

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM  
Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007

EVANGELOS ALBANIDIS, EVANGELIA VOUZANIDOU  
Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini, Greece

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS OF CONSTANTINOPLE GREEKS  
AND THEIR SPORTS ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING RESETTLEMENT IN TOWNS  
OF MAINLAND GREECE (THESSALONIKI, KAVALA)**

**Key words:** Constantinople, Greek-Turkish relations, athletic clubs.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was the collection of data about the athletic activities of Greeks in Constantinople, gymnastics in Greek schools, athletic clubs as well as Greek-Turkish relations concerning Greek athletic activities from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1955 and the transfer of sports activities after the resettlement of Constantinople Greeks in the towns mainland Greece – Thessaloniki and Kavala. The research sources included magazines and newspapers as well as documents and club archives. The collected data show that the athletic activity of the Greeks of Constantinople was remarkable and pioneering. More than forty sports clubs were founded between 1877 and 1922. Sport acted as a means to cultivate Greek national identity and as a connecting link between the Greeks. The athletic clubs of Constantinople organized annual games and international meetings achieving distinction. After their arrival in Greece, the refugees from Constantinople brought their athletic tradition to their new home towns, Thessaloniki and Kavala, founded new sports clubs and developed remarkable sports activities.

INTRODUCTION

Constantinople is a city situated strategically on the European coast of the Bosphorus. It is not a coincidence that the Megarians decided to build Byzantium there in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Much later, in the same area Constantine the Great built Constantinople, which reached its heyday during the Byzantine years. For centuries, it was the great city of the Greeks, serving as a political and religious base of Hellenism. On the borders of Europe it thrived and stood for centuries as the parapet of Hellenism and the centre of Orthodox religion. Since ancient times Hellenism has been directly linked with Constantinople. Today Constantinople is called Istanbul and belongs to Turkey.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Greeks outnumbered all other nationalities living in Constantinople, and their accomplishments were truly spectacular. In the prefecture (*Vilayeti*) of Constantinople, according to the memorandum submitted by El. Venizelos at the Congress of Paris in 1919 the Greek community in Constantinople numbered 364,459 [52, p. 91; 2, p. 38; 3, p. 97]. The Greeks had brought the Hellenic-European civilization to Constantinople and during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were extremely active in the intellectual and cultural life of the city. The numerous Greek cultural societies, clubs, fraternities and athletic clubs were the embellishments of westernization [57, p. 28].

Following the Lausanne Peace Treaty (1923) almost 120,000 Greeks remained in Constantinople.

Afterwards, systematic persecutions carried out by the Turkish government resulted in a rapid decrease of the Greek community in Constantinople. The Constantinople Greeks sought refuge in Europe, America as well as in Greece, mainly in Athens and in cities of Northern Greece such as Thessaloniki, Kavala, Alexandroupoli and Komotini.

The purpose of this study was to collect data about sports and physical education of the Greeks of Constantinople, organization of sports clubs, and the consequences of Turkish policies and the Greco-Turkish relations for their athletic activities. In addition, the successes of Constantinople athletes as well as their presence in athletic events in Greece and Turkey were recorded. The study also discusses the transfer and re-establishment of their sports activities in their new home towns in Northern Greece, i.e. Thessaloniki and Kavala.

#### PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN GREEK SCHOOLS IN CONSTANTINOPLE UNTIL 1922

In 1831 gymnastics was introduced in Greek schools in Constantinople, more specifically in the Greek Merchant School (High School and Lyceum) of Galata [61, p. 70; 1, p. 337]. In 1866 H. Stagalís became the first P.E. teacher in Constantinople at the Great School of the Nation; the first female P.E. teacher became A. Tolidou, in 1902, in the same school [51, p. 282].

In 1882-1883 gymnastics was introduced in the Ioakimio School for Girls [16, p. 59]. Later it was taught as an elective subject; and from 1907 as a core subject. In the area of gymnastics and athletics the most distinguished schools included the Zografio, the Zappio, the Great School and the elementary schools of Tatavla and Aghios Stefanos.

