored in the clubs' bulletins;<sup>74</sup> the key question was, which association – i. e., which ideology – genuinely manifested Zionism: as *Der Makkabi* stated to its Berlin readers in July 1933, »we [the bourgeois Maccabi] have a mission to build Palestine – [the socialist] »Hapoel« is about class warfare.«<sup>75</sup> By combining Jewish nationalism with »related« ideologies, the members of the Zionist sports associations imagined themselves as harbingers of progress, reason and peace in a field characterized by conflict, ineffective administration and limited commitment to mutual objectives.<sup>76</sup>

Upon their arrival in Palestine, German-speaking immigrants tended to follow these two lessons they had learned as athletes (and functionaries) in Central Europe. First, they were inclined to focus on the institutionalization of athletic activity – through clubs, physical education manuals, and sport-related bureaucracy – rather than merely engaging in a physically active lifestyle. Central European immigrants were indeed particularly instrumental in the foundation of sports associations and clubs in Palestine, such as Maccabi

71 As noted, for instance, in Ernst Simon's memoir, *Erinnerung an die Bar Kochba*, 1938, KMA, Maccabi Germany, 126/4-14-20.

72 See, for instance, Bar Kochba, Berlin, Programm zum Festakt anlässlich des 25jährigen Bestehens, October 17, 1923; Hakoah Köln, Altes Volk – Neues Geschlecht, advertisement in *Sport Rundschau*, December 7, 1934. Notably, such sports clubs, where physical activity could be regulated and constantly placed in an ideological context, became all the more influential under National Socialist rule, when Jewish athletes were forced to pursue their activities only within segregated Jewish clubs. *Der jüdische Sport* (Jüdisches Familienblatt) (fn. 65); Zirkular 2, *Makkabi International*, 1933, KMA, Maccabi, 126/4-14-23.

73 As explained, for instance, in the manifesto of Maccabi-Hatzair: World Committee of Maccabi-Hatzair, in: *Ha'arets*, May 8, 1937 [Hebrew].

74 See, for instance, Robert Atlasz, Ein Jahr vor der Makkabiah. Palästina Sport Heute, in: *Der jüdische Sport*, 1935 (no date), Maccabi Germany, 126/4-14-20.

75 Herbert Exiner, Leitsätze zum Programm und Weg der Makkabi-Hatzair, in: *Der Makkabi*, July 1933.

76 Walter Frank, Makkabi-Landessportfest in Nataniah, in: *Sport Rundschau*, November 29, 1935; Fritz Simon, Leibesübungen in Palästina, in: *Die Leibesübungen*, November 20, 1927.

Haifa and Maccabim-Atid, as well as in the institutionalization of athletic activity in the local youth movement Maccabi Hatzair (notably, the latter's code of conduct closely resembled that of the Reali School).<sup>77</sup> The trainers in these clubs were instructed to utilize physical activity to transform the athletes into the embodiment of the national values, so that they would exhibit the »physical and spiritual« qualities of the nation.<sup>78</sup> The vital role played by German-speaking immigrants in organizing the first and second Maccabiah Games (1932 and 1935) contributed further to the institutionalization of sports in Palestine. As an attempt to constitute Palestine as the center of Jewish life, the Maccabiah demonstrated the bureaucratic and administrative capacities of the *Yishuv*, as well as its ability to skillfully display the »qualities« and the »essence« of the nation.<sup>79</sup>

German-speaking immigrants' emphasis on the institutionalization and better organization of Jewish body culture in Palestine was also evident in the Zionist education system. Many German-speaking teachers who emigrated to Palestine during the 1930s after being educated in the bourgeois Zionist clubs of Central Europe seemed to make an intuitive connection between standardized activity in sports clubs and the school curricula.<sup>80</sup> Kurt Marx, who taught in the Reali School from 1943, explicitly noted this connection when he argued that sports institutions and the education of the youth were interrelated and, hence, should be monitored and developed in similar ways.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, together with the *Yishuv*'s sports institutions – the clubs, the Maccabiah Committee, etc. – physical education was integrated into the curriculum of a growing number of Zionist schools in Palestine.<sup>82</sup> New immigrants also sought to standardize the vocabulary and objectives of the teaching of gymnastics in the *Yishuv*, with initiatives such as a German-Hebrew

77 Founded by immigrants such as the physician Elihu Orbach and the gymnastic trainer Ernst Hermann, the association of Maccabi Haifa exemplifies this tendency. On the role of German-speaking immigrants in Maccabi Hatzair and Maccabim Atid, see Maccabi Hatzair, Haifa, in: *Ha-Boker – Sport*, July 18, 1936 [Hebrew]; Haifa, in: *Ha'aretz*, August 12, 1937 [Hebrew].