Due to the lack of P.E. teachers and coaches as well as gyms and school buildings, students trained at the gymnasiums of the sports club of Tatavla and Pera. Every year the school in Tatavla used to organize track and field events, cross-country running events and gymnastic shows. The school of Aghios Stefanos and many other elementary schools followed the Tatavla example. High schools usually organized annual leagues, wherein athletic meetings between the Zografio and the Great School were of great importance for the Constantinople community. The Interschool League of Constantinople was established for the first time in 1954 and it was a great chance for achieving

distinction by the Greek students. The athletic meetings between Greek schools of Constantinople and Turkish schools of Ankara were also significant events [55, pp. 317-340].

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST ATHLETIC SOCIETIES

It is commonly believed that the Greeks who lived outside mainland Greece, in ancient and in modern times used their athletic clubs to preserve their national identity and forge their unity. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the first two Hellenic athletic clubs were founded outside mainland Greece. These were Milon in Alexandria founded in 1873, Hermes in Constantinople in 1877 and the Hellenic Gymnastic Club in Athens in 1878 [17 p. 163].

In the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the sports societies in Constantinople were of educational character but they mainly served national purposes. The unification of the culturally and linguistically different Greek communities of the Ottoman Empire into a common Hellenic nationality and adoption of a common national ideology were the main concerns of all the clubs, cultural or athletic, which operated outside Greece. Gymnastics and athletics were particularly significant since they were considered to be the living heritage of the ancient Greek civilization and a great contribution to the development and expansion of the national ideology [11, pp. 54-55].

These clubs combined educational, musical and athletic activities. Hermes operated in the same way. Although it was established as a musical and educational club, it soon could boast an active sports section. More specifically, the Hermes Hellenic Club of Constantinople was founded as a spiritual and cultural society by graduates of Peran Lyceum in September 1877. It quickly organized a sizeable library, provided educational courses for adults (Sunday schools), created a musical school, theatrical section, published a monthly magazine and developed multiple sports activities. Hermes had an outdoor gym behind the East Club, where games between schools and clubs were held [36, pp. 71-89]. Like Hermes, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many other clubs of Constantinople combined music and athletics, the most famous instance was the Orpheus Musical Club founded in 1885 in Fanari [37, p. 146; 38, pp. 211-234].

As far as sports activities of the educational clubs of Constantinople were concerned a great contribution to them was made by a doctor and scholar from Constantinople, Iraklis Vasiadis from the Hellenic Philological Club of Constantinople, who delivered a lecture on “Resurrection and Regeneration of the National Gymnastic Pedagogical and Public Education” at the conference of the Greek clubs in 1879 [49, pp. 39-40; 62, p. 94]. Lively discussions also led to the publication of a leaflet in French, in 1869 in Constantinople, by another popular doctor A. Zoirou, entitled “*Question d’hygiene public. De la gymnastique dans l’education de la jeunesse*” [17, p. 53]. In this way, the ideas of physical exercise and its impact on health were popularized in Constantinople. As a result, a great number of sports clubs emerged. Without exaggeration, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the establishment of the Turkish Republic, i.e. about thirty years, more than forty clubs [40, pp. 220-222] were active in the area of Constantinople. It is worth noticing that in 1910 the membership of “The Association of Hellenic Athletic and Gymnastic Clubs” already consisted of 34 societies [49, p. 41].

The first all-athletic club was founded in Tatavla in 1896 under the name of Hercules [39, p. 74]. Very soon (most likely in 1920) it changed its name to the Gymnastic Club of Tatavla. It had football, basketball, volleyball, track and field, tennis, table-tennis, cycling, instrumental gymnastics, and Swedish gymnastics sections as well as a section for female athletes. It organized annual gymnastic shows and friendly games with other clubs, which took place on its own premises [55, pp. 43-50]. At that time the friendly games consisted of high jump, 50 m, 100 m and women’s relay race events [53, p. 101]. Gradually, many other sports clubs were established, e.g. Olympia in Therapies, Theseas in Vafeohori, Perseas in Contoskali, Aris in Megalo Rema or Achilleas in Chalkidona [60, p. 14].

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the people of Constantinople, inspired by the British ideas of sport began to specialize in one sport only, e.g. football, tennis or cycling. Soon sports clubs which specialized only in one sport began to emerge; the most numerous were football clubs [49, p. 42. 37, pp. 11-12].

As early as in 1900 Constantinople had – apart from the athletic grounds of the Hermes club – a winter (i.e. indoor) gymnasium [39, pp. 117-118] founded in Peran by gymnasts

H. Stagalos and Faik Vei [41]. In 1902 the Hercules Gymnastic Club of Tatavla [42] acquired a gym, and in 1905 an indoor wrestling ring was built in the Rovertio School [49, p. 54].

#### 1900–1922: THE PEAK PERIOD OF GREEK ATHLETICS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a great number of annual games and international sports meetings were organized. Many Olympic and Pan-Hellenic victories were won by the Greek athletes of Constantinople.

In 1896 the Panionian Games were held for the first time in Greek Smyrna [18, pp. 63, 294], in which athletes from Constantinople took part for first time in 1902. Specifically, two athletes of the Theseas sports club participated in those games. The Theseas was one of the oldest in Constantinople and was seated in Vafeohori. It should be remembered that the participation of the Constantinople athletes in the Panionian Games of Smyrna and the Pan Egyptian Games in Alexandria was not only an athletic but also a national event [18, pp. 84-85]. At the 1905 Games the athletes from Constantinople were the true protagonists. *Tatavla* won the second position in the medal ranking with six victories and one second place [55, p. 18]. Athletes from Constantinople took part in the Pan-Hellenic Games of Athens in 1912 and won a gold, silver and bronze medal [55, p. 26]. Clubs from Constantinople also took part in the Eolic Games that first took place in 1907, in the Pan-Euxeinian Gymnastic and Athletic Games in Amisos in 1910 [49, p. 44], as well as in the Pan Egyptian Games organized by the Greek Fan Club of Alexandria in 1912 [55, p. 12].

The year of 1908 witnessed a great number of developments. The Greek clubs – Panhelinios G.C. and Ethnikos G.C. of Athens – were officially invited by the Turkish authorities as co-organizers of the games in Constantinople in the first five days of Bairami. In these games Greek and Turkish clubs registered for participation, which was a clear sign of the positive atmosphere that was temporarily sustained by the change in the political situation [49, p. 61]. Eventually the games were cancelled because the gymnastic clubs of Constantinople, which were dependent on the Organization of Constantinople focusing on preservation of the Greek national identity and equality of political rights in the Ottoman Empire, withdrew. This was a

true display of their power [54, pp. 238-240]. The Athenian clubs withdrew from the games because the Turkish organizers declared that a part of the revenue from the Games would be used for the construction of two Turkish battleships [39, pp. 246-247].

However, the greatest and most important athletic event of that time was the Pan-Constantinouplian Athletic Games organized every year by a different club. They were organized for the first time in 1910 by the Aris of Megalo Reuma and saw the participation of Hermes, Hercules, Theseus, Iason and Pheidipides [55, p. 26]. Five months before the 1st Pan-Constantinouplian Games in 1910 the Association of Hellenic Athletic and Gymnastic Clubs set up a special seven-member committee to observe the athletic events of Constantinople and give grants to the clubs. The chairman of this committee was George Zarifis [49, pp. 43, 64]. The ambition of the club officials and of the athletes who fervently supported this idea was to hold an annual event equal to the Panionian Games of Smyrna. This ambition was not fulfilled, since within the period of 23 years (1910, 1911, 1920 and 1921) only four such events took place [55, pp. 33-36].

After the 2nd Pan-Constantinouplian Games in 1911 and upon entering the war year of 1912, the athletic movement of Constantinople began to decline until 1918 when the truce of the Gulf of Moudrou was signed. Only the participation of Apostolis Stanitsas [59, p. 27] in the Pan-Hellenic Games of 1914 reminded mainland Greece that there was still a champion in Constantinople. This great athlete of Hercules Tavatlon was 2<sup>nd</sup> in 110m hurdles and in 200m and 3<sup>rd</sup> in 100m. As a result his club achieved the 7<sup>th</sup> position out of 14 [49, p. 66].