78 Quoted from Erich Wolkenfeld's directions to Maccabi instructors, KMA, Maccabi, Germany 130-/4-14-63 (no date).

79 Robert Atlasz, Bar Kochba, Tel Aviv 1977, 189 [Hebrew]; Yekutieli, What is the Maccabiah? (fn. 52), 15 f.

80 See, for instance, Yaakov Sovovitch, The Beginnings of Physical Education and Sport in Haifa, in: *The Bulletin of the Haifa History Society* (2012), <<http://www.haifa.org.il/ourCity.aspx>>, 5 [Hebrew]; Eyal Gertmann, Where Did Hakoah and Bar Kochba Go? Immigrants from Central Europe in Israeli Sport, in: Yotam Hotam/Moshe Zimmermann (eds.), *Between the Homelands: The Yekkim in Their Territories*, Jerusalem 2005, 265–269 [Hebrew].

81 Kurt Marx, The Youth, in: *Ha-Boker Sport*, July 18, 1936 [Hebrew].

82 In the mid-1930s physical education was a regular part of the curricula of Tel Aviv's schools as well. See Anat Helman, Zionism, Politics, Hedonism: Sports in Interwar Tel Aviv, in: Jack Kugelmass (ed.), *Jews, Sports, and the Rites of Citizenship*, Urbana, IL 2007, 95–113, here 96.

gymnastics lexicon or the establishment of a uniform approach to physical education in the Zionist education system.<sup>83</sup>

The persistent efforts of Central European Jews to improve the organization of athletic activity in the *Yishuv*, to institutionalize the contexts in which this activity was carried out, was widely discussed in the German-Jewish press. However, the recognition that the institutional frameworks of physical activity were crucial for inculcating its wider meaning was not the only reason for the seemingly excessive interest in professionalism and standardization. As Robert Atlasz implied in a typical report on the poor standardization of sports in Palestine, this emphasis also assigned a special role to Central European newcomers. Since they were the only ones who had received a good physical education and had been disciplined and trained by adequate institutions and teachers, they would be able to have an unparalleled impact on the formation of national culture in the *Yishuv*.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to their role in institutionalizing the national body culture, Central European Jews also tended to conceive of themselves as transcending the ideological fractures that also characterized the field of sport in the *Yishuv*.<sup>85</sup> For example, Kurt Marx, appalled by the fragmentation of politically oriented Zionist clubs, advocated the establishment of a unified sports organization that would include all Jewish clubs in Palestine; loyal to Biram's vision, he linked his proposal with the endeavor of the Zionist education system to combine leisure athletic activity with national paramilitary training.<sup>86</sup> The »shocking« politicization of sports was noted in the reports by several sports delegates to Palestine, which declared middle-class German-speaking athletes to be the only truly apolitical group.<sup>87</sup> Many athletes, trainers and journalists considered that the skills and education of Central Euro-

83 Habib Jekutieli and Julius Hirsch explained in the introduction to their *Die Hebräische Turnsprache / Sfat ha-hitamlut ha-ivrit*, Berlin, 1921, that the goal was to »standardize [the Zionist] gymnastics education.« See also *Expose zur Ausgestaltung einer Hochschule für Leibesübungen in Palästina*, in: *Der Makkabi*, July 1933. For initiatives such as the gymnastics lexicon, as well as the Hebrew University professors' attempts to standardize physical education, see CZA, S71/1824/3.

84 Robert Atlasz, *Ein Jahr vor der Makkabiah. Palästina-Sport heute*, in: *Der jüdische Sport*, 1935 (no date), KMA, Maccabi Germany, 126/4-14-20.