Athletics in Constantinople experienced a second flourishing period at the beginning of 1919. In September 1920, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-Constantinouplian Games were organized by the club of Fans and Friends of Music of Megalo Reuma [60, p. 15]. At the end of May 1922, at the Taxim stadium of Peran, the 1st International Athletic Games of Constantinople were held in which a number of Greek and foreign athletes took part [60, p. 16]. The organizing committee consisted of the Turkish Athletic Union, the Greek Athletic Union, the Armenian Union, the Jewish Union Makavi, the Russian, the YMCA and the English Athletic Company. In August 1922, just a day before the attack in Afion Karahisar, the Association of

Athletic Clubs of Constantinople organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Pan-Hellenic Games of Constantinople, also known as Artemisia, with 174 athletes from 15 clubs [55, pp. 39-43; 39, p. 398].

#### ATHLETIC SUCCESSES UNTIL 1922

The first athletic successes of the Greek athletes of Constantinople are traced as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Zappas Olympics in 1859 when three athletes from Constantinople achieved victories (S. Ioannou, first in discus throwing, and G. Akestoridis and Venetsanopoulos first and second in climbing, respectively). At the 4<sup>th</sup> Zappas Olympic Games in 1889 D. Melekoglous took the third place in pole vault over a ditch [4, 12]. Seven athletes from Constantinople participated in the Intercalated Olympic Games in 1906 [55, pp. 18-19; 49, p. 56]. In the Intercalated Olympic Games of 1906 athletes from Constantinople, George and Nikolaos Alibrantis, won Olympic medals in climbing and in gymnastic pentathlon, respectively, while M. Dorizas won the third place in stone throwing [10, pp. 454-459]. M. Dorizas took part as a member of the Greek National Team and won the silver medal in the London Olympics in 1908 in javelin, throwing the javelin over the distance of 51.36 m. He also took part in the Olympic Games of 1912, but with no success [11, pp. 47-48]. At the London Olympic Games M. Pashalidis from Constantinople also took part as a member of the Greek National Team [49, p. 62].

The football team of Kadikioy, with 80% of players of Greek origin, won the Turkish championship in 1912 [49, p. 43]. Menelaos Karotsieris took the second place in the Pan-Hellenic Games of 1912 in wrestling and later repeated his victory in the Pan Egyptian Pan-Hellenic Games [49, p. 59]. He was a great patriot and an active member of the Organization of Constantinople [54, p. 224].

#### 1923–1955: SPORTS ACTIVITIES OF CONSTANTINOPLE GREEKS IN THE CONTEXT OF GREEK–TURKISH RELATIONS

The destruction of Asia Minor in 1922 was a terrible blow to Hellenism. In 1923 the final countdown for the Greek presence in Constantinople started. A series of measures were aimed at

restricting and eventually eliminating all the rights of the Greek community. The Treaty of Lausanne and the agreement to exchange populations between Greece and Turkey was a cruel way of resolving the Greek-Turkish differences and it failed to improve the life of the Orthodox Greeks of Constantinople. The Turks agreed that only those Greeks of Constantinople who lived there before 1918 could remain in their country [8, pp. 196-197]. The Mixed Committee of the Exchange of Inhabitants finally issued certificates of residence to 103.000 Greeks of Constantinople [2, p. 39]. The actions of the Turkish authorities led to the expatriation of many athletes of Constantinople, e.g. Menelaos and Emilios Ionas, Kostas Dimopoulos, Menelaos Karotsieris, Timoleon Tagaris, Miltos Ieremiadis, Stefanos Kehagias and many others [49, pp. 73-79].

By the end of 1923 an attempt was made to limit the civic and political rights of the Greek minority, which was a direct violation of Articles 39-42 of the Treaty of Lausanne [8, pp. 200-205; 2, pp. 40-44; 7, pp. 19-53]. Just two years after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne the Hellenic Philological Club was closed and its library and manuscripts were confiscated. Turkey forced the teaching of the Turkish language in minority schools (*yurtaslik* [2, p. 41]). Turkish educational institutions were compelled to hire Turkish headmasters and forced P.E. teachers to give their orders in the Turkish language. In consequence, physical education teachers were forced to sit exams in this language [8, p. 202]. Many schools were banned and taxes were imposed on the Greeks as regards education. All these measures remained in direct contrast to Article 45 of the Treaty [8, p. 203; 7, p. 23].

As far as the athletic clubs are concerned, following the 1923 Legislative Regulation, it was imperative that a person of Turkish origin or representing another minority had to be on the club board of directors. Between 1928 and 1930 Ahmet Nourentin was the chairman of A.C of Peran followed then by David Yiaffe of Jewish origin [55, p. 54].

Between 1928 and 1930 the limitations were temporarily lifted. There was an attempt to bridge the gap between the two nations, which had a direct impact on the Greeks of Constantinople. During that period meetings between Greek and Turkish clubs became more frequent. Eleftherios Venizelos believed that good Greek-Turkish relations would

lead to the prosperity of the Greek minority in Turkey. Unfortunately, his wishes never came true.

It is true that for a few years the Greeks Constantinople enjoyed very good treatment. In September 1928 boat races between Greek and Turkish clubs were organized that were attended by the President of the Turkish Republic [30, p. 11]. Also track races [32, p. 7; 19, p. 6; 21, p. 7] and football games between Greeks and Turks were held [33, p. 18; 20, p. 13]. During this period the Turkish newspapers were trying to promote a sports co-existence and through that a peaceful cohabitation of the two communities. A pioneer of this movement was the newspaper "Milliet" which organized tennis matches and made it possible for Mrs. Psathi to participate in the 1928 games [31, p. 10] and to Mrs. Thalia Patsikaki and Mr. Emanouil Kelaiditi to take part in the 1929 games [20, p. 13]. The same initiative was undertaken by the official newspaper of the Turkish Government "Hakimiyet-I Milliye", which organized football matches [23, p. 9], and by "Asam", which started a cross-country running cup [25, p. 4]. The Turkish Athletic Federation also organized a meeting with the top clubs of every participating nation. The A.C of Peran and Sporting won the first two places [26, p. 15]. Sports meetings between various national teams were also allowed. For instance, the Armenian teams Sisli and Esagian as well as the Jewish team Etoual competed against Greek football teams [21, p. 7; 27, p. 9]. Football matches between Turkish clubs such as Fenerbahce or Galatasaray and Greek clubs such as A.C of Pera, T.G.G Kourtoulous, Geni Gildiz (Astir Proodos), Fanari, Aetos were quite common [33, p. 18; 20, p. 13; 22, p. 15; 24, p. 11], followed by joint marathon [28, pp. 12-13] and cross-country running events [31, p. 10]. Some athletic clubs such as Pera or Fanari organized tours in Greece [29, p. 10]. As for visits of Greek clubs in Constantinople, the first one was Aris (1930) which was invited by Fenerbache and Galatasaray just a few days before the visit of El Venizelos in Ankara, where the Treaty of Greek-Turkish friendship would be signed. In fact, the Aris visit was a way to probe into the reactions of the Turkish public opinion concerning the Greek-Turkish friendship [58, p. 66].

In 1934 Law 2525 forced the Greeks to change their names to Turkish names [7, p. 26; 2, p. 97]. The Greek clubs were not recognized by the Turkish Associations [60, pp. 73-74]. It was forbidden for athletes from Greek clubs who used Greek names to take part in Turkish games and

championships. This step resulted in the decline of the position of these clubs and esteemed track and field athletes such as T. Baltzis (Turkish record holder in hammer throw from 1939 till 1955 and winner of the Pan Asian Games) transferred to Galatasaray. Another athlete, C. Poulis of AC Pera, who held the Turkish record in pole vault for 14 years and was the Balkan winner for five years in succession representing Turkey (1935-1939), was forced to change his name to Poulat as the Turkish Association commanded, and was transferred to Fenerbahce. The most remarkable cases included Karakasis, who had to change his name to Karakas and was transferred from AC Pera to Galatasaray, and Socratis Aratoglou (better known as Arat, the first Balkan winner in shot put, a member of the national team) [49, pp. 53-54].

In result, two of the biggest Greek clubs Tatavla and AC Pera were forced to use Turkish names from 1934. Tatavla, following the decision of the Turkish Government, had to change their name to Kouroulous and AC Pera to Beiglou Sport. In spite of this the two Greek clubs continued their sports activities, and their athletes took part in the Turkish championships, using other names. AC Pera became the most famous Greek club thanks to football. In 1962 the club played in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Championship of Turkey [55, p. 50]. It was also successful in other sports events such as wrestling, boxing, weight lifting, track, swimming and table tennis.

The years 1945-1954 were a breathing period for the Greek minority in Turkey. After World War Two and German occupation of Greece Turkey felt guilty towards the Allies for its stance during the war [13, p. 38].