85 A similar tendency was also evident in other realms. German-speaking immigrants advocated apolitical »professionalism« as opposed to the »political approach« – and party-based loyalties – in the realms of journalism and psychoanalysis. See, for instance, David Witzthum, *German-Jewish Journalism in Hebrew: Three Revolutions*, in: Hotam/Zimmermann (eds.), *Between the Homelands* (fn. 80), 270-276; Eran J. Rolnik, *Psychoanalysis Goes to Palestine: Immigration, Integration and Reception*, in: John Bunzl/Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (eds.), *Psychoanalysis, Identity, and Ideology: Critical Essays on the Israel/Palestine Case*, Norwell, MN 2002, 141-176.

86 Kurt Marx, proposal for the foundation of the united committee, CZA, S30/2073.

87 Hakoah Vienna athletes' impression from their visit in Palestine is telling: the delegates were »amazed« to see the subjugation of sports in the *Yishuv* to party poli-

pean (bourgeois) Zionists endowed them with the ability to correct this distortion.<sup>88</sup> Central European activists often linked the spirit of partisanship to the disorganized nature of local sport and the poor state of physical education in the *Yishuv*.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the Zionist youth urgently needed the kind of dual endeavor that Biram had introduced in the Reali School: carefully monitored and regulated physical education as a means of enhancing the formation of national individuals; and, an ongoing insistence on an »apolitical« commitment to Zionism, as opposed to the »politically oriented« youth movements and sports clubs outside the Reali School.

Yet, as their pre-immigration experiences had also taught them, an »apolitical« position did not mean abandoning the partisan values and objectives allegedly embedded in »national« athletic activity. Similar to Biram, many German-speaking immigrants who engaged in sports in Palestine sought to ensure that Zionist physical activity would be given the »right« meaning; that the national community it represented would be based on, and would express, the »right« values. Since Zionist clubs in Palestine were viewed as representing different visions of Jewish nationalism, the rivalry between them was often perceived as an expression of ideological disparity.<sup>90</sup> And, like Biram's insistence on the exclusion of external »political« influences on the students, different sports associations struggled to be recognized as the sole representatives of the Zionist enterprise.<sup>91</sup> Sports correspondents of the Hebrew newspapers often contributed to this dispute by referring to »international« matches of local clubs – against other clubs or against teams of the British army – as representing the *Yishuv* as a whole.<sup>92</sup> Prior to 1936 Maccabi had unsuccessfully sought to gain recognition as the sole representative of the Jewish people at the Olympic Games.<sup>93</sup> The decision of the *Yishuv* not to

tics and the abandonment of the »apolitical« nationalism in Jewish body culture (the genuine nationalism they alleged to represent). CZA, S105/329.

- 88 See, for instance, Itzhak Wachsbeum, The State of Boxing in Eretz-Israel (Interview with Hugo Bernhard), in: *Ha-Boker Sport*, October 31, 1936 [Hebrew].
- 89 See, for instance, memoirs of Siegmund Pinkus, CZA, A142/49/4; memoirs of Rudolph Loewy, KMA, Maccabi Breslau, 126/4-14-17.
- 90 Haim Kaufman, Maccabi versus Hapoel: The Political Divide that Developed in Sports in Eretz Israel, 1926-1935, in: *Israel Affairs* 13/3 (2007), 554-565.
- 91 See, for instance, The International Competitions in Haifa, in: *Ha'arets*, July 23, 1937 [Hebrew]; Maccabi's Achievements in the Last 25 Years, Tel Aviv 1936, 14 [Hebrew].
- 92 Yosef Yekutieli, They Did Not Disappoint! in: *Ha-Boker Sport*, November 21, 1936 [Hebrew]; Swimming Competitions in the Land [of Israel], in: *Ha'arets*, May 20, 1937 [Hebrew]; Maccabi Haifa Won Again, in: *Ha-Boker Sport*, July 18, 1936 [Hebrew].
- 93 Atlasz, Bar Kochba (fn. 79), 188f. See also Kurt Jacobowitz to the Organizing Committee of Maccabi, Palestine, April 26, 1933; Sigi Herman to the Organizing Committee of Maccabi, Palestine, May 25, 1933, both in KMA, Maccabi, 126/4-14-23.

participate in the Berlin Games – i. e., not to form a representative team that would transcend club and political affiliations – intensified the competition between the clubs over the right to »genuinely« represent the nation.<sup>94</sup> Within this context, Biram's »peculiar« determination to institutionalize physical activity in the school as the (only) genuine means for expressing Jewish national identity was anchored in a widespread tendency that was cultivated by many German-speaking immigrants to Palestine. Like Biram, it enabled a large number of athletes, trainers, journalists and teachers to be embraced by the mainstream Zionist establishment and to participate in the shaping of Zionist culture.