Between 1945 and 1954 there were many exchanges between Greece and Constantinople. The first visit was paid to Constantinople in 1945 by Olympiakos Peraeus which played against Pera and Besiktas. The Turkish Prime Minister Soukrou Saratsoglou attended the games [55, pp. 219-220]. Also similar friendly games were played between the national teams of Greece and Turkey. It should be noticed that a great star of the period for the Turkish national team was Lefteris Antoniadis, who was the only one who took part fifty times as a member of the Turkish national team [55, pp. 222-223]. At the same period friendly one-day track events were organized between clubs from Constantinople and Ethnikos Alexandroupolis or Orpheus Xanthis [55, pp. 132-136]. Between 1945 and 1954, sport in Constantinople was at its peak.

It is also worth mentioning that A.C. Pera became the basketball champion team at the Turkish Federation Championships in 1945 and 1946 as well as at the Youth Championships in 1950 and 1954 [55, p. 242]. In volleyball, A.C. Pera became the only team which won the first place in the Turkish championship for five years in succession (1949-1953) [55, pp. 271-282]. In water sports, P. Fanariotis achieved great successes in rowing, who, as an athlete of Galatasaray was the champion of Turkey for ten years (1941-1951). In swimming, P. Ornithopoulos won the 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Mediterranean Games of 1951 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Turkish Swimming League [55, pp. 309-312]. In track and field, many Greeks shattered the Turkish records, and there were remarkable successes in weight lifting and table tennis [56, pp. 234-240].

This entire warm sports climate between the two countries was destroyed by the events of September 1955. The aggravation of the Greek-Turkish relations because of the Cypriot troubles, led to persecution of Greeks and massive deportations in 1955 and 1964. Five sports clubs were destroyed and looted [2, p. 500; 5, pp. 81-147]. Hundreds of Greeks were expelled and others abandoned their birthplaces and came looking for safety in mainland Greece [2, pp. 512-513].

The decline in the number of Greeks in Constantinople slowly erased all athletic activities. Disperse successes in basketball and volleyball were only exceptions to the rule. The Greek clubs slowly faded away and in their place charity societies for the old and needy appeared.

#### ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES OF THE CONSTANTINOPLE GREEKS IN THESSALONIKI

Between 1923 and 1936 more than 250 expelees' clubs were established in Thessaloniki. The main aim of the most of them was to satisfy the deportees' interests and to help with their resettlement. In setting cultural priorities sports activities always play a key role. Therefore, a blooming of youth clubs, both cultural and athletic, founded by the deportees ensued [14, p. 37].

The pioneers of the establishment of the clubs were people who were active in many other areas of life. In the Constantinople clubs the members of the administrative councils had been people of financial power and usually members of

institutions which provided them with their social status [14, pp. 39-40]. The refugees from Constantinople, because of their urban descent, settled down mainly in two big Greek cities of Thessaloniki and Athens. In 1924, the resettlers in Thessaloniki decided to found a sports club, following members of other national minorities in the city. In May 1924, the Union of People of Constantinople Living in Thessaloniki was founded its aimed at fostering contacts among the refugees [60, p. 18].

The athletes from Constantinople had already started to engage in sports in Thessaloniki, and two sports clubs were already functioning: Hercules and Aris. The ones willing to take up gymnastics registered at Hercules and those who loved football enrolled at Aris. Athletes from Constantinople such as A. Armasis, K Pagalos and M Ventourelis had been members of the Hercules football team, which won the Greek championship between 1922 and 1924. Also K Sarantidis and Th. Sotiriou-Kalfopoulos, the great athletes of Hercules, were champions in the 1924 Panhellenic Games in 3000m and 4x400m relay race [60, p. 18].

A year after the foundation of the Union, in June 1925, the athletic section was established in the club. Soon football, swimming and track and field sections were organized. Constantinople's athletes, who were members of Hercules and Aris, considered it their duty to register at the new club. That's why the new sports club's relationship with Hercules and Aris was far from perfect [60, p. 19]. According to N. Christodoulou, the founders of the Union demanded that the athletes from Constantinople become members of new club. In a way, they were forced to abandon the remaining clubs [6, p. 95].

In December 1925, the club football players founded a new sports club by the name Athletic Union of Constantinople (AEK) of Thessaloniki [60, pp. 24-25]. The founders intended the AEK to become a great sports club which would be able to compete with the other clubs of the city and become the Greek champion in all sports. There were many ideas about the future of the football team of the club [60, p. 29]. In March 1926, members of the AEK founded another new sports club by the name Panthessalonikios Athletic Club of Constantinople (PAOK) [60, pp. 30-31]. As there were many problems from both clubs, at the beginning of 1929 both administrative councils decided on the union of the two clubs. The new club would keep the name of PAOK [60, p. 48].

The Byzantine Athletic Club (BAO) was founded in 1926 by athletes who had abandoned the AEK [14, p. 61].

As far as the sports successes were concerned, soon all the clubs proved that they could be protagonists in the athletic life of the city. More specifically, the Union, just a month after its foundation, won the 1<sup>st</sup> place in football and swimming in the city games. In track and field in the same year 29 athletes achieved remarkable successes during the 1<sup>st</sup> Pammacedonian Games [60, pp. 19-20].

From the first year of its foundation the AEK not only consisted of athletic departments but also successfully took part in games in the city. Moreover, the athletes participated in the Panthrakiki Games and Panhellenic Games in Athens. In May 1926, during the Panthrakiki Games in Xanthi, the club athletes took the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places many times [60, pp. 41-42].

The PAOK was in the ascent as well. In the period of 1926-1927 it won the Greek football championship. In athletics, it won the 1<sup>st</sup> medal in the 1929 Panhellenic Games. Apart from football and athletics it also featured swimming, cycling, volleyball, basketball, handball, shooting and wrestling sections [14, p. 52].

The BAO was a club which displayed a remarkable activity in all sports. Until 1940 there were basketball, cycling, wrestling, table tennis and football sections. In the beginning, it was merely a basketball club but it gradually established the other sections. In 1927, it became the basketball champion of Thessaloniki and next year it won the 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Greek Basketball League [14, p. 62].

#### ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES OF THE GREEKS OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN KAVALA

The Athletic Union of Constantinople in Kavala was formally established in 1928, but it had actually existed since 1924 by the name of Byzantion, which had been a very well known club in the whole Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Many Greeks from Constantinople came to Kavala after the mandatory exchange of populations in 1923. The members included many football players and athletics lovers. In 1928 Byzantion was renamed the AEK. At the beginning it was a football club, but very soon it established athletics and swimming sections [50, p. 633].

Byzantium achieved a great success in football and every Sunday it played football matches in the field of Kara Orman, the only one in the city at that time [47]. It is reported that the PAOK of Thessaloniki [43] and the AEK of Athens came to Kavala for football meetings against Byzantium [48]. In gymnastics, the athletes took part in the North Greek Championship in Alexandroupoli in 1931 [44] and in the Regional Athletic Men's Championship in Thrace in 1932 [32, p. 4]. In water sports the athletes took part in the Panthrakiki Swimming Games in Alexandroupoli [45], in the Panhellenic Swimming Games in Pireas [46] and in the North Greek Swimming Championship in Thessaloniki [33].

### CONCLUSION

The athletic activity of the Greeks of Constantinople was undoubtedly remarkable and pioneering in the Balkans. The existence of more than fifty clubs, breaking many Turkish records by Greek athletes as well as winning Turkish and Constantinople championships are evident of the great love of the Greeks of Constantinople of athletics and their constant effort to manifest their distinct identity. In addition, athletics acted as a means of developing the national ideology and as a link among the Greeks of Constantinople.

The joint Greek and Turkish athletic meetings helped in resettling the tension and were used by both countries to create a calmer atmosphere. On the other hand, when the Greek-Turkish relationships worsened, it had a direct impact on the functioning of the athletic clubs.

After their arrival in Greece, the deportees from Constantinople transferred their athletic habits to their new home towns of Thessaloniki and Kavala. The establishment of sports clubs after their resettlement was a result of their need to create an environment similar to the previous one in Constantinople, and to gradually become merged with the new local community and continue their athletic tradition.

Despite the financial problems of the sports clubs and everyday difficulties, the athletes were taking part in every great athletic event, winning medals and championships. Although all these sports clubs were founded by deportees, they soon became widely accepted by the local athletes and sports fans.

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