### *Conclusion*

During over three decades as principal of the Reali School, Arthur Biram shaped the approach to physical education among generations of students and teachers. After his retirement in 1948, he continued to exert an important influence both in the Reali School (as chair of the school's board) and on teachers' training in the young State of Israel (as the director of the Teachers' Training Seminary of the Reali School).<sup>95</sup> His inculcation of physical activity within the Zionist education system had a broad impact on the curricula of numerous national education programs in Israel, which continued, to a varying extent, also after his death in 1967.

While Biram preceded most German-speaking immigrants in Palestine, the two »lessons« learned by German Zionists during their encounter with bourgeois body culture are evident in his approach to physical education. Like many pre-1939 Central European immigrants, Biram realized that the regulation and standardization of athletic activity were crucial for its nationalization. Introducing physical education as an essential part of the school's curriculum reflected similar tendencies in other realms, such as professional (and semi-professional) sports, international athletic events and sports journalism. Biram likewise recognized that schools were able (and obliged) to compete with other frameworks of physical activity, which represented different visions of Jewish nationalism in Palestine.

As Robert Atlasz had predicted, their expertise in body culture enabled many German-speaking immigrants to be incorporated into the Jewish community in Palestine and to influence the discourse of national identity within

94 In 1937 two teams from Palestine, Amal (Tel Aviv) and Maccabi-Avshalom (Petach-Tikva), planned a tour in Central Europe. Amal's tour was cut short, however, due to the reluctance of local Jewish communities to host them. The *Yishuv's* press noted that Maccabi might have been behind the cancellation of the tour. *Ha-Boker Sport* presented the story within the context of Maccabi's endeavor to be perceived as the sole representative of the Jews in Palestine. See *Why Was Amal's Trip to Europe Cut Short?*, in: *Ha'aretz*, June 17, 1937 [Hebrew].

95 Biram established the seminary in 1948 and was its director for five years.

it. Biram's influence on the Zionist nation-building effort reached its climax through the institution of EPE, which showed how physical education in school could directly support the national struggle without – in principle – diminishing the cultivation of the individual. As mentioned above, when the Zionist education committee adopted EPE, they pledged commitment to Biram's pedagogy in general. They thus embraced a position that was developed within a long-standing German discourse on physical education and its role in national education. Through Biram they accepted Kerschensteiner's approach (rather than Jahn's), which attempted to combine the humanistic principle of *Bildung* with the nationalization of the individual.

The conviction that physical education should promote a »sense of national unity« was associated in the *Yishuv*, in particular after 1933, with the »German« approach to physical education (in contrast with the more individual-centered »Scandinavian« or »American« approach).<sup>96</sup> Biram's educational philosophy was »German« in a wider sense. Rather than merely »Prussian« or militarist sentiments, it reflected the various cultural and moral preferences of the *Bildungsbürgertum* as they had developed since the mid-nineteenth century. Like numerous German-speaking Zionists, however, Biram encountered these preferences and sensibilities as both an insider and outsider. His emulation of the values and behavior of his bourgeois environment not only indicated his acculturation but also underlined his otherness. Upon arrival in Palestine he did not shed his German bourgeois heritage. Instead he created in the Reali School an environment that reconstructed elements of his pre-immigration experiences. Through regulated physical activities and other means he sought to instill in his students both the bourgeois habitus and the sense of an intimately related community, constantly ready to defend its members. This aspiration and the practices he endorsed to promote its realization vitally transfused German-Jewish sensibilities into the veins of Zionist national culture in Palestine. The *Biramschule* was therefore a striking example of the role played by body culture in German-speaking immigrants' contribution to the cultural transfer that formed Jewish national identity in Mandate Palestine.

96 There was a fierce debate about the appropriate approach for Zionist physical education after the Aryanization of sports by the National Socialist regime in Germany. See *Newsletter of Gymnastics Teachers in Palestine* (1946), CZA, S23/720 [Hebrew]. See also Ben Israel, *The Integration of Physical Education* (fn. 7), 139; Zvi Nishri, *The History of Physical Education in Israel*, Tel Aviv 1953, 38 [Hebrew].